

PASTORAL EPISTLES

Applying the Gospel for Christian
Living

Introduction

- The Pastoral Epistles are more than a manual of church practice
- They are Paul's attempts to address specific situations related to the ministry contexts of Timothy (Ephesus) and Titus (Crete)
- At the heart of these letters is Paul's concern for "sound" doctrine (1 Tim 1:10; 6:3; 2 Tim 1:13; Titus 1:9)
- Paul uses the term "sound" to refer to teaching rooted in the gospel that produces healthy or wholesome living
- The unique contribution of the PE is applying the gospel to address issues related to Christian sanctification, mission, and leadership
- Paul's message is that every church issue must be addressed and applied through the lens of the gospel

The Gospel

- In spite of common themes, it is clear that each letter is unique
- 1 Tim addresses a problem of heresy in the church
- Paul's solution is to teach sound doctrine—the gospel (1:3-11):
- ³As I urged you when I went into Macedonia, stay there in Ephesus so that you may command certain people not to teach false doctrines any longer ⁴or to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies. Such things promote controversial speculations rather than advancing God's work—which is by faith. ⁵The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. ⁶Some have departed from these and have turned to meaningless talk. ⁷They want to be teachers of the law, but they do not know what they are talking about or what they so confidently affirm. ⁸We know that the law is good if one uses it properly.

The Gospel

- ⁹We also know that the law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, ¹⁰for the sexually immoral, for those practicing homosexuality, for slave traders and liars and perjurers—and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine ¹¹that conforms to the gospel concerning the glory of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me.
- In his refutation of the heresy in Ephesus, Paul instructs Timothy to confront the false teachers (v. 3)
- The nature of heresy is stated in vv. 3-4, referring to those who teach myths, allegedly based on the OT law, that lead to mere speculation

The Gospel

- The purpose of doctrine is correct belief that results in lifestyle, with the goal of love from a pure heart, a good conscience, and sincere faith (v. 5)
- Pastors and elders are to rightly interpret and apply the word of God
- Timothy should command them to stop teaching based on the authority of the gospel given to Paul by “the command of God our Savior” (1:1; cf. v. 11)
- Verses 10-11 tell us that false teaching is “whatever is contrary to sound doctrine, according to the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ”
- What is the gospel? It is the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, but what does that mean for the Christian life?

The Christian Life

- The theme of salvation has past, present and future components
- Salvation Past (Rom 8:24; Eph 2:5, 8), dealing with the *penalty* of sin
- Salvation Present (1 Cor 1:18; 2 Cor 2:15), dealing with the *power* of sin
- Salvation future (Rom 5:9-10; 13:11), dealing with the *presence* of sin
- In the PE, the emphasis is on salvation as a present reality
- Paul develops a model of Christian life characterized by three terms: faith, godliness (*eusebeia*) and good works
- The term “godliness” or piety (1 Tim 3:16; 4:6-8; 2 Tim 3:5) is

The Christian Life

- The PE use many other terms to describe the outward life, such as self-control, respectability, love, patience, all grounded in Christ's appearance and the salvation he offers (Titus 2:11-14):
- ¹¹ For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. ¹² It teaches us to say "No" to **ungodliness** and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and **godly** lives in this present age, ¹³ while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, ¹⁴ who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.
- Paul highlights that false teachers tend to dichotomize faith and practical living

Christian Mission

- The importance of the gospel message and the missionary enterprise are highlighted in these letters
- The term “deposit” implies that the gospel is entrusted by God to Paul and must be passed on from one generation to another (2 Tim 2:2):
- ²And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others
- Timothy must “not be ashamed to testify about our Lord,” but keep the teaching and guard it (2 Tim 1:8, 13-14):
- ¹³What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. ¹⁴Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you—guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

Christian Mission

- The message of the gospel is that “Christ died for all” (1 Tim 2:5-6)
- 2 Tim is written specifically to prepare him to carry on the apostle’s mission (2 Tim 1:6-14; 2:1-7; 3:10-17; 4:1-5; 6-18)
- Paul’s charge to Timothy is clear in 2 Tim 4:1-5:
- **4** In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: ²Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. ³For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. ⁴They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. ⁵But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.

Christian Mission

- Paul wants Timothy to come to Rome to take over for him (2 Tim 4:9-17):
- ⁹ Do your best to come to me quickly, ¹⁰ for Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, and Titus to Dalmatia. ¹¹ Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry. ¹² I sent Tychicus to Ephesus. ¹³ When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, and my scrolls, especially the parchments. ¹⁴ Alexander the metalworker did me a great deal of harm. The Lord will repay him for what he has done. ¹⁵ You too should be on your guard against him, because he strongly opposed our message. ¹⁶ At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them. ¹⁷ But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it.

Christian Leadership

- The PE focus on church leadership rather than structure
- The terms “overseer,” “elder,” and “pastor” do not denote separable job responsibilities. Rather, they overlap considerably
- The term “pastor” (*poimen*) means shepherd, and derives from biblical times in which shepherds led, fed, protected, and disciplined their flock
- The term “elder” (*presbyter*) carries an overtone of maturity that qualifies a person for respect and for leadership responsibilities
- The term “overseer” (*episkopos*), sometimes translated as “bishop,” points to administrative and ruling functions that are not entirely absent from the other two labels

Christian Leadership

- The profile of leaders in the PE focuses on three related elements: character qualifications, personal commitment to the mission, and personal holiness
- With the exception of being able to teach, spiritual giftedness is not as critical as character qualifications (1 Tim 3:1-16; Titus 2)
- Timothy is to follow the example of Paul by persevering in godliness, suffering, and trust in God (1 Tim 4:6-16; 6:12-14; 2 Tim 1:6-14; 3:10-17; 4:1-5)
- The church in Ephesus faced false teachers from within, so Paul focuses on strengthen leadership
- The church in Crete was a new plant and needed to install leaders

The Message of 1 Timothy

- In spite of common themes, it is clear that each letter is unique
- 1 Tim addresses a problem of heresy in the church
- Paul's solution is to:
- Teach sound apostolic gospel (1:3-8)
- Resist unruly behavior (2:8-15; 5:9-15; 6:1-2)
- Maintain strong leadership (3:1-13; 5:17-25)
- Pay attention to prayer and orderly worship (2:1; 4:3)

The Message of 2 Timothy

- The heresy in the Ephesian church is still a concern for Paul in 2 Tim
- However, his second letter to Timothy is much more personal and is concerned with Timothy's calling and well-being
- Paul begins by reminding Timothy of their close relationship and similar calling
- Timothy is to follow Paul's example (1:11-13; 2:8-10; 3:10-17; 4:6-7)
- Paul asks Timothy to join him in Rome to continue his apostolic ministry, but cautions that he will encounter suffering (1:8; 2:3; 3:12; 4:5)
- 2 Tim concludes the Pauline story in the NT

The Message of Titus

- Paul's letter to Titus similarly deals with a problem of heresy but the needs of the church are not the same
- In response to false teaching, Titus is "straighten out what was unfinished" business and appoint elders
- The main concern seems to be the stability (2:1-10) and public image (3:1-2) of the church, requiring respectable behavior
- The ethical instructions (2:11-14; 3:5-7) to cultivate godly behavior is grounded in the outworking of the grace of God (2:12)