

1 Timothy - Background and Overview

"I hope to send Timothy to you soon... I have no one else like him, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare." Phil 2v19-20 NIV

A powerful book for young people to study: 1 Timothy was specifically written to a young person. Paul encourages Timothy to not to let anyone despise his youth: **1 Tim 4v12**. So here we have encouragement that youth is a time of great opportunity: **Eccl 11v9; 12v1; 2 Tim 3v15**. Youth can have a wonderful influence in ecclesias! Timothy is a young person in a difficult ecclesial environment. He is about to face stress and conflict. But he was given the gospel of the Kingdom. **Great responsibility** was therefore on his shoulders. With this however came **wonderful opportunities**. So it is for us. There is much we can do to strengthen and build up our ecclesias. Paul's message to this young man is a message for all young people. It is a vital message for all ecclesias "until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ": **1 Tim 6v14**.

The Pastoral Letters (**1,2 Timothy** and **Titus**) were the last writings of Paul. A Pastor simply means a **shepherd**. A shepherd cares deeply for his sheep and he knows them all by name: **Jn 10v2-4**. A shepherd cares for and protects the ecclesia when it is threatened: **Jn 10v10-16**. Paul was a man of love and compassion who cared greatly for his brothers and sisters: **Gal 4v19** NIV "My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you". He therefore agonised for all his brethren that they would be in the Kingdom. **He gave his life for the ecclesias**.

Timothy's name means "of value to God" (**Timo** = of worth, value, honour; **Theos** = God). We see this in **2 Tim 2v20-21** where there is a play on his name: "honour... dishonour... unto honour". Timothy's father was a Greek and his mother a Jewish believer: **Acts 16v1**. His grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice were very faithful believers: **2 Tim 1v5**. They gave him thorough instruction in the Scriptures: **2 Tim 3v14-15**, and Paul then assisted him in his youth. Paul says in **Phil 2v22**, "you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel." Timothy and his mother were already disciples on Paul's second journey: **Acts 16v1-3**. Timothy's faithfulness won him the trust of the ecclesia. The brethren took him, circumcised him and made him Paul's companion: **Acts 16v2-3**. If Timothy is called a "youth" in **1 Tim 4v12**, he must have been very young when he first went with Paul.

Timothy is frequently Paul's messenger to the ecclesias. When Paul left Thessalonica and Berea, Timothy and Silas were left behind to strengthen the ecclesias: **Acts 17v13,14**. They later went to Paul at Corinth: **Acts 18v5**. Later, from Ephesus, Paul sent Timothy to Thessalonica to comfort the brethren: **Acts 19v22; 1 Thess 3v2,3**. Having done so, Timothy returned to Paul, and travelled with him to Asia: **Acts 20v4**. Timothy was present at the riot in Ephesus: **Acts 19v28-41**, and later at Paul's tearful farewell: **Acts 20v17-38**.

Paul's letter to the Ephesians was written around AD61 soon after Paul arrived in Rome. Timothy had been a constant companion of Paul in difficult times: **Phm 1v1; Phil 1v1; Col 1v1**. Paul heavily relied on Timothy to provide comfort to ecclesias: **Phil 2v19-23; Heb 13v23**. Paul's first imprisonment was from AD61-63: **Acts 28v30**. Much responsibility fell on the shoulders of Timothy at this time. It appears that this first letter to Timothy was written around AD64-67. **Timothy was in the Ephesus ecclesia** when Paul wrote **1 Timothy** - see **1 Tim 1v3**.

Ephesus was a significant sea port town which was well known for its commerce, education and pagan worship. There was a large Jewish population there, due to its commercial opportunities. The massive temple of Diana was in Ephesus. This temple had 127 marble pillars, each 18 metres high. This was the first of the 7 wonders of the ancient world. The temple housed the goddess of fertility and was associated with gross immorality. Ephesus was a place of great luxury and prosperity. As such the sins of Sodom were condemned in **Eph 2v3; 4v17-19**, cp. **Ezek 16v49-50**.

Preaching in Ephesus: Paul first preached the gospel to Jews in Ephesus: **Acts 18v19-20**. Between then and Paul's third journey, Aquila and Priscilla were active there: **Acts 18v26**. On Paul's third journey, the gospel message prospered in Ephesus: **Acts 19v1-10**. Paul preached boldly to the Jews for 3 months in the synagogue, arguing persuasively about **the Kingdom of God: 19v8**. Due to strong opposition, Paul then led the disciples aside and lectured daily in the hall of Tyrannus, a Gentile, for 2 years: **19v9-10**. Paul's miracles and preaching had an amazing influence: **19v11-20**. Huge numbers of magic books were burned publicly: **v19**. The worship of Diana declined as a result and her worshippers were facing financial ruin: **v27**. A huge riot was provoked in response to this: **v28-29,34**. Because of all this chaos, Paul departed for Macedonia: **20v1**.

Paul's final words to Ephesus: Paul's last personal contact was on his way home from his third journey. He called the elders to him and delivered a passionate and moving farewell: **Acts 20v17-38**. Paul's preaching about God and Christ emphasised **repentance, faith** and the **Kingdom of God: 20v21-25**. However, he now warned that grievous wolves would enter into the ecclesia, not sparing the flock: **Acts 20v29-30**. Factions and divisions would emerge. Prominent, influential brethren would lead many astray. Here we learn that **Paul warned of these threats day and night with tears for 3 years: 20v31**. He pleaded with them to stay faithful to the **Word of God** which would "build them up": **20v32**. This is consistent with what Paul writes to Timothy at a later time.

Four years later, Paul wrote to the **Ephesians** and was pleased to hear of their progress: **1v15-19**. He still however warns them not to be deceived by false teachings and division: **4v14,25-31; 5v11**. Over 30 years later, Ephesus is one of the 7 Ecclesias written to in **Rev 2v1-7**. We learn from **Rev 2v2** that Paul's warnings to Timothy were heeded, and that the false teachers had been dealt with. By that time however (AD96) Ephesus had a new problem: **Rev 2v4-7**.

Jews and Gentiles: Ephesus was a city of idolatry and Gentile philosophy. The Jewish influence however was a determination to succeed, with a critical attitude towards their brethren: **Eph 2v11**. These 2 ways of life combined in the ecclesia to provide great challenges for Timothy, a real threat to unity: **Eph 1v9-10**. Right at the beginning of **1 Tim**, Paul tells Timothy to resist these influences: **1v4**. Extremes often beget extremes in ecclesial life. On one hand, zealous Jews (such as Alexander) were arguing about worthless ideology: **1v4,20** cp. **Acts 19v33; 2 Tim 4v14**. On the other hand, Gentiles would react by "ministering questions", denying basic doctrine and causing others to doubt their faith: **1 Tim 6v20-21; 2 Tim 2v17,18**. These extremes are not isolated to the 1st century.

Godliness is the Main Theme of 1 Timothy: Of the 15 times "godliness" (Gk. *Eusebia*) is found in the NT, 8 of these are in **1 Tim: See 2v2; 3v16; 4v7,8; 6v3,5,6,11** (*Theosebeia* in **2v10**). Godliness literally means "right worship". See also **Acts 3v12; 2 Tim 3v5; Titus 1v1; 2 Pet 1v3,6,7; 3v11**. In **2 Tim 3v5** we find that Godliness is powerful (Gk. *dunamis*), literally meaning dynamite! We learn from **1 Thess 1v5** that this dynamic power is not just in word but more so in **action**. Godliness is therefore **the power of the gospel shining in a believer's life**. It is seen in one's **character**. In doing so we give glory to God, which is the real way we worship Him.

Faithful sayings: There are 5 faithful sayings in the Pastoral letters:

1. The beginning of our walk in the Truth: **1 Tim 1v15**
2. The continuation of these principles in daily life: **1 Tim 3v1**
3. Growing in the grace and mercy of Christ: **1 Tim 4v8**
4. Looking to our glorious hope of resurrection: **2 Tim 2v11**
5. The conclusion of God's salvation in us, eternal life: **Titus 3v7-8**

Holding on to Faith and a Good Conscience: 1v19. Faith is a constant theme in this letter. Paul constantly encourages Timothy to hold fast to sound doctrine - "the Faith". This is **Faith in the Gospel of the Kingdom!** Faith is powerful and a great motivator of believers through the ages. Look how often faith is referred to in this letter alone: **1 Tim 1v2,4,5,14,19; 2v7,15; 3v9,13; 4v1,6,12; 6v10,11,12,21**. **Faith underlies all our decisions in life** and is based on provable evidence: **Heb 11v1-6**. Without faith, our hope would have no substance. In **Heb 11** Faith produced **ACTIONS: v7,8-10,11,17,20-21,24**. Believers are justified (ie. made righteous) by faith: **Gen 15v6; Hab 2v4; Rom 4v3**. By faith, the simple steps to salvation can be summarised in these Scriptures: **Rom 10v17; Isa 55v6-7; Acts 22v16; Rom 6v4; Heb 11v13; 1 Jn 1v9; 2v1; Rev 22v12**.

A **good conscience** develops from a genuine, strong faith applied in daily life. A good conscience results in a believer doing what is right in the smallest of life issues - which only God will notice: **John 8v9; Acts 23v1; 2 Cor 4v2; 1 Tim 1v5,19; 3v9; 4v2; 2 Tim 1v3; Heb 13v18; 1 Pet 2v19; 3v16,21**. As such, we are "conscientious objectors". **So how do our lives reflect what we believe?**