

# 1 Timothy 1 - Teach Sound Doctrine; Defend the Faith

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## 1 Timothy 1

I. Timothy's purpose in Ephesus: confronting doctrinal error (1 Tim 1:1-20)

(1) Salutation (1:1-2)

(A) Author (1:1)

**1** Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus according to the **commandment** of God our Savior, and of Christ Jesus, *who is our hope*,

**1** Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus according to the commandment of God our Savior, and of Christ Jesus, *who is our hope*,

**1** From: Paul, an apostle of the Messiah Jesus, by the command of God our Savior and the Messiah Jesus, our hope.

**1** Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope;

- "...commandment" - by royal commission. Both Paul and Timothy were sent by the King of Kings! It was not only just "God's will" that pushed Paul into ministry, it was God's command.

— The "commandment" of God is a much narrower term than the will of God. Paul was a soldier under orders; an apostle by commandment, not by commission.

- "...our hope" - our Blessed Hope! He is coming for us and that should be the ultimate encouragement in times of stress.

(B) Recipient (1:2a)

(C) Greeting (1:2b)

**2** To **Timothy**, my true son in the faith: **Grace, mercy, and peace** from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

**2** To Timothy, my true child in the faith: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

**2** To: Timothy, my genuine child in the faith.

May grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and the Messiah Jesus, our Lord, be yours!

**2** Unto Timothy, my own son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.

- "...Timothy" - comes from two Greek words: *timan* ("honor") and *theos* ("God"), meaning "He who honors God"

— Timothy occupied a unique position in the Ephesian church...he was under Paul, but over the elders of the church, in his authority

- "...Grace" - *charis*, God's ongoing forgiveness, which enables...

- "...mercy" - *eleos*, God's sympathy and concern

- "...peace" - *eirene*, God's tranquility and stability within and among them as individuals and a Christian community

Paul explained the three responsibilities in a local church:

1. Teach sound doctrine (v3-11)
2. Proclaim the Gospel (v12-17)
3. Defend the faith (v18-20)

(2) Description of the heresy (1:3-17)

(A) Timothy's purpose (1:3)

**3** Just as I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, to remain on at Ephesus so that you would **instruct** certain people not to teach strange doctrines,  
**3** As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus so that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines,  
**3** When I was on my way to Macedonia, I urged you to stay in Ephesus so that you could instruct certain people to stop teaching false doctrine  
**3** As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine,  
- "...instruct" - military language: "to give strict orders from a superior officer" [8x in his 2 letters to Timothy]  
— Paul "charged" Timothy to remain faithful to the task with which Paul entrusted him  
— The task for Timothy was to instruct certain people to stop teaching false doctrine, spending too much time talking about myths and endless genealogies (v4)  
— Essentially, some teachers in the Ephesian church were majoring on minor matters in their Bible teaching  
- The fact that Paul instructs Timothy to instruct some to stop teaching "false doctrine" implies that there was a recognized standard of Christian doctrine that existed when Paul wrote.

(B) Heresy described (1:4-17)

(a) Myths (1:4)

**4** nor to pay attention to **myths and endless genealogies**, which give rise to useless speculation rather than *advance* the plan of God, which is by faith, *so I urge you now*.  
**4** nor to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies, which give rise to mere speculation rather than *furthering* the administration of God which is by faith.  
**4** and occupying themselves with myths and endless genealogies. These things promote controversies rather than God's ongoing purpose, which involves faith.

4 Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do.

- Too often our churches are places for entertainment rather than enlightenment and enrichment from the Word of God
- Ephesus was the heartland of the mystery religions of that today: It contained the temple to Hadrian, the temple to Trajan, and the great temple of Diana (all based on Greek mythology)
- "...myths and endless genealogies" - seems to imply an emphasis, by the false teachers, of extra-biblical stories that had become part of the traditions of Judaism that grew out of the genealogies of the OT
  - They evidently describe two aspects of one problem, rather than two separate problems
  - The lists of names in the OT genealogies were being expanded into fictitious histories, supposedly to illustrate God's dealings with His people
  - This emphasis, Paul warned, raised questions (controversies) for which there are no real answers, rather than contributing to the spiritual maturation of believers (Cf. Eph 4:11-16)
  - They were causing division, hypocrisy, and other problems

An example of this today would be the over-emphasis on numerology and typology, along with a failure to emphasize the point of the passage being taught. This failure to emphasize what the author of Scripture emphasized, and to emphasize something else, is the heart of the problem Paul addressed here.

(b) Loveless (1:5)

5 But the goal of our instruction is love from **a pure heart**, *from a good conscience*, and *from a sincere faith*.

5 But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.

5 The goal of this instruction is love that flows from a pure heart, from a clear conscience, and from a sincere faith.

5 Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned:

- The ultimate goal of a Bible teacher should not be to generate debate or controversy...it should be the cultivate the lives of students so they manifest love in their daily lives.
- "...a pure heart" - in contrast to the old nature
- "...conscience" - "to know with"; 21x in Paul's letters, 6x in these epistles
- It is possible to sin against the conscience so that it becomes defiled (Titus 1:15); even seared like scar tissue (1 Tim 4:2)

- Love is an active concern for others; which means you won't gossip about them or in any way bring harm to them...

Paul urged Timothy to take strong and decisive action to silence the false teachers, with the aim always being love. This is an important lesson for us today. In our world, taking action to silence someone is considered the opposite of love. It's almost a crime to state there is such thing as truth and error, let alone to state that we are in possession of truth and command our opponents to keep quiet. Yet for Paul, it is the essence of love and sincere faith. Love seeks the good of others, and since false teaching and idle speculation only leads away from God, it can never be for people's good to allow it to continue unchecked. In this situation, love must be tough, recognizing that false or speculative teaching is not harmless. Instead, it ruins the good conscience we have in the gospel and enslaves us.

(c) Fruitless discussion (1:6)

- 6 Some people have strayed from these things and have turned aside to **fruitless discussion**,
- 6 For some men, straying from these things, have turned aside to fruitless discussion,
- 6 Some people have left these qualities behind and have turned to fruitless discussion.
- 6 From which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling;
- "...fruitless discussion" - meaningless talk, empty chatter; beautiful words, but vapid content
- This applies to some of our worship songs, which teach little or no doctrine

(d) Abuse of the Law (1:7-17)

(i) False teacher's ignorance of the Law (1:7)

- 7 wanting to be teachers of **the Law**, even though they do not understand either what they are saying or the matters about which they make confident assertions.
- 7 wanting to be teachers of the Law, even though they do not understand either what they are saying or the matters about which they make confident assertions.
- 7 They want to be teachers of the Law, yet they do not understand either what they are talking about or the things about which they speak so confidently.
- 7 Desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm.
- "...the Law" - the Mosaic Code, also including the Scriptures of Paul's day, the OT, particularly the legal parts of it
- Paul probably meant that these false teachers did not understand what they were really saying or not saying by their emphasis. They had missed the point of the Law.

- Their main interest seemed to be to rival contemporary exegesis rather than to expound the gospel

Paul warned, in the book of Colossians, that teachers in Colosse were promoting serious heresy; but the teachers that he warned about, in 1 Timothy, in Ephesus were majoring in the minors. To avoid this pigeon-holed teaching, teachers need to teach a balanced diet of the whole Word of God (2 Tim 4:2). The true meaning of a passage should be stressed, rather than drawing out of it something that is not there.

(ii) Correct purpose of the Law: condemnation of sin (1:8-10)

- 8 But we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully,
- 8 But we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully,
- 8 Of course, we know that the Law is good if a person uses it legitimately,
- 8 But we know that the law *is* good, if a man use it lawfully;
  - The Law is profitable if it is used according to its original intention
  - The Law was not given to apply in some mystical way to people who are already "righteous" (those seeking to conform to the law). Instead, it was given to deal with people who are specifically violating its sanctions and to warn them against their specific sins (Cf. v9b-10)
- 9 realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous person but for **those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and worldly, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers,**
- 9 realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous person, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers
- 9 that is, if he understands that the Law is not intended for righteous people but for lawbreakers and rebels, for ungodly people and sinners, for those who are unholy and irreverent, for those who kill their fathers, their mothers, or other people,
- 9 Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers,
- Paul arranged the first six epithets in pairs. The leading attitude in each pair precedes the resulting action. Five of the Ten Commandments are in view.
  - There is a progression in these three couplets from general to specific lawlessness
  - "...those who are lawless and rebellious" - the lawless refuse to recognize law; rebellious individuals refuse to obey laws

- "...the ungodly and sinners" - ungodly people have no regard for God; sinners live in opposition to God
- "...the unholy and worldly" - unholy people's lives are impure; worldly people treat sacred things as common
- "...those who kill their fathers or mothers" - such people have no respect or affection for their own parents
- "...murderers" - those who kill people deliberately

10 for the **sexuallyimmoral, homosexuals, slavetraders, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching,**

10 and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching,

10 for those involved in sexual immorality, for homosexuals, for kidnappers, for liars, for false witnesses, and for whatever else goes against the healthy teaching

10 For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine;

- "...sexually immoral" - deal perversely with people of the opposite sex

- "...homosexuals" - abuse people of their own gender

— Homosexuality has become politically protected in our decadent society, but God condemns it in both the OT and the NT.

— There are five passages of Scripture that speak directly to homosexuality: Lev 18:22; 20:13; Rom 1:24-28; 1 Cor 6:9; 1 Tim 1:10. (See notes on Lev 18:22). Each of the five passages entail a wholesale prohibition of all forms of homosexual sex.

- "...slave traders" - kidnappers steal and sell other people; human traffickers

- "...liars, perjurers" - bear false witness; liars

- "...whatever else is contrary to sound teaching, " - Paul concluded the list with a general category of anything contrary to, not only the Law of Moses, but the larger gospel that Paul preached

— Sound doctrine does not just describe correct or accurate doctrine, but what is healthful and wholesome

Healthy teaching leads to proper Christian behavior, love and good works; the diseased teaching of false teachers leads to controversies, arrogance, abusiveness and strife (6:4).

(iii) Paul as an example of abusing the Law (1:11-17)

(a) God's grace toward Paul in placing him in the ministry (1:11-12)

11 according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, with which I have been entrusted.

11 according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, with which I have been entrusted.  
11 that agrees with the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me.  
11 According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.  
- The gospel encompassed the OT

Paul's points in this passage are:

1. When a teacher teaches Scripture, they should distinguish between speculation that goes beyond what God has revealed and the teaching of God's Word.
2. Love for others should be the primary motive, not a desire to glorify oneself.
3. The teacher should present a portion of Scripture, all the while considering the purpose for which God intended it (the meaning)
4. Knowledge of the letter is not enough...a teacher should communicate the spirit of the divine Author as well.

**12** I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service,

**12** I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service,

**12** I thank the Messiah Jesus, our Lord, who gives me strength, that he has considered me faithful and has appointed me to his service.

**12** And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry;

- Paul thanked God for strengthening (converting) him, because this made it possible for Timothy to appreciate the fact that God can transform even the worst of sinners.

- (b) Paul as a law breaker (1:13a)
- (c) God's grace shown to Paul (1:13b-14)

**13** even though I was previously a **blasphemer** and a **persecutor** and a **violent aggressor**. Yet I **was shown mercy** because I acted **ignorantly** in unbelief;

**13** even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief;

**13** In the past I was a blasphemer, a persecutor, and a violent man. But I received mercy because I acted ignorantly in my unbelief,

**13** Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.

- "...blasphemer" - he had denied the deity of Jesus Christ and forced others to deny it

- "...persecutor" - he had used physical power to try to destroy the church (Acts 8:1-4)

- "...violent aggressor" - *hubristes*, a proud, haughty man

- Such a person insults others and often does shameful acts of wrong against them, as Paul did to many Christians
- "...I was shown mercy" - Paul obtained mercy because he was mistaken about who Jesus was
- "...ignorantly" - appealing to a special Jewish law (Lev 5:15-19; Num 15:22-31)
- Paul is not offering an excuse for his former conduct; he is quite emphatic about the copious amount of mercy and grace that were needed to secure his forgiveness
- Paul did not oppose Jesus and His Church because he wanted to dishonor God. He believed he was serving God by persecuting Christians.
- Why was Paul's ignorant unbelief the reason he was shown mercy? — Contrast Paul with false teachers like Hymenaeus and Alexander (described as blasphemers, v20). When Paul was blaspheming and persecuting Jesus, he was acting without any knowledge of who Jesus really was. He was an outsider to faith, and to God's household.
- Hymenaeus and Alexander, however, operated from the inside. They were within God's household, at least as far as their profession is concerned. They swerved away from the truth, having once held it, and now have made a shipwreck of their faith.
- Like those of Heb 6:10, they have known something of the heavenly gift, but have now trampled it under foot. Thus, they act neither in ignorance nor in unbelief.

Paul did not conceal his record; he humbly communicated it so others may know and take courage and be filled with hope that the grace that had changed Paul could change them too.

Paul never tried to forget his past sin; in fact, he refused to forget. Every time he remembered the greatness of his sin, he remembered the greater greatness of Jesus. He remembered his sin to awaken rejoicing in the greatness of the grace of Jesus Christ.

14 and the grace of our Lord was **more than abundant**, with the faith and love which are *found* in Christ Jesus.

14 and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are *found* in Christ Jesus.

14 and the grace of our Lord overflowed toward me, along with the faith and love that are in the Messiah Jesus.

14 And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.

- God poured out grace, trust and love on Paul—even though Paul had poured out blasphemy, persecution and violence on God by attacking Christians.

- "...more than abundant" - Paul uses the Greek prefix *huper*, "super": super-increase in faith (2 Thess 1:3); super-abounding power (Eph 1:19); super-conqueror (Rom 8:37). This

has become, in English, "hyper..."

(d) Paul's salvation as a paradigm for all sinners (1:15-16)

15 It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that **Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners**, among whom **I am foremost**.

15 It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost *of all*.

15 This is a trustworthy saying that deserves complete acceptance: To this world Messiah came, sinful people to reclaim. I am the worst of them.

15 This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.

- 7x in the "pastoral epistles" Paul appears to allude to proverbs of the early church (1:15; 2:5-6; 3:16; 1 Tim 1:9-10; 2:8-13; Titus 2:11-14; 3:3-7)

— These may have been parts of early Christian hymns or catechisms

— "...Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" - the purpose of the Incarnation was the salvation of sinners

— Paul considered himself to be the "least of the apostles" (1 Cor 15:9), and the "least of all saints" (Eph 3:8)

- "...I am foremost" - note the tense; he does not say, "I was foremost," but rather "I am foremost."

— Paul's point is, if God could save him, God can save any (all) of us

16 Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost *sinner* Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life.

16 Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life.

16 But for that very reason I received mercy, so that in me, as the worst sinner, the Messiah Jesus might demonstrate all of his patience as an example for those who would believe in him for eternal life.

16 Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.

- "...for that very reason" - God was unusually merciful to Paul because He desired to make the apostle an example ("for a pattern") of His patience—how God can turn the worst of sinners into the best of saints.

— The Lord's greatest enemy became His greatest servant

- In light of Paul's conversion, no one should conclude that their sin is too great for God to forgive. If God could be patient with Paul, He can be patient with anyone.
- God's love in action: He turned the persecutor into a preacher; the murderer into a missionary...

- (e) Closing doxology (1:17)
  - (1) Sovereignty (1:17a)
  - (2) Eternality (1:17b)
  - (3) Immortality (1:17c)
  - (4) Spirituality (1:17d)
  - (5) Uniqueness (1:17e)
  - (6) Eternal glory (1:17f)

17 Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

17 Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

17 Now to the King Eternal—the immortal, invisible, and only God—be honor and glory forever and ever! Amen.

17 Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

- Paul almost involuntarily breaks out into this doxology...he is overwhelmed by God's grace

Paul referred to his conversion to encourage Timothy to be faithful in the ministry that God had entrusted to him. While ministering at Ephesus, Timothy would never encounter a more difficult case than Saul of Tarsus had been. The fact that God completely transformed Paul proves that He can do the same for anyone.

- (3) Paul's admonition for Timothy to fulfill his ministry (1:18-20)
  - (A) Timothy's spiritual status (1:18a)
  - (B) Timothy's prophetic destiny (1:18b)
  - (C) Timothy's calling (1:18c-20)
    - (a) Positive exhortations (1:18c-19a)

**18** This **command** I entrust to you, Timothy, *my son*, in accordance with the **prophecies previously made concerning you**, that by them you fight the good fight,

**18** This command I entrust to you, Timothy, *my son*, in accordance with the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you fight the good fight,

**18** Timothy, my child, I am instructing you in keeping with the **prophecies made earlier about you**, so that by following them you may continue to fight the good fight

18 This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare;

- "...command" - the "charge" to which Paul is commanding Timothy is contained in v3-4
- "...prophecies previously made concerning you" - sometime in the past, someone had given prophecies concerning Timothy's effectiveness as a servant of Christ
- We have no definitive record of who, what, where or when, unless it was at Timothy's ordination (4:14). But Paul referred to them here to motivate Timothy to carry on.
- We are in a warfare (Eph 6:10-18)
- We have a real enemy. He is knowledgeable and resourceful. And you are on *his* turf!

(b) Negative examples (1:19b-20)

19 keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith.

19 keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith.

19 with faith and a good conscience. By ignoring their consciences, some people have destroyed their faith like a wrecked ship.

19 Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck:

- Our conscience, like a computer, is programmed with the will of God and can be a great asset to a believer
- However, if one violates their conscience, that person ignores a warning signal, and the results can be disastrous
- The conscience is the "umpire" of the soul. Some have described it as the capacity to feel guilt; it also enables us to feel dishonor, shame and guilt.

20 Among these are **Hymenaeus** and **Alexander**, whom I have **handed over to Satan**, so that they will be taught not to **blaspheme**.

20 Among these are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan, so that they will be taught not to blaspheme.

20 These include Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I handed over to Satan so that they may learn not to blaspheme.

20 Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme

- Paul cites two examples of those whose lives are "shipwrecked" from ignoring their consciences
- Paul turned them over to God's discipline because of their determination to continue living in a manner contrary to the will of God

- This discipline would come to them through the agency of Satan, so they would repent and stop blaspheming God by their lives
- "...handed over to Satan" - may mean that Satan is given permission to inflict some illness or disability on the evildoer
- It may picture life out fellowship of the church as being in the realm and control of Satan's sphere. Thus, to deliver these men to Satan could mean Paul removed (excommunicated) them from the church's fellowship and placed them in Satan's realm where they would experience his malice (Cf. 5:1-11; 13:11; 1 Cor 5:3-5).
- "...Hymenaeus and Alexander" - they appear to have been leaders, teachers or even elders in the Ephesian church
- It was rare for Paul to name names when referring to serious sinners. The fact that he did so here indicates he wanted everyone to know exactly who he was talking about.
- Paul mentions these two apostates elsewhere and has little good to say about them (2 Tim 4:14)
- Excommunication was apostolic prerogative (1 Cor 5:3-5); Peter exercised it also (Acts 5:1-11)
- "...blaspheme" - *blasphemein*, by contemptuous speech intentionally come short of the reverence due to God

We should not misunderstand the nature of this process. It was not simply intended to "cut out the cancer" in order to preserve the rest of the body. It is also a process that the church can't afford to ignore. Taken together, Matt 18:15-17; 1 Cor 5:5; 2 Cor 2:5-11; 2 Thess 3:14-15 reflect a careful process. Each step is designed to bring the erring individual to admission and true change of mind and behavior. Even if the individuals persisted in a stubborn refusal to change, the final step of expulsion from the fellowship back into the hostile world was ultimately intended as a means of reclamation. To be handed over to Satan is to be exposed, without the protection of God's promises to his people, to the dangers of sin. For some, it takes being cast off into the sea to realize the advantages onboard the ship (Cf. Jonah).