

1-2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon Ep 225



In this outline are a few links to some of my favorite books that have really helped me understand the context and content of the scriptures. [Click here to see all of my favorite books on Amazon](#). As an Amazon Affiliate, I do earn a small commission from qualifying purchases (at no extra cost to you).

1 Timothy- 2 Timothy, Titus – Introduction

Authorship

In the realm of modern biblical scholarship, there has been questioning regarding the authorship of 1 Timothy and the entire set of pastoral epistles (1-2 Timothy and Titus) attributed to Paul.¹ One factor contributing to this doubt is the substantial presence of words that are absent in Paul's confirmed letters. Additionally, the style of these epistles differs from that of Paul's genuine writings. For example, in the Pastorals, the author speaks of faith, but in a way that is different from the genuine Pauline epistles. One scholar notes,

“The author of the Pastorals also uses the term “faith.” But here it is not about a relationship with Christ; faith now means the body of teaching that makes up the Christian religion. That is “the faith” (see Titus 1:13). Same word, different meaning. So too with other key terms, such as “righteousness.”... The term “faith” was of supreme importance to Paul. In books such as Romans and Galatians faith refers to the trust a person has in Christ to bring about salvation through his death. In other words, the term describes a *relationship* with another; faith is trust “in” Christ.”²

Another aspect is that the events described in the pastoral epistles appear to occur after the events recorded in Acts 28. While these letters do claim to be authored by Paul, contemporary readers familiar with scholarship on these texts face a dilemma. Are they forgeries? If so, what does this mean for the significance of these letters? Alternatively, is there a possibility that they occupy a middle ground, not entirely written by Paul but also not outright forgeries?³ Thomas Wayment's approach, as presented in his introduction to 1 Timothy, suggests the establishment of a middle ground, which appears to be a plausible perspective.⁴

¹ Keener writes, “Among all the letters attributed to Paul in the *New Testament, it is the authorship of the Pastoral Epistles (1 Timothy, 2 Timothy and Titus) that is the most disputed, although they were widely viewed as Pauline in the early church.” Keener, [The IVP Background Commentary: New Testament](#), IVP Academic, 2014, p. 600.

² Bart D. Ehrman, [Forged: Writing in the Name of God - Why the Bible's Authors Are Not Who We Think They Are](#), Harper One, 2011, p. 113.

³ See: Day, [“Layers of Pseudepigraphy – Authorship in the Epistles.”](#)

⁴ Wayment writes, “One reasonable solution is to accept them (the pastorals) as representations of what Paul counseled Timothy and Titus to do, while noting that he did not likely write them in the same way he wrote his

Context

Certain characteristics often cited to support the argument for a later date, such as the presence of church offices and the addressed heresy (sometimes interpreted as second-century Gnosticism by some scholars), can be equally or better explained within the context of Paul's time (detailed explanations can be found in specific passages; it is not necessary for the heresy to be Gnostic). Comparatively, church offices in 1 Timothy are less developed than those seen in the early second-century letters of Ignatius.⁵ In this letter, false teachers promoting asceticism (4:3) grounded in the law (1:7) are undermining the work of Paul and his companions in Ephesus (1:3). Although Ephesus was located in Asia Minor, during this period, it possessed a predominantly Greek culture rather than an Anatolian one. At the core of Paul's solution to this challenge is the appointment of church leaders who possess the necessary qualifications to confront the spreading heresies within the community. Paul employs the typical language used during his time to address such situations, resembling the rhetoric employed by philosophers against sophists or pseudo-philosophers.

Possible Dates of the Pastorals

On the premise of Pauline authorship, the Pastorals were written toward the end of his life, about a.d. 62–64. This would mean that Paul was released from his detention described in Acts 28:30-31 and completed the journeys presupposed in the Pastoral Epistles, as suggested also by early Christian tradition. Some who date these letters later than Paul date them late enough to allow for the reuse of Paul's name pseudonymously, sometimes as late as the mid-second century (although the Muratorian Canon assumes them to be Pauline not long after that date). Others suggest that the material is Pauline but was organized into its current form more quickly after Paul's death.⁶

Who was Timothy?

Timothy, whose name means "honoring God" or "one who fears God," was a prominent figure in the early Christian community and a close associate of the apostle Paul. Information about Timothy can be gathered from various biblical sources, primarily the New Testament, as well as early Christian writings. Timothy was a younger colleague and dear friend of Paul, frequently traveled alongside him. According to Acts 16:1-3, Timothy hailed from Lystra, a town in the Roman province of Galatia in south-central Asia Minor. It is believed that Paul first encountered Timothy during his initial missionary venture in the region, which took place around A.D. 46-48. This encounter likely resulted in Timothy, along with his mother and grandmother, embracing the Christian faith. During Paul's subsequent visit to the area, around A.D. 49-50, local believers recommended that Timothy accompany him on his travels. Due to Timothy's mixed lineage—having a Jewish mother and a pagan father—and to maintain good relations with Diaspora Jews, Paul arranged for Timothy to be circumcised. This act marked the beginning of a

other letters." Thomas Wayment, [The New Testament: A Translation for Latter-day Saints](#), Deseret Book, 2019, p. 378.

⁵ Ignatius, in his letter to the Ephesians, writes: "Wherefore it is fitting that ye should run together in accordance with the will of your bishop, which thing also ye do. For your justly renowned presbytery, worthy of God, is fitted as exactly to the bishop as the strings are to the harp. Therefore in your concord and harmonious love, Jesus Christ is sung." The general counsel in his letter is one of encouraging unity and working with the bishop "even as we would upon the Lord himself." See: [The Epistle of Ignatius to the Ephesians](#), accessed 7.8.23.

⁶ Keener, [Background](#), p. 601.

lifelong bond characterized by deep affection and mutual respect between Paul and Timothy, as evident in passages like Philippians 2:19-24.

Paul affectionately refers to Timothy as his "beloved and faithful son in the Lord" in multiple instances (1 Corinthians 4:17, Philippians 2:22, 1 Timothy 1:2, 2 Timothy 1:2). Additionally, Paul describes Timothy as a "fellow worker" (Τιμόθεος ὁ συνεργός μου) in the gospel (Romans 16:21). As Paul's trusted companion and son in the faith, Timothy closely followed and shared Paul's perspective (1 Timothy 4:6, 2 Timothy 3:10-11). He was entrusted with various assignments to different churches, including Thessalonica (around A.D. 50), Corinth (around A.D. 53-54), and Philippi (around A.D. 60-62). Timothy collaborated with Paul in writing several letters, such as 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 2 Corinthians, Colossians, Philemon, Philippians, and is mentioned in Romans 16:21. In the current letters, Timothy is given the challenging task of addressing false teachers in Ephesus who threatened the integrity of the local church.

1 Timothy

Outline

I. Introduction

A. Greeting and identification of author and recipient (1:1-2)

B. Purpose of the letter: Stop the False Teachers! (1:3-7)

Paul launches immediately into the occasion and purpose of the letter. Indeed, all the crucial matters that make up the framework and content of 1 Timothy are set out in the opening paragraph (vv. 3-7). The church has been greatly endangered by some elders (probably), who think of themselves as teachers of the law (v. 7), but who in fact teach false doctrines (v. 3). Timothy has been left in Ephesus to stem the tide. He is not the "pastor"; rather, he has been left to act on Paul's behalf while Paul is away. This letter will authorize Timothy-before the church-to oppose those deceivers and their followers. Thus the stage is set: The whole letter is a response to the presence of the false teachers.⁷

"Fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions" (1 Tim. 1.4).

Paul rebukes the indulgence in false or foolish genealogies on two occasions, including here and in Titus 3.9. It seems that people were pursuing their genealogies for misguided purposes. This Jewish practice might have instilled a sense of superiority among Jewish converts who traced their lineage to esteemed figures such as prophets or kings. However, within a predominantly Gentile Christian church, it could have led to feelings of inferiority. Alternatively, Paul may have simply wanted them to cease the fruitless pursuit of distant relatives for the sake of vanity. It is known that there were discussions about vicarious baptism for the dead happening in the early Christian church (1 Corinthians 15.29), but this issue does not seem to pertain in this context. Paul emphasizes that such "endless genealogies" do not promote spiritual growth but instead foster speculative distractions. Paul's admonition applies to all Christians, urging them to scrutinize their teachers carefully to ensure they are trustworthy servants of God, prioritizing edification and divine training.

⁷ Gordon D. Fee, [1 and 2 Timothy, Titus](#), Hendrickson Publishers, 1988, p. 39.

Craig Keener offers this explanation:

Plato and most other philosophers rejected or reinterpreted the “myths” that they believed misrepresented the gods, although some believed that myths could be used to illustrate truths. Philo, Josephus and other Jews argued that their Scriptures contained no myths; but extrabiblical elaborations of biblical accounts were common, and Paul probably has them in view here (cf. Tit 1:14). “Genealogies” might refer to expansions of biblical genealogies, as in some Jewish works from this period, or perhaps false postbiblical attributions of ancestry. The phrase “myths and genealogies” had been used pejoratively from Plato on.⁸

Gordon Fee offers this explanation:

Timothy is also to command the erring teachers not to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies. These two words, among the few in the letters to Timothy that give any indication of the content of the false doctrines, are also among the more puzzling. As Kelly says, “They come tantalizingly near disclosing the content of the heresy”! (p. 44). In 4:7 they are again characterized as “godless myths and old wives’ tales.” A similar phenomenon has also emerged in Crete, where they are called “Jewish myths” (Titus 1:14); the “genealogies” reappear in a list that includes “arguments and quarrels about the Law” (Titus 3:9).

It has often been suggested that these words reflect the alleged Gnostic character of the heresy, supported further by such language as “the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge” (6:20) and by the ascetic practices mentioned in 4:3 (cf. 5:23). Thus the myths and genealogies are seen to refer to the speculative cosmologies of the later Gnostics with their systems of aeons (spiritual beings) that emanate from God (the Father of the All), such as one finds in Valentinus. (This position seems to be reflected in the Living Bible, which reads: “Their idea of being saved by finding favor with an endless chain of angels leading up to God:”)

But the terms translated myths (*mythoi*) and genealogies (*genealogiai*) are never used in descriptions of these Gnostic systems. They do, however, regularly appear in Hellenism and Hellenistic Judaism to refer to traditions about peoples’ origins. The term *mythoi* in this literature is almost always used in a pejorative sense (as throughout the Pastoral Epistles), to contrast the mythical character of many of these stories to historical truth.

Therefore, given the lack of any real concern in 1 and 2 Timothy for characteristically Gnostic motifs, plus the fact that in verse 7 the errors are specifically related to the Law, it is more plausible that these myths and endless genealogies reflect Jewish influence of some kind, undoubtedly with some Hellenistic overlays. But what they were precisely is not available to us, although there have been several suggestions (such as the kinds of speculations one finds in the *Book of Jubilees* or in Philo’s *Questions and Answers on Genesis* or in Pseudo-Philo’s *Book of Biblical Antiquities* or even in the Jewish haggadic tradition [illustrative commentary on the OT]). It must finally be admitted that we simply do not know, because Paul does not give us enough clues.

What we do know is that he stands boldly against such things, not so, much because of their content (although such myths are quite unrelated to the truth [4:6-7; 2 Tim. 4:4]) but because

⁸ Keener, [Background](#), p. 603.

such teaching has two net effects: (1) "meaningless talk" (1:6; cf. 6:20; 2 Tim. 2:16; 3:7), which (2) result in quarrels and strife (6:3-5; 2 Tim. 2:14, 23).⁹

II. The Correct Use of the Law (1:8-20)

A. The misuse of the law (1:8-11)

8 But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully; 9 Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers (1 Tim. 1:8-9).

Philosophers believed that wise people did not need laws, because their wise behavior itself modeled the moral truth on which laws were based. For Paul, this ideal was true for Christians; laws were necessary only to restrain those who were inclined to sin. Like many ancient authors, he includes a "vice list" to catalog the sorts of sins he means (1:9-10). Most of these were obvious as sins to ancient readers: for instance, killers of fathers and mothers were considered the most evil of sinners and executed in horrible ways under Roman law (sewn into a bag with animals, including a snake, and drowned).¹⁰

For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers (ἀνδραποδιστής), for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine (1 Tim. 1:10).

Scholars have disputed the meaning of the term sometimes translated "homosexuals" (ἀρσενοκοίταις – translated in the KJV as "for them that defile themselves with mankind" in 1 Tim. 1:10), but it seems to be coined from Leviticus 20:13 and to mean those who engage in homosexual acts. These were a common feature of Greek male life in antiquity; this was one form of behavior that Jewish people regarded as virtually exclusively a Gentile vice (e.g., Philo, *Special Laws* 3.37-39; Josephus, *Against Apion* 2.215; *Sibylline Oracles* 5.387). Like the rabbis, Paul engages in rhetorical damnation: even though in practice he has expelled from fellowship only the most extreme offender (2 Cor. 5.1-5), those who continue in the lifestyles he mentions here will not make it into the kingdom of God.¹¹

Kidnappers (ἀνδραποδιστής) engaged in the abhorrent practice of "slave trading" (NIV, NRSV), which involved forcibly capturing individuals to sell them as slaves (as seen in Exodus 21:16 and Deuteronomy 24:7). **Paul's statement directly condemns the cruel slave trade prevalent in his time.** Many kidnappers specifically targeted children, who would be forced into the harrowing existence of male and female slave prostitution. Infants, abandoned by desperate parents, were also exploited and left discarded on trash heaps. Perjury, a form of lying, involved breaking a divine oath and thereby showed disrespect towards the deity. The term "sound" (healthy, wholesome) was used by Stoics and others to describe teaching that was reasonable and well-grounded.

B. Paul's personal testimony and gratitude (1:12-17)

⁹ Fee, *1-2 Timothy*, p. 41-42

¹⁰ Keener, *Background*, p. 603.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 471.

This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief (1 Tim. 1:15).

To personalize the saying, Paul adds of whom I am the worst, not as a form of hyperbole, as some would have it, or because he was morbid about his sinful past, but precisely because of his own experience of God's mercy and grace. Such statements are to be understood in light of the intersection in Paul's life of the simultaneous overwhelming sense of his own sinfulness and utter helplessness before God and the fact of God's grace lavished freely on him and God's unconditionally accepting him despite his sin. It should also be noted that he says I am, not "I was." Even one like Hanson who believes the letter to be a forgery admits that this is a "truly Pauline touch." But it is so, not because of Paul's abiding sense of sinfulness (as Bernard and others), but because he recognized himself as always having the status of "sinner redeemed."¹²

C. The charge to Timothy (1:18-20)

19 Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck: 20 Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme (1 Tim. 1:19-20).

Early Jewish sources (including the Dead Sea Scrolls) attest a range of levels of excommunication, including full exclusion from the community (for extended periods or even permanently; here, apparently until repentance). Some contend that official synagogue excommunication included a curse or execration against the person being banned from the community; it could be viewed as equivalent to capital punishment under the Old Testament law. By handing these blasphemers over to Satan, Paul is simply acknowledging the sphere they had already chosen to enter (5:15). Paul's purpose here is restorative, however, "so that they might be taught not to blaspheme" (nasb), as God had taught Paul (1:13)... Hymenaeus and probably Philetus had been officially cut off (1 Tim 1:20) but still retained a pervasive influence and probably a significant following. Then, as today, it was easy for almost any speaker to get a hearing, because only a few were skilled enough in the Scriptures to discern truth from error for themselves, rather than being dependent on others' teachings. In antiquity the difficulty was greater in the sense that most people could not read and copies of the Scriptures were scarce and expensive, being copied by hand.¹³

III. Instructions for Worship and Church Leadership (2:1-3:13)

A. Prayer and conduct in worship (2:1-8)

B. Instructions for women in worship (2:9-15)

11 Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. 12 But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. 13 For Adam was first formed, then Eve. 14 And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. 15 Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety (1 Tim. 2:11-15).

¹² Fee, [1-2 Timothy](#), p. 53.

¹³ Keener, [Background](#), p. 603, 619.

Focusing on the first phrase of the verse, the text recognizes that women have the ability to learn and engage with religious topics, which marked a significant departure from the Pharisaic teachings of the time.¹⁴ This represented a positive cultural advancement, allowing women to participate actively in religious education. However, the second phrase, "women learn in silence with all subjection," seems reminiscent of the Pharisaic tradition that restricted women from speaking in public settings. Christian women, on the other hand, were encouraged to fully participate in religious worship, offer their opinions, and ask questions, which represented a drastic change from the previous norms. It is important to note, though, that this verse appears to contradict Paul's earlier statements in which he encouraged women to pray,¹⁵ prophesy, teach,¹⁶ and emphasized the unity and interdependence of all members in the body of Christ. Throughout his letters, Paul reiterated the importance of everyone's contribution¹⁷ in serving and building the kingdom in various ways.

President Nelson taught:

My dear sisters, you who are our vital associates during this winding-up scene, the day that President Kimball foresaw is today. You are the women he foresaw! Your virtue, light, love, knowledge, courage, character, faith, and righteous lives will draw good women of the world, along with their families, to the Church in unprecedented numbers! We, your brethren, need your strength, your conversion, your conviction, your ability to lead, your wisdom, and your voices. The kingdom of God is not and cannot be complete without women who make sacred covenants and then keep them, women who can speak with the power and authority of God! ... Today, let me add that we need women who know how to make important things happen by their faith and who are courageous defenders of morality and families in a sin-sick world. We need women who are devoted to shepherding God's children along the covenant path toward exaltation; women who know how to receive personal revelation, who understand the power and peace of the temple endowment; women who know how to call upon the powers of heaven to protect and strengthen children and families; women who teach fearlessly. Throughout my life, I have been blessed by such women. My departed wife, Dantzel, was such a woman. I will always be grateful for the life-changing influence she had on me in *all* aspects of my life, including my pioneering efforts in open-heart surgery.¹⁸

¹⁴ [Mishnah, Kiddushin 30a](#). The text teaches that fathers are to teach their sons, "but not your daughters." In previous generations, Jewish women were often prohibited from engaging in formal study. However, within Christianity, this prohibition is unmistakably lifted.

¹⁵ 1 Corinthians 11:5: "But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, for that is one and the same as if her head were shaved."

¹⁶ Titus 2:3-4: "Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children."

¹⁷ Romans 16:1-2: "I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church at Cenchreae, that you may welcome her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints, and help her in whatever she may need from you, for she has been a patron of many and of myself as well." We see this also in Philippians 4:2-3: "I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord. Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women, who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life."

¹⁸ President Russell M. Nelson, "[A Plea to my Sisters](#)," [October 2015 Conference](#).

C. Qualifications and responsibilities of a ἐπίσκοπος - bishops/overseers¹⁹ (3:1-7)

Blameless

The husband of one wife

Sober

Of good behavior

Not greedy, not a lover of money

Manages his household

Not a recent convert (μὴ νεόφυτον – not a neophyte, not “newly planted” 1 Tim. 3.6)

D. Qualifications and responsibilities of a διάκονος - deacons²⁰ (3:8-13)

Dignified

Sincere

Able to not overdrink wine

Not greedy

Married and able to manage their homes in a dignified manner

For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus (1 Tim. 3.13 KJV).

for those who did minister well a good step to themselves do acquire, and much boldness in faith that [is] in Christ Jesus (1 Tim. 3.13 YLT).

It is important to at least mention that to LDS readers, this list may seem somewhat out of place, seeing how in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, deacons are mostly young men around the age of 12. This shift in how deacons were ordained and assigned duties shifted gradually over time in six general stages, something that William Hartley outlines in more detail.²¹ Clearly, in Paul's time, deacons were married men who served in the church.

Bryce's quote about the importance of bishops involving ward members:

In the mountains surrounding [the Salt Lake] valley there is still very deep snow. The animals, especially the deer, have suffered because of it. They have moved from the foothills to the orchards and gardens trying to find enough nourishment to survive. President Hinckley, who

¹⁹ A superintendent, i.e. Christian officer in genitive case charge of a (or the) church (literally or figuratively): — bishop, overseer.

²⁰ dee-ak'-on-os; probably from an obsolete διάκω diákō (to run on errands); an attendant, i.e. (genitive case) a waiter (at table or in other menial duties); specially, a Christian teacher and pastor (technically, a deacon or deaconess):—deacon, minister, servant.

²¹ William Hartley, From Men to Boys: LDS Aaronic Priesthood Offices, 1829-1996, [Journal of Mormon History](#), Spring 1996, Vol. 22, No. 1 (Spring 1996), pp. 80-136.

lives quite near to here, has had them in his garden during the winter. For many years, game wardens bought alfalfa hay and established feed yards in the foothills. The deer came in great numbers to eat the green, leafy hay. They thought they were doing all they needed to do for them. But, if the winter wore on and spring was late, the deer died in great numbers. They died of starvation with their bellies full of hay. This, because nutrients essential to sustain life through a long period of stress, were missing from their diet. It can be like that with the flocks for whom we are the shepherds. Other stake presidents have thought they were doing all that was needed for their sheep, only to find that some have been fed but not nourished. Like the deer with their stomachs full of hay, in times of prolonged individual stress they do not survive spiritually. Buildings and budgets, and reports and programs and procedures are very important. But, by themselves, do not carry that essential spiritual nourishment and will not accomplish what the Lord has given us to do. They are only tools. The means to an end, not ends in themselves.²²

IV. Dealing with False Teachers and Doctrinal Issues (3:14-6:10)

A. The purpose and conduct of the church (3:14-16)

Pillars

But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Tim. 3:15).

The church, which met in homes, was modeled on the household, just as pagan political theorists compared the household to society in general (3:4-5). Paul's prior admonitions to Timothy, especially in 3:1-13, thus serve a function analogous to the household codes of many ancient writers: providing a specific framework of wisdom for administering the family unit and society. "Pillars" were used to uphold structures, and support for the truth was needed given its challenge by false teachers (1:3-7). (A prominent and important member of a community was often called a "pillar," so the image here may emphasize the church's strength and indispensability.)²³

B. Warning against false teachers (4:1-5)

"forbidding to marry" (1 Tim. 4:3).

The false teachers addressed in this passage may have been Gnostics who propagated the belief that God's people should abstain from physical elements such as marriage, certain foods, and aspects related to the material world, including the concepts of creation, crucifixion, and resurrection. It is important to note that Paul's concern lay not with Jewish attitudes but with the Christian heresies that stemmed from a combination of Jewish and Gnostic influences. This verse serves as a valuable addition to the collection of verses highlighting Paul's positive endorsement of marriage, such as 1 Corinthians 9:5 and Philippians 4:3.

Asceticism was on the rise in Greco-Roman paganism, and although most teachers (both Jewish and Gentile) advocated marriage, the value of celibacy was becoming more popular (especially

²² Boyd K. Packer, "Shepherds of the Flock," Meeting of Stake Presidents and Regional Representatives, 2 Apr 1982, 1.

²³ Keener, *Background*, p. 608.

among Gentiles, but some Essenes also seem to have practiced it). “Abstaining from foods” probably refers to Jewish food laws.²⁴

C. Instructions for Timothy's conduct and teaching (4:6-16)

Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery (1 Tim. 4.14).

The imperative, do not neglect your gift (lit. "do not neglect the gift that is in you"), follows naturally out of verse 13. The word gift [*charisma*] means something like "gracious endowment"; because in Paul there is frequently a close tie (as here) between *charisma* and "Spirit" (cf. 1 Cor. 1:7; 12:4, 31; Rom. 1:11), the word is frequently translated "spiritual gift" (as NASB, GNB here). In this case the gift "that is in him" almost certainly has to do with his calling and gift for ministry as a preacher/teacher of the Word. It is precisely through his role as preacher/teacher that he is to overcome the influence of error, a point made even more clearly in 2 Timothy (1:13-14; 2:15; 2:24-26; 3:14-4:5). But Timothy must ultimately rely on the Holy Spirit, who, as 2 Timothy 1:6-7 and 14 make plain, is the source of the gift he is not to neglect (*amelei*, "disregard;" or "not take care of").²⁵

D. Instructions regarding the elderly and widows in the church (5:1-6:2)

The KJV translation of these verses on widows may pose some challenges, but with a deeper understanding of the historical context, we can discern the church leaders' generosity and priorities. Paul devotes considerable attention to addressing their care, reflecting the early Jerusalem church's similar concern (Acts 6.1-7) and the Old Testament's repeated calls to care for widows (Proverbs 23.22). It appears that the local Christian churches took responsibility for providing for older widows who lacked family support while encouraging them to remain active through service. Younger widows, on the other hand, were encouraged to remarry, as widowhood often meant financial hardship due to limited opportunities for women to earn a living. Furthermore, the Roman Empire implemented a law under Caesar Augustus that placed additional financial pressure on widows and divorcees to either remarry within two years or pay higher taxes,²⁶ emphasizing the societal and economic challenges they faced.

ἡ δὲ σπαταλῶσα ζῶσα τέθνηκεν But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth" (1 Tim. 5.6).

Another translation could read: "And she who dwells in luxury, though living, has already died" (1 Tim. 5.6, my translation).²⁷

²⁴ Keener, p. 608.

²⁵ Fee, p. 108.

²⁶ Ben Witherington III, *Women and the Genesis of Christianity*, Cambridge University Press, 1990, p. 23. Jackson J. Spielvogel, *Western Civilization: A Brief History, 7th ed.* (Belmont, CA: Thomson & Wadsworth, 2009), volume 1, p. 152; "Augustus also revised the tax laws to penalize bachelors, widowers, and married persons who had fewer than three children." See also: *Julian marriage laws*, accessed 7.8.23. In 18 B.C., the Emperor Augustus turned his attention to social problems at Rome. Extravagance and adultery were widespread. Among the upper classes, marriage was increasingly infrequent and, many couples who did marry failed to produce offspring. Augustus, who hoped thereby to elevate both the morals and the numbers of the upper classes in Rome, and to increase the population of native Italians in Italy, enacted laws to encourage marriage and having children (*lex Julia de maritandis ordinibus*), including provisions establishing adultery as a crime.

²⁷ I see this translation as a better reflection of the perfect verb θνήσκω "I die."

In this particular passage, it is likely that Paul is alluding to various forms of sexual immorality, which may include engaging in extramarital affairs, indulging in lustful desires, or assuming a position of concubinage. The specific context and language utilized by Paul suggest a condemnation of actions that deviate from moral and ethical standards, particularly in the realm of sexual conduct. By employing this language, Paul emphasizes the importance of upholding sexual purity and integrity within the Christian community.

And if any one for his own -- and especially for those of the household -- doth not provide, the faith he hath denied, and than an unbeliever he is worse (1 Tim. 5.8).

Even pagans believed in supporting destitute widows who were relatives; it was believed that one owed support to one's aged parents... Adult children or other close relatives were expected to care for destitute widows, who had no opportunity to earn wages (and relatively little potential income by other means, e.g., selling produce from their garden) in ancient society. It was believed that one owed this care to one's parents for their support during youth; Paul agrees. Judaism even understood this support as part of the commandment to honor one's parents. (Under Roman law, a father could discard a newborn child; the child was not regarded as a person and member of the household until the father agreed to raise and support the child. This way of thinking probably contributed to children's recognition of responsibility to parents. Early Jews and Christians, however, unanimously opposed abortion, infanticide and throwing out babies, seeing personhood as a gift of God, not of parents.) Caring for aged parents was a matter not only of custom but of law, and was common even in Western society until recent times.²⁸

16 If any man or woman that believeth have widows, let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed. 17 Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of **double honour**, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. 18 For the scripture saith, thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward (1 Tim. 5.16-18).

"Honor" sometimes included payment, and this is the case here (5:18). "Double pay" was sometimes given to worthy soldiers and is probably in view here. Because elders who did not have large property holdings would otherwise be at least partly dependent on working children, Paul advocates supporting them well (this support does not imply making them wealthy, of course). In 1 Tim. 5.18 Paul argues his case both from the Old Testament (Deut 25:4) and from the sayings of Jesus (cf. Lk 10:7). Citations from authoritative or classical texts were used to prove one's point not only in Jewish but also in other Greco-Roman literature.²⁹

"Drink no longer water, but use a little wine" (1 Tim. 5.23).

Most people drank wine with their meals (albeit about two parts water to one part wine, and not distilled to a higher than natural degree of fermentation).³⁰ Timothy has been abstaining

²⁸ Keener, p. 611, 610.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 612.

³⁰ Some state that the dilution was more like ten or twenty parts water to one part wine. See: Richard N. Holzapfel, Thomas A. Wayment, Eric D. Huntsman, *Jesus Christ and the World of the New Testament*, Deseret Book, 2006. John MacArthur, ed. *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary*, Moody Press, ch 18, Ephesians 5:18. A "strong

(apart from, we may assume, the Lord's Supper), perhaps to avoid the criticism of those influenced by the false teachers (4:3; some ascetics abstained from wine); Paul tells him to go back to using it. Wine was often helpful in settling stomachs and preventing dysentery (it could be used to disinfect water). Some restorative diets recommended water (e.g., Fronto, *Ad Antoninum Pium* 8), others wine; medicines could be delivered with either.³¹

Paul's counsel to slaves

Ὅσοι εἰσὶν ὑπὸ ζυγὸν **δοῦλοι τοὺς ἰδίους δεσπότας** πάσης τιμῆς ἀξίους ἡγείσθωσαν ἵνα μὴ τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἡ διδασκαλία βλασφημῇται. οἱ δὲ πιστοὺς ἔχοντες δεσπότας μὴ καταφρονεῖτωσαν ὅτι ἀδελφοί εἰσιν ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον δουλευέτωσαν ὅτι πιστοί εἰσιν καὶ ἀγαπητοὶ οἱ τῆς εὐεργεσίας ἀντιλαμβάνοντες. Ταῦτα δίδασκε καὶ παρακάλει.

1 Let **as many servants** as are under the yoke **count their own masters** worthy of all honour, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed. 2 And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren; but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit. These things teach and exhort (1 Tim. 6.1-2).

These two verses, which give instructions about the attitudes of slaves toward their masters, present difficulties for the contextual questions: What's the point of all this, and what is it doing here? The section is related to the preceding two sections on widows and elders in its concern for times ("honor;" or respect; cf. 5:3, 17). However, it also differs considerably from them in that both of the previous sections were concerned that the church both honor genuine widows and worthy elders as well as discipline the erring ones. **Here the words are strictly for the slaves, with no corresponding word either to the church or to the masters.**

But why these words at all? First, it needs to be noted that slavery in the first-century Greco-Roman world was considerably different from that of recent American history; it was rarely racially motivated. Most people became slaves through war or economic necessity, although by the time of this letter, the majority of slaves were so by birth (born of slaves). Manumission, the freeing of slaves, was a common occurrence, although in many cases slavery was preferred to freedom because it offered security and, in some cases, good positions in a household.

Nonetheless, slavery was the bottom extreme of the human social condition and was scarcely a desirable status. Slaves, along with most freedmen, constituted a large element of "the poor" to whom the gospel came with good news of acceptance with and freedom before God. From the evidence of the NT and beyond, it is clear that slaves made up a considerable portion of early Christian communities in the Hellenistic world. Hence this passage fits in with several others in the NT that speak to the behavior of slaves (Col. 3:22-25; Eph. 6:5-8; 1 Pet. 2:18-25; Titus 2:9-10) or their situation (1 Cor. 7:21-24; Philem. 10-17). It is perhaps worthy of note that the other two Pauline passages (Colossians and Ephesians) were written to churches in this same geographical area, and that in each case the word to slaves is much longer than the corresponding words to masters or parents and children. One wonders, therefore, whether the false teachings being

drink" at that time meant two-parts wine, one-part water. Also, Ezekiel 44:21, explained the priests' dietary restrictions from wine: "... Neither shall any priest drink wine, when they enter into the inner court."

³¹ Keener, p. 612.

propagated in this part of the world were putting considerable tension on the master/slave relationship in the church.

One cannot be sure that such was the case here, but it is altogether likely in view of the position of this section in the argument. Furthermore, as with the two preceding sections, the concern seems to be with the second item taken up, namely, the attitudes among believers. If so, then perhaps problems have arisen among some Christian slaves and their attitudes toward Christian masters similar to those among the younger widows. Have an exaggerated anticipation of the end times or a sense of exclusive spiritual superiority led them to disregard the importance of existing relationships associated with the passing age? One cannot have certain answers to such questions, of course, but such a reconstruction does make sense of Paul's instructions. In any case, it is clear that Paul's concern, as before (2:2; 3:7; 5:14), is not only with relationships within the church but also with how the problem was affecting the church's witness.³²

Brigham Young gave similar practical advice to members of the Church. Although members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints believe in end times prophecies and the Second Coming, Brigham also preached a "practical" religion:

He taught:

And if I today attend to what devolves upon me to do, and then do that which presents itself tomorrow, and so on, when eternity comes I will be prepared to enter on the things of eternity. But I would not be prepared for that sphere of action, unless I could manage the things that are now within my reach. You must all learn to do this (DBY, 11).

The very object of our existence here is to handle the temporal elements of this world and subdue the earth, multiplying those organisms of plants and animals God has designed shall dwell upon it (DBY, 15).

Life is for us, and it is for us to receive it today, and not wait for the Millennium. Let us take a course to be saved today, and, when evening comes, review the acts of the day, repent of our sins, if we have any to repent of, and say our prayers; then we can lie down and sleep in peace until the morning, arise with gratitude to God, commence the labors of another day, and strive to live the whole day to God and nobody else (DBY, 16).³³

E. Warning against the love of money (6:3-10)

Elder Dallin H. Oaks taught:

Those who preach the gospel of success and the theology of prosperity are suffering from 'the deceitfulness of riches' and from supposing that 'gain is godliness' (1 Timothy 6:5). The possession of wealth or the acquisition of significant income is not a mark of heavenly favor, and their absence is not evidence of heavenly disfavor. Riches can be among the blessings that follow

³² Gordon Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, p. 136-137.

³³ *Teachings of the President of the Church: Brigham Young*, [chapter 3, "Living the Gospel."](#) Accessed 7.6.23.

right behavior-such as the payment of tithing (Malachi 3:9-12)-but riches can also be acquired through the luck of a prospector or as the fruits of dishonesty.³⁴

Elder Hartman Rector Jr. taught:

Some years ago while I was serving in the navy and was away from home, a very prominent and well-to-do farmer died in my home neighborhood. Upon my return I was talking with my cousin about the estate of the deceased, and I asked the inevitable question, 'How much did he leave?' My cousin said, 'He left it all; he didn't take any of it with him.' That struck me as being a great truth that very, very few men seem ever to comprehend. Certainly many of us act as though we are going to take it all with us when we go; of course, we are not. In terms of material things, each of us leaves it all. In the words of Paul to Timothy, 'For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.' (1 Tim. 6:7.).³⁵

V. Final Charge to Timothy (6:11-21)

A. Pursue godliness and fight the good fight (6:11-16)

14 That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: 15 Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; 16 Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; **whom no man hath seen, nor can see:** to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen. (1 Tim. 6.14-16).

Clearly, we have a problem here, as Paul has stated that he has seen Christ. Paul recounts his encounter with the resurrected Jesus in several places in his writings. One notable instance is found in 1 Corinthians 15:8, where Paul states, "Last of all, as to one untimely born, **he appeared also to me.**" This reference indicates that Paul had a personal encounter with the risen Christ. Additionally, in Galatians 1:15-16, Paul describes how God revealed His Son to him, suggesting a direct encounter with Jesus. Throughout his letters, Paul consistently affirms his apostolic authority and his firsthand experience of encountering the resurrected Christ.

The Joseph Smith Translation (JST) introduces a significant alteration to the original order of phrases in this prayer or hymn, resulting in a shift in its meaning. In conventional English translations, the passage suggests that humanity cannot see God, which appears contradictory to Paul's own experiences, as documented in the references mentioned above, along with the accounts of others like Mary Magdalene and the five hundred witnesses who saw the resurrected Lord. However, the JST's rearrangement clarifies that those saints who possess the "hope of immortality dwelling in" them may indeed have the opportunity to behold God.

The JST reads as follows:

³⁴ Elder Dallin H. Oaks, *Pure in Heart*, Bookcraft, 1988], p. 75.

³⁵ Elder Hartman Rector Jr., "[Ignorance Is Expensive](#)," *Ensign*, June 1971.

“Who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, to whom be honor and power everlasting. Whom no man hath seen, nor can see, Unto whom no man can approach, Only he who hath the light and the hope of immortality dwelling in him.”

B. Instructions for the wealthy (6:17-19)

C. Final exhortation and closing remarks (6:20-21)

O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called (τῆς ψευδωνύμου γνώσεως) (1 Tim. 6:20).

Certain scholars have suggested that the mention of "false knowledge" in this context could be a veiled reference to Gnosticism, potentially indicating a later date for the Pastoral Epistles beyond Paul's lifetime. However, it is important to note that this interpretation is not essential, as various philosophers of the time often laid claim to "knowledge" that was perceived as erroneous by their contemporaries. The reference to "false knowledge" could simply reflect a general concern about erroneous teachings and the need for discernment, without specifically targeting any particular philosophical or religious system.

2 Timothy

Historical Context

Assuming Pauline authorship, Paul writes 2 Timothy while imprisoned in Rome, awaiting probable execution; he wants Timothy to join him before it is too late (4:21). Paul was probably released after his imprisonment in Acts 28 and undertook the missions presupposed in 2 Timothy; then he was rearrested, this time during Nero's massive repression of Christians. He was most likely beheaded under Nero in A.D. 64. Second Timothy has in view this second imprisonment.

Paul's opponents have spread in the province of Asia, and the situation has become much worse since Paul wrote 1 Timothy (2 Tim 1:15). Paul could be discouraged; like Jeremiah in the Old Testament, his life is to end while God's people are turned away from him, and he will not live to see the fruit of his ministry. His consolation, however, is that he has been faithful to God (4:7-8), and he exhorts Timothy to follow in his paths no matter what the cost. (That the letter was preserved almost certainly indicates that Timothy did persevere.) The letter is dominated by the themes of persecution from outside the church and false teaching within, and Paul's final exhortation to a young minister is to focus on the Scriptures and the sound teaching to be found in them.³⁶ Kent Jackson explains, "Paul's final prophecy of the abandonment of true religion is found in the last chapter of 2 Timothy, where he talks about men replacing "sound doctrine" with "fables." Again, Paul saw a willful rejection of true doctrine and its replacement by doctrines that were untrue but more to the liking of the hearers. Notice that the people involved, although unwilling to put up with correct teachings, desired teachings nonetheless. Having "itching ears"—a desire to hear religion—they would acquire teachers whose doctrines were acceptable to them. [2 Tim. 2:3–4]."

Outline

³⁶ Keener, p. 616.

I. Introduction and Greeting (1:1-2)

A. Identification of author and recipient

B. Greeting and blessing

II. Exhortation to Remain Faithful (1:3-18)

A. Paul's thanksgiving and prayers for Timothy (1:3-7)

When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also (2 Tim. 1.5).

Ann Madsen shares the following:

The hope of every mother and grandmother is underscored in these few words. As a woman seeks to increase in faith and good works she does so not to her own glory, but to fashion a legacy for her children and her children's children to inherit. Lois and Eunice lived in a generation when the gospel was a fresh, bright gift, newly restored from God in the person of his son Jesus Christ. How they must have rejoiced as they received its truth into their lives. Their home was Lystra, a city in the Roman province of Galatia. Eunice was a Jewess married to a Greek, whose name is not given. We may infer that she was a widow much of her life. Ties of kinship strengthened the family in that day where a grandmother and mother joined forces and faith to train their choice son. Paul gives evidence of the teachings of Timothy's youth when he says to him, 'from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.' (2 Tim. 3:15.) He also suggests, 'continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them.' (2 Tim. 3:14.) Timothy was converted by Paul in Lystra at a young age and may have been as young as 15. How difficult it must have been for his mother and grandmother to send him away with Paul at such a tender age. His further training was completed by Paul, who loved him as his own son and spoke of him always with great pride. Although only one verse tells of Timothy's grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice, we see their likenesses reflected in the man he became. His loyalty and devotion, his willingness to consecrate his all to the cause of Christ, his capacity for selflessness, gentleness, and love—all were qualities present in this youth who left his home to become a champion for Christ. These same qualities allowed his mother and grandmother to send him away with their confidence and trust. Paul planted gospel seeds in fertile ground that had been prepared by two loving women.³⁷

Craig S. Keener adds:

The "faith" of Timothy's mother and grandmother was Jewish (Jewish Christian by the time Paul met them—Acts 16:1). Jewish fathers were primarily responsible for their sons' instruction in the law, but Timothy's father was a Gentile (Acts 16:1, 3). Those without a living religious father also learned from grandmothers if they were still living (cf. Tobit 1:8). Most education included corporal discipline, but some ancient education experts stressed instead encouraging the child, making him or her feel successful, provoking competition and making learning enjoyable

³⁷ Ann N. Madsen, "[Cameos: The Women of the New Testament](#)," *Ensign*, Sept. 1975.

(Quintilian). Ancient writers differed on whether public instructors or home schooling was better, provided the former held classes small enough to permit private instruction.³⁸

B. Encouragement to guard the faith and fan into flame the gift of God (1:8-14)

C. Examples of traitors, faithfulness and loyalty (1:15-18)

This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes. (2 Tim. 1.15).

In a remarkably short span of just over thirty years since the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, signs of apostasy are widespread everywhere Paul has preached. Doctrines have been distorted, and even individuals mentioned here by the names of Phygellus and Hymenaeus have turned away from the Christian cause. Hymenaeus, specifically identified as an apostate residing in Ephesus (1 Timothy 1:3, 20), is not the only one to have succumbed to this trend. Paul had previously prophesied about this looming apostasy a decade earlier, as documented in Acts 20.29, forewarning of the arrival of (λύκοι βαρεῖς) "grievous wolves" following his departure.

"he ... was not ashamed of my chain" (2 Tim. 1.16).

Chains and imprisonment were normally matters of shame, and people were often embarrassed to be associated with those so stigmatized. "Onesimus" (Philem 10) could be a contraction for Onesiphorus, but the person Paul describes here does not sound like a recently freed slave. Because Paul speaks of a whole "household" of believers, the Onesiphorus to whom he refers may have had slaves and other dependents. "Refresh" is the language of hospitality, which included housing travelers; Onesiphorus must have had a large home and housed Paul whenever he came to Ephesus. He is a good example to Timothy of one not "ashamed" (1:8, 12; 2:15).³⁹

III. Charge to Endure and Continue in the Gospel (2:1-13)

A. Exhortation to pass on the teachings to faithful men (2:1-2)

B. Illustrations of a soldier, an athlete, and a hardworking farmer (2:3-7)

3 thou, therefore, suffer evil as a good soldier of Jesus Christ; 4 no one serving as a soldier did entangle himself with the affairs of life, that him who did enlist him he may please; 5 and if also any one may strive, he is not crowned, except he may strive lawfully; 6 the labouring husbandman it behoveth first of the fruits to partake; 7 be considering what things I say, for the Lord give to thee understanding in all things. (2 Tim. 3-7 YLT)

In 2 Timothy 2:3-7, Paul imparts important teachings to Timothy. He begins by using the metaphor of a soldier to encourage Timothy to endure hardship and strive to please the Lord. Paul emphasizes the need for single-minded dedication, stating that soldiers do not get entangled in civilian affairs if they want to please their commanding officer.⁴⁰ Paul then shifts to the imagery of an athlete, highlighting the

³⁸ Keener, p. 617.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 618.

⁴⁰ Philosophers emphasized the total commitment involved in being a true philosopher. They also compared their task to that of soldiers and athletes fighting a war or running a race. Soldiers were not even allowed to marry during their term of service (although some had unofficial concubines while they were stationed somewhere) and

importance of abiding by the rules and competing according to them. He emphasizes the necessity of discipline and self-control in order to attain the prize. Lastly, Paul likens himself to a hardworking farmer who labors diligently and deserves to share in the harvest. Through these metaphors, Paul teaches Timothy about the perseverance, dedication, and discipline required in the Christian life, urging him to remain steadfast in his faith and ministry.

C. Emphasis on the enduring nature of the gospel (2:8-13)

IV. Warning against False Teachers (2:14-26)

A. Exhortation to handle God's word accurately (2:14-19)

“Study to shew thyself approved unto God... shun profane and vain babblings... their word will eat as a canker” (2 Tim. 2:15-17).

The Ephesian community seemed to struggle with contentious arguments and meaningless talk that had a detrimental impact on their spiritual well-being. Paul describes these behaviors as destructive, akin to a spreading cancer or causing ruin for those who engage in them. In response, Paul advises Timothy to diligently teach and proclaim the "word of truth," emphasizing the importance of conveying genuine, meaningful teachings to counteract the harmful effects of quarreling and empty discussions.

Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some. (2 Tim. 2:18).

The challenge arose from the presence of corrupt Gnostic teachers who propagated the belief that the resurrection had already taken place and that the remaining believers had missed it. Additionally, there are indications that these Gnostics claimed that Jesus had already returned and that a physical resurrection would not occur at all. These teachers allegorized and symbolized the doctrine, stripping it of its literal meaning. The early Christian theologian Irenaeus described their false spirituality as an invincible materialism that supported their denial of the bodily resurrection.⁴¹ The Gnostics' perspective aligned more closely with Jewish sects like the Sadducees and Essenes, who rejected the idea of a physical resurrection, considering nothing material to be truly eternal.⁴²

B. Avoidance of foolish controversies and godless chatter (2:20-23)

20 But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. 21 If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work (2 Tim. 2:20-21).

In 2 Timothy 2:20-21, Paul is teaching Timothy about the importance of living a life of purity and consecration to God. He uses the analogy of a great house with various types of vessels to illustrate his point.⁴³ Paul explains that in a large house, there are vessels made of different materials, some for

were to be strictly devoted to their service for over twenty years; probably over half usually survived to retire. Keener, p. 618.

⁴¹ Irenæus, [Against Heresies Book 2, chapter 31](#), 2; cf. Tertullians. de Resurr. 19.

⁴² Charles John Ellicott, [Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers](#), 2018, 2 Timothy 2:18.

⁴³ When used figuratively in ancient literature, “vessels” (kjv, nasb) usually meant people (or their bodies as containers of their souls, a meaning that would be irrelevant here). Expensive vessels were reserved for special

honorable use and some for dishonorable use. He encourages Timothy to cleanse himself from dishonorable things so that he can be a vessel for honorable use, set apart for God's purposes.

Paul emphasizes the need for believers to pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with others who call on the Lord with a pure heart. He urges Timothy to flee from youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, avoiding foolish and ignorant controversies that only lead to strife. By highlighting the importance of personal holiness and avoiding sinful behaviors, Paul teaches Timothy the need for personal sanctification and consecration to be used effectively by God in His service. He encourages Timothy to live a life that reflects the values and character of Christ, being dedicated and prepared for every good work that God has called him to do.

“But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes” (2 Tim. 2:23).

As a leader, Timothy possessed an understanding of the distinction between teaching and engaging in debates. Teaching involves a selfless approach, focused on imparting knowledge and guiding others, while debating tends to be driven by self-interest and a desire to win arguments. Contentious attitudes and disputes were prevalent in the early church, a concern that the Lord Himself addressed during His visit to the Nephites (3 Nephi 11:29). Even at the onset of our dispensation, before the translation of the Book of Mormon and the establishment of the Church, the Lord emphasized the need to establish His gospel without excessive contention. Satan, He taught, incites people to engage in contentious debates over doctrinal matters, causing them to stray from the truth (D&C 10:63).

C. Qualities of a servant of the Lord and the goal of restoring opponents (2:24-26)

V. Prediction of Difficult Times and Faithfulness (3:1-17)

A. Description of the difficult times to come (3:1-9)

Elder Neil L. Andersen taught:

Ours is a day long foreseen. We live in the perilous times spoken of by the Apostle Paul...And yet, we should not be intimidated or overly alarmed. These events have all been foreseen. In this deteriorating situation, the kingdom of God will strengthen. President Brigham Young prophesied, 'It was revealed to me in the commencement of this Church, that the Church would spread, prosper, grow and extend, and that in proportion to the spread of the Gospel among the nations of the earth, so would the power of Satan rise.' (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, 1978, p. 72).⁴⁴

“Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses...” (2 Tim. 3:8).

Paul here employs Jewish tradition not found in the *Old Testament. In a widespread Jewish tradition (various elements appear in Pseudo-Philo, the Dead Sea Scrolls, rabbis, etc.), Jannes and his brother Jambres were Pharaoh's magicians who opposed Moses in Exodus 7:11. Even pagan accounts (Pliny the Elder and Apuleius) record them as magicians of Moses' time

purposes like banquets; the cheapest vessels were expendable and in Jewish circles would be shattered if rendered impure. Keener, p. 619-620.

⁴⁴ Elder Andersen, "[Teaching Our Children to Love the Prophets](#)," *Ensign*, Apr. 1996.

(presumably dependent on Jewish tradition). Because Paul's opponents appeal to Jewish myths (1 Tim 1:4; 2 Tim 4:4; Tit 1:14), Paul cites such stories to fill in the names for these characters.⁴⁵

B. Timothy's faith and example from Paul (3:10-13)

"Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra" (2 Tim. 3.11).

Timothy's familiarity with Paul's sufferings in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra (Acts 13.50–14.19) seems to stem from his early exposure to the Christian message through his family, prior to his involvement in Paul's travels (Acts 16.1-3). We read in Acts 14.19 that Paul was stoned in Antioch and Iconium and that he experienced much opposition there.

C. The inspiration and authority of Scripture (3:14-17)

VI. Final Charge and Farewell (4:1-22)

A. Charge to preach the word and fulfill ministry (4:1-5)

Elder M. Russell Ballard taught:

Early Christians endured the challenges of persecution and hardship. ***Peter and his brethren had a difficult time holding the Church together and keeping the doctrine pure.*** They traveled extensively and wrote to one another about the problems they were facing, but information moved so slowly and the Church and its teachings were so new that heading off false teachings before they became firmly entrenched was difficult. The New Testament indicates that the early Apostles worked hard to preserve the church that Jesus Christ left to their care and keeping, but they knew their efforts would ultimately be in vain. Paul wrote to the Thessalonian Saints, who were anxiously anticipating the second coming of Christ, that 'that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first' (2 Thes. 2:3). He also warned Timothy that 'the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; ... And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables' (2 Tim. 4:3-4).⁴⁶

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Tim. 4.3-4).

Demagogues who told people what they wanted to hear were common among politicians, public speakers and philosophers in Greco-Roman society, and false prophets in the Old Testament (prophets who told people what they wanted to hear were usually false; cf. Jer 6:14; 8:11; Ezek 13:10, 16; Mic 3:5; see also comment on Lk 6:26). "Desiring to have one's ears tickled" means desiring to hear only what one enjoys; Lucian describes in these terms people who like to listen to slander.⁴⁷

We read other prophets rebuking this kind of desire. For example, in Helaman 13 the prophet Samuel rebukes the wicked Nephites:

⁴⁵ Keener, p. 621.

⁴⁶ Elder M. Russell Ballard, "[Restored Truth](#)," *Ensign*, Nov. 1994.

⁴⁷ Keener, p. 622.

If a prophet come among you and declareth unto you the word of the Lord, which testifieth of your sins and iniquities, **ye are angry with him**, and **cast him out** and seek all manner of ways to destroy him; yea, you will say that **he is a false prophet**, and that he is a sinner, and **of the devil**, **because he testifieth that your deeds are evil**. But behold, if a man shall come among you and shall say: **Do this, and there is no iniquity; do that and ye shall not suffer**; yea, he will say: Walk after the pride of your own hearts; yea, **walk after the pride of your eyes**, and **do whatsoever your heart desireth**—and if a man shall come among you and say this, **ye will receive him**, and say that he is a prophet. Yea, **ye will lift him up**, and ye will give unto him of your substance; **ye will give unto him of your gold**, and of your silver, and ye will clothe him with costly apparel; and because he speaketh flattering words unto you, and he saith that all is well, then ye will not find fault with him. O ye wicked and ye perverse generation; ye hardened and ye stiffnecked people, how long will ye suppose that the Lord will suffer you? Yea, how long will ye suffer yourselves to be led by foolish and blind guides? Yea, how long will ye choose darkness rather than light? (Hel. 13.26-29)

B. Paul's personal testimony and anticipation of his departure (4:6-8)

For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand (2 Tim. 4.6).

In 2 Timothy 4.6, Paul metaphorically describes his impending death as being poured out like a drink offering, drawing on the imagery of a Jewish temple sacrifice. It is a poignant image that reflects Paul's deep sense of surrender to the Lord and his awareness that his earthly journey is coming to an end. Throughout his ministry, Paul experienced imprisonment and faced numerous perils, but now he senses that the Spirit is gently whispering that his mission is reaching its conclusion.

C. Personal instructions and requests to Timothy (4:9-18)

“Demas has forsaken me” (2 Tim. 4.10).

Apparently Demas (probably an abbreviation for Demetrius, but the name that Paul always uses for him) expected to find less suffering there than he would have faced had he remained with Paul the prisoner.⁴⁸

“Take Mark, and bring him with you” (2 Tim. 4.11).

Although “Mark” was a common name, among the limited number of close associates of Paul it almost certainly refers to John Mark of Acts, as in Colossians 4:10. Others besides Luke were with him in Rome (2 Tim 4:21), but Luke was the only traveling companion he and Timothy had shared; he was probably also the only one in Rome specifically to be with Paul.⁴⁹

“Tychicus have I sent to Ephesus” (2 Tim. 4.12).

Tychicus is bearer of the letter (cf. 1 Tim 1:3), a mutual traveling companion of Paul and Timothy (Acts 20:4; Col 4:7). Because the only Roman mail service was by imperial envoys for government use, personal mail had to be carried by travelers.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 623.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

D. Final greetings and closing remarks (4:19-22)

Titus

Who was Titus?

We know less about Titus than we do of Timothy. Curiously, he is not mentioned in Acts. From Paul we learn that he was a Gentile, whose lack of circumcision was a key factor in Paul's securing the right of the Gentiles to a Law-free gospel (Gal. 2:1, 3). He, too, was an early co-worker of Paul's (the event in Gal. 2:1 probably dates ca. A.D. 48-49) who became a trusted compatriot throughout Paul's life. To him Paul had entrusted the ticklish situation in Corinth, which included both the delivery of a very difficult letter (see 2 Cor. 2:3-4, 13; 7:6-16) and the gathering of the Corinthian gift for the poor in Jerusalem (2 Cor. 8:16-24).

According to the letter that bears his name, Titus had been left on Crete, after Paul and he had evangelized the island, to set the churches in order. But he was soon to be replaced by Artemas (see Titus 3:12) and was to join Paul in Nicopolis. Apparently he had done so, because according to 2 Timothy 4:10 he had gone on to Dalmatia, presumably for ministry. Although one cannot be certain, Titus was probably older than Timothy. He also seems to have been of stronger temperament. Paul calls him his "true [legitimate] son;" which at least means that his ministry is a legitimate expression of Paul's; most likely it also indicates that he is Paul's convert (cf. 1 Cor. 4:14-15; Philem. 10).

It should be noted that the pictures that emerge in the Pastoral Epistles are consonant with what we learn elsewhere. A pseudepigrapher, of course, could have so read Paul's earlier letters and painted his own pictures accordingly. But that would have come very close to his having done research, which is highly unlikely. Moreover, the various movements of Titus (Titus 3:12; 2 Tim. 4:10) are not the stuff of pseudepigraphy, which would be expected to have drawn a consistent, easy-to-follow picture of events. These matters about Timothy and Titus, at least, favor the authenticity of the letters.⁵¹

Titus

Outline

I. Introduction

A. Authorship and Date of Writing

Paul entrusted Titus with the task of establishing church leadership in Crete (1:5). The opposition and false teachings addressed in Titus resemble those encountered in Ephesus, indicating a rapid spread of error among Christian congregations. The opponents include those from the circumcision group that Paul encountered in Galatia, who sought to influence and correct his converts (1:10, 14). While these opponents initially gained some followers, their views eventually diminished. However, Paul did not witness the complete triumph of his own teachings before his passing (2 Tim 1:15).

It should be noted that there are debates among scholars regarding the authenticity of Titus (as well as the other Pastorals). The stylistic and linguistic variations in Titus, compared to other Pauline letters, have led some scholars to propose that it was written by a disciple or follower of Paul, commonly

⁵¹ Gordon D. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy*, Hendrickson Publishers, 1988, p. 2-3.

referred to as a "Deutero-Pauline" author. These scholars suggest that the letter was composed in the late first century or early second century, after Paul's death, by someone influenced by his teachings.⁵²

B. Recipient: Titus

This epistle was written by Paul to Titus, whom Paul referred to as "mine own son after the common faith" (Titus 1:4). Titus was Greek (Galatians 2:3) and had been converted to the gospel by Paul himself. After his conversion, Titus labored with Paul to spread the gospel and organize the Church. He helped gather donations for the poor in Jerusalem (2 Corinthians 8:6, 16–23) and also accompanied Paul to the Jerusalem council (Galatians 2:1). Paul entrusted Titus to take to Corinth Paul's first epistle to the Saints living there (2 Corinthians 7:5–15). Paul wrote to Titus to strengthen him in his assignment to lead and care for the branch of the Church in Crete in spite of opposition (see Titus 1:5, 10–11; 2:15; 3:10).⁵³

C. Location: Crete

During the first century when the Apostle Paul wrote the Epistle to Titus, Crete was a part of the Roman Empire. As a Roman province known as "Creta et Cyrenaica," the island was governed by a Roman governor appointed by the emperor. During the reign of Tiberius, from AD 14 to 37, Crete served as a place of exile for individuals from Rome, as mentioned by the historian Tacitus in his work "Annals" (4.21). In addition to the presence of Roman administrators, Crete had a local governing official known as the Koinon, who played a significant role in preserving the island's distinct Greek identity. The Koinon organized quinquennial games, sporting events held every five years, and even minted its own coins. These efforts aimed to maintain the cultural and political autonomy of Crete within the larger framework of the Roman Empire. Crete was a strategically important location, and the Romans maintained a strong military presence to assert control and safeguard against piracy.

Crete boasted a thriving economy, thanks to its fertile soil and favorable climate. The island was primarily agricultural, cultivating crops such as olives, grapes, and grains. These agricultural products formed the backbone of Crete's economy, with surplus goods being exported to other regions. The island also excelled in the production of pottery, textiles, and other luxury items, contributing to its status as a trading hub in the Mediterranean.

Religiously, Crete exhibited a diverse landscape influenced by both Greek and Eastern traditions. The island's traditional religion was polytheistic, with reverence given to various Greek gods and goddesses. Cults and mystery religions were also prevalent, offering alternative spiritual practices. The cult of Asclepius, a god of healing, was confirmed in at least eighteen locations. The Egyptian cult of Isis and Serapis is attested as well. The worship of the Roman emperor as a divine figure was common throughout the Roman Empire, and Crete was no exception. Jewish communities existed on the island, and while Christianity was likely in its early stages during this period, its presence and influence may not have been extensive.

D. Purpose and Context of the Letter

II. Appointment of Elders in Crete (Titus 1:1-16)

⁵² For a more in depth examination of these arguments, see [Authorship of the Pauline Epistles](#), Wikipedia, accessed 7.10.23.

⁵³ [Introduction to the Epistle of Paul to Titus](#), *New Testament Seminary Teacher Manual*, accessed 7.10.23.

A. Greeting and Introduction (Titus 1:1-4)

B. Instructions for Appointing Qualified Elders (Titus 1:5-9)

“Ordain elders in every city” (Titus 1.5).

“In every city” meant that the different house churches in each city would each have their own leaders. During the Roman period, Crete had approximately twenty towns that are known to have existed. These towns had their own governance and issued their own coins. Among the notable cities in early Roman times were Gortyn, which served as the administrative capital and gained fame for its “Gortyn Code,” a collection of classical laws. Knossos, a Roman colony likely established by Augustus, was renowned for its Bronze Age palace. Other cities such as Eleutherna, Hierapytna, and Kydonia, though less explored, also held significance. Gortyn, situated in the southern part of the island, was in proximity to the areas Paul encountered along the Cretan coast during his journey to Rome.

There is a possibility that Titus was stationed in or near Gortyn, the provincial capital of Crete. As an apostolic delegate, his mission might have involved the important task of establishing a group of elders in the churches of each of the approximately twenty cities on the island. This suggests that Titus had a significant role in organizing and strengthening the Christian communities throughout Crete, ensuring their spiritual well-being and effective governance.

C. Description of False Teachers and Their Corrective Measures (Titus 1:10-16)

“Who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre’s sake” (Titus 1.11).

“Upsetting whole families” (nasb) could mean that, by gaining entrance to families, these false teachers were disrupting entire households (cf. 2 Tim 3:6-7), or that they are “subverting” (kjv) households. Perhaps they are undermining the authority structures current in the culture (Tit 2:4-5, 9-10); less likely, they may oppose marriage or sex within marriage on *ascetic grounds (see comment on 1 Tim 4:1-3; 1 Cor 7:1-7). Neither error was characteristic of Palestinian or Diaspora Judaism, although many Essenes advocated celibacy. The accusation of “teaching for gain” was commonly leveled against traveling teachers of morality, probably including Paul (1 Thess 2:5). A writer long before Paul charged that the Cretans were known to be more fond of gain and more dishonest than any other people.⁵⁴

Κρητες **ἀεὶ ψεύσται** κακὰ θηρία γαστέρες ἀργαί “The Cretians *are always liars*, evil beasts, slow bellies” (Titus 1.12).

The quote attributed to Paul in this passage has been linked to multiple sources, with the earliest known attribution dating back to Epimenides, a sixth-century BC teacher from Knossos in Crete.

Keener makes this observation:

(The real source may more likely be Hesiod by way of the third-century b.c. Callimachus’s *Hymn to Zeus*. As was widely known, Crete claimed to possess both the birthplace and grave of Zeus; the latter claim drew outsiders’ scorn and charge of falsehood. But that the words were often attributed to a Cretan in Paul’s day is sufficient for him to make the point for Titus. Paul is clearly not citing his own view, because he would not consider a liar to be a true prophet. Greek

⁵⁴ Keener, p. 627.

logicians played with the claim by a Cretan that all Cretans were liars: if he had told the truth, he was lying; but if he was lying, then they reasoned that all Cretans told the truth—reasonable, except that this Cretan had not!}⁵⁵

This witness is true. Wherefore, rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith (Titus 1.13).

Ancient ethnographers attributed certain characteristics (both good and bad) to various peoples whose cultures emphasized those traits. (That Paul could cite these negative characteristics of Cretans in a letter that Cretan believers would hear suggests that he must have been on very good terms with them and that Cretans recognized these characteristics of their own culture; he is not offering here a model for crosscultural sensitivity in normal situations.)⁵⁶

Another commentator gave this explanation:

Before pursuing these opponents further about their teaching, Paul gives the argument an unexpected turn. He is reminded that the conduct of these false teachers is very much in accord with the known reputation of Crete, expressed in an epigram of Epimenides (ca. 600 B.C.): "**Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons:**" What he intends by this seems clear enough. It is not a blanket indictment of all Cretans; rather, he is reminding them that in the case of the false teachers, Epimenides, **one of their own prophets**, certainly gave **testimony** which was **true**. These teachers are **liars** (cf. "mere talkers and deceivers;" v. 10). Perhaps they also fit the rest of the description (**evil brutes**, "rebellious people" [v. 10]; **lazy gluttons**, "for the sake of dishonest gain" [v. 11]). In any case, he is trying to shame them—both the teachers and any who would follow them—by saying, "It's all very Cretan of them;" in the sense of the island's unsavory reputation on the outside.

The quote itself has an interesting history. According to a well-established tradition found in Callimachus' *Hymn to Zeus* 8 (305-240 B.C.) and Lucian's *Lover of Lies* 3 (cf. Timon 6; ca. AD. 120-180), the reason that Cretans are always liars was that they claimed to possess a tomb of Zeus, who, of course, as a god, cannot have died!

But what did Paul mean by calling Epimenides **one of their own prophets**? Possibly he intended something similar to John 11:49-51, where Caiaphas spoke prophetically without necessarily intending to do so. More likely Paul is reflecting the common reputation of Epimenides, whom Plato called a "divine man" and of whom Aristotle said, "He used to divine, not the future, but only things that were past but obscure" (*The Art of Rhetoric* 3.17, Loeb). The **truth** of what he had said about Cretans now evidenced in the false teachers makes the title a permissible one.

Therefore, he continues, **rebuke them sharply**. This is the only time in the letter that Titus himself is called upon to address the false teachers (cf. 1 Timothy everywhere). The word **rebuke**

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 627. He continues, "By Paul's time Epimenides was reputed to have been a traveling wonderworker, teacher and prophet; as usual in Greek thought, the line between poetic and prophetic inspiration could be thin. Although the saying seems to have become proverbial (one commentator declares that "to cretize" became slang for "to lie"), it is not impossible that Paul knew the works of Epimenides; it seems much more likely, however, that he knew only the attributed saying or at most an anthology containing sayings attributed to Epimenides. Crete also had a bad reputation for arrogance, treachery and greed. "Gluttony" was associated with love of pleasure as opposed to love of knowledge, see Philippians 3:19."

⁵⁶ Ibid.

(*elengchein*) occurred in verse 9 as the task of the elders (**refute**; cf. 1 Tim. 5:20; 2 Tim. 3:16; Titus 2:15). Used with the adverb *apotomös* (sharply) the imperative more likely means "correct them rigorously" (Goodspeed), since the intent is **so that they will be sound in the faith**.

This last clause opens the question about to whom **they** refer. To the false teachers? or to the Cretan believers as well? The context demands that the antecedent is primarily the false teachers. But the corrective aim of the rebuke, as well as the content of verse 14, may point beyond them to all the believers (however, see 2 Tim. 2:25-26, where Paul possibly still holds out hope for the opponents themselves).⁵⁷

III. Conduct and Teachings for Various Groups (Titus 2:1-3:11)

A. Speak Sound Doctrine (Titus 2:1)

Σὺ δὲ λάλει ᾧ **πρέπει** τῇ ὑγιαίνουσῃ διδασκαλίᾳ. But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine (Titus 2.1). I translate this as: "And yet, you are to say **the things which stand out** as being sound teaching."

Because the false teachers were subverting households, the "sound" teaching (cf. 2:15) Paul supplies in this case applies especially to household relationships (2:2-14). Households were defined in terms of hierarchy and dependence (e.g., slaves to masters or clients to patrons) rather than strictly in terms of blood relationship.⁵⁸

B. Instructions regarding Household Codes (Titus 2:2-10)

Due to the Romans' suspicions towards minority religions, particularly those from the Eastern regions that incorporated ecstatic practices in their worship, there was a tendency for these religions to adopt "household codes" in line with the teachings of philosophers. These codes provided guidance to male heads of households on how to interact with each member, especially wives, children, and slaves. The scope of these codes extended beyond household management and encompassed aspects such as relations with parents, responsibilities to the state (3:1), and obligations to the gods. Given that early Christian gatherings took place in homes and were seen as an extended family centered around the patron hosting the believers, these instructions naturally extended to various relationships within the church.

The early Christians' adaptation of Roman social conventions held value both in terms of the church's testimony to society and in reducing unnecessary opposition to the Gospel (2:5, 8, 10). It is important to note that modern readers often tend to perceive and emphasize only the traditional values of their own culture. However, Paul's writings address the prevailing Roman values of his time, which included the household slavery system, distinct from other models of slavery seen in various societies.

Peter Enns discusses slavery and how it has been viewed in the Bible and the Christian tradition:

As for slavery, Paul could have been clearer. **He never actually argues for it, but he does assume its legitimacy, as does the Old Testament; he never once calls the institution itself into question and certainly never abolishes it.** That being said, major props to Paul for pushing the

⁵⁷ Fee, p. 179-180.

⁵⁸ Keener, p. 628.

social boundaries of his day, for example, when he claims that slaves are “equal” to free persons in God’s eyes (Gal. 3:28)—which did not accord with the thinking of the ancient Israelites (recall from chapter 3 that slaves did not have the rights of free Israelites). In a society based on honor and shame, where the social pecking order was sacred, claiming that slaves and free persons were the same in God’s eyes would be like telling white supremacists that they are no better in God’s eyes than people of color. So Paul is pushing the boundaries. But the church has had a far from flawless track record when it comes to slavery. There are instances that are horrid and shameful throughout the history of Christianity, not least of which is the saga of buying and selling Africans (to the glory of God, of course). And yes, as hard as it is to believe, even today I have heard Christians making atrocious arguments from their rulebook Bible for why slavery of non-white humans is part of God’s design.

Having said that, if you asked your average Joe and Jane on the street what Christians think about slavery, they’d probably say that Christians denounce slavery as immoral. Generally speaking, in other words, the church is known for having accepted Paul’s boundary-pushing trajectory and pushing it farther. Freedom and equality eventually won out as the norm over passages like, Slaves, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling (Eph. 6:5), a compliant go-to passage of nineteenth-century Southern slave owners.

Actually, slavery is a really good example for us to look at here. That issue caused a real crisis for Christians in the nineteenth century who thought the Bible held the clear answer. ***The problem is that Northern abolitionists and Southern anti-abolitionists both made their case by pointing to the same Bible.***

The thing is, when the Bible is viewed as a once-for-all rulebook, the anti-abolitionists had a slam-dunk case, because you have passages from both parts of the Bible that assume the institution of slavery. The abolitionists had to argue differently—on the basis of the Bible’s trajectory toward justice and equality. That type of argument is a wisdom argument, tied not to the words on the page, but to discerning where the Spirit seems to be leading. I’m glad to say that the wisdom way of handling slavery won the day—at least in theory. The racism that lay beneath is, tragically, still with us.

But my point is that the just way of addressing human slavery had to go beyond the Bible—it had to take seriously “the moment” and read it well.

The Bible couldn’t be counted on to settle a pressing moral issue of the day—whether God favors light-skinned over dark-skinned humans (if they even are human). That should have been a wake-up call to everyone that knowing what to do can’t be left to finding a Bible verse.

The Bible isn’t set up for that sort of thing. The Bible is ambiguous enough for us to find there what we already believe. The answer to this issue would need to be found elsewhere—in the realm of wisdom, not Bible verses.⁵⁹

C. Reflection on God's Saving Grace (Titus 2:11-14)

⁵⁹ Peter Enns, [How the Bible Actually Works](#), Harper One, 2020, p. 183-184 electronic version.

D. Reminder to Submit to Authorities and Show Good Works (Titus 3:1-2)

Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work (Titus 3.1).

The exhortations concerning allegiance to the state and submission to its authorities were frequently intertwined with the instructions on household duties. In fact, they held comparable, if not greater, significance in countering accusations of subversion, as the Romans particularly detested cults they considered rebellious. By emphasizing loyalty to the state, these exhortations aimed to dispel any suspicions and slander surrounding such religious groups. It is worth noting that household duties were not the sole focus; rather, the admonitions regarding allegiance to the state played an integral role in safeguarding against accusations of sedition.

L. Tom Perry taught:

As Church members, we live under the banner of many different flags. How important it is that we understand our place and our position in the lands in which we live! We should be familiar with the history, heritage, and laws of the lands that govern us. In those countries that allow us the right to participate in the affairs of government, we should use our free agency and be actively engaged in supporting and defending the principles of truth, right, and freedom.⁶⁰

E. Reflection on God's Saving Work and Renewal (Titus 3:3-7)

F. Instructions for Dealing with Divisive People (Titus 3:9-11)

10 A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject; 11 Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself (Titus 3.10-11).

Before bringing a person before the religious assembly for discipline; this procedure gave the offender ample opportunity to repent. One severe form of punishment against an unrepentant offender was exclusion from the religious community for a set time or until repentance ensued. Because Paul uses this penalty only in the most extreme circumstances, the divisiveness in view here must be serious; the person has already excluded himself from the life of the community.⁶¹

President Hinckley taught:

Every individual in the Church is free to think as he pleases, but when an individual speaks openly and actively and takes measures to enlist others in opposition to the Church and its programs and doctrines, then we feel there is cause for action.⁶²

IV. The Grace of God and the Christian Life (Titus 3:12-15)

A. Final Exhortations and Encouragement (Titus 3:12-14)

B. Closing Benediction (Titus 3:15)

⁶⁰ Elder L. Tom Perry, "[A Meaningful Celebration](#)," *Ensign*, Nov. 1987.

⁶¹ Keener, *Background*, p. 630-631.

⁶² [Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley](#), Deseret Book, 1997, p. 96.

Philemon

Outline

I. Introduction

Slavery and the Setting of Philemon

Craig Keener provides this useful background information regarding 1st century slavery:

Like other slave laws, Roman law addressed the dual status of slaves: by nature they were persons, but from an economic standpoint they were treated as property. The head of a household could legally execute his slaves, and they would all be executed if the head of the household were murdered. Slaves composed a large part of the agricultural work force in parts of the empire (e.g., Italy); they competed with free peasants for the same work. The mine slaves had the worst life, dying quickly under the harsh conditions of the mines. Male household slaves generally had life better, though female household slaves (and sometimes boys) were vulnerable to sexual exploitation by slaveholders. Household slaves were the only kind of slaves addressed in Paul's writings.

But urban slaves were found in all professions and generally had more opportunity for social advancement than free peasants; unlike the vast majority of slaves in the United States and the Caribbean, they were able to work for and achieve freedom, and some estimate that as many as half of household slaves may have had the opportunity to become free at some point in their lives (at least if they lived long enough). Some freed household slaves became independently wealthy; at least in Roman custom, their former holders became their patrons and were supposed to help them advance in society. Economically, socially, and with regard to freedom to determine their future, many of these male household slaves were better off than average free persons in the Roman Empire; many—scholars commonly say most— free persons were rural peasants working as tenant farmers on the vast estates of wealthy landowners.

Some philosophers said that slaves were equals as people, but in this period they never suggested that masters should free their slaves. (Earlier Stoics were more radical, but the movement eventually became more mainstream. Cynics invited prospective followers to abandon everything because they needed nothing, not to free slaves because slavery was wrong.) Nearly everyone took the institution of slavery for granted, except early Stoics who said that it was “against nature.” Paul's message to Philemon goes beyond other documents of his time in not only pleading for clemency for an escaped slave but suggesting that he be released (to continue working with Paul in ministry) because he is now a Christian. So powerful was this precedent that many of the earliest U.S. slaveholders did not want their slaves to be exposed to Christianity, for fear that they would be compelled to free them; the Christian message had to be domesticated (like early Stoicism) to become neutral or supportive of slavery. Cf. Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978).

Slaves, especially skilled or educated males, were often sent on errands and trusted as agents with their masters' property. Such slaves could sometimes earn enough money on the side to buy their freedom (although their earnings legally belonged to their master, slaves were normally permitted to control the money themselves); still, a few took the opportunity of an

errand to escape. Because a safe escape required them to get far away from where their master lived (in the case Paul addresses here, from Phrygia to Rome)⁶³, they might take some of their master's money with them. Recapture normally meant severe punishment.

Such theft may be the point of verse 18, but Paul might there account for the possibility that Philemon wants repayment for Onesimus himself. From the standpoint of ancient slaveholders, the lost time of an escaped slave was lost money and was legally viewed as stolen property, to which one harboring him was liable. But more important, slaves themselves were not cheap, and Philemon might have already bought another slave to replace him. Slaves could cost between 750 sesterces (187.5 denarii) and 700,000 sesterces (175,000 denarii), with 2,000 as an average. (Keep in mind that a denarius was close to a day's wage for many farmers in this period.)

Old Testament law required harboring escaped slaves (Deut 23:15-16; contrast Josephus, *Jewish War* 3.373), but Roman law required Paul to return Onesimus to his master, with serious penalties if he failed to do so. Paul uses his relationship with Philemon to seek Onesimus's release: in a standard "letter of recommendation," one would plead with someone of equal (or sometimes lower) status on behalf of someone of lower status. Paul was not Philemon's equal socially, but as his spiritual father he had grounds to claim the equality that characterized ancient friendship.⁶⁴

Lane Johnson provides this background:

The epistle to Philemon is a special letter of intercession on behalf of the runaway slave Onesimus, who had earlier fled his master Philemon, and possibly taken with him some of the latter's money or property. Ordinarily, under contemporary law, a runaway slave could be subject to frightful penalties. However, while in Rome Onesimus was converted to the gospel by Paul and had proved himself 'profitable' (Philem. 1:10-11); therefore, when Tychicus went to Colosse (bearing the epistle to the Colossians), Paul sent Onesimus along, with an appeal to Philemon to receive him in the spirit of forgiveness as 'a faithful and beloved brother.' (See Col. 4:7-9.)

Aside from the fact that it is a remarkable example of a tactful appeal, this epistle shows that the gospel of Jesus Christ is an equalizing force in the lives of men regardless of differences in social status. Because Onesimus had come repentant into the gospel brotherhood, Philemon was asked to receive him, not as a servant, but as 'a brother beloved, ... both in the flesh, and in the Lord.' (Philem. 1:15, 16.)⁶⁵

A. Greeting and prayer for Philemon (Philemon 1-3)

B. Expressing gratitude for Philemon's love and faith (Philemon 4-7)

II. Paul's Appeal for Onesimus

A. Acknowledging Onesimus' conversion and their relationship (Philemon 8-10)

B. Pleading on behalf of Onesimus (Philemon 11-14)

⁶³ Almost 2,000 km.

⁶⁴ Keener, *Background*, p. 632-633.

⁶⁵ Lane Johnson, "[New Testament Backgrounds: Philemon](#)," *Ensign*, Apr. 1976.

I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds:

Which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me: Whom I have sent again: thou therefore receive him, that is, mine own bowels (Philemon 1.10-12).

Because Paul has, in effect, delivered a slave back into servitude, some have interpreted this epistle as an endorsement of slavery as a practice. On the other hand, others have understood the request to receive Onesimus "not ... as a servant" (Philem. 1:16) to be a disavowal of slavery. But Paul seems to have intended neither of these. He simply acknowledges slavery indirectly as a social reality, at the same time reminding Philemon of the obligations of brotherhood in the kingdom.⁶⁶

Brother Richard Anderson gives this commentary:

What were Philemon's options when Onesimus returned? Merely probing them shows why Paul protected his new convert with letters to Philemon and to the Colossian branch of the Church... The fragments of preserved laws on the subject show Paul's legal duty to send Onesimus back: 'Anyone who has hidden a runaway slave is guilty of theft.' There were legal options to report to authorities or to return 'to the owners.' The process of formal return hints at how masters might treat returning slaves: 'Carefully guarding them may even include chaining them up.' Second-century laws prevented owners from killing their slaves, but first-century masters seem to have been free to inflict almost anything to break a slave from deserting.

'Do not torment him,' the senator Pliny wrote a friend, asking for leniency for an offending household servant. 'Make some concession to his youth, his tears, and to your own kind heart.' Such an appeal is admirable but superficial when comparing that request for human decency with Paul's bold testimony of equality: '[Onesimus] departed for a while for this purpose, that you might receive him forever, no longer as a slave but more than a slave, as a beloved brother' (Philem. 1:15-16, NKJB). Such a request would not work unless Philemon really believed in eternal brotherhood. So Paul labors deftly but plainly for Philemon's conversion to that principle. He writes with the obvious goal of softening Philemon's heart.⁶⁷

C. Expressing willingness to take responsibility for any wrongdoing (Philemon 15-19)

III. Request for Philemon's Forgiveness and Reconciliation

A. Urging Philemon to receive Onesimus as a brother (Philemon 20-21)

B. Mentioning Paul's hope of visiting Philemon (Philemon 22)

C. Requesting Philemon to prepare a guest room (Philemon 22)

IV. Closing Remarks and Greetings

A. Final instructions and greetings (Philemon 23-24)

B. Concluding benediction (Philemon 25)

⁶⁶ Lane Johnson, "[New Testament Backgrounds: Philemon](#)," *Ensign*, Apr. 1976.

⁶⁷ Richard Lloyd Anderson, [Understanding Paul](#), Deseret Book, 1983, p. 241-242.

“Written... by Onesimus” ἐγράφη ... διὰ Ὀνησίμου

The problem in the subscription at the end of Philemon is caused by the translation of the Greek word *dia*-rendered as 'by' in English-which suggests that Onesimus may have composed the letter. Actually, in the context of this Greek passage and in its genitive case, *dia* means 'through' or 'by means of' Onesimus. Hence, the subscription in Greek does not state that Onesimus composed the letter (which would contradict verse nineteen), but that the letter was written by means of or through Onesimus-as Paul's... messenger who delivered it.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ Max H Parkin, "I Have a Question," *Ensign*, Sept. 1991. See also: [Perseus, list of prepositions](#), διὰ with the Genitive, accessed 7.10.23.

1. διὰ with the Genitive

a. Local: through and out of (cp. Hom. διέκ, διαπρό), as ““δι’ ὧμου ἔγχος ἦλθεν” the spear went clear through his shoulder” Δ 481, ἀκοῦσαι διὰ τέλους to listen from beginning to end Lyc. 16. Through, but not out of: διὰ πολεμίας_ς (γῆς) ““πορεύεσθαι” to march through the enemy's country” X. Hi. 2.8 and often in figurative expressions: ““διὰ χειρὸς ἔχειν” to control” T. 2.13, διὰ στόματος ἔχειν to have in one's mouth (be always talking of) X. C. 1.4.25 (also ἀνὰ στόμα).

b. Temporal: of uninterrupted duration, as ““διὰ νυκτός” through the night” X. A. 4.6.22, ““διὰ παντός” constantly” T. 2.49.

c. Intervals of Space or Time: ““διὰ δέκα ἐπάλξεων” at intervals of ten battlements” T. 3.21, ““διὰ χρόνου” after an interval” L. 1.12, intermittently Aes. 3.220, ““διὰ πολλοῦ” at a long distance” T. 3.94.

d. Other relations: Means, Mediation (per): ““αὐτὸς δι’ ἑαυτοῦ” ipse per se” D. 48.15, ““διὰ τούτου γράμματα πέμψα_ς” sending a letter by this man” Aes. 3.162. State or feeling: with εἶναι, γίνεσθαι, ἔχειν, of a property or quality: ““διὰ φόβου εἰσὶ” they are afraid” T. 6.34, δι’ ἡσυχίας_ς εἶχεν he kept in quiet 2. 22, ἐλθεῖν ἡμῖν διὰ μάχης to meet us in battle 2. 11, ““αὐτοῖς διὰ φιλίας_ς ἰέναι” to enter into friendship with them” X. A. 3.2.8. Manner: ““διὰ ταχέων” quickly” T. 4.8.