

Dr. David Mathewson, New Testament Literature,

Session 26 – 1 & 2 Timothy

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Alright, today we're going to jump into some of the most personal and, honestly, some of the most debated letters that the Apostle Paul ever wrote: 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus. These are his final letters, and it really makes you wonder: what did he say at the very end? You know, these letters are so much more than just old mail. They're like this incredible window into Paul's final thoughts, his last-minute instructions, and the legacy he was really hoping to leave behind.

So these three letters, people often group them together and call them the Pastoral Epistles. And what makes them so unique is that they're not written to a whole church, like Romans or Corinthians. Nope.

These are written to two specific guys, Timothy and Titus, who Paul had basically put in charge of leading churches through some really tough situations. And you know, this is where things get tricky for us today. Because these letters were written to solve very specific first-century problems.

But they contain instructions that are, well, they're hugely debated now. It really forces us to ask, how do we handle ancient commands in our completely different world? Okay, let's just put it out there. This verse from 1 Timothy is probably the most famous and definitely the most controversial part of these letters.

For centuries, people have wrestled with this. What did Paul mean? And maybe more importantly, what does it mean for the church today? So it really boils down to one massive question. Was Paul laying down a universal rule, something for every church for all time? Or was he giving a temporary solution for a very specific problem that was blowing up in the church at Ephesus? That is the absolute heart of the debate.

And scholars pretty much go down two main roads on this. On one hand, you have the view that this is a timeless, universally binding principle. The argument here is that Paul bases his reasoning on the creation story.

You know, Adam was formed first, then Eve, which suggests it's not about a local issue, but something fundamental. But then, on the other hand, you have the view that this was a laser-focused, situation-specific command. A response to a local crisis in Ephesus, probably involving some wild false teachings and maybe even some disruptive cultural movements.

So the real key here, the thing that unlocks this whole debate, is realizing that 1 Timothy isn't some generic how-to manual for church. Paul says it right in the letter. He's writing to help Timothy deal with a huge threat: false teaching that was spreading like wildfire through the church.

And you can see how this one single problem sends these ripples through the entire letter. His instructions about how people should behave in worship, his super detailed list of

qualifications for church leaders, even his advice on how to live in the wider culture. It all comes back to his main goal: stopping this dangerous teaching in its tracks.

Yeah, you can really see this laser focus when you look at the qualifications for church leaders in 1 Timothy chapter 3. This isn't just some generic checklist you'd find in a corporate handbook. Paul is looking for people with solid character for sure, but crucially, people who can teach sound doctrine. Why? Because that was the church's number one defense against heresy.

But this whole false teaching thing wasn't just a problem in Ephesus. Oh no. Paul sent another one of his trusted partners, a guy named Titus, all the way to the island of Crete to handle a very similar mess that was shaking up the church there.

And let me tell you, Crete had a reputation. In the ancient world, the island was so famous for being dishonest that the verb to Cretanize literally meant to lie. There was even a popular saying that went, "All Cretans are liars."

Ouch. And this is where Paul does something brilliant. He just walks right up to this cultural landmine.

He starts his letter to Titus by saying he serves a God who does not lie. Bam. In a culture known for deception, he completely flips the script by holding up the character of God as the total opposite.

It's an amazing direct challenge to their entire value system. So we've seen these public battles Paul was fighting, but now we turn to his most personal letter of all, 2 Timothy. And to really feel the punch of this letter, you have to understand this ancient writing style called a testament.

It was basically the last words, the final instructions of a dying hero to their followers. And 2 Timothy is a perfect example of this. I mean, this is it.

Paul is in a cold Roman prison. He knows his execution is coming, and it's coming soon. This letter is everything he has left to say to Timothy, his spiritual son.

It's his last will and testament. I mean, you can just feel the finality in these words, can't you? Paul sees the finish line. He's not just saying goodbye.

He's passing the torch. He's begging Timothy to carry on the mission, to keep up the good fight for the gospel long after he's gone. It's powerful stuff.

So when you take a step back, you see how these last letters, written right at the end of his life, really bring everything Paul stood for into sharp focus. So what is that big picture? What's the enduring legacy we see across all his writings? You've got these huge themes that just echo through everything he wrote. The big one: salvation is a gift of grace you get through faith, not something you can ever earn.

Then there's the idea that in Jesus, all the old walls between people, like between Jews and Gentiles, are just torn down. He also talks constantly about how God's power shows up

most clearly in our weakness and suffering, and that salvation isn't just about you and God. It's about being part of this new family, the church.

And finally, that living out the truth of the gospel is the ultimate answer to error. Now, this might be one of Paul's most mind-bending but crucial ideas. He creates this tension of the already, but not yet.

On one hand, he says things that are absolute facts, the indicative. In Christ, you have already died to sin. It's a done deal.

That's your new reality. But in the very next breath, he gives these urgent commands, the imperative. He says, do not yet give up the fight against sin in your body.

So the reality of who you are becomes the power for what you must do. It's this beautiful ongoing tension. So in the end, reading Paul's letters isn't about opening up a flat rule book.

It's about seeing these passionate, focused letters written to solve real problems for real people. The big takeaway is this. So often, the real meaning is locked inside the original problem Paul was trying to solve.

And that leaves us with a really important question to ask ourselves anytime we pick up an ancient text. How does knowing the original context, the why behind the words, completely change how we read and apply it to our lives today?