

Mount Pisgah A.M.E Church

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Bible Study, Wednesday, January 13, 2016

Survey of the Bible

Lesson 56: 1 Timothy

The Book of 1 Timothy

The book of 1 Timothy is the first of three New Testament books known as the Pastoral Epistles (the others being 2 Timothy and Titus). They are grouped together because unlike the other Epistles which are written to groups of people, they are addressed to individuals, specifically those who lead congregations. First Timothy is a sort of “leadership manual” written by a seasoned pastoral leader to his young protégé Timothy.

Author

The authorship of the Pastoral Epistles has been contested by some critics; however the traditional view is that they were written by Paul. External evidence from early church authors attests to its integrity. Critics suggest that their style of writing, language/words used, and theological emphases seem different (for example, in the pastorals his emphasis is more on “defending the faith” rather than on “salvation by faith”). Also, the church seems more organized than in Paul’s day. However again, it is not unreasonable to suggest that a different audience requires a different style of writing. A letter to a young pastor with some training might require that Paul use different words and emphasize different things than he might have in a letter to be read to the church.

The Times and context of 1 Timothy

If Paul wrote the letter, the reconstruction of the context can only be tentative because there are details of the last years of Paul’s life that we do not have. However, one theory suggests that after his two year imprisonment in Rome (Acts 28), Paul was released and was able to make one more journey through Asia Minor, Macedonia, Crete, Greece, and Spain. This tour would have amounted to a Fourth Missionary Journey. His first stop was to return to see those who he had grown so close to in Ephesus. After a short stay, he instructed young Timothy to stay there and oversee the church while he traveled to Macedonia. Concerned about the church at Ephesus staying strong while he was delayed in Macedonia, he wrote 1 Timothy (perhaps from Philippi in Macedonia).

Overview

Paul’s last three recorded letters, written near the end of his life, were addressed to his authorized representatives Timothy and Titus. These letters were designed to exhort and encourage Timothy and Titus in their ministry of solidifying the churches in Ephesus and Crete. In his first letter to Timothy, Paul seeks to guide his younger and less experienced assistant in his weighty responsibility as the overseer of the work at Ephesus and other Asian cities. He writes, in effect, a challenge to Timothy to fulfill the task before him: combatting false teaching with sound doctrine, developing qualified leadership, teaching God’s Word, encouraging Christian conduct, and caring for people’s needs. Because of the conversational character of the letter, it is loosely structured around six clear charges to Timothy. It instructs him to (1) Avoid legalism and emphasize grace, (2) Establish Order in Worship, (3) Identify Qualified leadership, (4) Prepare Himself Adequately, (5) Challenge and Care for The People, and (6) Avoid Materialism.

Outline

- I. **Personal Greeting (1:1-1:2)**
- II. **Charge to Avoid Legalism and Emphasize Grace (1:3-1:20)**
 - A. Paul's Past Instruction Concerning Legalists (1:3-1:11)
 - B. Grace as Manifested in Paul's Life (1:12-1:17)
 - C. Grace for Timothy to Avoid Shipwreck (1:18-1:20)
- III. **Charge to Establish Order in Worship (2:1-2:15)**
 - A. Prayer in Public Worship (2:1-2:8)
 - B. Women and Order (2:9-2:15)
- IV. **Charge to Identify Qualified Leadership (3:1-3:16)**
 - A. Qualifications for Bishops (3:1-3:7)
 - B. Qualifications for Deacons (3:8-3:13)
 - C. The Emphasis in Public Worship (3:14-3:16)
- V. **Charge to Prepare Himself Adequately (4:1-4:16)**
 - A. Expect there to be False Teaching (4:1-4:5)
 - B. Spiritual Preparation (4:6-4:10)
 - C. Take Spiritual Authority (4:11-4:14)
 - D. Watch Your Own Walk (4:15-4:16)
- VI. **Charge to Challenge and Care for People (5:1-6:2)**
 - A. Discipline (5:1-5:2)
 - B. Care for Needy Widows (5:3-5:8)
 - C. Ministry for Widows (5:9-5:16)
 - D. Recognition of Elders (5:17-5:20)
 - E. Self-Care (5:21-5:24)
 - F. Slaves (6:1-6:2)
- VII. **Charge to Avoid Materialism and Focus Spiritually (6:3-6:21)**
 - A. Avoid "Godliness for Gain" Theology (6:3-10)
 - B. Focus on True Rewards (6:11-6:16)
 - C. Social Responsibility (6:17-6:19)
 - D. Guard What God has Given You (6:20-6:21)

Some Keys to understanding The Book of 1 Timothy

- 1 Timothy emphasizes Christ as "the one mediator between God and people." He is the source of spiritual strength, faith, and love. He "came into the world to save sinners." The attitude toward people ought to be that of grace.
- The New Testament uses four terms to describe the leadership of the church
 - Elder (Gk. *Presbyteros*) which places emphasis upon the authority that the leadership has to teach or rule in the church
 - Bishop (Gk. *Episkopos*) or overseer, which emphasizes the fact that leadership is charged with overseeing churches or souls and as such is responsible for the well-being of those in the church.
 - Pastor (Gk. *Poimen*) or shepherd, which places emphasis on the responsibility of leadership to care for the people. No shepherd gives birth to sheep, hence it is the responsibility of sheep to beget sheep. The shepherd is to guard, and nurture the sheep.
 - Deacon (Gk. *Diakonos*) or minister, which places emphasis upon the attitude that leaders have, understanding themselves as *servants*. They are not to "lord over" the flock, but to *serve* their needs. Deacons *assist* Elders or Pastors.

- The “role of women” section has been among the most argued in the New Testament. However, properly understood in its context, Paul is concerned about *false teaching* and *misinformation*.
 - Women were not permitted to learn outside of Greek households, only men. Thus, women teaching would have spread untruths and misinterpretations. Paul was actually being revolutionary by suggesting that women should learn at all! As Adam was formed first, so men learned first, then women. However, women have now come to a place where they are enabled to learn. Therefore, the command in 2:11-12 is specific to that context.
 - Paul was also concerned about protecting the witness of the church. “Made up” women in this context were likely prostitutes, and Christian women perceived that way would have damaged the witness of the church.
 - Finally, “the saving of women through childbirth” appears to relegate the role of women to child bearing alone. However the “seed of a woman” (Christ) is the only source of salvation for any and all believers. This reference points us back to Genesis, where the “seed of the woman” is the one who will crush Satan’s head.
- Widows were often organized into groups that provided prayer, care and relief for the needy. This way their needs could be met in numbers, they had a built in family, and they continue to be useful to God. This is thought to be the precursor of Catholic religious orders. AME Deaconesses also follow this model.
- The use of wine for medicinal purposes was often preferred over water because sometimes water could be contaminated.

Some Lessons from 1 Timothy

- God calls us to not get caught up in legalistic battles, but to be led in our walk by love and genuine concern for others. People tend not to care what you know unless they know that you care.
- God is calling believers, if nothing else, to PRAY. More prayer will bring peace to our communities, to our city, even to the world.
- Male or female, exterior beauty or bling is not nearly as valuable as the beauty of genuine character.
- Leaders in God’s church are held to a higher standard in terms of qualification; however every believer is a “leader” in some area of their lives and should strive to live a life of integrity and incorporate (in some ways) the qualifications for “leadership” into their lives.
- Salvation happens by grace (totally an act of God), but godliness requires *training*. It does not come naturally. Our *intentionality* and *determination* are important factors in the degree to which we grow.
- Caring for *people* is central to the mission of the Body of Christ. We must not be so “program focused” or “task oriented” that we lose this concept.
- Self-care and attentiveness to one’s own spiritual walk is critical for the effectiveness of God’s leaders. It is easy even for leaders to be “swayed by trends” or drawn into things that distract from their purpose (especially since Satan often targets leaders in order to scatter the flock).
- While there is something to be said for life experience, spiritual maturity is not a function of age. It is possible to be a senior in age and be a spiritual teenager, and it is possible to be a child in age and a mature adult spiritually. We ought to be looking for character as a determinant of who leads us.
- Material wealth is a TOOL, not a GOAL, for the believer. Being at peace and content is worth far more.