

## 2 Timothy

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“These three apostolic epistles ought to be constantly before the eyes of every one who has obtained the position of a teacher in the Church”

Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine* IV.16.33

“[Second Timothy] has been more profitable to me than any other book of Scripture, and still is profitable to me every day; and if any person shall examine it carefully, there can be no doubt he will experience the same effect.”

Calvin, *Commentaries*, 21, p. 183

### Context and Content

1. Paul is writing from prison to Timothy, in charge of the church in Ephesus.

c) What can you infer from this letter about the problems Tim and that church were facing?

- *false teachers taking advantage of women with guilty consciences, spreading heresy and preaching license*
- *quarreling in the congregation*
- *discouragement—Tim was stalled*

d) What false doctrines were being spread in Ephesus?

rejection of the bodily resurrection: *Hymenaeus and Philetus were saying the resurrection was a past event (2 Tim 2:18). The body is evil, so isn't raised. Paul kicked out Alexander and Hymenaeus for this heresy (1 Tim 1:19-20).*

asceticism: *this played off against antinomian license. The body is seen as evil (physical==bad, spiritual==good) (1 Tim 4:3-4); sex denigrated and sex within marriage repudiated (1 Tim 4:3; 2 Tim 3:1-7); foods were artificially restricted, although God made all things good (1 Tim 4:3-5; Tit 1:15; cf. Col 2:16-18).*

antinomian license: *These threatened marriage (2 Tim 3:6), preaching cheap grace (Tit 1:16); they made money off false teachings (1 Tim 6:5; Tit 1:11). Tim was told to remain pure and combat false doctrine with holy living (1 Tim 5:22; 2 Tim 2:22).*

Fascination with myths and genealogies: *Myths: 1 Tim 1:4; 2 Tim 4:4; Tit 1:14; genealogies: 1 Tim 1:4; 4:7; Tit 3:9. Some of these teachers were Judaizers (1 Tim 1:6-7; Tit 1:14-16) pretending to represent Jewish law and tradition (1 Tim 1:7).*

Divisive, speculative controversialists: *Constantly inventing foolish questions (1 Tim 1:4; 6:4; 2 Tim 2:23) because of their pride (1 Tim 6:4). Paul warned against the resulting controversies (2 Tim 2:23; see also Tit 3:9, 2 Tim 2:14; 2:16).*

gnostic elitism (1 Tim 6:20), *a Judaizing gnosticism, characterized by the idea that salvation was available only to a few, occasioning Paul's reference to "all" in 1 Tim 2:4, 4:10; Tit 2:11.*

c) What does Paul direct Timothy to do in response to the false teachings?

- *Pick trustworthy leaders and teachers (3:2), and preach yourself too (4:2)*

- Review what you've been taught (1:13-14; 2:7); and equip yourself with scripture (3:16-17)
- Cleanse yourself for holy living (2:20-21)
- Hunker down and endure hardship (2:1-6) with single-mindedness (soldier), self-denial (athlete) and intense effort (farmer).
- Be patient with the false teachers, refuting them; but the ones who go too far, avoid, and their true nature will be obvious to everyone

**Possible question:** Jannes and Jambres (3:8) were “the names given in later tradition to the magicians who opposed Moses in Ex 7:11-12” (Jerome p. 901). What solution or solutions were used to counter false teachers in Israel in OT times? How does Paul allude to this in 2:19?

The first saying there is supposedly a quote from Num 16:5, which describes the Korah rebellion. The second is a quote from Lev which Jerome says cautions believers to shun wrongdoing.

2. “There is some reason to believe that Timothy was temperamentally timid and retiring by nature (cf. 1:7), with a weak stomach and a shy disposition, hence needing authoritative written instructions so that when later challenged he could appeal to the Apostle’s letter (1 Tim 3:14-15; 4:12; 5:23; 1 Cor 16:10)” (Oden, p. 7). What do you think? Can you discern sections of the letter which Paul included as fodder for Tim’s enemies?
3. Paul makes it clear that suffering is an expected part of the life of a Christian, suggesting that his suffering isn’t a sign that things are going wrong [1:8; 1:12; 2:8-10; 3:10-12 (“In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted”); 4:6-8; 4:18].

Read the accompanying excerpt from the NY Times op-ed *Where Faith Thrives*. Given that Jesus called his disciples to take up their crosses and follow him, do you think American evangelical belief truly is in danger because our American predecessors were too successful at creating a context where faith has fewer obstacles than in non-Western countries?

4. In the hymn quoted in 2:11-13, what is the difference between disowning Jesus and being faithless to him? Why does Paul include this?
5. What are the similarities and differences between 2 Tim and 1 Thess, and why?
6. *For Fun:* What heresies, if any, have you encountered before? How did you handle them?

*Preterism at BCC, weak forms of docetism at RCRC, modalism from Ed, 5-point Calvinism at RCRC, Arminianism from myself, something like adoptionism from Fr. Stephen, and whatever heresy open theology is in my last bible study, and from Polkinghorne.*

*Next time: Read and discuss Raymond Brown, pp. 37-43, and the B&C article “What American Teenagers Believe”. Also save for next week:*

7. *In the Galatian crisis, the church was threatened by outside Judaizing influences. In the crisis at Ephesus addressed by the Pastorals, the false teachers are coming from within the church. Paul’s solution here is to place strict rules on the choice of teachers and leaders (e.g. 2:2—much more detail about this is given in 1 Tim, but the theme is present in 2 Tim as well).*

*How general is Paul’s solution? How widely are the rules in the Pastorals applied in modern times, say in the CRC?*

Bibliography

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*The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, eds. Ray Brown et al. (Prentice Hall: Upper Saddle River, NJ) 1990.

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Raymond Brown, *The Churches the Apostles Left Behind* (Paulist, New York) 1984.



## The Authorship of the Pastoral Epistles

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, C. F. Baur and others proposed for the first time that the Pastorals were written not by Paul, but by someone of a proposed school of Paul, as late as 130-150 AD; according to Rudolf Bultmann, they represent a faded Paulinism trying to make “a place for itself within the framework of bourgeois living.” This theory was countered in the 19<sup>th</sup> cent. by such heavy hitters as J. B. Lightfoot, and while still popular today is opposed by mainstream sources such as Thomas Oden and the authors of the *Dictionary of Paul and his Letters*. The table below briefly summarizes the pros and cons of the theories as described in Oden. Either way, as Raymond Brown (1984) points out, the Pastorals “preserve certain strains of genuine Pauline thought.”

Late Date	Early Date
<p>The imprisonment described in the Pastorals doesn't fit with the chronology of Acts, in which Luke strongly implies that Paul's first Roman captivity, paralleling Jesus' trip to Jerusalem, leads to his martyrdom.</p>	<p>The letters don't need to fit into the chronology of Acts because Acts doesn't describe Paul's death. Eusebius found this credible, and there's no source before the 19<sup>th</sup> cent. suggesting otherwise. Clement, bishop of Rome, wrote in his 1 Clement (circa 90) of Paul's seven imprisonments and his trip to the “extreme limits of the West”, which for him would mean Spain—which would have to have occurred after the first Roman captivity. According to Irenaeus, Clement was taught by Peter and Paul and would have been in an ideal position to know of Paul's time in Rome.</p>
<p>The complexity of church organization described in the Pastorals is thought to be too far in advance of the other Pauline letters, suggesting a later writing.</p>	<p>It is to be expected that as the church grew there would be a need for organization; indeed, bishops and deacons are mentioned in Phil 1:1. There is substantial evidence for church growth by 67, the putative year of this second imprisonment.</p>
<p>There are vocabulary and stylistic differences between the Pastorals and the letters generally accepted to have been written by Paul. Also, some of the doctrines seem inconsistent with those in Paul's letters.</p>	<p>Every letter uses new words. The Pastoral more so—but the Pastorals are also unique in that they are addressed to long-term associates who didn't need elementary teaching. The context, very different from that of the other letters, may have determined the style and vocabulary. In addition, the sample is too small to be statistically significant. Finally, vocabulary irregularities may have been the result of a different secretary—e.g., we know Timothy penned many of Paul's letters but was unavailable to do so here. In addition, there is much of Paul's theology here, e.g. in 1 Tim 1:12-17.</p>
<p>‘Although written by someone else under Paul's name, the Pastorals are not “forgeries.” Within the Greco-Roman philosophical tradition, the writing of pseudonymous epistles was a long-standing tradition’ (Jerome, p. 892).</p>	<p>A surrogate author would have been blatantly fabricating details like 2 Tim 4:13 about the cloak and parchments, which seems unlikely (and beyond the scope of the tradition mentioned?). It is also unlikely that the author would have had Paul call himself the “chief of sinners” (1 Tim 1:15) or write of a “God who never lies” (Tit 1:2). Also, if these <i>are</i> forgeries (Oden's word), they had to have been distributed and fully accepted within 50 years of Paul's death.</p>

Excerpt from the op-ed *Where Faith Thrives* (New York Times, Mar 26, 2005) by Nicholas Kristof:

*Dete Crossing, Zimbabwe*—So with Easter approaching, here I am in the heart of Christendom. That's right, Africa. One of the most important trends reshaping the world is the decline of Christianity in Europe and its rise in Africa and other parts of the developing world, including Asia and Latin America...

On Easter, more Anglicans will attend church in Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda—each—than Anglicans and Episcopalians together will attend services in Britain, Canada, and the U.S. combined.

More Roman Catholics will celebrate Easter Mass in the Philippines than in any European country. The largest church in the world is in South Korea. And more Christians will probably attend Easter services in China than in all of Europe together.

In short, for the first time since it began two millennia ago, Christianity is no longer “Western” in any very meaningful sense.

“If on a Sunday you want to attend a lively, jammed full, fervent and life-changing service of Christian worship, you want to be in Nairobi, not in Stockholm,” notes Mark Noll, a professor at Wheaton College. He adds, “But if you want to walk home safely at night, you want to be in Stockholm, not Nairobi.”

This shift could be just beginning. David Lyle of Baylor University sees some parallels between China today and the early Roman empire. He wonders aloud whether a Chinese Constantine will come along and convert to Christianity...

Whether in China or Africa, the commitment of new converts is extraordinary. While I was interviewing villages along the Zambezi River last Sunday, I met a young man who was setting out for his Pentecostal church at 8:30 a.m. “The service begins at 2 p.m.,” he explained—but the journey is a five-hour hike each way.

So where faith is easy, it is fading; where it's a challenge, it thrives.

“When people are in difficulties, they want to cling to something,” said the Rev. Johnson Makoti, a Pentecostal minister in Zimbabwe who drives a car plastered with Jesus bumper stickers. “The only solution people here can believe in is Jesus Christ.”

## BACKGROUND ON THE PASTORALS AND 2 TIM

This was written probably in the Fall/Winter of 67, from prison in Rome, during a dreadful persecution by Nero. It is written to Timothy, a disciple of Paul for almost 20 years (~46-67).

In contrast to our last text, this is the last of Paul's letters, written 27 years after 1 Thess to Tim at the church in Ephesus, a church which by now is composed not just of Gentile converts and Jewish Christians, but of their children as well.

The historical setting was that of house churches, which usually met in the homes of affluent members, where a congregation could consist of 100-200 people in the main room or in a colonnaded garden. Advice to the rich and regulations regarding slaves from 1 Tim show that the congregations included these rich members. Paul's earlier letters shown that even in the 50s there were at least two such houses in Ephesus (1 Cor 16:19; 2 Tim 1:16; 4:19), so probably more had grown up since.

The Pastorals are the only letters which are written specifically to a church leader, and they deal correspondingly with organizational issues.

More importantly, though, these letters find a church in crisis. In contrast to the Galatian controversy in which Judaizers were coming from outside the church to try to impose Jewish laws, here the false doctrines are arising from within their ranks and even from their elders (1 Tim 3:2; 5:17) and threatening to tear the church apart. We know that Paul had foreseen the potential for this when he left Ephesus on his way to Jerusalem, since he said to the elders there:

*Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.*

(Acts 20:28-30). This was a serious enough problem for Paul to write "restore the things that remain, and appoint elders in each city. ...For many deceivers...especially the circumcision party...are overthrowing whole houses" (Tit 1:5, 10-11). Paul's directions in the Pastorals aim to shore up a church fighting for its very survival.

The reconstructed setting for the writing of this letter has Paul emerging from the first Roman imprisonment described in Acts 28, and heading westward toward or into Spain, as he had previously planned to do. After a brief mission to Spain Paul returned to find (or perhaps because of) the crisis in the Aegean churches, around 65-66, which is likely when Titus and 1 Tim were written. Perhaps because of the severe persecution in Rome Paul travelled there and was imprisoned, and then wrote 2 Tim.

Tim and Paul were very close, as attested to by this letter. Paul had brought Tim's Jewish mother and grandmother to faith, and Tim was likely either a witness or in Lystra when Paul was mistaken for Hermes. Paul, having Tim commended to him by the elders of Lystra, participated in his ordination and used him as his right-hand man.