1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus

Alright, let’s go ahead and get started. Today I want to just conclude our study of First and Second Thessalonians that we began looking at on Monday and then move on to start discussing the last three books of the collection of Paul's letters First and Second Timothy and Titus. Then to wrap up that part of the discussion will summarize the whole of Paul's letters which might take us into Friday. But today, at least, we’ll start looking at the First and Second Timothy and Titus which are the last three letters that belonged to the collection of Paul's letters that we’ll look at. 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 I will look to wrap up Thessalonians and in start in on the final three letters of the collection 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 it is a collection of documents that contain nothing less than your very word, 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've listened to it, but also as your people today should listen to it. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

Alright, we ended by looking at 2 Thessalonians which I suggested was probably written as a response in part to 1 Thessalonians that is perhaps Paul's readers, in Thessalonica, over responded to Paul's letter in 1 Thessalonians. Paul himself in 2 Thessalonians mentions the possibility of a letter that claims to be from him, but the point is that the Thessalonians thought after 1 Thessalonians that they were already in the day of the Lord, a phrase that comes out of Old Testament. Day of the Lord referring 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. Now the Thessalonians thought they were already in the Day of the Lord so 2 Thessalonians is primarily written to dispel them of that notion. 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 in 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 the 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 are the rebellion; the man of lawlessness, and the restrainer that Paul says will be taken away. So until these three things occur the Day of the Lord will not come. The problem is that 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? We very quickly ran through that on Monday, there have been numerous attempts to figure out what the restrainer is. Some said it was the Roman Empire, the Roman Empire itself was the restrainer holding back evil. Some have suggested that it was God himself. Some have suggested it was the Holy Spirit that was the restrainer that will be removed. Some have said that it was the church that was the restrainer that would be removed. Others have said it was the gospel that would be removed and there have been other suggestions so we really can't be sure about what it is.

Part of the problem is, as I've already said, there's 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 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 going to more detail. So presumably his readers knew what he was talking about and so we’re 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. His main point is that certain events have not yet
happened, so that Thessalonians should not think they are in 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's no need to work. But that Paul writes solely to convince them that until these three things happen, whenever they are, and whenever they take place, until they happened 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 Day of the Lord.

So how do we compare First and Second 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 that within canon at the by juxtaposing First and Second 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. And again read chapter 4, Paul even speaks as if Jesus could come back in his 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, although we cannot presume that he necessarily will. So 1 Thessalonians Christ could come back in our lifetime, but 2 Thessalonians reminds us we can't presume that he necessarily will, he might delay. The point is in either case God's people live prepared for either scenario.

I always tell this story in relationship to talking about First and Second Thessalonians. If we emphasize either one of these works we can be in danger of making 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 then in the 1 Thessalonians Christ could come back
at any time. I always think of when I was actually pastoring a church back in the first Gulf War, back in the early 90s when George Bush Senior was president. I remember one time when the Gulf War was heating up and I turned on a Christian radio station and there were a number of prophecy gurus sitting around the table. A number of prophecy gurus are sitting around the table talking about these events and how they fit into biblical prophecy. I remember one of them said we should use this as a time to kind of bolster our attempt to evangelize and to lead our friends or family Jesus Christ. And I thought that's good advice, but that should be happening anyway, whether one thinks the end is near or not. Then the next person, I'll withhold the names to protect the guilty, of these people spoke my jaw dropped open when this person said. “Well, I think Christians need to cash in their CDs and an empty their bank accounts and invest it in the Lord’s work,”-- presumably his church's ministry. Basically he said because this is the end and the other person agreed that yes this is the end 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, the end of the world. That was in the 1990’s, so nearly 20 years or more later, and I pity the people that 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 you might delay. We must live as if Christ may come back in our lifetime, but we can't necessarily presume he you will. So Christians must be prepared for either scenario. And in fact, I am convinced that this balance is found throughout the entire New Testament. A kind of expectation, but delay at the same time. To overemphasize any of those I think at times can result in misconceptions and actually even worse to act rather foolishly. Hopefully no one took this guy's advice of the radio back in the 90s very seriously. So I think putting First and Second Thessalonians in their slightly different eschatology teachings together demonstrates how they complement and how we need to listen both. So when perhaps we were 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 according to our own agenda, we need to hear
the message of 1 Thessalonians. But when we’re tempted to do foolish things, such as you perhaps have all heard stories, I still hear them once in a while of persons who have taken out bank accounts or large loans because they thought they wouldn’t have to pay them back because Christ will come back. When we’re tempted to do things like that we need to hear the message of 2 Thessalonians, you don’t know, Christ could delay for quite some time and you will have to payback that loan or whatever. So that Christians must wisely live in light of both perspectives and is prepared for either scenario.

1 Timothy, 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 the 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 imprisoned, though there's some debate as to where he was imprisoned. 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, especially because 1 Timothy addresses a number of issues related to the church. He talks about choosing elders and deacons, he talks somewhat about church structure, what the church's function is. Paul is writing this letter to Timothy, we’ll talk a little bit more about him, but often he is seen as functioning as the pastor or leader of this church. So for that reason these letters are often called the Pastoral Epistles. Again there may be better names for them then 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 1 Timothy because remember what I suggested to you about the letter, that we call 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, 1 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 Timothy in my opinion is a book that could lay the best claim to being labeled, “the letter to the Ephesians” because that’s ultimately where it’s going to end up, addressing the church in the city of Ephesus.

Now I don’t necessarily want to solve this issue, but remember that because the letters of Paul are arranged largely in order of their length, whenever we have a First and Second like: First Corinthians and Second Corinthians, First Thessalonians and second Thessalonians, First Timothy and 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 on 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 is 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 1 Timothy and Titus come in? Again, I don't want to try to solve that but that many have argued for Titus being written first and then Timothy second although some have argued for the opposite. Basically all you need to know is 1) the order in which they occur is not necessarily the order in which they were written 2) the one thing we do know for sure is that 2 Timothy was the last book written. Paul's clearly facing death and the executioner’s block and this is his final communication.

Now, the other thing with First and Second Timothy and Titus, especially First Timothy and Titus, is that these are letters often 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 even a little bit after, we have evidence that pseudonymity, that is writing in someone else's name or writing under a false name. It was a fairly common phenomenon in some literary types and literary genres. There are usually 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 or perhaps the person thought he was actually writing in the spirit of love for that person who had passed. There’s other 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 they didn't really write this. We know that it's someone's writing in the name so it wouldn't have deceived them and the author wasn't trying to pull a fast one on them or 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 died and was who was a hero or well-known character, was I was a fairly common literary device. So the question some raise is are any of the New Testament documents perhaps pseudonymous and many feel that First and Second Timothy and Titus are the best candidates for that for a couple of reasons. Some have suggested that the language and style of First Timothy and Second Timothy and Titus, the Pastoral Epistles, when you compare these letters with the letters we know Paul did write, core of letters such as Romans, Galatians, First and Second Corinthians and Philippians letters, we know Paul did write is that the style and vocabulary that he uses appear so different from those books, how could Paul have written them?

Another argument is there appear to be theological differences between the two, again between the Pastoral Epistles of First and Second Timothy and Titus and some of the earlier letters that we know Paul wrote (Galatians, Romans, etc.). There do seem to be profound theological differences. For example, there is 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 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 or a fixed body of doctrine or teaching that he passes on and some therefore see that as a distinct difference from Paul's teaching in his emphasis on the gospel in his other letters. There seem to be theological themes that are absent in the pastoral epistles or theme that get developed a little bit differently than you find in some of Paul's other letters and so that lead a number people to think that Paul did not or could not have written these letters. 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 the expectation of the coming of Christ and it was would've been more charismatic and loosely structured. But as it began to settle down and as it begin to start to grow, settle in for the long run, there was a need to organize it more carefully and so it would have elders and deacons in the carefully structured leadership. Some say that’s what was happening in the pastoral epistles. Therefore the Pastoral Epistles must've come later. It reflects a structured leadership, it reflects a church organization and structure that would've only been true sometime after Paul's life, therefore Paul could not have written this. 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 First and Second Timothy and Titus. It must have been written maybe by a disciple of his or maybe by a follower of Paul who, after his death, had now written in Paul's name to address a situation in Ephesus.

Maybe the readers of the letters knew that. The knew exactly what was going on they would not have even thought Paul wrote it because that they knew he was dead and they knew that pseudonymity is a common device. So they would 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 letters. One of them would be the church organization. So they’d say 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, that the gospel now was conceived more as a deposit of teaching, a more well defined body of teaching that Paul was passing on. The other one is that the ethics of the Pastoral Epistles emphasize godliness, they more emphasize trying to live life in a way that reflects that the church is beginning to now settle down within its pagan environment. So the ethic of First and Second Timothy is more trying to show the church how to live 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 that early church would've thought Jesus is coming
back soon and therefore will live life in light of that. Now First and Second Timothy assume the churches are going to be around for a while and now they're being shown how should we live our lives so we can 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 1 Timothy seems to reflect a much later situation beyond Paul’s lifetime. So again in connection with the fact that pseudonymity was a fairly common device, as some would say, this is probably a disciple of Paul writing the kind of thing that Paul probably would've said to the church in Ephesus several years or more after Paul's death. Again maybe the readers would not have been upset, they would've thought: “We know Paul's dead and we know you didn't write this, but we know it's a disciple writing in his name.” So they weren’t being deceived and the author of First and Second Timothy and Titus weren’t being deceived either.

How do we respond that? Why was it accepted as Scripture, especially if the church thought that it’s because Paul wrote it, which is why we should accept it as Scripture. So were they being deceived if Paul really didn’t write it? That’s a very good point that 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. Theoretically, I don’t have a problem with a 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 a pseudonymous writings that Paul didn't write but someone after him? I suggest that while we can’t perhaps obtain one hundred percent absolute certainty with scientific precision that unless there is good reason to think that Paul did write it starting with the early church's testimony that Paul is the author of these letters. I mean, you look at these objections and 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 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 written them. We just need a lot more than we have to
determine what Paul could or could not written. So interestingly most people that 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 Paul's letters to be more
confident.

The second one too, theological differences, first of all, in response to those that
say, “Well because First and Second 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 and some of Paul's letters. Paul didn’t
write it.” The fact that they don't occur in First and Second Timothy and Titus really
doesn’t say much. I mean does Paul have to say everything he believes and thinks 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 maybe he's emphasizing other things or other things that he
would've normally emphasized he doesn't at this point. There could be a variety of
reasons why he doesn't emphasize some of the same things he has earlier and there could
be reasons why he maybe develops them in a different way. I'm actually not convinced
that the distance between First and Second Timothy and Titus and Paul's other letters is
quite as drastic that the themes have developed so greatly that Paul could not have written
them. So 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 types of arguments need to be treated
with caution.

The last one, later church organization. Actually, when you read First and Second
Timothy and Titus carefully it's interesting how little it actually says about church
organization. Paul's main concern is not a highly structured and organized church, if you
read the letter carefully it really says very little about how the church is organized and structured. In fact, if you go back, we’ve already looked at the book of Philippians. It’s interesting that Philippians begins by addressing the elders and deacons in the church of 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 in leadership and First and Second 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, deacons and a main elder or head bishop and other bishops. 1 Timothy and Titus simply don't evince 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. So I'm going to operate and move forward on the assumption that Paul is in fact the author of First and Second Timothy and Titus and that the differences between the two would have to do with his circumstances, the situation he's addressing, etc.

Alright, so what is the purpose of 1 Timothy? We will start with First Timothy, what I said about the Pauline authorship, whether Paul wrote them or not, is kind of true for all three of these. But now by talking about the purpose, I will focus mainly on First Timothy. Why was this letter written? How you read and interpret First Timothy has a lot to do with what you think Paul was doing. The common approach, the traditional approach for some time, is what I call the “Church Manual” approach that 1 Timothy was written as just 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, in chapter 3 it gives him instructions as to how to manage different groups in the church, and what an elder should be doing, and what deacons should be doing. So First Timothy becomes kind of a “Church Manual,” 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 First Timothy to
support or justify certain church governments, whether it's more of a congregational type of government, an elder ruled type of church government or Presbyterian or Episcopal type of church government. 1 Timothy is often appealed to support that or when it comes to how do we choose elders and deacons in our church, what are they supposed to do? We go back to First Timothy and we find information that helps us to decipher those kinds of questions.

I don’t want to say that we shouldn't do that, but I want to propose something else then the commonly held view that First Timothy is a Church Manual, just an instructional manual on how to run the church. The key comes right at the beginning of First Timothy, this is verses three and four of First Timothy. Paul says, “I urge you, Timothy, (that's why the book's name Timothy because he's the primary recipient) 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 coworkers, since Paul for 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, warn people not to teach this false doctrine with 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 that help Timothy, to instruct Timothy, how to deal with a false teaching that has infiltrated the church of Ephesus. So in that sense First Timothy belongs in the same category as Galatians and Colossians as books were Paul is addressing some kind of deviant teaching or false teaching that is now a threat to the gospel of Jesus Christ. So I take it that what Paul's going to do in First
Timothy is not to primarily tell Timothy how to run the church, but more to instruct them how to deal with this false teaching that is infiltrating the church in Ephesus. He appoints Timothy to go to that church and take care of this problem and Timothy immediately went.

When you read First Timothy, clearly, Timothy is the mediating figure and Paul is writing to Timothy but he's not primarily instructing Timothy, he's giving Timothy instructions that should be passed down to the church of Ephesus. Paul is writing through Timothy to the Ephesian church. Ultimately they are the ones who are to obey the majority of the instructions in First Timothy the church at Ephesus, but Timothy is the go-between, the mediator, who is to mediate this information. Paul addresses Timothy because Timothy is in charge of the Ephesian church. Paul tells Timothy he is to then communicate this information to the Ephesian church. What that means is that the book of First Timothy looks roughly like this and then when we understand the purpose of First Timothy is Paul's instructing Timothy on how to combat this false teaching that he infiltrated the church in Ephesus. First Timothy then, I think, can roughly be seen as the different ways that Timothy should implement in combating and dealing with this false teachings.

The first way that Timothy and the Ephesian churches are to combat false teaching is by emphasizing the gospel of God's grace. Interestingly in the first chapter of First 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 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, but 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 they gathered for worship and caused them to do things in a very upsetting and unconventional way. So Paul calls for the church to restore proper order as they gathered for worship. This is very important and we will 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 privately are 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 will talk a little bit about that more in a moment and see what the connection is.

Fourth, Paul encourages the proper treatment of various groups in the church. So in chapter 4 Paul addresses various groups within those and how they treat elders, specifically how a lot of younger persons treat older persons in the church. 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 hesitate to do this because 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 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 verses 14-15. Paul says, “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 as the Pillar of Truth and all of these instructions I think contribute to that end. The church was commonly understood in the first century along the lines of a household in the same way that there are certain ways of the household is operated. 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.
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 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 this passage 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 Paul says, “I desire that in every place that men should pray lifting up their holy hands without anger or argument, also that women should dress themselves modestly an decently in suitable clothing not with braided hair with gold pearls and expensive clothes.” Anyone wearing gold pearls with their hair braided shouldn't do that, I just read it. “But, with good works as is proper for women who profess reverence for God. 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 and holiness with modesty.”

Now what do you do with a text like this? Again, we could take this rather straightforward. So yeah, we can’t wear pearls, gold and have braided hair and the women should be silent and not teach a man or have authority over man or speak up.

Let me say a couple 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, not that those aren't of interest. I'm just trying to demonstrate that Paul's main focus was not about what goes on in the workplace, Paul is addressing what happens when the church gathers for worship. The second thing to understand again is that 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 un-contextualized teaching, Paul doesn't just 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 and from Cambridge England and he wrote an interesting book where he argued from literary evidence from the first century. 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, although this was frowned upon by the public in general and by the Emperor and especially philosophers of the day in the first century. Some were advocating this idea of a new Roman woman and that was someone who wanted their freedom. It was someone who dressed provocatively, and basically they flaunted and undermined traditional marriage roles and the value of marriage. Basically they were just flaunting societies convention and all the traditional roles in the first century and again promoting this ostentatious display of one's wealth and again dressing provocatively or showing disrespect to their spouses or husbands. Is possible that this is one of the things that had now infiltrated the church in Ephesus? So now that would explain why Paul speaks out against wearing gold and pearls and braided hair and expensive clothes not necessarily because those things in and of themselves are wrong, but is it possible that it was suggesting this new Roman woman concept. So 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 in 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 to flaunt convention, to show disrespect her husband, to show disrespect for traditional marriage, 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. Now Paul wants that to stop. He doesn't want the women acting like this concept of the new Roman woman
that is rebellious and flaunts conventions of society and undermines all its traditional values and dresses provocatively, ostentatiously and in disrespect their husbands dressing in a way that the disrespects marriage, etc. Paul wants that to stop.

So then maybe understanding a little of the background can help you see why Paul writes like this, why he addresses it in the way he does and why he forbids certain ways dressing or why he forbids women to teach in the church and have authority over their husbands. It may be because of 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. It’s possible maybe it was serious enough that he's speaking in very absolute terms, 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 Paul just wanted it to stop in this situation. So maybe it so infiltrated the church and is causing such problems his only recourse is just to put an end to it, so he speaks in rather strong terms. It could be the way he's handling this could reflect differences in the way he's handled situations in his previous letters. But does everyone see how it appears on the face of it, Paul is responding to a very specific problem that a 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 to the church or at least some women have been affected by it. 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 flaunting society’s conventions and dressing in a provocative way showing disrespect to marriage to their partners and Paul wants that to stop. So Paul says don't dress like that and no teaching and having authority over your husbands as a sign of your disrespect to them.

The question being whether Paul would say something similar to other churches in other situations. How does that compare to 1 Corinthians 11 where Paul is addressing the situation of worship he actually gives us, 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 pick up on the main debate here and I don't want to settle it, my intentions are 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've said something similar to any church in the first century or the 21st-century. In other words, are Paul's instructions in chapter 2, regarding women not teaching and having authority over men in the church, are they binding for today? Is it universal or is it more cultural and limited? Did Paul only intend these instructions for the first century church of Ephesus and not necessarily for anyone else so that in any other context Paul was happy for women to teach and preach to have authority over men, etc. but in Ephesus he wasn't. Or again, was this Paul's desire for any church? We will talk more about that on Friday.