

Dr. Dave Mathewson, New Testament Literature, Lecture 25, Thessalonians, Timothy and Titus

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This was Dr. Dave Mathewson in New Testament History and Literature, Lecture 25 on Thessalonians, Timothy, and Titus.

All right, let's go ahead and get started. Today I want to just conclude our study of 1st and 2nd Thessalonians that we begin looking at on Monday, and then actually move on to start discussing the last three books of the collection of Paul's letters, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, and then to kind of wrap up our discussion as a whole of Paul's letters, which might take us into Friday. But today at least we'll start looking at 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, which, as I said, are the last three letters that belong to the collection of Paul's letters that we'll look at.

And then we move on to the final segment of the New Testament that begins with Hebrews and takes us through to the book of Revelation. But let's begin with prayer, and then we'll look at, wrap up Thessalonians and start in on the final three letters of the collection of Paul's letters.

Father, again we are humbled to think about and realize that you would communicate to us as your creatures, as your creation. And Lord, because of that, I pray that we will be mindful of the need to listen carefully to your word as something that is more than just a written communication but is a collection of documents that contain nothing less than your very word and your very revelation to your people. So, it's worth all the pain and effort and all the time and hard work to try to understand that accurately. And so, I pray that this class will contribute in just a small way to that end of being better equipped to hear your word as the first people would have listened to it, but as your people today should listen to it. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

All right, we ended by looking at 2 Thessalonians, which I suggested to you was probably written as a response in part to 1 Thessalonians.

That is, perhaps Paul's readers, the readers in Thessalonica, responded or over-responded to Paul's letter in 1 Thessalonians, and to others, Paul himself in 2 Thessalonians mentions the possibility of a letter that claims to be from him. But the point is, the Thessalonians thought after 1 Thessalonians sometime, the Thessalonians then thought that they were already in the day of the Lord. A phrase that comes out of the Old Testament, the Day of the Lord, refers not to a 24-hour period, but the Day of the Lord referring to a time when God returns to judge evil and to reward and save his people.

And now the Thessalonians thought that they were already in the day of the Lord. So, 2 Thessalonians is primarily written to dispel them of that notion. And Paul does that by pointing to these three things that we very briefly mentioned on Monday.

He says to the Thessalonians, basically, you can't be on the Day of the Lord because there are certain things that have to happen before the Day of the Lord can arrive. And because these things have not yet happened, therefore you're not in the Day of the Lord. The three things that he mentions in 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 are the rebellion, the man of lawlessness, and the restrainer that Paul says presently there's a restrainer that will be taken away.

So, until these three things occur, the Day of the Lord will not come. And I said the problem is, throughout the history of interpretation, we haven't come to a consensus as to what these three things might be. Especially this last one, what is the restrainer? And as I very quickly ran through on Monday, there have been numerous attempts to figure out what the restrainer is.

Some have said it was the Roman Empire. The Roman Empire itself was the restrainer that was holding back evil. Some have suggested that it was God himself.

Some have suggested it was the Holy Spirit was the restrainer that would be removed. Some have said it's the church that's the restrainer that would be removed. Others have said the gospel would be removed.

And there have been other suggestions so that we really can't be sure what it was. Part of the problem is, as I've already said, there are two things you need to keep in mind. One of them is, Paul has already taught them these things before.

So unfortunately for us, in 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 and verse 5 he says, do you not remember that I told you these things when I was still with you? So apparently when he was present with them previously on one of his missionary journeys, he had no doubt taught them about this. So now he sees no need to elaborate and go into more detail. So presumably his readers knew what he was talking about and so were the ones in the dark.

So, the best way to treat that, and by the way, presumably these are three things that could have happened and could have transpired within Paul's lifetime. They're the kinds of things that may very well have developed and happened within Paul's lifetime. But his main point is that certain events have not yet happened, so the Thessalonians should not think they are on the Day of the Lord.

There's even a reference later on in 2 Thessalonians to some of the Thessalonians not working, and there's some speculation that that could be tied into the fact that they thought because they were already in the Day of the Lord, they were going to

mooch off other people and there was no need to work. But Paul writes solely to convince them that until these three things happen, whatever they are and whenever they take place, is until they happen, the Day of the Lord has not yet arrived. So, the Thessalonians should not be deceived into thinking that they are already living in the end, or in the Day of the Lord.

So how do we compare 1 and 2 Thessalonians? On the one hand, 1 Thessalonians clearly reminds the Thessalonian church and Christians that Jesus Christ could come back, and when he does, they will participate fully in the events that surround the coming of Christ. Yet 2 Thessalonians warns them not to be too premature in concluding that the day of the Lord is already present and has already arrived. So, within the canon, by juxtaposing 1 and 2 Thessalonians and their slightly different perspective on the coming of Christ in the same New Testament canon, I wonder if they simply don't function to balance each other out in some sense.

So, 1 Thessalonians reminds us that Christ could come back in our lifetime. But, because, again read chapter 4, Paul even speaks as if Jesus could come back in their lifetime. We who are alive and who remain at the coming of the Lord will be caught up to meet him in the air.

So, we have to live as if Christ could come back in our lifetime. Yet 2 Thessalonians reminds us that Christ might delay for some time. We cannot presume that he necessarily will.

So, 1 Thessalonians, Christ could come back in our lifetime. But 2 Thessalonians reminds us that we can't presume that he necessarily will, he might delay.

And the point is, in either case, God's people live prepared for either scenario. I always tell this story in relationship to talking about 1 and 2 Thessalonians. I remember, to show you how, if we emphasize either one of these, we can be in danger of making a mistake.

So, for example, if all we emphasize is 2 Thessalonians that Christ could delay, that could lead to a viewpoint, well, I'll get my life in order sooner or later. I have plenty of time to get my life in order. But, even the first one, Christ could come back at any time.

I always think of, I was actually pastoring a church back in the first Gulf War, back in 1990, the early 90s when George Bush Sr. was president. And I remember one time when the Gulf War was heating up and I turned on a radio station and there were a number, a Christian radio station, and there were a number of prophecy gurus sitting around a table, and a well-known nationally broadcasted Christian radio station. A number of prophecy gurus were sitting around the table talking about these events and how they fit into biblical prophecy.

And I remember one of them said, well, we need to, we should use this as a time to kind of bolster our attempts to evangelize and to lead our friends and our family to Jesus Christ. And I thought, well, that's good advice, but that should be happening anyway, whether one thinks the end is near or not. Then the next person and I'll withhold the names to protect the guilty of these people, the next person, my jaw dropped open when this person said, and someone that was fairly well-known said, well, I think Christians need to cash in their CDs and empty their bank accounts and invest it in the Lord's work, presumably his church and his ministry.

But basically, he said, because this is the end. And the other person agreed, yes, this is the end. And we need to take drastic measures and you should invest all your money in the Lord's work because this is going to end up being the battle of Armageddon and the end of the world.

And that was in the 1990s. So nearly 20 years or more later, I really, pity the people who took that advice seriously. But it misses the perspective that we simply can't know.

Christians must be prepared for either scenario. We must live as if Christ can come back in our lifetime, but we must also live as if he might delay. We must live as Christ, because Christ may come back in our lifetime, but we can't necessarily presume that he will.

So, Christians must be prepared for either scenario. And in fact, I'm convinced this balance is found throughout the entire New Testament of kind of expectation but delay at the same time. And to overemphasize any of those, I think at times can result in misconceptions and actually even worse, to act rather foolishly, as hopefully no one took this guy's advice on the radio back in the 90s very seriously.

So, I think putting first and second Thessalonians and their slightly different eschatology together demonstrates how they complement and how we need to listen to both. So perhaps when we're tempted to think that we have all kinds of time to get our act together and we're just going to do our own thing and enjoy life on our own, according to our own agenda, we need to hear the message of first Thessalonians. But when we're tempted to think to do foolish things, such as you've perhaps all heard stories, I still hear them once in a while, of persons that have taken out bank accounts or large loans because they thought they wouldn't have to pay them back because Christ was going to come back.

When we're tempted to do things like that, we need to hear the message of Second Thessalonians. You don't know. Christ could delay quite some time and you'll have to pay back that loan or whatever.

So, Christians must wisely live in light of both perspectives and be prepared for either scenario. All right. First Timothy, the next, actually the next three books that we're going to look at, the final three books of the collection of Paul's letters, you'll note in your Bibles Philemon is the last book in the collection of Paul's letters in the New Testament, but we dealt with that with Colossians for obvious reasons.

So, the last three letters that we want to look at are First and Second Timothy and Titus. These three books together are often referred to by students of the New Testament as the Pastoral Epistles. So, we've already looked at the collection called the prison epistles, Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, and Philemon because they were written while Paul was in prison, though there's some debate as to where he was in prison.

But these are often known as the pastoral epistles and most likely based on their content, there are probably better names for them than the pastoral epistles, but probably based on their content, because especially first Timothy addresses a number of issues related to the church. He talks about choosing elders and deacons. He talks somewhat about church structure and what the church's function is.

And often Timothy, that Paul is writing this letter to Timothy, we'll talk a little bit more about him, but often he is seen as a functioning kind of pastor or leader of this church. So hence, for that reason, these letters are often called the pastoral epistles, though again, there may be better names for them than the pastoral epistles. As we said, in my opinion, the book in the New Testament that has the best claim to be called the letter to the Ephesians would be First Timothy.

Remember, I suggested to you that the letter to the Ephesians that we call the Ephesians most likely was not written just to the city of Ephesus. In fact, that phrase in Ephesus may not have been in the original manuscript. And the book of Ephesians may have actually been addressed to a very wide audience, addressing no specific Christian group or church and no specific problem.

However, first Timothy clearly is addressed to a church, it's addressed to Timothy, but Timothy is to relay its contents to a church in the city of Ephesus. So, First Timothy, in my opinion, is a book that could lay the best claim to being labeled the letter to the Ephesians, because that's where it ultimately ends up, addressing the church in the city of Ephesus. Now, just to, I don't necessarily want to solve this issue, but remember, because the letters of Paul are arranged largely in order of their length, whenever we have a first and second, like First Corinthians, Second Corinthians, First Thessalonians, Second Thessalonians, First Timothy, Second Timothy, we cannot necessarily assume that that's the order in which they were written.

So, First and Second Timothy and Titus is the order in which they occur in the New Testament, but not necessarily the order in which they may have been written. Now, I think there's one thing that is certain that everyone would agree upon, and that is Second Timothy is the last book that Paul wrote, at least that we know of. Because when you read it, Paul is clearly facing execution.

He's in prison, and he realizes that this is the end of the road for him, this is the end of his life. So, Second Timothy is clearly the last book written. The question is where do First Timothy and Titus come in? Again, I don't want to try to solve that, but many have argued for Titus being written first, and then Timothy second, although some have argued for, or first Timothy second, though some have argued for the opposite.

But basically all you need to know is number one is, again, there is some, the order in which they occur is not necessarily the order in which they were written, but second, the one thing we do know for sure is second Timothy was the last book written. Paul is clearly facing death and the executioner block. So, this is kind of his last, final, final communication.

Now first, the other thing that's with first and second Timothy and Titus, especially first Timothy and Titus, is these are letters that often are called into question as far as whether Paul actually wrote them or not. The reason is, in the first century, actually in the period leading up to the first century and even a little bit after, we have evidence that pseudonymity, that is writing in someone else's name, writing under a false name, was a fairly common phenomenon in some literary types and literary genres, that is usually for various reasons an author of a literary work might choose to write in someone else's name some well-known figure or well-known hero that was dead, perhaps to add authority to his own writing. Perhaps he thought, the person thought he was actually writing in the spirit of that person who had passed.

There are questions as to whether it was deceptive. In other words, whether people thought they were actually reading something that that person wrote or whether they knew, you know, Paul didn't really write this. We know that it's someone just writing in their name, so it wouldn't have deceived them and the author wasn't trying to pull a fast one on them and try to trick them into thinking that Paul actually wrote this.

But it does seem that pseudonymity, writing in someone else's name, especially the name of someone who had died and who was kind of a hero or a well-known character, was a fairly common literary device. And so, the question some raise is, are any of the New Testament documents perhaps pseudonymous? And many feel that 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus are the best candidates for that. And for a couple of reasons.

Some have suggested that the language and style of 1 Timothy and 2 Timothy and Titus, are the Pastoral Epistles, they would say when you compare these letters with the letters that we know Paul did write, the core of letters such as Romans, Galatians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, those letters, Philippians that we know Paul did write, is the style and the vocabulary that he uses appear so different from those books that how could Paul have written them? Another one is there appear to be theological differences between the two, again between the pastoral epistles, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, and some of the earlier letters that we know Paul wrote, Galatians, Romans, etc. There seem to be profound theological differences. For example, there's no mention of some of the theological themes that crop up in Paul's other letters, such as justification by faith, and some of the dominant themes that he talks about in his other letters don't occur.

Or else they get developed a little bit differently. Paul seems to think of the gospel more as a fixed deposit, a fixed body of doctrine or teaching that he passes on, and some therefore see that as a distinct difference from Paul's teaching and his emphasis on the gospel in his other letters. So there seem to be theological themes that are absent in the pastoral epistles, or themes that get developed a little bit differently than you find in some of Paul's other letters.

And so that leads a number of people to think that, well, Paul did not or could not have written these letters. One final one, later church organization. Some see in the pastoral epistles a fairly highly organized and structured church.

And what they say is this, when the church was just getting started in the first century, it would have been, with its expectation of the coming of Christ, and as it was growing, it would have been more charismatic and loosely structured. But as it began to settle down, and as it began to start to grow and kind of settle in for the long run, there was a need to organize it more carefully. And so it would have elders and deacons and a carefully structured leadership.

And some say that's what's happening in the pastoral epistles. Therefore, the pastoral epistles must have come later. It reflects a structured leadership.

It reflects a church organization and structure that would have only been true sometime after Paul's life. Therefore, Paul could not have written this. So, for those reasons, and because pseudonymity writing in someone else's name was fairly common, some are convinced that Paul did not or could not have written 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus.

It must have been written maybe by a disciple of his, maybe by a follower of Paul, who after his death has now written in Paul's name to address a situation in Ephesus. And maybe the readers of the letters knew this. Maybe they knew exactly what was going on.

They wouldn't have even thought Paul wrote it. They knew he was dead, and they just knew that pseudonymity is a common device, so we know that this is probably a disciple or follower of Paul writing this letter. Some of the theological themes seem to be developed differently than you find elsewhere in Paul's letter.

And one of them would be the church organization. So, they'd say, you know, you read 1 Corinthians where the church is more charismatic and emphasizes gifts, whereas now you have a more carefully structured leadership governing the church, which they say is more indicative of the church after it's been in existence for a while. Or again, the gospel now is conceived more as a deposit, it's conceived more as a deposit of teaching, a more well-defined body of teaching that Paul passes on.

The other one is the ethics of the pastoral epistles. Some think that the ethics of the Pastoral Epistles emphasize godliness, they emphasize living life in the, trying to live life in a way that reflects the church's beginning to now settle down within its hostile, within its pagan environment. So, the ethics of 1 and 2 Timothy is more trying to show the church how to live kind of in harmony with and how to live within the secular world in which they're going to be around for quite some time.

Whereas again, the assumption is the early church would have thought, well, Jesus is coming back soon, and therefore will live life in light of that. Now some think, no, 1 and 2 Timothy assume the church is going to be around for a while, and now they're being shown how should we live our lives so we kind of live in harmony with and in a way that doesn't upset the status quo too much in society. So, they would point to all that and say, it's just 1 Timothy seems to reflect a much later situation beyond Paul's lifetime.

So again, Paul, in connection with the fact that pseudonymity was a fairly common device, again, some would say, is probably a disciple of Paul writing the kind of thing that Paul probably would have said to the church at Ephesus several years or more after Paul's death. And again, maybe the readers would not have been upset. They would have thought, we know Paul's dead, we know he didn't write this, we know it's a disciple writing in his name.

So, they weren't being deceived, and the author of 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus weren't being deceived either. Do you like that? I mean, how do we respond to that? That's a good question too, is why was it accepted as scripture, especially if the church thought that it's because Paul wrote it, we should accept it as scripture. So, were they being deceived if Paul really didn't write it? That's a very good point, it does seem that the testimony of the early church fathers, remember those church leaders and those who wrote after the time of the apostles, the early church testimony was that Paul wrote them.

I mean, theoretically, theoretically, I have to say, I don't have a problem with pseudonymous writing in the New Testament if it can be demonstrated that it was only a literary device that would not have deceived anyone. But the question is not whether that's theoretically possible but whether that actually happened. Should we read these as pseudonymous writings that Paul didn't write but someone after him? I would suggest that while we can't perhaps obtain 100% absolute certainty with scientific precision, there's good reason to think that Paul did write it, starting with the early church's testimony that Paul was the author of these letters.

I mean, you look at these objections, first of all, with language and style, although we have more books written by Paul than any other author in the New Testament, there still is not enough of Paul's writings to do a comparison to determine what Paul could and could not have written. In other words, if I want to compare the style of an author and what kind of vocabulary they use, I need a lot more writings of Paul than we have in the New Testament. So, we really don't have enough writings in the New Testament to definitively say, that Paul couldn't have written in this style, or Paul could never have used these vocabulary words, or they're so unique that Paul could not have written.

We just need a lot more than we have to determine what Paul could or could not have written. So, interestingly, most people who argue that Paul didn't write these don't do so any longer as much based on style and vocabulary because they recognize that statistically we just need a lot more of Paul's letters to be more confident. The second one, too, is theological differences.

Again, it seems to me, first of all, in response to those that say, well, because 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus don't have some of the major teachings like justification by faith, and you're not saved by works of the law but by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, and the language of reconciliation. Some of the theological themes that we've seen repeated over and over in some of Paul's letters, the fact that they don't occur in 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus really don't say much. I mean, does Paul have to say everything he believes and thinks at every time? Is it possible that the situation that he's addressing caused him to tailor his letter in the way he did so that he's maybe emphasizing other themes or other themes that he would have normally emphasized he doesn't at this point? There could be a variety of reasons why he doesn't emphasize some of the same themes he has earlier, and there could be reasons why he maybe develop them in a different way.

I'm actually not convinced that the distance between 1 and 2 Thesalonians, I'm sorry, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus and Paul's other letters, I'm not convinced that the difference is quite so drastic, that the themes have developed so greatly that Paul could not have written them. So, I'm just, again, the middle one, I think, needs to be used with caution. We can't definitively say, well, Paul couldn't have written this because he doesn't emphasize this or because this theme is developed like this.

I think those need to be treated with caution. The last one, was later church organization. Actually, when you read 1 and 2 Timothy carefully and Titus, it's interesting how little it actually says about church organization.

Paul's main concern is not a highly structured and organized church. All you have to do is read the letter carefully and it really says very little about how the church is organized and structured. In fact, if you go back, we already looked at the book of Philippians.

It's interesting, Philippians begins by addressing the elders and deacons in the church at Philippi. So, I think it's a stretch to say that the early church in the early first century was never structured and didn't have a leadership until later on. It seems that quite early, the church did have a structure and a leadership.

And that 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus really don't seem to have much beyond what we find in some of Paul's earlier letters by way of a highly organized and structured church with bishops and deacons and a main elder, a head bishop, and other bishops. 1 Timothy and Titus simply don't evidence that. So at the end of the day, I'm going to suggest that ultimately these are not definitive.

Yes, they remind us that perhaps we can't conclude for absolute certainty unless Paul were here to say, yes, I wrote these. But I don't think there's enough evidence to overturn the testimony of the early church that Paul wrote these letters. And so, I'm going to operate and move forward on the assumption that Paul is in fact the author of 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus.

And that the differences between the two would have to do with his circumstances, the situation he's addressing, etc. So, what is the purpose of 1 Timothy? We'll start with 1 Timothy. What I said about the Pauline authorship, whether Paul wrote them or not, is kind of true of all three of these.

And in a sense, the purpose is too. But now by talking about the purpose, I want to focus mainly on 1 Timothy. Why was this letter written? How you read and interpret 1 Timothy has a lot to do with what you think Paul was doing.

The common approach, kind of the traditional approach for some time, is what I call the church manual approach, that 1 Timothy was written as just kind of an instructional manual to Timothy on how to run the church. So, it gives him instructions as to what to do in worship. It gives him instructions on how to choose elders and deacons, chapter 3. It gives him instructions as to how to manage different groups in the church, what elders should be doing and what deacons should be doing.

So, 1 Timothy becomes kind of a church manual that is just an instructional manual that Paul has written to Timothy to tell him how to govern, manage, and care for the church in Ephesus. So, it's no wonder that today we often appeal to 1 Timothy to support or justify certain church governments, whether it's more of a congregational type of government, an elder rule type of church government, or a Presbyterian or Episcopal type of church government 1 Timothy is often appealed to support that. Or when it comes to how we choose elders and deacons in our church, what are they supposed to do? Well, we go back to 1 Timothy and we find information that helps us to decipher those kinds of questions.

And I don't want to say that we shouldn't do that, but I want to propose something else than the commonly held view that 1 Timothy is kind of a church manual, just an instructional manual on how to run the church. The key comes right at the beginning of 1 Timothy. I'm still on 2 Thessalonians.

There we are. This is verses 3 and 4 of 1 Timothy. Paul says, I urge you, Timothy, that's why the book's named Timothy because he's the primary recipient.

Paul says I urge you, Timothy, as I did when I was on my way to Macedonia, to remain in Ephesus. So clearly Paul is writing to Timothy and telling him to stay in Ephesus so that you may instruct certain people not to teach a different or false teaching and not to occupy themselves with myths and endless genealogies that promote speculation rather than divine training that is known through faith. In other words, the primary purpose Paul writes this is a purpose we've seen in several of Paul's letters, that is to combat some kind of false teaching that has now infiltrated the church and is threatening the true gospel.

So, I take it, what is happening is this. Most likely Paul has appointed Timothy, one of his co-workers, since Paul for some reason, different reasons, could not be there himself, Paul now appoints Timothy to go to the church of Ephesus and take care of this problem, that is, he says, warning people not to teach this false doctrine or this false teaching that promotes endless speculation about genealogies, etc., instead of true training in the gospel and true progress in the gospel of Jesus Christ that comes through faith. So, 1 Timothy is not a church manual to tell us how to do church, it primarily is a book that's written to tell Timothy, to instruct Timothy how to deal with a false teaching that has infiltrated the church of Ephesus.

So, in that sense, 1 Timothy belongs in the same category as Galatians and Colossians as books where Paul is addressing some kind of deviant teaching or false teaching that is now a threat to the gospel of Jesus Christ. And so, I take it that what Paul's going to do in 1 Timothy is not primarily, I should say, primarily tell Timothy how to run the gospel, but rather instruct him how to deal with this false teaching that is infiltrating the church of Ephesus. And so, he appoints Timothy to go to that church and take care of this problem.

So, and the other thing, when you read 1 Timothy, clearly Timothy is kind of the, is the mediating figure. Paul is writing to Timothy, but he's not instructing, primarily instructing Timothy, he's giving Timothy instructions that should be passed down to the church of Ephesus. So, Paul's writing through Timothy to the Ephesian church.

Ultimately, they are the ones who are to obey the majority of the instructions in 1 Timothy, the church of Ephesus. But Timothy is kind of the go-between, the mediator who is to mediate this information. So, Paul addresses Timothy because Timothy is in charge of the Ephesian church, and Timothy is to then communicate this information to the Ephesian church.

So, what that means is the book of 1 Timothy, I think, looks roughly like this. Then when we understand the purpose of 1 Timothy, is Paul's instructing Timothy on how to combat this false teaching that has infiltrated the church in Ephesus, 1 Timothy then, I think, can be seen in its, roughly in each chapter, in each major section, can be seen as the different ways that Timothy should implement in combating and dealing with this false teaching. So, first of all, the first way that Timothy and the Ephesian church is to combat false teaching is by emphasizing the gospel of God's grace.

Interestingly, in the first chapter of 1 Timothy, Paul actually uses himself as an example of someone who has been rescued by or gripped by God's grace and who has been taken out of his previous situation and now has been rescued and saved through the work of Jesus Christ. So, the first way to combat false teaching is by emphasizing the gospel of God's grace. The second way, and again, these divisions are just rough, chapter 1, chapter 2, but the second way to combat false teaching is by observing proper church order.

Most likely, part of what the false teaching was doing was causing chaos and disruption in the church as it gathered for worship causing them to do things in a very upsetting and entirely unconventional way. So, Paul calls for the church to restore proper order as it gathers for worship. And this is very important.

We'll return to this in a moment. But all of chapter 2 is addressing the church as it gathers for worship, not what Christians do in their homes or in private or not what goes on in the workplace, but the whole entire context for chapter 2 is the church as it gathers for worship. The third way to combat false teaching is by choosing qualified church leaders.

This is the section where Paul talks about choosing elders and deacons. We'll talk a little bit about that more in a moment and see what the connection is. Chapter 4, by encouraging the prophet to restore proper treatment to various groups in the church.

So, in chapter 4, Paul addresses various groups, widows, and how they treat elders, and how younger persons treat older persons in the church. So again, it seems that this false teaching, whatever it was, had caused disruption and chaos in the church. And now, again, Paul is trying to restore that by calling on them to observe and be careful how they treat different groups and different persons within the church, including their leadership, which is actually chapter 5. The last way to combat false teaching is Paul tells Timothy to encourage proper treatment of the church leaders.

I'll leave that up for a moment. Although I hesitate to do this because, again, we don't—it may be more of our Western mindset and our desire to encapsulate everything in a nice sound bite or a nice neat theme that wraps up everything. But it does seem that if I were to choose one section of 1 Timothy 3 or one verse that might encapsulate the dominant theme or one of the dominant themes of the book, it would be chapter 3, verse 15, where Paul says if I am delayed—I'll back up and read 14—I hope to come to you soon.

So, Paul tells Timothy, I actually hope at some point to visit you in Ephesus, but I am writing these instructions to you so that if I am delayed, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth. So, in a sense, chapter 3, verse 15 summarizes what Paul is doing in this letter. He wants the Ephesian Christians to know how they should conduct themselves in the church as the house of God and as the pillar of truth.

And all of these instructions, I think, contribute to that end. The church—this also reflects the fact that the church was commonly understood in the first century along the lines of a household. In the same way that there were certain functions and certain ways that the household operated, so Paul wanted that to be reflected in the church as God's household as well.

And that's reflected in chapter 3 and verse 15. Now I want to look at a couple of passages in 1 Timothy just to demonstrate how understanding the background might make a difference in the way we approach the text. The first one is—I can't remember if this is on my—no.

I'll put this back up in case anyone is still writing. The first section I want to look at is a portion in chapter 2, and I don't want to spend a lot of time on these, but again, just enough to demonstrate the issues involved in trying to understand certain texts in light of why Paul may have written them. What is going on in these passages, and how might they be responses to this problem of false teaching that has infiltrated the church? This is the last several verses of chapter 2, of 1 Timothy 2. Paul says, Anyone wearing gold and pearls, and you have your hair braided? You shouldn't do that.

I just read it. No, we'll go back and talk about that. Let a woman learn in silence with full submission.

I do not permit women to teach or have authority over a man. She is to keep silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve.

And Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived, and became a transgressor. Yet she will be saved through childbearing, provided they continue in faith, love, holiness, with modesty. What do we do with a text like this? Again, we take this rather straightforward, so yeah, we can't wear pearls and gold and have braided hair, and women should be silent and not teach a man, or have authority over a man, or speak.

Let me say a couple of things. Number one, the first thing to remember is, however you understand this text, it's referring to the church as it gathers for worship. So it's saying nothing about necessarily what goes on in the home, or what goes on in one's private life, or not that those aren't of interest, I'm just trying to demonstrate Paul's main focus.

It's not talking about what goes on in the workplace. Paul is addressing what happens when the church gathers for worship. The second thing to understand is, again, Paul is addressing a false teaching that has infiltrated the church, and apparently has caused problems in the worship service.

So, this is not just some uncontextualized teaching. Paul just doesn't sit down and say, I'm going to teach about the role of women in the church. He's addressing a specific problem that was probably precipitated by this false teaching, whatever it was, that has now caused disruption within the church.

Now, let me suggest something else. I have an interesting book in my library by an individual named Bruce Winter, who is a British scholar from Cambridge, England. He wrote an interesting book where he argued, from literary evidence from the first century, that there would have been this concept in the Roman world of what is called the new woman, or the new Roman woman.

What it was is there were some, although this was frowned upon basically by the public and general, and by the emperor, and especially philosophers of the day in the first century, although this was frowned upon, were advocating this idea of a new Roman woman. That was someone who flaunted their freedom. It was someone who dressed provocatively.

Basically, they flaunted and undermined traditional marriage roles and the value of marriage. They were just flaunting society's conventions and all the traditional roles in the first century. Again, promoting this ostentatious display of one's wealth.

Again, dressing provocatively, showing disrespect to their spouses, and their husbands. Is it possible that this is one of the things that had now infiltrated the church at Ephesus? That would explain why then does Paul speak out against wearing gold and pearls and braided hair and expensive clothes? Not necessarily because those things of themselves are wrong, but is it possible that this was the very thing that this new Roman woman concept was suggesting? What he's telling them is, therefore, it's not so much these things in themselves are wrong but don't dress in this provocative and kind of disrespectful way that this new Roman woman is promoting. Furthermore, even then Paul's instructions when he says the woman should not have authority over or teach her husband.

Is it possible then, again, that that reflects this new Roman woman's tendency to, again, flaunt convention, to show disrespect for the husband, to show disrespect for traditional marriage, the value of marriage, and traditional roles within marriage? What has Paul upset is that now has infiltrated the Ephesian church and is now surfacing in their worship by women coming and dressing in a way that reflects this new Roman woman, that reflects kind of a lifestyle and attitude that was even reprehensible by some of the pagan philosophers and the Roman public in general. And now Paul wants that to stop.

He doesn't want the women acting like this concept a new Roman woman who is just kind of rebellious and flaunts conventions of society and undermines all its traditional values, dresses provocatively and ostentatiously and disrespects their husbands, dresses in a way that disrespects marriage, etc. And Paul wants that to stop. So it maybe then understanding a little bit of the background can help you see why Paul writes like this, why he addresses it in the way he does, why he forbids certain ways of dressing, why he forbids women to teach in the church and have authority over their husbands, because it may be this false teaching and perhaps this new Roman woman idea from the first century that has now infiltrated the Ephesian church and is causing all kinds of havoc, and Paul wants it to stop.

Yeah, it's possible. Maybe it was serious enough that he was speaking very absolute terms. Maybe the situation and this is one of the points I want to get at in a moment when it comes to how we apply this text, but it's possible that one of the problems is, in other words, Paul just wants it to stop in this situation.

Maybe it's so infiltrated the church and is causing such problems that his only recourse is just to put an end to it. So, he speaks in rather strong terms. Yeah, it could be.

Maybe the way he's handling this could reflect the difference in the way he's handled situations in his previous letters. But does everyone see that, how it appears that on the face of it, Paul is responding to a very specific problem, false teaching along with

this new Roman woman idea that even pagan philosophers and others in the society seem to not be happy with? Now that has gotten into the church, and at least some women have been affected by it, and now Paul is trying to put a stop to it, because it's particularly manifesting itself in the church as it gathers for worship, with the women dressing like this new Roman woman and flaunting society's convention, dressing in a provocative way, showing disrespect to marriage, to their partners, and Paul wants that to stop.

So, he says, don't dress like that, and don't, you know, no teaching and having authority over your husbands as a sign of your disrespect of them. The question is whether Paul would say something similar to other churches in other situations. Yeah, how does that compare to 1 Corinthians 11, where he gave them instructions related to, interestingly, 1 Corinthians chapter 11, where Paul is addressing the situation of worship, he actually gives a section we didn't talk about, because I knew we would talk about it in this book, in 1 Timothy, is Paul also addresses the issue of the relationship between husbands and wives within the context of worship.

Now to then pick up on that, the main debate here, and I don't want to settle it, my intention is not to settle it as much as just to get you to see the issue. The main debate is whether Paul's instructions here in chapter 2 are universally binding, that is, whether Paul would have said something similar to any church in the 1st century or the 21st century. In other words, is Paul's instructions in chapter 2 regarding women not teaching and having authority over men in the church, is binding for today? Is it universal, or is it more cultural and limited? Did Paul only intend these instructions for the 1st-century church of Ephesus and not necessarily for anyone else? So, in any other context, Paul was happy for women to teach and preach and have authority over men, etc.

But in Ephesus, he wasn't. Or, again, was this Paul's desire for any church? We'll talk more about that on Friday.

This was Dr. Dave Mathewson in New Testament History and Literature, Lecture 25 on Thessalonians, Timothy, and Titus.