

JEREMIAH
BIBLE STUDY SERIES

1&2 TIMOTHY & TITUS

THE WAY TO LIVE AND
LEAD FOR CHRIST

DR. DAVID JEREMIAH

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Prepared by Peachtree Publishing Services



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Since 1798

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INTRODUCTION TO

The Letters of 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus

“If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed. But reject profane and old wives’ fables, and exercise yourself toward godliness. For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things” (1 Timothy 4:6–8). History tells us the apostle Paul was a remarkable individual who worked tirelessly to spread the gospel. When we read accounts of his life, such as the one told in Acts, we might think he accomplished these feats on his own. But the truth is that Paul had a team that helped him. His mission was to spread the gospel as far and wide as he could, so he was rarely in one place for any extended period of time. Yet the congregations he founded needed shepherding. For this reason, he recruited godly men such as Timothy and Titus to minister in his absence. Paul knew the task would not be easy. He knew they would face many challenges. So he sent them letters—such as the ones we have in our Bible—to instruct, encourage, and equip them in this role.

1 TIMOTHY

Author and Date

The writer of this letter identifies himself as “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ” (1:1). Early church fathers such as Polycarp (AD 59–156), Clement of Rome (AD 35–99), and Justin Martyr (AD 100–165) each made allusions to 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus (collectively known as the “pastoral letters”), and

Irenaeus (writing around AD 180) noted they were penned by Paul. Although the letters do not contain themes typically found in Paul's letters, and the vocabulary and style do not necessarily match his other letters, the personal details he includes about Timothy align with what we know about Paul's life from Acts. It is likely Paul composed the letter c. AD 62, after being released from arrest in Rome (see Acts 28), when he was again allowed to travel.

Background and Setting

Paul helped found the church in Ephesus during his second missionary journey (see Acts 18:18–21) and ministered there for three years during his third missionary journey (see 19:1–41). Following his release from prison in Rome, sometime after the events depicted in Acts, he returned to the city with Timothy, whom he considered his “son in the faith” (1 Timothy 1:2). Paul eventually journeyed on to regions in Macedonia, but he left Timothy behind to minister in the church and confront certain false teachers who had infiltrated the congregation. Paul wrote this first letter from Macedonia to Timothy to instruct, inspire, and encourage him in this task.

Key Themes

Several key themes are prominent in 1 Timothy. The first is that *believers in Christ must possess sound doctrine and practices in worship* (see 1 Timothy 1–2). The city of Ephesus had been a center of pagan worship for centuries and was famous for its temple dedicated to the Greek goddess Artemis. As such, the city presented a unique challenge for believers in knowing how to lead a righteous life in the midst of a pagan culture. Paul thus offers instructions to Timothy on how to pray, worship, and maintain sound doctrine in the midst of competing influences.

A second theme is that *believers in Christ must be instructed by godly leaders* (see 1 Timothy 3). Paul emphasizes the importance of entrusting ministry to those who are pursuing godliness and encourages Timothy to surround himself with fellow laborers whose lives consistently reflect the

influence of Christ. Paul assists him in his search by giving him a list of qualities and character traits to look for in prospective candidates.

A third theme is that *believers in Christ must avoid false teaching and be good servants in God's kingdom* (see 1 Timothy 4–6). Paul was particularly concerned in advising Timothy on how to recognize false teachers in the church and not allow them to gain a foothold among the members. He instructed Timothy to encourage believers to flee from such teachings, pursue godly qualities (such as love, patience, and gentleness), and look for ways to serve the body of Christ. He urged Timothy to always fight for righteousness, be faithful to God's Word, and remember that believers in Christ are recognized by the way they live.

2 TIMOTHY

Author and Date

The writer of this letter also identifies himself as “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ” (1:1). Once again, though the vocabulary and style do not match his other letters (most likely in this case due to the personal nature of the letter), the details the writer includes align with what we know about Paul's life. It is likely Paul wrote the letter two to three years after penning 1 Timothy and shortly before his death in AD 67 at the hands of Emperor Nero. This was evidently the final letter that Paul wrote (see 2 Timothy 1:8, 16; 4:6–13) and was penned from a Roman prison.

Background and Setting

Paul had written in his first letter that he hoped to visit Timothy soon in Ephesus (see 1 Timothy 3:14–15). It is unknown whether this visit ever took place, but it clear that by the time Paul wrote his second letter, he was no longer in Macedonia but imprisoned in Rome, “suffer[ing] trouble as an evildoer, even to the point of chains” (2 Timothy 2:9). The Roman Emperor Nero's persecution of Christians had intensified, and Paul recognized that

his ministry on this earth was coming to an end. He would soon be martyred for his faith—“Poured out as a drink offering” (4:6). So Paul wrote to ask Timothy to join him in Rome (see 4:9, 21).

Key Themes

Several key themes are prominent in this letter. The first is that *believers in Christ must remain faithful to the Lord in spite of what they are facing* (see 2 Timothy 1). Paul reminds Timothy that suffering is just part of the normal Christian life, and believers are called to persevere in their faith regardless of their present circumstances. As they do this, they can identify with Christ Himself, who suffered and endured faithfully on their behalf.

A second theme is that *believers in Christ must continue to pursue truth and sound doctrine* (see 2 Timothy 2–3). Paul frequently refers to “the truth” that Timothy has been given and charges him to guard this treasure that has been entrusted to him. As he does this, he will be able to recognize any false doctrines or teachings that threaten to infiltrate the church. He urges believers to leave behind their self-centered lives and stand firm in God’s grace and truth. In doing this, they will be recognized as Jesus’ disciples.

A third theme is that *believers need to stay focused on the mission* (see 2 Timothy 4:1–8). Paul concludes his letter with a challenge for us to stay focused on our calling of sharing the gospel. We are to convince, rebuke, exhort, and endure in our mission and avoid fruitless arguments that take us away from this goal. Paul’s focus was ever on the prize that was awaiting him in heaven, and he wanted to bring as many people into God’s kingdom as he could. This should be the ultimate goal of our lives as well.

TITUS

Author and Date

The writer of this letter identifies himself as “Paul, a bondservant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ” (1:1). As with the other pastoral letters,

the vocabulary and style are not typical of what is found in Paul's other letters, but the details he includes align with what we know about Paul's life and his relationship with Titus. It is likely Paul composed the letter c. AD 63–64, sometime after visiting the church on the isle of Crete and leaving Titus in charge there.

Background and Setting

Little is known about Titus. Luke never mentions him in the book of Acts, and while he appears to have not been as close to Paul as Timothy, he was still a trusted associate. Paul writes in his letter to the Galatians that Titus was a Gentile, and the fact that he was not circumcised after converting to Christ played a key role in Paul securing the right to a law-free gospel for Gentiles (see Galatians 2:1, 3). Paul entrusted Titus with the tasks of delivering a letter to the church at Corinth (see 2 Corinthians 2:3–4, 13; 7:6–16) and gathering the Corinthian gift for the poor of Jerusalem (see 8:16–24). Paul evidently travelled with Titus to Crete sometime between AD 64–63, and he left Titus there to provide leadership to the new church (see Titus 1:5).

KEY THEMES

Several key themes are prominent in this letter. The first theme is that *believers in Christ must have sound doctrine to live in godliness* (see Titus 1:1–4; 2:1). Paul states in his opening greeting to Titus that he is an apostle “according to the faith of God's elect and the acknowledgment of the truth which accords with godliness” (verse 1). He then encourages Titus to “speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine” (2:1) so the congregation can grow in godliness.

A second theme is that *believers in Christ need virtuous leaders* (see Titus 1:5–16; 2:2–10). Paul carefully defines the qualities and virtues that elders in the church should possess. He also describes behaviors that elders should avoid—primarily in regard to their speech. As Paul notes,

there were many “idle talkers and deceivers” present in the congregation (1:10), and Titus was to make sure these individuals were not in a position to influence others.

The third theme is that *believers in Christ should be trained by God’s grace and live in obedience to Him* (see Titus 2:11–3:11). Paul instructs Titus to remind the believers in Crete that they were saved “not by works of righteousness” but “according to [God’s] mercy” and have now become His “heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (3:5, 7). At the same time, Paul urges, that “those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works” (verse 8).

KEY APPLICATIONS

The letters that Paul wrote to Timothy and Titus give us an in-depth look at pastoral ministry in the church. In many ways, they serve as a blueprint for the qualities and character traits that are needed for anyone who desired to serve in church ministry. As we read the letters, we should keep in mind that Paul wrote them to two actual pastors to address actual issues in their churches and provide them with sound solutions that still apply in our times. As Paul’s greetings insist, those pastors did not face their struggles alone, and neither do we today. As we study these letters, we can be assured—like Timothy and Titus—of God’s grace, mercy, and peace.

FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT

GETTING STARTED

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines, typical of notebook paper. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

SETTING THE STAGE

In Acts, we read that Paul travelled to the city of Lystra, located in Asia Minor, during his first missionary journey (see 14:8–18). At this time, it is likely Paul met Timothy and led him and his family to faith in Christ. Luke tells us Timothy’s father was Greek and his mother was Jewish (see 16:1)—a situation that probably caused him to be treated as an outsider by the greater Jewish community. Regardless, Timothy had dedicated himself to the study of Jewish Scripture since he was a child (see 2 Timothy 3:15).

When the time came for Paul to begin his second missionary journey, he again travelled to Lystra and asked Timothy to accompany him and Silas on their venture. Before setting out, Timothy agreed to be circumcised in order to remove potential barriers to his ministry among the Jews (see Acts 16:1–3). Timothy helped evangelize Philippi and Thessalonica (see Philippians 2:19–24; 1 Thessalonians 3:1–10). When Paul and Silas left Thessalonica, Timothy stayed behind to help guide and influence the fledgling church. He then moved on to Corinth (see 1 Corinthians 4:16–17; 16:10–11), where he acted as Paul’s liaison to the church. From there, he went to Ephesus, where he prepared the churches in the region for Paul’s visit.

Timothy was one of the few people who remained faithful to Paul after his imprisonment. Following Paul’s release from prison in Rome (which occurred sometime after the events depicted in Acts), Timothy again travelled with Paul to Ephesus. Paul continued on into Macedonia, but he left Timothy behind in Ephesus to serve as pastor to the growing congregation that was in need of spiritual leadership.

At some point in Paul’s journey, he pauses to write a personal letter to Timothy to encourage him in his new role and make sure he is ready for the task. As we find in this opening section, he begins by reminding Timothy of his responsibilities—first, as a discerner of, and protector against, false teachings; and second, as a fighter for God-honoring causes. Paul’s advice resonates with anyone who has ever stepped into a position of leadership and authority: remember your calling, cling to your faith, and fight the good fight for Christ.

EXPLORING THE TEXT

Greeting (1 Timothy 1:1–7)

¹ Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the commandment of God our Savior and the Lord Jesus Christ, our hope,

²To Timothy, a true son in the faith:

Grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.

³As I urged you when I went into Macedonia—remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine, ⁴nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith. ⁵Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith, ⁶from which some, having strayed, have turned aside to idle talk, ⁷desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say nor the things which they affirm.

1. Paul opens the letter by stating he is an “an apostle of Jesus Christ,” which is his customary way of establishing his identity to his readers. How does Paul go on to identify Timothy (see verse 2)? How would this designation authenticate Timothy as his successor in the church?

2. What characteristics of godliness does Paul say must be present in the teaching of God's Word? What should be avoided when teaching God's Word (see verses 5–6)?

No Other Doctrine (1 Timothy 1:8–11)

⁸But we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully, ⁹knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, ¹⁰for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine, ¹¹according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust.

3. Paul quickly moves into the main concern that had motivated him to write the letter: the presence of false teachers in the church. Evidently, some of these teachers were using the law of Moses to bolster and support their false claims. For whom does Paul say the law was made? What does the law reveal about a person (see verses 8–10)?

[illegible]

wrote this letter? How did the change make him uniquely qualified to talk about God's abundant grace to others (see verses 12–15)?

6. Paul had been a former persecutor of the church and considered himself a “chief” among sinners. What did Jesus demonstrate in extending mercy to Paul (see verses 15–16)?

Fight the Good Fight (1 Timothy 1:17–20)

¹⁷ Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

¹⁸ This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, ¹⁹ having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck, ²⁰ of whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.

7. Paul concludes this section with a brief prayer (or *doxology*), in which he praises the unmatched character of God. Why do you think Paul includes this prayer after reflecting on his own life? What is his personal charge to Timothy (see verses 17–18)?

8. Paul names two false teachers (Hymenaeus and Alexander) and states they have been “delivered to Satan,” which likely refers to their removal from the church. What had these men rejected? What did Paul want these men to learn (see verses 19–20)?

REVIEWING THE STORY

Paul sets the tone of his letter by referring to Timothy as his “true son in the faith” (1:2), and like a concerned father, he wants to make sure Timothy is fully equipped to handle the situation. False teachers had infiltrated the church in Ephesus. Among other things, these teachers were urging the believers to place themselves under Jewish law. Paul reminds Timothy that the power of the law pales in comparison to the power of the gospel of Christ. He urges Timothy to stay strong and remember that he is not alone in the fight.

LETTERS OF 1 & 2 TIMOTHY & TITUS

9. From a personal and spiritual standpoint, how did Paul view Timothy (see 1 Timothy 1:2)?

10. What was the primary purpose of the Old Testament law (see 1 Timothy 1:9–10)?

11. What did Paul want Timothy to know about the direction his own life had taken since his encounter with the risen Christ (see 1 Timothy 1:12)?

12. What phrase does Paul use to suggest that people had been expecting big things from Timothy for some time (see 1 Timothy 1:18)?

APPLYING THE MESSAGE

13. What difference does it make in your life to know that Jesus extended mercy to Paul, the “chief” among sinners? What does this tell you about God’s grace?

14. Who are some individuals you have mentored and encouraged in the faith? How have they helped you?

REFLECTING ON THE MEANING

As Paul concludes the opening section of his first letter to Timothy, he gives his protégé a solemn responsibility to “wage the good warfare” (1:18). Jesus is clear that the same responsibility belongs to all His followers. As he said to His disciples, “Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you” (Matthew 5:11–12). If we live for Jesus, we will face attacks just as He did.

So, how do we “wage the good warfare” when these attacks come into our lives? Paul offers some clues in his instructions to Timothy. First, *we fight the good fight with faith*. As believers, we allow the Holy Spirit to guide us into battle. If He prompts us to engage with someone, we must listen to His instruction and act. We may not feel prepared or comfortable, but we must trust God to give us the wisdom, courage, patience, and authority we need.

Second, *we fight the good fight with a clear conscience*. We can never lose sight of the fact that we always represent Christ in this world. Given this, we must resist the urge to “fight dirty” by engaging in personal attacks or broad generalizations, twisting or misrepresenting God’s words to “win a point,” or letting our anger or frustration get the best of us.

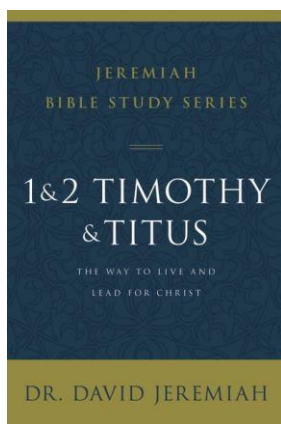
Third, *we fight the good fight for the benefit of others*. As Paul instructs Timothy in the art of battle, he mentions two people who failed to fight the good fight: Hymenaeus and Alexander. Paul’s ultimate goal is that the men “may learn not to blaspheme” (1 Timothy 1:20). He wants them to be restored. He has their best interests at heart.

Paul fights the good fight because he is genuinely concerned about others. He knows from his own story as a former persecutor of the church that no one is too far gone to receive God’s incredible gift of grace. He had found salvation and purpose in his relationship with Christ. This same attitude and loving concern should drive every one of our pointed encounters with others.

JOURNALING YOUR RESPONSE

What does it mean to “fight the good fight” when it comes to your faith in Christ?

[illegible]



1 & 2 TIMOTHY & TITUS JEREMIAH BIBLE STUDY SERIES

The apostle Paul founded many churches in the Roman Empire, but it is clear he did not do this work alone. Rather, he relied on trusted companions such as Timothy and Titus to support the ongoing work in these communities. As Paul neared the end of his life, he wrote personal letters to these men to encourage them in their ministry and provide final guidelines for how live and lead for Christ. In particular, we find him urging these coworkers to maintain purity in the church, faithfully endure for the gospel, preach sound doctrine, pursue godliness, and maintain order as they built up other leaders. Paul's words compel believers today to also pursue their calling in the church . . . even when that means dealing with hardheaded and unruly fellow believers!

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