

# Introduction to 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy

**AUTHOR:** The apostle Paul, as stated in the salutation (1:1). The internal evidence certainly supports Paul as the author, especially references to his earlier life (1:13), and the close relationship between the author and Timothy (1:2; cf. Phil. 2:22). Early sources in church history that attribute this letter to Paul include: Eusebius (300 A.D.), Origen (250 A.D.), Clement of Alexandria (200 A.D.), Tertullian (200 A.D.), Irenaeus (200 A.D.), the Muratorian Fragment (180 A.D.). References to the epistle are also found in the writings of Theophilus of Antioch (180 A.D.), Justin Martyr (160 A.D.), Polycarp (135 A.D.), and Clement of Rome (90 A.D.).

**RECIPIENT:** Timothy, Paul's "true son in the faith" (1:2,18). We are first introduced to Timothy in Acts 16:1-3, where we learn that his mother was Jewish (cf. also 2 Tim. 1:5; 3:14-15) and his father Greek. Well spoken of by the brethren at Lystra and Iconium, Paul desired that the young disciple travel with him and therefore had him circumcised to accommodate Jews they would seek to evangelize. This began a long relationship of service together in the work of the Lord, in which Timothy served Paul as a son would his father (Phil. 2:19-24). Such service included not only traveling with Paul, but remaining with new congregations when Paul had to leave suddenly (Acts 17:13-14), going back to encourage such congregations (1 Thess. 3:1-3), and serving as Paul's personal emissary (1 Cor. 16:10-11; Phil. 2:19-24). He had the honor of joining Paul in the salutation of several epistles written by Paul (2 Cor. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; Col 1:1; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1), and from such epistles we learn that Timothy had been with Paul during his imprisonment at Rome. Such faithful service helps us to appreciate why Paul would leave him in Ephesus (1:3)

**TIME AND PLACE OF WRITING:** Some commentators (such as Barnes) believe that Paul may have penned 1st Timothy after his extended stay at Ephesus and departure to Macedonia on his third missionary journey (cf. Acts 19:1-41; 20:1-3). This would place its composition around 58-59 A.D. The general consensus, though, is that Paul wrote this epistle from Macedonia, following his first imprisonment in Rome (cf. Acts 28:16, 30-31). Paul was released and allowed to travel for several years before being arrested again and finally put to death by Nero. It is possible to conjecture from several references in his epistles that he went to places like Philippi (Phil. 1:26; 2:24), Colosse (Philemon 22), and even Spain (Rom. 15:24, 28). With more certainty his destinations included Ephesus (where he left Timothy, 1 Tim. 1:3), Macedonia (where he wrote 1st Timothy, 1 Tim. 1:3), Crete (where he left Titus, Titus 1:5), Miletus (2 Tim. 4:20), Corinth (2 Tim. 4:20), and a winter at Nicopolis (Titus 3:12). Any attempt to determine the exact order of these visits is pure speculation, however. If 1st Timothy was indeed written during this period, the date would be around 63-64 A.D.

**PURPOSE OF THE EPISTLE:** Paul had left Timothy behind at Ephesus with an awesome responsibility: to charge some not to teach anything contrary to the "sound doctrine" which was according to the "glorious gospel of the blessed God" (1:3-11). Fulfilling this charge was made difficult by Timothy's youth and natural timidity (4:11-12; cf. 2 Tim. 1:7-8). While Paul hoped to come himself, he writes Timothy to guide him in the meantime (1 Tim. 3:14-15). Therefore, Paul writes:

- **To instruct Timothy on how to conduct himself while working with the church (3:14-15)**
- **To encourage Timothy by providing counsel concerning his own spiritual progress (4:12-16)**

**THEME OF THE EPISTLE:** This letter is addressed to a young evangelist charged with the responsibility of working with a congregation and guiding them in the right way. Everything that is written is designed to aid both him and the congregation in doctrine and conduct. An appropriate theme for this epistle might therefore be: **"Sound Doctrine for a Congregation and Its Preacher"**

--- Taken from Mark Copeland (Executable Outlines) ---