

**1 Timothy 1**  
**January 9, 2022**

**Open with Prayer**

**HOOK:**

We are beginning our study of I Timothy, which happens to be one of two pastoral letters that Paul writes to Timothy. If you're not familiar with Timothy, he was the son of a Greek Gentile father and a strong-minded Jewish mother. He joined Paul on his second missionary journey and was an associate and faithful companion to Paul for about 15 years. Paul was probably in his 60s when he wrote this letter, and theologians believe Timothy was probably around 35 yrs old when he received this letter. Paul had left Timothy in charge of the work at Ephesus and most likely was writing this epistle from Macedonia circa 63 a.d. Paul knew firsthand of the heresies that were alive and at work there because Paul and Timothy served together before Paul left for Macedonia.

**Transition:** Upon reading this epistle and especially our opening chapter, we will discover that Paul is asking Timothy to stay in Ephesus and deal with false teaching that is coming from the *inside* of the church. Ephesus would not be the easiest place to pastor a church. (Are there any "easy places"? I doubt it.) The city was devoted to the worship of Diana. Her images helped promote sexual immorality of all kinds (see Acts 19). Timothy faced the challenge that all pastors face, even today: "***How should pastors and believers in the local body deal with false teaching?***" So Paul wrote the letter we call 1 Timothy to encourage Timothy, to explain how a local church should be managed, and to enforce his own authority as a servant of God. In this chapter, Paul explained the three (3) RESPONSIBILITIES of a pastor and people in a local church. Let's read the text and see what they are. [Teach Sound Doctrine, Proclaim the Gospel, Defend the Faith]

**BOOK:**

**1** Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope,

<sup>2</sup>To Timothy my true son in the faith:

Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

*Warning Against False Teachers of the Law*

<sup>3</sup>As I urged you when I went into Macedonia, stay there in Ephesus so that you may command certain men not to teach false doctrines any longer <sup>4</sup>nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies. These promote controversies rather than God's work—which is by faith. <sup>5</sup>The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. <sup>6</sup>Some have wandered away from these and turned to meaningless talk. <sup>7</sup>They want to be teachers of the law, but they do not know what they are talking about or what they so confidently affirm.

<sup>8</sup>We know that the law is good if one uses it properly. <sup>9</sup>We also know that law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious; for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, <sup>10</sup>for adulterers and perverts, for slave

traders and liars and perjurers—and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine <sup>11</sup> that conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me.

### *The Lord's Grace to Paul*

<sup>12</sup> I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his service. <sup>13</sup> Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. <sup>14</sup> The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

<sup>15</sup> Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst. <sup>16</sup> But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life. <sup>17</sup> Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

<sup>18</sup> Timothy, my son, I give you this instruction in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by following them you may fight the good fight, <sup>19</sup> holding on to faith and a good conscience. Some have rejected these and so have shipwrecked their faith. <sup>20</sup> Among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme.

### **Process Observations/Questions:**

Q: What did you most like about this passage? What resonated with you? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you least like about this passage? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you find in this passage that you didn't understand? [Let people engage]

Q: What do we learn about Jesus in this passage? [Let people engage]

### **LOOK:**

Each local church is in a constant battle against the forces of evil. There are false prophets and false teachers. Satan is the originator of false doctrines, for he is a liar from the beginning (John 8:44). It is not enough for a local church to teach sound doctrine and to proclaim the Gospel. The church must also defend the faith by exposing lies and opposing the doctrines of demons (1 Tim. 4:1).

### **Close in Prayer**

## **Commentaries for Today's Lesson:**

**Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible Exposition Commentary (Vol. 2, pp. 210–214). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.***

### **STAY ON THE JOB**

#### *1 Timothy 1*

Men wanted for hazardous journey, small wages, bitter cold, long months of complete darkness, constant danger, safe return doubtful. Honor and recognition in case of success.”

That advertisement appeared in a London newspaper and *thousands of men responded!* It was signed by the noted Arctic explorer, Sir Ernest Shackleton, and that was what made the difference.

If Jesus Christ had advertised for workers, the announcement might have read something like this:

“Men and women wanted for difficult task of helping to build My church. You will often be misunderstood, even by those working with you. You will face constant attack from an invisible enemy. You may not see the results of your labor, and your full reward will not come till after all your work is completed. It may cost you your home, your ambitions, even your life.”

In spite of the demands that He makes, Jesus Christ receives the “applications” of many who gladly give their all for Him. He is certainly the greatest Master for whom anyone could work, and the task of building His church is certainly the greatest challenge to which a believer could give his life.

Timothy was one young man who responded to Christ’s call to help build His church. He was one of the Apostle Paul’s special assistants. Along with Titus, Timothy tackled some of the tough assignments in the churches that Paul had founded. Timothy was brought up in a religious home (2 Tim. 1:5) and had been led to faith in Christ by Paul himself. This explains why Paul called Timothy “my own [genuine] son in the faith” (1 Tim. 1:2).

Timothy was born of mixed parentage: his mother was a Jewess, his father a Greek. He was so devoted to Christ that his local church leaders recommended him to Paul, and Paul added him to his “missionary staff” (Acts 16:1–5). Paul often reminded Timothy that he was chosen for this ministry (1 Tim. 1:18; 4:14). Timothy was faithful to the Lord (1 Cor. 4:17) and had a deep concern for God’s people (Phil. 2:20–22).

But in spite of his calling, his close association with Paul, and his spiritual gifts, Timothy was easily discouraged. The last time Paul had been with Timothy, he had encouraged him to stay on at Ephesus and finish his work (1 Tim. 1:3). Apparently, Timothy had physical problems (1 Tim. 5:23) as well as periods of discouragement; and you get the impression that some of the church members were not giving their pastor the proper respect as God’s servant (1 Tim. 4:12; 2 Tim. 2:6–8).

Ephesus would not be the easiest place to pastor a church. (Are there any “easy places”? I doubt it.) The city was devoted to the worship of Diana, the patroness of the sexual instinct. Her lascivious images helped promote sexual immorality of all kinds (see Acts 19). Paul had done a great work in Ephesus during his three-year ministry, so “all they which dwelt in [the province of] Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 19:10). It was not easy for Timothy to follow a man like Paul! Of course, Satan had his workers in the city; for wherever there are spiritual opportunities there are also satanic obstacles (1 Cor. 16:8–9).

Paul wrote the letter we call 1 Timothy to encourage Timothy, to explain how a local church should be managed, and to enforce his own authority as a servant of God. In 1 Timothy 1 Paul explained the three responsibilities of a pastor and people in a local church.

### **Teach Sound Doctrine (1 Tim. 1:1–11)**

From the very greeting of the letter, Paul affirmed his authority as a servant of Jesus Christ. Those who were giving Timothy trouble needed to remember that their pastor was there because God had put him there, for Paul's authority was given by God. Paul was an "apostle," one whom God sent with a special commission. His apostleship came by "commandment" from Jesus Christ. This word means "a royal commission." Both Paul and Timothy were sent by the King of kings!

Jesus Christ is not only Lord, but He is our "Savior," a title used ten times in the Pastoral Epistles (1 Tim. 1:1; 2:3; 4:10; 2 Tim. 1:10; Titus 1:3–4; 2:10, 13; 3:4, 6). To discourage Timothy, the title "our hope" (1 Tim. 1:1) was a real boost. Paul wrote the same encouragement to Titus (Titus 1:2; 2:13; 3:7). Knowing that Jesus Christ is coming for us encourages us to serve Him faithfully.

One reason Christian workers must stay on the job is that false teachers are busy trying to capture Christians. There were teachers of false doctrines in Paul's day just as there are today, and we must take them seriously. These false teachers have no good news for lost sinners. They seek instead to lead Christians astray and capture them for their causes.

Paul used military language to help Timothy and his people see the seriousness of the problem (1 Tim. 1:3). *Charge* means "to give strict orders from a superior officer." Paul used this word (sometimes translated "commandment" and "command" in KJV) eight times in his two letters to Timothy (1 Tim. 1:3, 5, 18; 4:11; 5:7; 6:13, 17; 2 Tim. 4:1). He was conveying this idea: "Timothy, you are not only a pastor of the church in a difficult city. You are also a Christian soldier under orders from the King. Now pass these orders along to the soldiers in your church!"

What was the order? "Do not teach different doctrines from those taught by Paul!" In the original text there are thirty-two references to "doctrine," "teach," "teacher," "teaches," and "teaching" in the three Pastoral Epistles. In the early church, the believers were taught the Word of God and the meanings of basic Christian doctrines. In many churches today, the pulpit and choir loft are places for entertainment, not enlightenment and enrichment.

God had committed the truth of the Word to Paul (1 Tim. 1:11), and Paul had committed it to Timothy (1 Tim. 6:20). It was Timothy's responsibility to guard the faith (2 Tim. 1:14) and to pass it along to faithful people (2 Tim. 2:2).

Paul identified the false teaching as "fables and endless genealogies" (1 Tim. 1:4). Titus faced the same kind of false teaching in Crete (Titus 1:14; 3:9). The false teachers were using the Old Testament Law, and especially the genealogies, to manufacture all kinds of novelties; and these new doctrines were leading people astray. The false teachers were raising questions, not answering them. They were not promoting "God's saving plan" ("godly edifying," 1 Tim. 1:4), but were leading people away from the truth. Instead of producing love, purity, a good conscience, and sincere faith, these novel doctrines were causing division, hypocrisy, and all sorts of problems.

Paul used the word "conscience(s)" twenty-one times in his letters, and six of these references are in the Pastoral Epistles (1 Tim. 1:5, 19; 3:9; 4:2; 2 Tim. 1:3; Titus 1:15). The word "conscience" means "to know with." Conscience is the inner judge that accuses us when we have

done wrong and approves when we have done right (Rom. 2:14–15). It is possible to sin against the conscience so that it becomes “defiled” (Titus 1:15). Repeated sinning hardens the conscience so that it becomes “seared” like scar tissue (1 Tim. 4:2).

It is tragic when professed Christians get off course because they refuse “healthy doctrine” (“sound doctrine,” 1 Tim. 1:10). Paul also calls it “the doctrine ... according to godliness” (1 Tim. 6:3), “sound words” (2 Tim. 1:13), “sound doctrine” (2 Tim. 4:3; Titus 1:9; 2:1), “faith” (Titus 1:13; 2:2), and “sound speech” (Titus 2:8). But many prefer the “vain jangling” (1 Tim. 1:6) of those who teach novelties rather than the pure Word of God that produces holiness in lives. It is unfortunate today that we not only have “vain jangling” (“meaningless talk,” NIV) in teaching and preaching, but also in music. Far too many songs not only teach *no* doctrine, but many even teach *false* doctrines. A singer has no more right to sing a lie than a teacher has to teach a lie.

The reason for this false doctrine was a misuse of the Old Testament Law. These false teachers did not understand the content or the purpose of God’s Law. They were leading believers out of the liberty of grace (Gal. 5:1ff) into the bondage of legalism, a tragedy that still occurs today. The flesh (our old nature) loves religious legalism because rules and regulations enable a person to *appear* holy without really having to change his heart.

Paul listed fourteen kinds of people who were condemned by the Law (1 Tim. 1:9–10). This is one of several such lists in the New Testament (see Mark 7:20–23; Rom. 1:18–32; Gal. 5:19–21). The lawful use of the Law is to expose, restrain, and convict the lawless. The Law cannot save lost sinners (Gal. 2:21; 3:21–29); it can only reveal their need for a Savior. When a sinner believes on Jesus Christ, he is freed from the curse of the Law (Gal. 3:10–14); and the righteous demands of the Law are met by the indwelling Holy Spirit as a believer yields to God (Rom. 8:1–4).

Paul (1 Tim. 1:9–10) centered particularly on five of the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20:

- No. 5— “*Honor thy father and thy mother*”—“murderers of the fathers and ... mothers.”
- No. 6— “*Thou shalt not kill [murder]*”—“murderers of fathers and ... mothers ... manslayers.”
- No. 7— “*Thou shalt not commit adultery*”—“whoremongers [fornicators] ... them that defile themselves with mankind [sodomites].”
- No. 8— “*Thou shalt not steal*”—“men-stealers [kidnappers].”
- No. 9— “*Thou shalt not bear false witness*”—“liars ... perjured persons.”

It is the “glorious Gospel” that saves lost sinners. Paul had experienced the power of the Gospel (Rom. 1:16), and he had been entrusted with the ministry of the Gospel (1 Thess. 2:4). Law and Gospel go together, for the Law without the Gospel is diagnosis without remedy; but the Gospel without Law is only the Good News of salvation for people who don’t believe they need it because they have never heard the bad news of judgment. The Law is not Gospel, but the Gospel is not lawless (Rom. 3:20–31).

### **Proclaim the Gospel (1 Tim. 1:12–17)**

The mention of “the Gospel of the glory of the blessed God” (1 Tim. 1:11, literal translation) moved Paul to share his own personal testimony. He was “Exhibit A” to prove that the Gospel of the grace of God really works. When you read Paul’s testimony (see also Acts 9:1–22; 22:1–21; 26:9–18), you begin to grasp the wonder of God’s grace and His saving power.

**What Paul used to be (v. 13a).** He was a *blasphemer* because he denied the deity of Jesus Christ and forced others to deny it. He was a *persecutor* who used physical power to try to destroy the church. “Murderous threats” were the very breath of his life (Acts 9:1 NIV). He persecuted the Christian church (1 Cor. 15:9) and then discovered that he was actually laying hands on Jesus Christ, the Messiah! (Acts 9:4) During this period of his life, Paul consented to the stoning of Stephen and made havoc of the church (Acts 8:1–4).

Paul was *injurious*, a word that means “proud and insolent.” A modern equivalent might be “bully.” It conveys the idea of a haughty man “throwing his weight around” in violence. But the basic causes of his godless behavior were “ignorance” and “unbelief.” Even though Saul of Tarsus was a brilliant man and well educated (Acts 22:3; Gal. 1:13–14), his mind was blinded from the truth (1 Cor. 2:14; 2 Cor. 4:3–4). He was a religious man, yet he was not headed for heaven! It was not until he put faith in Jesus Christ that he was saved (Phil. 3:1–11).

**How Paul was saved (vv. 13b–15).** How could the holy God ever save and forgive such a self-righteous sinner? The key words are “mercy” and “grace.” God in His mercy did not give Paul what he did deserve. Instead God in His grace gave Paul what he did not deserve. Grace and mercy are God’s love in action, God’s love *paying a price* to save lost sinners. It is not God’s love alone that saves us, for God loves the whole world (John 3:16). It is by grace that we are saved (Eph. 2:8–9) because God is rich in mercy (Eph. 2:4) and grace (Eph. 2:7).

What did Paul’s “ignorance” have to do with his salvation? Is ignorance an excuse before God? Of course not! The fact of his ignorance is related to a special Jewish law (Lev. 5:15–19; Num. 15:22–31). If a person sinned knowingly “with a high hand” in Israel, he was cut off from the people. But if he sinned in ignorance, he was permitted to bring the proper sacrifices to atone for his sins. Jesus recognized this principle when He prayed on the cross, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). Their ignorance did not save them, nor did Christ’s prayer save them; but the combination of the two postponed God’s judgment, giving them an opportunity to be saved.

Paul stated that it took “exceedingly abundant” grace to save him! Paul liked to use the Greek prefix *huper* (meaning “an exceeding abundant amount”), and he often attached it to words in his letters. You might translate some of these as “superincrease of faith” (2 Thes. 1:3); “superabounding power” (Eph. 1:19); “superconqueror” (Rom. 8:37). This same prefix has come into the English language as *hyper*. We speak of “hyperactive” children and “hypersensitive” people.

Paul makes it clear that this salvation is not for him only, but for all who receive Jesus Christ (1 Tim. 1:15). If Jesus could save Saul of Tarsus, the *chief* of sinners, then He can save anybody! We admire Paul’s humility, and we note that he considered himself to be the “least of the apostles” (1 Cor. 15:9) and the “least of all saints” (Eph. 3:8). Notice that Paul did not write “of whom I was chief” but “of whom I *am* chief.”

**What Paul became (vv. 12, 16).** The grace of God turned the persecutor into a preacher, and the murderer into a minister and a missionary! So dramatic was the change in Paul’s life that the Jerusalem church suspected that it was a trick, and they had a hard time accepting him (Acts 9:26–31). God gave Paul his ministry; he did not get it from Peter or the other Apostles (Gal. 1:11–24). He was called and commissioned by the risen Christ in heaven.

God saw that Paul was faithful, and so He entrusted the Gospel to him. Even as an unbelieving and Gospel-ignorant Jewish leader, Paul had maintained a good conscience and he lived up to the light that he had. So often those who are intensely wrong as lost sinners become intensely right as Christians and are greatly used of God to win souls. God not only *entrusted* the

Gospel to Paul, but He *enabled* Paul to minister that Gospel (1 Cor. 15:10; Phil. 4:13). When someone obeys God's call to serve, God always equips and enables that person.

But Paul not only became a minister; he also became *an example* (1 Tim. 1:16). In what sense is Paul an example to lost sinners who believe on Christ? None of us has had the same experience that Paul had on the Damascus road (Acts 9). We did not see a light, fall to the ground, and hear Jesus speak from heaven. But Paul is a pattern ("type") to all lost sinners, for he was the chief of sinners! He is proof that the grace of God can change *any* sinner!

But there is a special application of this to today's people of Israel, Paul's countrymen, for whom he had a special burden (Rom. 9:1–5; 10:1–3). The people of Israel, like unconverted Saul of Tarsus, are religious, self-righteous, blind to their own Law and its message of the Messiah, and unwilling to believe. One day, Israel shall see Jesus Christ even as Paul saw Him; and the nation shall be saved. "They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced" (Zech. 12:10). This may be one reason why Paul said he was "born out of due time" (1 Cor. 15:8), for his experience of seeing the risen Christ came at the beginning of this Church Age and not at its end (Matt. 24:29ff).

Paul gave a third responsibility for the local church to fulfill besides teaching sound doctrine and proclaiming the Gospel.

### **Defend the Faith (1 Tim. 1:18–20)**

Again, Paul used military language to enforce his statement, for the word "charge" (1 Tim. 1:18) means "an urgent command handed down from a superior officer" (1 Tim. 1:3). Paul also reminded Timothy that God had chosen him for his ministry. Apparently some of the prophets in the local assemblies had been led by the Spirit to select Timothy for service (see Acts 13:1–3 for an example of this procedure).

It was not easy to serve God in pagan Ephesus, but Timothy was a man under orders, and he had to obey. The soldier's task is to "please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier" (2 Tim. 2:4), and not to please himself. Furthermore, Timothy was there by divine appointment: God had chosen him and sent him. It was this fact that could give him assurance in difficult days. If you are God's servant, called by the Spirit, obeying His will, then you can "stay with it" and finish the work. These assurances enabled Timothy to war the good warfare.

Paul changed the illustration from army to navy (1 Tim. 1:19). He warned Timothy that the only way to succeed was to hold fast to "faith and a good conscience." It is not enough to proclaim the faith with our lips; we must practice the faith in our daily lives. One man said of his hypocritical pastor, "He is such a good preacher, he should never get out of the pulpit; but he is such a poor Christian, he should never get into the pulpit!"

A good conscience is important to a good warfare and a good ministry. The magazine editor H.L. Mencken defined conscience as "the inner voice which warns us that somebody may be looking." But a man with a good conscience will do the will of God in spite of who is watching or what people may say. Like Martin Luther, he will say, "Here I stand; I can do no other, so help me God!"

Professed Christians who "make shipwreck" of their faith do so by sinning against their consciences. Bad doctrine usually starts with bad conduct, and usually with secret sin. Hymenaeus and Alexander deliberately rejected their good consciences in order to defend their ungodly lives. Paul did not tell us exactly what they did, except that their sin involved "blaspheming" in some way. Hymenaeus said that the resurrection was already past (2 Tim. 2:16–18). Alexander was a popular name in that day, so we cannot be sure that the man named in

Paul's next letter to Timothy (2 Tim. 4:14) is the same man; but if he is, no doubt he withstood Paul by teaching false doctrine.

"Delivered unto Satan" (1 Tim. 1:20) implies an apostolic discipline (see 1 Cor. 5:5) and disassociation from the local church. The verb "learn" (1 Tim. 1:20) means "to learn by discipline." When a Christian refuses to repent, the local fellowship should exercise discipline, excluding him from the protective fellowship of the saints, making him vulnerable to the attacks of Satan. The fellowship of the local church, in obedience to the will of God, gives a believer spiritual protection. Satan has to ask God for permission to attack a believer (see Job 1–2; Luke 22:31–34).

Each local church is in a constant battle against the forces of evil. There are false prophets and false teachers, as well as false christs. Satan is the originator of false doctrines, for he is a liar from the beginning (John 8:44). It is not enough for a local church to teach sound doctrine and to proclaim the Gospel. The church must also defend the faith by exposing lies and opposing the doctrines of demons (1 Tim. 4:1).

It is important that our ministry be balanced. Some churches only preach the Gospel and seldom teach their converts the truths of the Christian life. Other churches are only opposing false doctrine; they have no positive ministry. We must be teachers of healthy doctrine ("sound doctrine," 1 Tim. 1:10) or the believers will not grow. We must preach the Gospel and keep winning the lost to Christ. And we must defend the faith against those who would corrupt the church with false doctrine and godless living. It is a constant battle, but it must be carried on.

Timothy must have been greatly helped and encouraged when he read this first section of Paul's letter. God had called Timothy, equipped him, and put him into his place of ministry. Timothy's job was not to run all over Ephesus, being involved in a multitude of tasks. His job was to care for the church by winning the lost, teaching the saved, and defending the faith. Any task that did not relate to these ministries would have to be abandoned. One reason some local churches are having problems is that the pastors and spiritual leaders are involved in too many extracurricular activities and are not doing the tasks God has called them to do.

It might be a good idea for our churches to take a spiritual inventory!

**Litfin, A. D. (1985). 1 Timothy. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures (Vol. 2, pp. 731-734) Wheaton, IL: Victor Books**

## I. The Salutation (1:1–2).

1:1. Paul's typical salutation includes an identification of both author and recipient, combined with a more or less ritualized greeting. Here as in each of his other epistles except Philippians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, and Philemon, **Paul** identified himself as **an apostle of Christ Jesus**. He no doubt used the term "apostle" in its more restricted sense to refer to those who had been personally commissioned by the risen Christ (cf. 2 Cor. 8:23 ["representatives"]; Phil. 2:25 ["messenger"] for its broader usage). Paul's apostleship was not something he had sought; it had come to him through a heavenly command (Gal. 1:11–2:2; cf. 1 Tim. 2:7). In several of his other epistles Paul commonly made a similar point by stressing his apostolic "calling" according to "the will of God" (1 Cor. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; Col. 1:1; 2 Tim. 1:1). Paul was often in the position of having to defend his authority which came from both God the Father and God the Son. The identification of **God our Savior** has an Old Testament ring to it but is common in the Pastorals (cf. 1 Tim. 2:3; 4:10; Titus 1:3; 2:10; 3:4). **Jesus** is described as



**our hope**, a term which directs the reader's attention to the certain fulfillment of God's saving plan in **Christ** (cf. Col. 1:27).

1:2. Though this letter was clearly intended to be read aloud to the congregations in Ephesus and beyond, **Timothy** was identified as its immediate recipient. As Paul's genuine or **true son in the faith**, none could mistake Timothy's special place in Paul's heart. (This is the first of 19 times Paul used the Gr. word *pistis*, "faith," in 1 Tim.) Paul had probably not led him to Christ (cf. 2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15), but he probably had ordained (2 Tim. 1:6) the young minister, and had great confidence in him. Timothy was issued Paul's fairly standard greeting of **grace, mercy, and peace**.

## II. Instructions concerning False Teachers (1:3–20).

### A. *Warnings against false teachers (1:3–11).*

1:3. The moves referred to in this verse cannot be followed clearly. Was Paul leaving **Ephesus** to enter **Macedonia**? Had he given Timothy instructions prior to leaving Ephesus? This is perhaps the best supposition. Timothy was urged, apparently for a second time, to **stay** on in Ephesus, indicating perhaps some inclination on Timothy's part to leave that ministry, perhaps to accompany Paul. Timothy's task in remaining was to stifle **certain men** in the congregation who were teaching **false** (lit., "different"; cf. 6:3) **doctrines**—that is, different from Paul's doctrine (cf. 1:11).

1:4. These false teachers were following after fables (*mythois*, cf. 4:7) and long, involved **genealogies**. Exactly what these fables and genealogies involved is not known. They may have had a Gnostic flavor, but were more likely of Jewish origin (cf. Titus 1:14). Whatever their nature, they were empty of any spiritual value and led only to further speculation, questions, and arguments. Such speculations were to be avoided because they did not further **God's** plan, which is grasped and implemented not by human imaginings, but **by faith**. By contrast, human speculations tend to lead off down endless blind tunnels which serve only to confuse and obscure God's truth.

1:5. Unlike such aimless speculations, the intended result of Paul's instruction to Timothy was **love**, and the purest kind of love at that. It is that love which pours naturally from a cleansed **heart** (cf. 2 Tim. 2:22), untainted **conscience**, and a **sincere** (*anypokritou*, "unhypocritical"; cf. 2 Tim. 1:5) **faith**. Each member of this beautiful trio speaks of a purity and integrity which produces the most exquisite kind of selfless love, seen in its ultimate form in God's love itself. Whereas the false teachers were motivated by worthless curiosity, Paul's instruction was designed to promote the most magnificent of virtues by maintaining the purity of the church's teaching. God's truth always purifies the human spirit, while error putrifies it.

1:6. Paul no doubt believed that such love should be the goal of all Christian ministry (cf. 1 Cor. 13:1–3). Yet, sadly, though they should have known better, some teachers in the Ephesian congregation had lost sight of this lofty purpose and had **wandered away** (lit., "missed the aim"; cf. 1 Tim. 6:21; 2 Tim. 2:18) and **turned aside to meaningless talk**. Their teaching was *mataiologian*, that is, idle, useless, futile, empty verbiage.

1:7. More specifically, the problem with these false teachers, as is often the case, was a matter of the ego. They wanted to become respected **teachers of the Law**. Yet they were completely incapable of doing so. But instead of recognizing their inadequacies and remaining silent, they went on babbling as if with great authority, never understanding their subject (the Law), or even **what they** were saying about it.

1:8. Paul wanted to be sure that he was not misunderstood. He was not disparaging the Law. Paul viewed the Law as “holy, righteous, and good” (Rom. 7:12). Thus he clarified his point by emphasizing that **the Law is good** provided it is used **properly**. There is an inappropriate, legalistic use of the Law which Paul disavowed; but there is also a proper use of the Law that Paul embraced (cf. Gal. 3:19, 24).

1:9–10. **The Law** is designed to show people their sinfulness. Thus the Law is not for one who had already recognized his sin and turned to Christ. That person is no longer under the Law but should now walk in the Spirit (Gal. 5:13–26). The Law is intended for those who remain unconvinced of their sin.

Paul provided a striking list of examples which seem to be intentionally based on the Ten Commandments (cf. Ex. 20:3–17). The list begins with three pairs corresponding to the *first* table of the Decalogue dealing with offenses against God: (1) **lawbreakers and rebels**, (2) **the ungodly and sinful**, (3) **the unholy** (*anosiois*, “not devout”; cf. *hosious* in 1 Tim. 2:8) **and irreligious** (*bebēlois*, “profane”; cf. 4:7; 6:20; 2 Tim. 2:16). Paul then listed violators of the first five commandments of the *second* table of the Decalogue: **those who kill their fathers or mothers** represent the ultimate violation of the fifth commandment, and **murderers** the sixth. **Adulterers and perverts** pertain to the seventh commandment, which was generally broadly interpreted to include all forms of sexual sin. **Slave traders** may correspond to the eighth commandment since kidnapping was viewed as the ultimate act of stealing (Ex. 21:16; Deut. 24:7). **Liars and perjurers** clearly pertain to the ninth commandment. Only the 10th commandment (“You shall not covet”) is not included (but cf. Rom. 7:7). Paul concluded this inventory of sinners with an all-inclusive reference to any behavior which **is contrary to sound doctrine** (lit., to “healthy teaching”; cf. 2 Tim. 1:13), including no doubt the very behavior of the false teachers themselves. “Doctrine” here is *didaskalia*, “teaching” or “the content taught,” used seven times in this epistle: 1 Timothy 1:10; 4:1, 6, 13, 16; 5:17; 6:1.

1:11. Paul’s yardstick for measuring what is and is not sound teaching, of course, was the message of God’s great good news in Christ with which he had been **entrusted** (cf. 1 Thes. 2:4; Titus 1:3), and which he had faithfully preached in Ephesus (cf. Acts 20:17–27).

#### *B. Paul’s experience of grace (1:12–17).*

1:12. At this point Paul’s inventory of sinners, of which he knew he was the chief—combined with his remembrance of the gospel with which he had been entrusted—triggered within him a powerful surge of gratitude. Literally, the words “Thanks I have”—with “thanks” in the emphatic position—begins this section. Paul’s gratitude stemmed from the fact that God in His grace had provided Paul all necessary enablement (cf. Phil. 4:13) and, considering him trustworthy, had pressed him into a privileged place of **service**.

1:13. The reason this was so striking to the apostle was that he knew so well the pit from which he had been dug. When he said he was **a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man**, he was not exaggerating for the sake of effect. (See Acts 22:4–5, 19–20; 26:9–11 for the vivid truth.) Yet Paul **was shown mercy because** his actions were the product of **ignorance**. Willful disobedience triggers God’s wrath (cf., e.g., Num. 15:22–31; Heb. 10:26). But God deals gently with the ignorant and misguided (Heb. 5:2). The German philosopher Nietzsche said, “If you could prove God to me, I would believe Him all the less.” No such willfulness characterized Paul’s unbelief.

1:14. Therefore the apostle received God’s mercy, not His wrath. God’s **grace** far outpaced even Paul’s grievous sin. Where there was once only unbelief, God **poured out ... faith ... in**

**Christ.** Where there had been violent aggression against God and His people, now God poured out the **love** of Christ. (See comments on 2 Tim. 2:10.) Everything Paul lacked, God’s grace had more than amply supplied. (The verb *hyperepleonasen*, used only here in the NT, means “to be present in great or superabundance.”) Here may be seen the full measure of what Paul meant when he spoke of the empowering ministry of Christ (1 Tim. 1:12).

1:15. The central thrust of Paul’s personal digression, begun in verse 12, now becomes clear. It is a testimony concerning the purpose of the Incarnation of **Christ. Jesus came** not merely to set an example or to show that He cared. He came to salvage **sinners** from their spiritual destitution—and Paul said he was **the worst** of that lot. There must be no misunderstanding of this most fundamental point. It is a truth that is completely **trustworthy** and deserving of **full acceptance**. (Four other passages include this “trustworthy” phrase: 3:1; 4:9; 2 Tim. 2:11; Titus 3:8.)

1:16. In fact it was just for this purpose—that is, to demonstrate God’s plan to save sinners—that Paul himself was saved. As **the worst of sinners** (cf. Paul’s other descriptions of himself in 1 Cor. 15:9; Eph. 3:8), Paul represents the extreme **example**. If God was patient and gracious enough to save Paul, He is patient and gracious enough to save anyone. All who follow can look back at Paul as a prototype or pattern (“example,” *hypotypōsin*; cf. 2 Tim. 1:13). The ultimate sinner became the ultimate saint; God’s greatest enemy became His finest servant. Somewhere between these extremes fall all the rest. In studying Paul’s pattern, Christians can therefore learn about themselves.

1:17. This contemplation of God’s grace as seen in Paul’s case prompted him to one of his typical doxologies. It is filled with awe and adoration of the Lord. **King eternal** (lit., “King of the Ages”) emphasizes God’s sovereignty over all the ebb and flow of human history. **Immortal** and **invisible** speak of two of the central attributes of God: His eternality and His spiritual essence. **The only God** emphasizes His uniqueness in a typical Jewish monotheistic fashion. To this God alone must all **honor and glory** be ascribed, eternally. **Amen** (cf. 6:16).

### C. Paul’s charge to Timothy (1:18–20).

1:18. Returning from his brief personal digression (vv. 12–17), Paul got back to the specific matters before Timothy in Ephesus, resuming the charge begun in verse 3. **This instruction** (the same word *parangelian* is translated “command” in v. 5) refers to the teaching about the false teachers mentioned in verse 3. Such instructions were in accord with **the prophecies ... made** earlier concerning Timothy’s call and fitness for service in Ephesus. When and by whom these prophecies were made can only be guessed. It is known that the prophecies reinforced Paul’s conviction that Timothy was a fit soldier to conduct the battle against error in the Ephesian church (cf. 6:12; 2 Tim. 4:7 for an athletic rather than military metaphor). Timothy was to remember these prophecies and be inspired by them in the struggle.

1:19. Whereas in Ephesians 6:10–17 Paul spelled out in detail to that church the Christian’s equipment for spiritual warfare, here he listed only two items: **faith and a good conscience**. These two always seem to travel together (cf. 1 Tim. 1:5; 3:9). Strength in the one is always combined with strength in the other. So also is failure in the one correlated with failure in the other. Thus **some** who **have rejected** (*apōtheō*, “a strong, deliberate thrusting away”; used elsewhere in the NT only in Acts 7:27; Rom. 11:1–2) a good conscience have also found **their faith** destroyed (cf. 1 Tim. 4:1; 6:10). Theological error is often rooted in moral failure.

1:20. Two in Ephesus who illustrate this principle are **Hymenaeus** (cf. 2 Tim. 2:17) **and Alexander**. Whether this is the same Alexander mentioned in Acts 19:33 and 2 Timothy 4:14 is

not clear. Probably it is not. Paul's prescription for these two blasphemers was that they be **handed over to Satan**, a phrase which perhaps refers to excommunication from the congregation (cf. 1 Cor. 5:1–5) and abandonment to realms controlled by Satan (2 Cor. 4:4). Paul viewed the congregation as a haven and protection for believers without which they would suffer painful disadvantage. Thus excommunication was designed to chasten the two apostates. Yet Paul's motive was remedial, not punitive (cf. 2 Cor. 2:5–8; 2 Thess. 3:14–15).

***Dockery, D. S. (1998). The Pauline Letters. In D. S. Dockery (Ed.), Holman concise Bible commentary (pp. 603–604). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.***

Paul's three letters to Timothy and Titus are called the *Pastoral letters*. These letters were written near the end of Paul's life to guide his two younger associates.

Some have suggested that Paul did not write these letters. Arguments against Pauline authorship are basically threefold. (1) These letters cannot be placed within the framework of the chronology of Acts and are thus assumed to have been written after Paul's death. (2) The content of the letters is said to be different from Paul's teaching elsewhere. (3) Differences in vocabulary are said to be so great that the same author could not have written these three letters and Paul's earlier works.

In response it should be noted that Acts 28 and Philippians 1:25–26 imply that Paul was released from his first Roman imprisonment. Several writers in the early church indicate a release, a further period of activity (during which 1 Timothy and Titus were written), and reimprisonment (when 2 Timothy). Also, the different subjects addressed and the needs of the recipients account for the differences in style, vocabulary, and doctrine. The characteristics discussed are not those of the second century and the contents of the letters are appropriate continuations of Paul's earlier concerns. If Luke was the one who wrote down Paul's thoughts, as was certainly possible, then Luke's input may explain some of the unique vocabulary. There is no compelling reason to deny the claim of Paul's authorship of these letters written sometime between A.D. 64 and 67.

***Occasion.*** The letters were written to deal with the false teaching which was negatively impacting the young churches. The churches were apparently in more danger from internal threats than from external persecution. Paul urged his apostolic associates to counter the internal danger with sound teaching, by providing an example of godly living, and by organizing and training leaders for the congregations.

First Timothy suggests Timothy was at Ephesus while Paul wrote from Macedonia (1 Tim. 1:3). Timothy probably was still located in Ephesus when he received 2 Timothy (2 Tim. 1:18). The second letter was written from a Roman prison. Titus received his letter in Crete (1:5, 12). Paul's whereabouts between Macedonia (1 Tim.) and Rome (2 Tim.) cannot be known for certain. The order of the letters then was 1 Timothy, Titus, and 2 Timothy.

***Purpose and Theology.*** The letters to Timothy and Titus share many similar characteristics. Unlike Paul's other letters the letters to Timothy and Titus are personal words to his apostolic helpers. These letters address the need for pastoral oversight in the churches (thus the name Pastoral letters, a name given to these three letters in the eighteenth century). They focus on church organization, the importance of apostolic doctrine, and the refutation of false doctrine. First Timothy and Titus carefully describe the qualifications of Christian leaders.

Not only is there emphasis on orthodox doctrine (1 Tim. 1:8–11; 2 Tim. 1:13–14; Titus 2:1) and church leadership (1 Tim. 3:1–15; 2 Tim. 2:22–26; Titus 1:5–9), but other important matters are addressed as well. Paul wrote to give Timothy and Titus guidance in their ministries (1 Tim. 1:18–2:7; 2 Tim. 2:1–7; Titus 2:7–8, 15; 3:9). An emphasis on godly living also characterizes the letters (1 Tim. 1:3–7; 2:8–10; 2 Tim. 1:3–12; 2:14–19; Titus 3:1–11).

- I. Introduction (1:1–2)
- II. Warning against False Teachers (1:3–20)
- III. Guidelines for Church Worship (2:1–15)
- IV. Instructions for Church Leadership (3:1–13)
- V. Maintaining the Truth (3:14–4:16)
- VI. Miscellaneous Instructions for the Church (5:1–6:10)
- VII. Personal Charge to Timothy (6:11–21)

## **INTRODUCTION (1:1–2)**

The letter begins like other Pauline letters. Paul the apostle is named as the author, Timothy is named as recipient, and then follows a greeting. Timothy is affectionately called “my true son in the faith” (1:2). The phrase indicates the spiritual relationship between Paul and Timothy. We cannot be sure whether Timothy was a convert of Paul, but certainly Timothy had a special role on the Pauline mission team (see 1 Tim. 1:18; compare 1 Cor. 4:17; Phil. 2:19–24; 2 Tim. 1:2; 2:1).

## **FALSE TEACHERS (1:3–20)**

**1:3–11.** Paul emotionally warned Timothy about the danger of false doctrine. Timothy was urged to stay in Ephesus, indicating perhaps some inclination on Timothy’s part to leave Ephesus to rejoin Paul. Timothy’s assignment was to restrain those in the congregation who were teaching false doctrine.

These false teachers were probably forerunners of second-century Gnostics. In this letter Paul characterizes these false teachers as: (1) teachers of Jewish myths and fictitious stories based on obscure genealogies; (2) conceited; (3) argumentative; (4) desiring to teach Old Testament law, yet they knew not what they teach; (5) full of meaningless talk; (6) teaching false ascetic practices; and (7) using their positions of religious leadership for personal financial gain.

**1:12–20.** Paul’s measuring rod for evaluating what is and is not sound teaching was the message of God’s grace in Christ with which he had been entrusted. At this point Paul’s inventory of sinners, of which he knew he was the chief, initiated a powerful sense of gratitude. Paul’s thanksgiving developed from the fact that God in His grace had provided Paul a privileged place of service. Paul expounded the doctrine of God’s grace as experienced in his life and as seen in Timothy’s ministry.

***Fields, W. C. (1972). 1 Timothy. In H. F. Paschall & H. H. Hobbs (Eds.), The Teacher’s Bible Commentary (pp. 762–763). Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers.***

## **INTRODUCTION**

This is the first of the so-called pastoral epistles of Paul. They voice the concern of Paul as a pastor-at-large for the scattered congregations of believers. They deal with church leadership, correct doctrine, and appropriate conduct. These three letters—two to Timothy and one to Titus—are the final correspondence from Paul which we have in the New Testament.

Luke's account in Acts ends with Paul serving a two-year prison term in Rome. We learn from the pastoral epistles that he was released and made a fourth missionary journey among some of the churches. Timothy and Titus were his associates in this campaign.

During the tour Titus was left to lead the work in Crete and Timothy was left in Ephesus. Paul goes on alone to Macedonia, perhaps to Philippi. From there he writes the first letter to Timothy. Later from somewhere in that region, perhaps Macedonia or Corinth, he writes to Titus. By the time he writes to Timothy the second time he has been arrested again by the Roman authorities and he knows the death penalty awaits him.

These letters are addressed to individuals, but they have strong overtones for the churches where these men served. There is urgency in them. The veteran apostle, an old man now, senses that time for him is running out and there is much work yet to do.

*Author:* the apostle Paul.

*The audience:* primarily one man, Timothy. The son of a Greek Gentile father and a strong-minded Jewish mother, Timothy joined Paul on his second missionary journey and was an associate and faithful companion to the apostle for about 15 years.

*Date:* uncertain, but possibly around A. D. 63 from Macedonia.

*Occasion:* Paul had left Timothy in charge of the work at Ephesus. The apostle knew personally of the heresies that were alive and at work there.

*Purpose:* to strengthen the hand and the resolve of Timothy; to reinforce his charges against the false teachers; to give suggestions for the functioning of the church; and to give personal counsel to Timothy.

*Central message:* stated in 3:15, "But if I delay, this letter will let you know how we should conduct ourselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth" (TEV).

### **Salutation (1 Tim. 1:1–2)**

The author uses formal tones. This is more than a personal letter. He is consciously speaking as one divinely appointed. "Apostle" means "one sent."

Paul was likely in his sixties at this writing. Timothy was younger, perhaps thirty-five. The bond between them was strong—"my own son in the faith." The early Christian leaders often worked in two's. Timothy needed additional grooming for the time when Paul would be gone. Thus this letter.

The letter stresses Timothy's responsibilities. He is an envoy (1:3) and an ordained official (4:14). He is a minister (4:6), adviser (4:13), with some authority over the church (6:17), yet he is under Paul's authority (5:21). His assignment to Ephesus seems to be temporary (4:13). He is a missionary, developing local leaders who will eventually take up the burden of responsibility.

The arduous life of both men reminds one of Martin Niemöller's statement, "God has sent me in ways that I would not have chosen and through trials I would not have dared face."

### **Timothy to Discipline the Church (1 Tim. 1:3–20)**

Paul seems to be persuading a reluctant Timothy to stay on in Ephesus (v. 3). He is needed there to clear up the confusion caused by some misguided teachers. The heresy in Ephesus was a mixture of elements of Judaism, gnosticism (which claimed special, exclusive knowledge), and Christianity. The fondness of these teachers for “legends and long lists of names of ancestors” (v. 4, TEV) merely produced arguments. Paul says they don’t know what they are talking about (vv. 5–7).

Lest some misunderstand the nature and limitations of law, Paul explains (vv. 8–11.) The law makes explicit that which is wrong. It is therefore primarily for wrongdoers. It is useful because it curtails evil. It is also inadequate. The gospel lifts the believer from the negative life of avoiding wrong, to the positive life of striving for that which is right in God’s sight.

Paul illustrates from his own experience (vv. 12–17). He had been a strict Pharisee and doctrinaire observer of the Levitical law. His misplaced zeal had caused him to persecute the Christians and denounce Jesus, their leader (Acts 9:4–5). Now he realizes this was blasphemy, because he was speaking evil of God. But God’s grace even included him, the worst of sinners. If he could be saved and transformed, the gospel could save and transform anyone. He himself is living proof of its power.

This is the kind of gospel that is entrusted to Timothy. He should hang on to it in faith and in a good conscience (vv. 18–20). Don’t deal lightly with those who could destroy it! Like Hymanaeus and Alexander, for instance. They were turned out of the church for their false teachings. This act marked the seriousness of their offense, but it was done so that they would “be taught to stop speaking evil of God” (v. 20, TEV).

**The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). (1 Tim 1). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.**