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## LESSON NOTES (EXPLORE THE BIBLE)

### TIMOTHY & TITUS: PAUL'S FAVORITE ELDERS

Teaching and Study Preparation

#### OVERVIEW

Preparation for Studying Paul's Letters to Timothy & Titus

Truth is a paradox—fragile, yet everlasting. Clear, yet elusive. Worshiped, yet blasphemed. Ignored yet trumpeted from on high. Truth is fragile when inconvenient. Elusive when filtered by useful demi-truths. And, blasphemed when considered merely human.

Truth is everlasting when viewed from the Truth. Clear when seen in action. Many are blind. Truth is worshiped when it is the only focus.<sup>1</sup> Many love bokeh more. Truth is never ignored—if we listen to the trumpet. Many are deaf. Truth is pure when unfiltered. Many add a culture to their drink. Worship Truth, and you worship Him. Many blaspheme.

Paul was obsessed with Truth. As he attempted to educate two of his favorite elders, Timothy and Titus, he knew the road to truth was beset with side roads, “useful” roads, broad roads leading to destinies in which we humans love to dabble. The theological Las Vegas of those days<sup>2</sup> was found at these roads' finale, roads characterized by—

1. teaching false doctrines (1 Timothy 1:3; 6:3);
2. teaching Jewish myths (Titus 1:14);
3. wanting to be teachers of the Law (1 Timothy 1:7);
4. building up endless, far-fetched, fictitious stories based on obscure genealogical points (1 Timothy 1:4; 4:7; Titus 3:9);
5. being conceited (1 Timothy 1:7; 6:4);
6. being argumentative (1 Timothy 1:4; 6:4; 2 Timothy 2:23; Titus 3:9);



<sup>1</sup>The first rule for a quality image, still or video, is focus. Without correct focus there is no crisp image, of truth or Truth.

<sup>2</sup>Paul deploys a variety of warning signs about the roads. 1 Timothy 1 along with 4:1-8; 6:3-5,20-21, Paul warns against heretical teachers in the Ephesian church.

7. using talk that was meaningless (1 Timothy 1:6) and foolish (2 Timothy 2:23; Titus 3:9);
8. not knowing what they were talking about (1 Timothy 1:7; 6:4);
9. teaching ascetic practices (see 1 Timothy 4:3, food restrictions); and
10. using their positions of religious leadership for personal financial gain (1 Timothy 6:5).



As you study these dead end roads, look for the signs Paul provides Timothy and Titus. Nothing is more profoundly pragmatic than effective warning signs.

## SOME TEXTUAL BACKGROUND ISSUES FOR 1 TIMOTHY

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1. A key purpose of *1 Timothy* was to assist Timothy in caring for the church at Ephesus. In so doing, he is attempting to combat false teaching (e.g., see 1:3-7; 4:1-8; 6:3-5,20-21), build an infrastructure for the church there (see 2:1-15), and appointing qualified church leaders (see 3:1-13; 5:17-25).
2. A key problem of the church at Ephesus was comprised of three dimensions—
  - a. an early form of gnosticism,<sup>3</sup>
  - b. decadent Judaism (1:3-7), and
  - c. asceticism (4:1-5)
3. *1 Timothy* was written after the events of Acts 28 when Paul lived in Rome for two years, at least 8 years after Paul's three year stay in Ephesus. (See Acts 19:8,10; 20:31)
4. Timothy was not an official "apostle," and he was given instructions about overseers (3:1-7; 5:17-22). Thus, it may be inconsistent, if not wrong, to call Timothy one of Paul's favorite "elders." It may be best to regard him as an apostolic representative, delegated to carry out special work (see Titus 1:5).

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<sup>3</sup>Intentionally not capitalized. While Gnosticism is a major movement in Christianity throughout its history, the tendency to create Gnostic versions of almost all major religions is rampant. We humans love to claim extra gnosis (γνῶσις, knowledge) that the "unwashed" don't have, and love to claim spiritual insight and closeness to some spiritual being that others don't, and can't have, especially without "our" knowledge, "our" spiritual superiority, and/or "our" faithfulness to the orthodoxy and orthopraxy of said religion.