

I Timothy Introduction

Author:

According to the opening salutation of this letter it is evident that the Apostle Paul wrote this epistle. One might find it surprising that men, in their infinite wisdom, have questioned the authorship of the Apostle Paul. Among the reasons proposed are as follows: 1) The events and design of the epistle is not discussed in the book of Acts. 2) The language utilized by the Apostle in this letter is different than in his ten other letters written to congregations or individuals. 3) The apostasy mentioned in the letter could not have occurred until after Paul's death.

Obviously these three arguments do not provide a preponderance of evidence to reject the plain statement of the salutation of this book. We will address the first argument later on in this introduction (See "when and where"). The second argument doesn't even approach the standard of material evidence. Just because the apostle utilizes different grammatical phrases in a letter written to an individual, that was a close personal companion, which are different from the ones utilized in addressing a congregation, hardly constitutes a reason to question the Apostle's authorship. Thirdly, the evidence in the New Testament fully endorses the apostasy Paul was writing about as imminent and "*already at work*" (2 Thes 2:7). Paul, along with the other New Testament writers, warned of false doctrine and false teachers in the present tense (I Tim. 1: 3, Titus 1: 10, 2 Pet. 2:1-2; 3:16, 1 Jn 4: 1, Jude 3 -4 et.al.)

To deny the authorship of the Apostle Paul is to deny the plenary inspiration of the scriptures. The bible asserts that all the scriptures come from the mouth of God, and to deny any of its statements would be a denial of their inspiration (2 Tim. 3:16-18, 2 Pet. 3:16, 1 Cor. 2:13).

Recipient:

The letter is written to the individual in whom the book is named, Timothy. All we know of Timothy is found in the New Testament scriptures. He is introduced to us in Acts 16. He was either from Derbe or Lystra. Most commentators believe that he was from Lystra. I suppose after much study and meditation I would agree. In his second letter to Timothy he reminds the young evangelist of his persecutions that he received in Lystra (2 Tim. 3: 10-11), that Paul asserts that Timothy was aware. Timothy was most likely an eyewitness of the shameful treatment he had received (Acts 14:19-20).

Although many commentators seem to be hesitant in stating when Timothy was converted, it seems likely that Paul converted him on his first missionary journey (Acts 13:4-14:23). Although it is certainly possible that Timothy was converted between Paul's first and second visits to Lystra, Paul's description of Timothy as "*my own son in the*

faith", leads me to believe that Paul was directly responsible for his conversion (I Tim. 1:2, 2 Tim. 1:2).

Timothy was chosen by Paul to be his companion commencing with the second missionary journey in Acts 16. Most commentators suppose he was in the neighborhood of 23 years old when he first began with the Apostle Paul. This is conjectured based upon Paul calling Timothy a youth (I Tim. 4:12). In the common vernacular of the day, a man was considered a "*neanias*" (young man) until the age of 40. If this is so, then Timothy is under the age of 40 at the time of the writing of this book, (most commentators place him at 35-38 years old) which is supposed to have been written 12-15 years after Acts 16.

Timothy was an exemplary Christian. The apostle Paul certainly did not choose lightly his traveling companions (Acts 15:36-40). Timothy had a tremendous reputation as a disciple of Christ in his home town as well as surrounding areas (Acts 16:2). In his journeys with the Apostle Paul he endeared himself to the Apostle evidence by the terms Paul used of Timothy: "beloved brother", "faithful-minister", "fellow servant" (Col. 4:7); "my beloved", "fellow-worker" (Rom. 16:3, 9); "My partner", "fellow helper" (2 Cor. 8:23); "companion in labor", "fellow soldier", and "fellow laborer"(1 Thes. 3:1-2).

Another evidence of Timothy's character were the missions that Paul sent him on. Besides being invited to travel with Paul on this second missionary journey, Timothy was sent to Thessalonica to comfort the new saints there and labored with the Apostle for 18 months in Corinth (Acts 16:6-18:11; 1 Thes. 3:1-2). He was also sent to Philippi after Paul's release from prison. In choosing Timothy, Paul stated "*For I have no man like minded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's. But ye know the proof of him, that as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel*" (Phil. 2:20-22).

We see Timothy again a companion of Paul's on his third missionary journey in Ephesus. Near the end of Paul's stay there, he sent Timothy to the churches of Macedonia and Achaia (Acts 19:21, 22; 1 Cor. 4:17; 16: 10, 11). When he returns from this mission we see that he is with Paul in Macedonia as he writes 2 Corinthians (2 Cor. 1: 1), and the following winter he spends with Paul as the letter to the Romans is written (Acts 20:1-3; Romans 16:2 1). Finally we see him accompanying the Apostle as he makes his way to Jerusalem at the end of Paul's third missionary journey (Acts 20:3-5) and was most likely with him on his travels and imprisonment in Rome (Phil. 1; 1; 2:19-23; Col. 1: 1; Phile 1).

Timothy's father was a Greek and his mother was a Jew (Acts 16:1-3). We don't know if his father was alive or dead at the time of his conversion, but if he was alive he was not an antagonist of Timothy's new religion. Timothy did not practice full Judaism because he was not circumcised (Acts 16:3). His mother Eunice and grandmother Lois had, however, taught him the Old Testament scriptures (2 Tim. 1:5). Because the Jews knew him in his area, Paul took Timothy and circumcised him (Acts 16:3) before he began working with Paul.

There are many opinions on whether Timothy had spiritual gifts or not (I Tim. 4:14, 2 Tim. 1:6). I would tend to lean toward him not having spiritual gifts although it is not out of the question. Certainly, as an Apostle, Paul had the ability to lay his hands on Timothy to receive the differing gifts of the Spirit (Acts 8:18; 19:6).

The word "gift" is translated from the Greek word "Charisma" which means "a gift of grace, a favor which one receives with out merit". We can find instances where this word is used to describe both spiritual and physical gifts (Rom. 12:6-8, 1 Pet. 4: 10-11). Therefore the word itself does not necessarily mean some spiritual gift. Paul refers to his calling and working in the ministry as a gift or grace of God (I Tim. 1: 12-13, Gal. 2:9, Rom. 1:5, Eph. 3:8).

What gift Timothy may have received is certainly unclear. It evidently was not the gift of prophecy for Paul exhorts Timothy to "*give attendance to reading ... meditate upon these things* " (I Tim. 1: 13, 15), and again "*Study to show thyself approved unto God ... rightly dividing the word of truth* " (2 Tim. 2:15).

Although I cannot say with all certainty, I would lean toward Timothy's calling and gift as one similar to what Paul and Barnabas received in Acts 13:1-2. Through a prophet (maybe Paul himself) the Holy Spirit made it known that Timothy was to be a part of the ministry. Both Paul and the eldership (Presbytery) laid their hands on Timothy signifying their endorsement of and obedience to the call of God. This may further explain why Paul would be willing to take a chance on another young Christian when he had had a bad experience with John Mark earlier (Acts 15:37-40).

In summary, what we know of Timothy from the Scriptures the following can be chronicled:

1. Timothy is most likely converted during Paul's first missionary journey (Acts 14:1ff)
2. Timothy joins Paul in his ministry and is circumcised (Acts 16:1-3)
3. Traveled as far as Berea where he stayed while Paul went to Athens (Acts 17:14-15)
4. Went to Athens and then revisited Thessalonica on Paul's instructions (I Thes. 3:2, Acts 17:15)
5. Then met Paul in Corinth (Acts 18:5, 1 Thes. 1: 1; 3:6, 2 Thes. 1: 1, 2 Cor. 1: 10.
6. Was with Paul on his third missionary journey and was sent from Ephesus to Corinth (I Cor. 4:17; 16: 10)
7. Was sent with Erastus to Macedonia (Acts 19:22)
8. Most likely met up with Paul in Macedonia and went with him to Corinth (2 Cor. 1: 1)
9. Most likely went with Paul to Jerusalem (Acts 20:4, Rom. 16:2 1)
10. Was with Paul during his imprisonment in Rome (Phil. 1: 1, Col. 1: 1, Phil. 2:19. Phile. 1: 1)
11. Was sent to Philippi by Paul after Paul's release (Phil. 2:19-23)
12. Met up with Paul and was left in Ephesus (I Tim. 1:3)
13. May have been imprisoned (Heb 13:23)
14. Was summoned by Paul to Rome as Paul was about to be executed (2 Tim.4:9)

When and Where:

As concerning when and where this Epistle was written, one can only lean on strong probabilities. Many commentators attempt to pigeon hole the writings somewhere in the events of the book of Acts. It seems to me to be quite difficult to do this and the time of this writing seems most naturally after Paul's first imprisonment recorded in the last chapters of the book of Acts.

Although no direct reference is made of Paul's second imprisonment we glean this knowledge from his epistles. From Rome during his first imprisonment he writes the books of Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon. In these books he speaks of his bonds and imprisonment and also of his belief of his impending release (Phil. 1:7; 12-26; 2:19-24, Philemon 22). This is in contrast to his writing to Timothy from prison in 2 Timothy. His outlook is much dimmer in the latter letter and he makes reference to his impending execution (2 Tim. 4:6-9), and his desire for Timothy to "make haste" to come see him before the end (2 Tim. 4:9, 13, 21). When these epistles are compared, we determine that there were two imprisonments. The one we read of in Acts 28 from which he is released, and the second from which he writes 2 Timothy, where he will meet martyrdom.

As to Paul's writing of this book we must follow his expressed desires in his epistles to determine where and when he may have written the letter.

- 1) After writing Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon, he sends these letters by the hand of Tychicus and Onesimus.
- 2) Paul is released from prison and sends Timothy to Philippi (Phil. 2:19-23).
- 3) From Rome, Paul goes to Asia Minor by way of Crete and leaves Titus there (Titus 1:5).
- 4) Paul then travels to Colosse (Phile 22) and then returns to Ephesus. At Ephesus he is reunited with Timothy and hears news of Philippi.
- 5) Paul then goes to Philippi (Phil. 2:24) and leaves Timothy there at Ephesus (I Tim. 1:3, 4).
- 6) During his stay at Philippi he writes the book of I Timothy and Titus.

With this itinerary all laid out, this would date the book somewhere between 62 and 64 AD.

Purpose:

The books of I & II Timothy and Titus are sometimes referred to as the "Pastoral Epistles" in the religious world. The origin of this designation is found somewhere in the

late 1700's. At first glance one might think that this term is given these books because in two of the letters (I Timothy & Titus) the qualifications of a pastor are laid out. However, this is not the genesis of the description. Calling these books the "pastoral epistles" is a clear reference to the denominational false doctrine of a local evangelist being the "pastor" of a flock or community.

The idea that Timothy and Titus were "the pastors" of Ephesus or Crete goes against the clear teaching of the New Testament. To be pastors these two young men must first meet the qualifications in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1 of a pastor. What we know of both men, namely their youth and their marital status, they would most likely not be qualified. Also, the pastorship is a position in a local work that is always held by a plurality of men, and by those that live and work solely in that locale (Acts 14:23; 20:17, Philippians 1, 1 Pet. 5:2-3). Therefore, Timothy and Titus are not "the pastors" of these churches and thus the designation of these books as the "pastoral epistles" should be rejected.

The purpose of this letter is summed up in three of its passages. "*As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine*" (I Tim. 1:3), "*But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.*" (I Tim. 3:15), and again, "*Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee*" (I Tim. 4:16).

The Apostle Paul had entrusted Timothy with a special mission, to strengthen and set in order things in Ephesus. This letter is to give Timothy the guidance necessary to accomplish his mission while strengthening Timothy's own spiritual life through service and dedication to the Lord.

The letter can be roughly outlined as follows:

- 1) Salutation (I Tim. 1: 1-2)
- 2) Exhortation To Oppose Error (I Tim. 1:3-20)
- 3) In The Church (I Tim. 2:1-3:15)
- 4) Admonishment To Timothy (I Tim. 4:1-5:2)
- 5) Widows Indeed and Preaching Elders (I Tim. 5:3-20)
- 6) Personal Admonition To Timothy (I Tim. 5:21-25)
- 7) Master/Slave Relationship (I Tim. 6:1-2)
- 8) Discipline The Unruly (I Tim. 6:3-5)
- 9) True Wealth and Final Admonitions (I Tim. 6:6-21)