

1 & 2 TIMOTHY AND TITUS

**By
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Lesson 1

Paul's Relationship with Timothy

1 Timothy 1

1:1-2 – Paul's true child in the faith

This letter is addressed to Timothy – one of Paul's closest companions. It is believed Timothy came from Lystra and would have been baptized on Paul's first missionary journey. When Paul returned to Lystra on his second missionary journey we read of Timothy traveling with Paul's missionary party. Timothy would spend several decades working with congregations throughout Macedonia, Greece, and Asia Minor. That the two men had a strong relationship with each other is clearly seen throughout 1 and 2 Timothy and in Philippians 2:19-24 and 1 Corinthians 4:17. Besides Timothy, only Titus is mentioned as being Paul's *true child in the faith*, Titus 1:4.

1:3-11 – Timothy's mission at Ephesus

This letter is written by Paul around AD 64 from Macedonia. In the middle of AD 63 Paul had been released from his first imprisonment in Rome and immediately began visiting many of the congregations he had worked to establish during the AD 50's. He and Timothy met up in Ephesus where they worked to protect the congregation from an increasing influence of false teachers within the church who were clinging to the Law of Moses as a basis for justification. The church at Ephesus had been in existence for over ten years at this point and was at a very critical juncture in its work. This is why Paul instructed Timothy to remain at Ephesus charging him to *instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines*. This would have been a large task, and some have speculated that Timothy's timid spirit (2 Timothy. 1:7) led to his reluctance to stay in Ephesus.

Timothy's mission was clear and concise. He was to withstand those who would compromise the simplicity of the gospel. The word instruct is important. MacAthur notes that this was like a "military command – demanding a subordinate to obey an order from a superior."³ Timothy would need to hold his ground against these teachers as he is operating under the authority of an apostle. Even though the church was in its infancy, it should

be understood that the first century Christians were expected to abide in the apostles doctrine (6:3-4). Six years earlier Paul warned the Ephesian elders of a time when *savage wolves would come in not sparing the flock*, Acts 20:29. How long they remained on alert after Paul's departure is unknown (Acts 20:31), but it is clear by this time that false doctrine was gaining ground with a few – perhaps even the elders of the church? Are the certain ones Paul mentions in 1 Timothy 1:3 Hymenaeus & Alexander? Probably not, but there is speculation that there would have been a few within the congregation that would have been sympathetic to the false doctrine these two men advocated. Timothy was to charge them not to teach any other doctrine. According to Galatians 1:6-9, there is only one doctrine. See also 1 Timothy 6:3-4. In the New Testament, the only time the term “doctrines” is mentioned in a plural sense, it is speaking of the doctrines of men.

Those who were soft on doctrine were relying on man-made additions to God's law. This has always been the case with false teachers – loving to interweave doctrines of men with the doctrine of Christ. The false teachers in Ephesus had lost their focus from the true gospel and had turned aside to something pointless.

The goal behind Timothy's instruction was *love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith* (1:5). Contrast this to circumstances often created by false doctrine: conflict and endless disputes. It is in such cases that the focus is removed from Jesus to that of the teacher(s). There is little doubt that this was going on since Paul mentions the false teachers were not as important as they thought they were (1:7). These misunderstood the Law of Moses – failing to grasp that it was temporary in nature (Colossians 2:14-16). When the doctrine of Christ is adhered to, peace and love abound! Keeping this in mind, Timothy would have increased confidence in holding up the truth.

Paul says, *the law is good, if one uses it lawfully* (1:8). What was the original intention for the law? For one, it revealed God's righteous standard of right and wrong. It also brings to light the sin of the lawless with hopes of bringing them to God. See also Romans 3:20. The law was created “for the restraint of evil-doing.”²⁴ The Jewish teachers long had things misconstrued in thinking that law-keeping creates righteousness. Rather, the law reminds us of our sin and the need for tremendous and abundant mercy of God. If one

had ever had a chance of being saved by the law – it would have been Paul who was trained according to the strictest aspects of the law (Acts 22:3). Yet, it was he who pleaded for mercy! (1 Timothy 1:15-16; Romans 7:24)

In verses nine and ten, Paul speaks of lawless ones who had no regard for holy and righteous things. The first six items Paul mentions might be classified as *sins against God*. The final descriptions might be described as *crimes against men*.⁵ The term *sound doctrine* (1:10) is also mentioned in 2 Timothy 4:3 and Titus 2:1. Sound is used in 1 Timothy 6:3; 2 Timothy 1:13; and Titus 1:13. “Sound” is derived from the same word that we use for “Hygienic” today. “It promotes spiritual health.”⁶ Unsound doctrine leads to spiritual disease and death. May we realize the importance of adhering to sound doctrine (the apostle’s doctrine) today! God had *entrusted* the gospel to Paul. His great trust in the blessed gospel never escaped his mind. Paul treated his responsibilities seriously, and constantly risked his life to spread the gospel wherever he went.

1:12-17 – Paul’s appreciation for God’s mercy

Paul had a constant attitude of gratefulness. He was extremely unworthy to have the honor to preach the gospel, but felt thankful for the opportunity to bring sinners to repentance. One remembers his former life as expressed in Philippians 3:3-6. Note how he would have been considered *blameless* under the law – but yet here is a man who was still in need of God’s mercy and forgiveness! This is the message of the gospel! While God expects us to keep His law, we are still in total need of His mercy and grace to be saved! Paul preached under the full authority of God and had been appointed by Him to preach in His service! In Acts 22:15 Ananias told Saul he was to be *a witness for Him to all men of what you have seen and heard*. God’s mercy has shown that even a man such as Paul could be saved! Someone who had blasphemed,

3 *1 & 2nd Timothy: Encouragement for Church Leaders*, MacArthur, John © 2001. p. 7

4 *The Pastoral Epistles*, Guthrie, Donald, Tyndale © 1990 p. 70.

5 *The Pastoral Epistles*, Guthrie, Donald, Tyndale © 1990 p. 71.

6 *Thessalonians, the Pastorals, and Hebrews*, Hendrickson, William, New Testament Commentary © 1996 : p. 70

persecuted, and injured the cause of Christ had the opportunity for salvation! He did these things in ignorance thinking that he had the truth and was protecting the Jewish religion. God recognized Paul's potential for spreading the gospel and it was His mercy that allowed Paul to do that. Thus Paul says, *the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus* (1:14).

Patton notes *this is a faithful saying*, appears five times in the Pastoral Epistles,⁷ (1 Timothy 1:15; 3:1; 4:9; 2 Timothy 2:11; and Titus 3:8). This phrase notes a summary of an important doctrine. Paul states the fundamental of the gospel – *Jesus came into the world to save sinners*. He came to save them! Jesus alone provides deliverance from eternal damnation! He can rescue us from the guilt and slavery of sin! He can liberate us from the sentence of eternal death! It is through His blood that we have fellowship with God and have hope of everlasting life. This was the mission of Jesus (Luke 19:10; John 3:16). Paul also notes that he was the chief of sinners. No doubt, he was thinking of his life before becoming a Christian. Remember 1:13? Paul mentions that he serves as an example of the *perfect patience* of God. No person is beyond the saving power of Jesus Christ! The Greek word here means “an outline, a sketch-plan, a first draft, a preliminary model.”⁸ If God's grace and mercy could extend to such a person as Paul – there is no doubt God will save others! You can read of the accounts of Paul's personal testimony of coming to Christ in Acts 9, 22, 26, Galatians 1-2, and Philippians 3:1-14. The remembrance of Paul's former life was always present for Paul. Even though he had been deeply stained with sin, he had been cleansed through Christ. In verse 17, Paul gives all the glory and honor to God!

1:18-20 – Fight the good fight

What charge is Paul talking about? See 1:3. The very future of the church depended upon Timothy to uphold the truth of the gospel. Paul had full faith and trust in his son in the faith. He is intent in helping the young

⁷ *The Books of 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, Patton, Marshall, Truth Commentaries ©2001 : p. 25

⁸ *The Letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, Barclay, William, The Daily Study Bible Series © 1975 : p. 48

evangelist see there was no room for failure! Timothy was expected to fight the good fight. He would have to actively resist the infiltration of false doctrine fighting both an offensive and defensive battle. Holding on to the truth involves clinging to it with great fervor. Jude 3 comes to mind: *contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.* (NASU) Like Timothy, we must come to understand that there is no room for failure! Our mission is of utmost importance! In an age where doctrinal truth is deemphasized and everything is relative upholding God's standard must be seen as urgent and absolutely necessary!

Some had gone against their conscience and allowed their faith to *suffer shipwreck*. Paul mentions Hymenaeus and Alexander as examples. Hymenaeus is also mentioned in 2 Timothy 2:17 as saying *the resurrection (had) already taken place*. Whether the Alexander mentioned in 1 Timothy 1 is the same person as mentioned in Acts 19:33 and 2 Timothy 4:14-15 cannot be proven. Alexander (then and now) is a very common name. Hendrickson points out "these men were leaders among the Ephesian heretics. They were self-righteous people who yearned to be law teachers, although they understood neither the words which they were speaking nor the themes on which they were harping with such confidence,"⁹ (1:7). These men had continued in their teaching to the point that now there could be no fellowship with them. *Handed over to Satan* is also used by Paul in 1 Corinthians 5:5 in reference to the man who had his father's wife. Just as the situation in Corinth demanded action on part of the brethren – there is no doubt the circumstances in Ephesus had risen to the point where fellowship had to be severed with these men because of their insistence in teaching false doctrine. Remember the end view of church discipline. Its aim is to restore a person back to a proper relationship with God. There can be little doubt that Paul was desirous that these men come to repentance and cease their blasphemy against sound doctrine.

Thus ends chapter one. Paul's son in the faith, Timothy, had a huge task before him, but with God on His side success would come! No doubt Paul's letter to Timothy would have been one of great encouragement. Those older

⁹ *Thessalonians, the Pastorals, and Hebrews*, Hendrickson, William, New Testament Commentary 1996 : p. 87

and more mature in the faith must never shirk their duty in encouraging younger ones, who can be often subject to discouragement. Here we are presented with the tender relationship between two soldiers in the faith. May we seek to grow closer to one another so that we can do our best to *consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds* (Hebrews 10:24 NASU).

Questions for Discussion

1. We see a special and tender relationship between Paul and Timothy. By the time 1 Timothy is written, how long had Paul & Timothy worked together in spreading the gospel? Describe when/where they worked together.
2. How much had Paul been involved with the church at Ephesus?
3. What was Timothy's mission at Ephesus?
4. Read 1:4-7. See if you can find three things that would help one identify false teaching.
5. How dangerous were the false doctrines that were being taught within the Ephesian congregation?

6. From where does false doctrine originate?

7. What are some effective ways in dealing with the teaching of false doctrine?

8. Read 1:7 and 1:12. Contrast the motivation between Paul's teaching and that of the certain ones who taught false doctrine.

9. What is the purpose of the law? How were the people Timothy dealt with using it improperly?

10. What is sound doctrine? How can it be identified?

11. Was Paul saved by grace? Describe the process by which Paul was saved.

12. In what way was Paul an example for the rest of those who would be saved?

13. How can we fight the good fight of faith?

14. Find some passages that compare the Christian to a soldier. How are a good soldier and a good Christian comparable?

15. What does it mean to keep faith and (have) a good conscience? (See 1:19.)

16. How can our faith suffer shipwreck?

17. Of what sin were Hymenaeus and Alexander guilty of?

18. What is the aim of church discipline?

19. Describe the impact of the encouragement you have received from those older and more mature in the faith. How can we look for opportunities to make a difference for those younger in the faith?

20. Is there someone within your congregation that you can “adopt” as a son/daughter in the faith?