

NOTES AND QUESTIONS FOR GROUP OR INDIVIDUAL STUDY IN THE FIRST BOOK OF TIMOTHY – PART ONE – INTRODUCTORY NOTES AND QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER ONE

Paul's first visit to Lystra must have seemed a disaster. First he was worshipped as a god, then he was dragged out of the city, stoned and left for dead.(Acts 14:8-19) Undeterred he got up and walked back into the city to encourage the disciples before leaving the next day. Lystra would surely now be on Paul's list of unfavourite destinations yet a few weeks later he was back there again to train leaders. Among those who trusted Christ on the first visit were a mother and daughter, Lois and Eunice.(II Tim.1:5) On the second visit Paul became aware of Eunice's son Timothy and led him to Christ.(II Tim.1:6) On Paul's third visit he discovered that his young son in the faith had enthusiastically shared the gospel and become well respected not only in his home town but also in the neighbouring one. When Eunice had married a Greek she seemingly wavered in her Jewish faith and failed to circumcise their son when he arrived. Paul put that right so that Timothy would be accepted in both cultures.(Acts 16:1-3) Thus began a close relationship which would last for about 17 years.

Paul and Timothy often travelled together,(Acts 20:4; II Cor.1:19) but at the same time Timothy was the co-worker in whom Paul had the greatest confidence to send to difficult places,(Acts 19:22; I Cor.4:17; 16:10,11; Phil.2:19; I Thess.3:2,6;) or to leave behind to follow up those they had been teaching.(Acts 17:14; 18:5; I Tim.1:3) Of the nine letters Paul wrote to churches, Timothy was his co-writer on five occasions and he was also included in the very personal note he wrote to an old friend, Philemon, to be carried by his returning runaway slave.(II Cor.1:1; Phil.1:1; Col.1:1; I Thess.1:1; II Thess.1:1; Philem.1) He was included in greetings to churches because like Paul he cared about them.(Rom.16:21)

Paul invested his time in many people's lives as well as having a public ministry in places where he was sometimes welcome and sometimes not. The standard means of travel in his day was walking or sitting on a slow sailing ship. To us that would seem a waste of time but to Paul it was a marvellous opportunity to teach one to one, answer difficult questions and sometimes to learn from his friends. Of all his close group, Timothy was the one in whom he saw the greatest potential for the future and the continuation of his ministry after his death. We are not told the age of either Paul or Timothy but it seems likely there was a gap of a generation. It is worthwhile every now and then to stop and ask who plays or could play the role of Paul in our lives, or in whose life could we invest quality time.

There is no clear indication of the time of the writing of this letter. The reference in 1:3 to Paul leaving Ephesus for Macedonia does not seem to fit Paul's movements in Acts 20:1-6. The most likely scenario is that after Paul's two year house arrest in Rome in Acts 28:30,31 he was released about 62AD and had further opportunity to visit the churches he cared so much about before being arrested again and then executed, most likely in 64AD. He knew this was close when he wrote what was probably his last book, II Timothy.(II Tim.4:6-8)

Before starting to study I Timothy reflect on what you might have included in a letter to your spiritual apprentice summarising your key messages for his future work without you. When

you have read through the book several times, list the areas Paul covered and compare them with your own priorities. My strong encouragement to you as you study this book is to begin each section with prayer in which you ask God to teach you.(I Jn.2:27) Read with an open heart expecting Him enable you to observe accurately what the passage actually says in context. Then trust Him to lead you in interpreting what it means, drawing on the rest of the Bible. Remember that as you do, God wants you to question Him, starting with the very simple questions – Who? What? Where? When? - and, as you move into interpretation – Why? Finally as the message begins to become clear it is time to move on to application – How? How Lord do you want to work this out in my life? If the questions provided in the study are helpful, use them, but be prepared in time to write your own questions perhaps for teaching others. Only finally read the comments in the study but as you do ask the Lord to confirm that they are helpful and consistent with scripture. If not discard them!

QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER ONE

1. How does Paul describe his relationship with God? What effect does ‘Christ Jesus, who is our hope’ have on our Christian ministry? What was Timothy’s relationship with Paul? What were his resources to make his Christian life work?(1:1,2)
2. What was the first instruction Paul gave Timothy about his ministry in Ephesus? What examples does he give of ‘strange doctrines’? What damage does such doctrine cause? What instead should be our goal in ministry? What motivates teachers of wrong doctrine?(1:3-7)
3. What is the purpose of the Law?(Gal.3:24) What is the first problem the Law shows us about our hearts? What kind of behaviour does it expose? How does the heart attitude lead to subsequent behaviour? How does preaching the gospel help? Is our job to lay down the Law?(1:8-11)
4. How had Paul’s previous behaviour been in relation to the Law? Had God laid down the Law for Paul? If not what had he discovered about Jesus Christ? How had this helped his understanding of grace? What had Jesus done for sinners? Where did Paul rank himself among sinners? Why does he say, “I **am** foremost of all.”, not “I **was**...”? In what sense was Paul a model for all of us? Who deserves the credit for the change in Paul... or any of us?(1:12-17)
5. What prophecies had been made about Timothy?(4:14) How are we to “fight the good fight of faith.”?(Eph.6:10-17) What is the greatest danger we face as we fight in God’s cause? How had Hymenaeus,(II Tim.2:17) and Alexander,(II Tim.4:14,15) made this mistake? What does it mean to hand someone over to Satan?(1:18-20)