

Episode: Paul's Letters Series No. 15

Narrator: Apollos

Primary Scriptures: First Timothy 1-6

Story Summary: Paul's first letter to Timothy, while Timothy is in Ephesus

Location: Roman Empire; Asia; Ephesus

Time: AD 30 Jesus crucified and resurrected; Pentecost; Holy Spirit arrives
 AD 48 Paul's "famine visit" to Jerusalem; First Missionary Journey starts
 AD 50 Council at Jerusalem; Start of Second Missionary Journey.
 AD 53 Start of Third Missionary Journey
 AD 62 Paul writes *1 Timothy* after being released from prison

Suggested Memory Scriptures: 1 Timothy 1:3-4; 2:1-2, 3-4; 3:1, 15; 4:1, 7-8; 5:8; 6:6-10, 12, 17-19

The church in Ephesus was probably started at the end of the Second Missionary Journey by Priscilla and Aquila. Paul lived in Ephesus for more than two years during the Third Missionary Journey, and the church was well established by the time he wrote *First Timothy*. It appears that Paul's instructions in the letter to Timothy were for all churches, not just the one in Ephesus.

The main purpose of the letter is to instruct Timothy about refuting false teachers. Paul does not give an exact description of these false teachings, but they seem to be along the lines of what would become known as "Gnostic" teachings: physical things are evil so Jesus cannot have come in the flesh, certain people possess critical secret knowledge that leads to salvation, and secret ways to have access to an unknowable God.

Paul opens his letter by reaffirming his own credentials and restating the true Gospel. Since Timothy had been Paul's close companion for more than ten years, he certainly had heard all these things before and was totally convinced of their truth.

In the second chapter, Paul addresses matters having to do with orderly and proper worship that will lead to unity of the church, as the church in Ephesus had to blend people from various cultures, ethnic groups, economic circumstances, and social classes. Imagine an older, male Jewish goldsmith well-versed in the Old Testament worshiping alongside a young female slave who had previously worshiped at the temple of Artemis.

With those thoughts in mind, recognize that the third chapter is Paul's instructions about appointing a new kind of leader. Roman leadership was dominated by rich people and government officials. The church was going to need a new type of leader, and it would have to cultivate, grow, and teach them to become the type of people they needed to be.

All of those thoughts lead to the rest of Paul's teaching on growing and unifying a church. Through all his instructions, Paul's love and concern for Timothy shine through.

Discussion Questions:

1. What are the false doctrines Paul references in 1 Timothy 1:3?
 2. How do you know that 1 Timothy 1:9-10 is not an all-inclusive list of unrighteous behavior?
 3. In 1 Timothy 1:20, Paul says he handed over two people to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme? What do you think that means?
 4. How much of 2 Timothy 2:8-12 is not applicable to modern churches? Why do you think it is or is not?
 5. 1 Timothy 3 gives qualifications for elders and deacons. How many, if any, of those qualifications are applicable to modern churches?
 6. Do you think 1 Timothy 6:1-2 are useful for dealing with today's business issues between employees and management?
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1. Based on the rest of the letter, the doctrines included speculations on the nature of good and evil, that physical things are evil so Jesus could not have come in the flesh, and that angels and myths have importance. 2. Because Paul adds "and for whatever else" to the list.

Application Questions:

1. 1 Timothy 1:15 bluntly states Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Do you consider yourself a sinner or a good person? Is it possible to be both?
2. 1 Timothy 2:1-2 probably means modern Christians should pray for all people in governmental office, regardless of their political leanings. Do you do this? Are you willing to do this if they hold religious or ideological beliefs different from yours?
3. 1 Timothy 4:1 says that in later days, some will be deceived and abandon the faith. What can you do now to prevent being deceived by false teaching in the future?
4. 1 Timothy 6:6-10 promotes having godliness with contentment. What does that look like in today's business world? Why is wanting to get rich a trap?
5. At various times, Jesus and Paul warn against being rich or wanting to get rich, but 1 Timothy 6:17-19 gives instructions for rich people about how to behave. Is being rich a sin, or is it just a dangerous thing to be? Would it be dangerous for you to be rich?

Application Questions for Teens:

1. 1 Timothy 1:3 mentions false doctrines. Do you believe there are things that are fundamentally true or are all things relative? How can you recognize false doctrines?
2. Paul indicates that, if young people behave according to 1 Timothy 12-13, then older people will respect them and not look down on them. Do you think this still applies to modern culture? Are you willing to behave in those ways?
3. 1 Timothy 6:11 says to flee from pursuing money and instead to pursue righteousness and godliness. What does it look like in your life to pursue righteousness?