

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this teaching series, you will have an opportunity to learn to know the Bible. Today we introduce the the two letters to TIMOTHY and the letter to TITUS. In part 1, we will spend much time proving that the apostle Paul wrote the letters of Timothy and Titus.

POINT 1. THE WRITER OF THE LETTERS TO TIMOTHY AND TITUS

Although these three letters are sometimes called “the pastoral letters”, Timothy and Titus were not really “pastors” in the present-day sense of the word. Timothy and Titus were *special fellow workers of the apostle* Paul. They were not ministers of local congregations, but were *apostolic envoys*, sent by Paul to certain places to accomplish specific tasks or missions. They were the assistants of the apostles of Jesus Christ, helping to establish the first local Christian churches in Asia and Europe. These churches were led by a group of elders (1 Tim 3; Tit 1).

People have used different arguments to prove that Paul could not have written the letters to Timothy and Titus. The following are the four main arguments and our reply to each of these arguments:

The first argument.

Some people say that these letters deal with a problem that occurred only during the middle of the second century A.D. Already in the middle of the second century A.D., a certain false teacher called Marcion, rejected not only Paul as the writer of these letters, but rejected these letters completely. He advocated a dualism, teaching that the God of the Old Testament was a righteous God, while the God of the New Testament was a good God, who revealed himself in Christ. He said that especially the Jews, who believed in the righteous God, had crucified Christ. Marcion misunderstood and twisted Paul’s contrast between the law and the gospel. Therefore, he rejected the whole Old Testament, criticised the New Testament and only accepted the 10 other letters of Paul. Marcion rejected the physical resurrection and believed only in the salvation of the soul. Therefore, the physical body had to be saved by a strict asceticism. Marcion could not accept these letters, because 1 Timothy 4:3-4 and Titus 1:14-15 condemned his teaching of asceticism that denied the lawfulness of marriage and that issued rigid rules for fasting. Although Marcion lived in the middle of the second century A.D., the beliefs he advocated already existed during the time of the New Testament, as the strict rules of the Pharisees and Paul’s teaching in Colossians 2:14-23 clearly show.

The letters of Timothy and Titus were not written against the second century cult called “Gnosticism”, but against certain false teachings and practices, which already existed in the first century. Moreover, “Gnosticism” did not arrive full-blown in the second century, but already had its origin in the first century. Gnosticism was not a unified system of teaching, but consisted of a mixture of Platonic philosophy, Oriental mysticism, Cabalistic Judaism and certain elements taken from Christianity. The heresy that is condemned in the letters of Timothy and Titus have certain traits in common with this second century Gnosticism, but is by no means identical to it. The letters to Timothy and Titus expressly mention that the controversies were about the *Jewish* law and second century Gnosticism would have nothing to do with the law (1 Tim 1:3-8; Tit 3:9)! The letters to Timothy and Titus expressly mention that the false teachers belonged to “*the circumcision party*” (Tit 1:10) and that the arguments were about “*Jewish myths*” (Tit 1:14). Paul warned against similar ascetic tendencies in Colossians 2:14-23. We therefore conclude that these letters *could* have been written by Paul in the first century A.D.

The second argument.

Some people say that the vocabulary of these letters show great similarity with that of the church fathers of the second century A.D. The apostolic fathers or church fathers were the early leaders of the Christian Church in the end of the first century A.D. until the beginning of the fourth century A.D. They used a different and more classical vocabulary than the New Testament. There is some similarity between the vocabulary used in the letters to Timothy and Titus and that used in the writings of the church fathers.

However, this does not mean that the letters of Paul to Timothy and Titus were only written during the time of the church fathers. We must not forget that Paul was a very learned man, who had studied under the famous Gamaliel, was fluent in the Hebrew, Greek and Latin languages and had probably travelled more widely than any of the other apostles. The fact that Paul quoted Greek authors like Menander in 1 Corinthians 15:33 and Aratus in Acts 17:28, shows that he was well acquainted with classical literature. His birth in the Roman city of Tarsus and his imprisonment in Rome caused him to use certain Latin words, not only in the letter to Timothy, like for example, “parchment” and “cloak” in 2 Timothy 4:13, but also in his other letters, like for example “to lead in triumph” in 2 Corinthians 2:14 and “praetorian guard” in Philippians 1:13. Moreover, his fellow worker, Luke, used half of the about thirty different Latin words that occur in the New Testament. No single writer in the world is handed a list of words at the beginning of his writing career that he is compelled to use when he writes a book. Likewise, we may not expect that Paul must only use certain words and then distribute them in equal proportion over all his letters. Because Paul was older and because he was

writing, not to a church, but to his fellow workers, Timothy and Titus, and because his subjects dealt with church administration, he would naturally use different words than in his other letters to the churches. We therefore conclude that these letters *could* have been written by Paul in the first century A.D.

The third argument.

Some people say that these letters show a more advanced form of church organisation than the time of Paul. They say that the letters to Timothy and Titus point to a time when there was a complex church organisation, with salaried officials whose qualifications had become standardised.

However, the rest of the New Testament shows a similar kind of church organisation as the letters to Timothy and Titus. Acts 6 shows that *deacons* were already appointed in the very first local church at Jerusalem and that they were subject to certain qualifications. Acts 14:23 shows that already during his very first missionary journey, Paul appointed *elders* in the new established churches. And according to Acts 20:17-28 and 1 Peter 5:1-4, these elders were subject to certain qualifications, which are in complete agreement with the qualifications in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. Moreover, while in the beginning of the second century A.D., we find the first evidence of a distinction between the office of a *bishop* and that of an *elder*, in these letters there is no such distinction! In the letters of Ignatius of Antioch, who was martyred in A.D. 110, we see the gradual emergence of the episcopate within a local church, and not yet within an ecclesiastical region. The episcopate is a system of ecclesiastical government in which *the bishop or overseer* rules over *the presbyters or elders*. However, according to Titus 1:5-7, 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Acts 20:28, Philippians 1:1, and 1 Peter 5:1-4, the term bishop or overseer is synonymous with the term presbyter or elder! We therefore conclude that the letters to Timothy and Titus do not show a more advanced form of church organisation than the time of the New Testament and that these letters *could* have been written by Paul in the first century A.D.

The fourth argument.

Some people say that these letters were written after Paul's one and only Roman imprisonment and death. Some people say that there was only one Roman imprisonment of Paul, at the end of which he was martyred. They say that the book of Acts relates all Paul's journeys and ends with his only imprisonment in Rome. They also say that because the journeys of Paul mentioned in the letters to Timothy and Titus can nowhere be fitted into the history of the book of Acts, therefore these letters were written much later than Paul's time by someone who pretended to be the apostle Paul. However, by making a more careful study of Paul's imprisonment in Rome, we come to a different conclusion: Paul's first Roman imprisonment, described in Acts 28, is completely different than his second Roman imprisonment, described in 2 Timothy.

One. The book of Acts leads the readers to expect Paul's release. The book of Acts shows throughout the respectful way in which the Roman government had treated Paul. The Roman military commanders and Roman political governors all treated Paul with respect and protected his life again and again. And finally, when he arrived in Rome, he was permitted to live by himself with a soldier to guard him (Act 28:16). Although he was a prisoner, he was given much freedom to receive visitors and even to preach the gospel (Act 28:30-31). Paul's first imprisonment in Rome was from A.D. 60-61.

Two. The letters written from prison in Rome lead the readers to expect Paul's release. During his first Roman imprisonment, Paul wrote four letters: Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians and Philippians. In Philippians 1:25-27 and 2:24, he writes that he is confident that he would soon be released and then come to the Philippians. And in Philemon 1:22 he writes that they may prepare a room for him, because he hopes to be released soon.

Three. The existence of the letters to Timothy and Titus presuppose Paul's release from his first imprisonment and subsequent journeys before his second imprisonment. The fact that the letters to Timothy and Titus were accepted by the early church as authentic and inspired, proves that the early church knew that Paul had been imprisoned twice in Rome.

Four. Paul's plan to travel to Spain was made long before his first Roman imprisonment, but could only have taken place between his two imprisonments. In Romans 15:24,28, Paul mentions that after he has come to Rome, he would like the Christians in Rome to assist him on his journey to Spain. Although the letters to Timothy and Titus do not mention if he actually made this journey to Spain, there is evidence from the writings of the early church fathers that he did. Clement of Rome, writing during the last decade of the first century A.D. from the city of Rome to the Corinthians, says, "Paul ... having taught righteousness to the whole world, and *having gone to the limits of the West*, and having given testimony before the rulers, thus passed from the world and was taken up into the Holy Place, having become the outstanding model of endurance." (First letter of Clement to the Corinthians V. 7). The most obvious interpretation is that Paul travelled from Rome as the centre of the Roman Empire to the extreme western part of Europe, which is Spain. Also the Muratorian fragment of A.D. 170 mentions Paul's journey to Spain. And the church historian, Eusebius wrote in about A.D. 300, "Luke also, who handed down the Acts of the apostles in writing, brought his narrative to a close by the statement that Paul spent two whole years in Rome in freedom, and preached the word of God without hindrance. Tradition has it that the apostle, having defended himself, was again sent upon the ministry of preaching, and

coming a second time to the same city, suffered martyrdom under Nero. While he was being held in prison, he composed the second letter to Timothy, at the same time signifying that his first defence had taken place and that his martyrdom was at hand.” (Ecclesiastical History II. xxii. 1,2). We therefore conclude that there is more historical evidence for two Roman imprisonments than for one only, and that therefore the letters to Timothy and Titus *could* have been written by Paul.

The fifth argument.

The writer of the letters to Timothy and Titus is the apostle Paul. As we have seen above, there is not a single good argument that convince Christians today that the apostle Paul could not have written these letters.

All three letters clearly state that they have been written by the apostle Paul. The facts within these three letters are the same as in Acts and the other letters of Paul. For example, in 1 Timothy 2:13 as well as in Acts 26:9-11, Paul describes himself as a person who once was a blasphemer and persecutor and a violent man. In 1 Timothy 2:7 and Galatians 2:7, after he was converted, Paul was appointed by God to be a herald and an apostle and a teacher (2 Tim 1:11). In 2 Timothy 3:10-11 and 2 Corinthians 11, Paul said that he suffered much in the defence of the gospel. In 1 Timothy 1:2 and 1 Corinthians 4:17, Paul calls Timothy his son in the Christian faith (Tit 1:4 and 2 Cor 2:13; 8:23). And in 2 Timothy 4 and Titus 3, Paul mentions by name his fellow workers whom we also know from Acts and his other letters. These three letters have the same structure as all Paul’s other letters. They begin with the mentioning of his name and office, the recipients of the letter, the opening greetings and a thanksgiving or prayer. After the main body of the letter, follows concluding greetings and a benediction.

Finally, the united testimony of the early church says that Paul *is* the author of the letters to Timothy and Titus.

POINT 2. THE RECIPIENT OF THE LETTERS TO TIMOTHY

First. The history of Timothy.

One. Timothy is first mentioned in Acts 16:1. He probably lived in Lystra in modern Turkey. He had a pagan Greek father and a Jewish mother named Eunice (Act 16:1; 2 Tim 1:5). According to 2 Timothy 1:5, both his grandmother and mother had a sincere faith in Jesus Christ and according to 2 Timothy 3:15, Timothy received instruction from the Bible (O.T.) already from his early childhood. Thus, his grandmother and mother probably became Christians before Timothy and had much influence in Timothy becoming a Christian.

Two. During Paul’s first missionary journey from A.D. 47-48, Timothy probably personally committed his heart and life to Jesus Christ, because Paul calls him his spiritual “child” in 1 Timothy 1:2 (1 Cor 4:17; 2 Tim 1:2).

Three. During Paul’s second missionary journey from A.D. 50-52, Timothy responded favourably to Paul’s request to join the team consisting of Paul, Silas and Luke. According to Acts 16:2, the Christians in Lystra and Derbe spoke well of Timothy. Because Paul still began his work of preaching in the Jewish synagogues, he circumcised Timothy in order not to unnecessarily offend the legalistic Jews (Act 16:3). It was probably at this time, that the elders of the churches, which had been established during Paul’s first missionary journey (Act 14:23), together with Paul laid their hands on Timothy in order to *appoint* him for his new task (1 Tim 1:18; 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6). The missionary team crossed over to Europe for the first time to preach the gospel and establish Christian churches in Europe. Luke stayed behind in Philippi (Act 16:11-11,16, cf. 17:1). Timothy and Silas preached the gospel together with Paul in Thessalonica (1 Thes 1:1) and in Berea (Act 17:10,15). Silas and Timothy stayed in Berea to help the young Christian church to grow, while Paul travelled to Athens (Act 17:15). On Paul’s request, Timothy soon joined Paul in Athens (1 Tim 3:1-2) and then Paul sent him to Thessalonica for the purpose of strengthening and encouraging the young Christian church there (1 Thes 3:1-2). After Paul had left Athens and had begun preaching in Corinth, Silas and Timothy came from Thessalonica (Macedonia) to Corinth (Act 18:1,5; 1 Thes 3:6). From Corinth, Paul sent two letters to Thessalonica, in which both Silas and Timothy are also mentioned (1 Thes 1:1; 2 Thes 1:1).

Four. During Paul’s third missionary journey from A.D. 53-57, Timothy was with Paul during his three years of ministry in Ephesus. Paul sent Timothy via Macedonia to Corinth and expected Timothy to arrive at Corinth after his first letter to the Corinthians had arrived there (Act 19:22; 1 Cor 4:17; 16:10). After Paul left Ephesus, he travelled to Macedonia, met Timothy in Macedonia, from where Paul sent his second letter to the Corinthians (2 Cor 1:1). Timothy travelled with Paul to Corinth, where they stayed for three months (Act 20:3; Rom 16:21). Timothy travelled with Paul to Macedonia and waited for Paul in Troas, while Paul probably stayed in Philippi (Act 20:4-5). After that, Timothy was probably together with Paul in Jerusalem (1 Cor 16:3).

Five. During Paul’s first Roman imprisonment from AD 60-61, Timothy was in close contact with Paul (Col 1:1; Philem 1:1; Phil 1:1). From prison, Paul wrote that he hoped to be released soon and that he would send Timothy to Philippi (Phil 2:24,19).

Six. Between Paul's two Roman imprisonments from AD 61-64, Paul was together with Timothy in Ephesus. Timothy received Paul's first letter to him in Ephesus (1 Tim 1:3), in about A.D. 62-63. Paul urged Timothy to remain in Ephesus to combat the false teachers and to establish sound doctrine. Timothy also received Paul's second letter written from his prison in Rome in the winter A.D. 64-65 while he was still in Ephesus (2 Tim 4:9,21). Whether Timothy reached Paul before his death in Rome is not recorded.

Seven. Timothy is once more mentioned in Hebrews 13:23.

Second. The character of Timothy.

The name *Timothy* means *honouring God* or *worshipping God*. In Philippians 2:20-22, Paul says that he had no one else like Timothy, who took a genuine interest in the welfare of others. Timothy was a person who looked not for his own interests, but for the interests of Jesus Christ. Timothy was genuinely unselfish and committed to the kingdom of Christ. In 1 Corinthians 4:17, Paul says that Timothy was faithful in the Lord and would remind the Christians of Paul's way of life and teachings. Timothy was a faithful team member and committed to be loyal to his team. According to Corinthians 16:10 and 2 Timothy 1:7, it seems that Timothy was by nature a fearful, timid and reserved person. And according to 1 Timothy 5:23, he was frequently sick. Nevertheless, he was willing to leave his home and follow the apostle Paul on most of his often dangerous journeys and willing to be sent on his own difficult missions. According to 2 Timothy 4:9,21, Paul knew that Timothy was a person who would do his utmost to come to him in prison. Timothy was very dependable. Paul called Timothy his child, brother and fellow worker in spreading the gospel of Christ (Rom 16:21; 1 Thes 3:2).

ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK

First. During the next week, read 2 Timothy 1-4 and Titus 1-3. Next week we will complete this introduction. Second.

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Third. Listen every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY on the radio to "Discipleship training on the air".