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The Distinctive Vocabulary of the Pastoral Letters

The Pastoral Letters use about nine hundred vocabulary words.

Scholars compare these with the vocabulary of other letters attributed to Paul.

Many distinctive words. Over one-third of the words used in these letters do not occur in any other New Testament writing attributed to Paul. Two-thirds of these distinctive words occur in the writings of second-century Christians.

Absence of typical words. Many words used regularly in Paul's other letters are not used here, including numerous characteristic words (conjunctions, particles, adverbs) that Paul tends to use regardless of topic or circumstance.

Words with different meanings. Some important words found in both the Pastoral Letters and Paul's undisputed writings seem to be used differently. Examples:

- Paul uses the word "righteousness" to mean "being in a right relationship with God" (Rom. 5:17; 10:3–4; Gal. 3:21); in the Pastoral Letters it means "being a morally upright person" (1 Tim. 6:11; 2 Tim. 2:22; 3:16; Titus 1:8).
- Paul uses the word "faith" to mean "trust in Jesus Christ" (Rom. 1:16; 2 Cor. 5:7; Gal. 2:20); in the Pastoral Letters it

means “Christian doctrine” (1 Tim. 1:19; 3:9; 4:1; 2 Tim. 3:8; 4:7; Titus 1:13).

- Paul uses the word “common” to mean “unclean” (Rom. 14:14); in the Pastoral Letters it means “shared” (Titus 1:4).