

1 Timothy

A Call to Faithful Service

Lesson 1

To Timothy,
my true child
in the faith...



1 Timothy is part of what is sometimes called the “Pastoral Epistles.” An epistle is simply a letter and much of what is discussed in this letter describes how to care for the church. 1 Timothy could be also be called a letter to a young preacher or a letter of exhortation.

1 Timothy is a personal letter from the Apostle Paul to the evangelist Timothy, but the teachings are designed for all Christians in all churches in all ages. This letter along with 2 Timothy and Titus are some of Paul’s latest writings and probably occur following all the events found in the book of Acts.

The book of Acts ends with Paul in prison in Rome and it is likely that he was released around the year AD 63 and that he continued to travel preaching the gospel until his death. Tradition says that Paul wrote 1 Timothy from Macedonia around the year AD 65 and that he was martyred during the reign of Nero in AD 67 or AD 68.

Important Teachings in 1 Timothy

1. Warning against false teachers
2. The power of prayer
3. The role of women in the church
4. Church leadership
5. Proper behaviour in the church
6. Faithful service
7. Caring for those in need

Greeting 1:1-2

Paul names himself as the author immediately in verse 1 and stresses his authority as an apostle. His apostleship came to him directly by command from God and Christ. Paul wanted those in the churches to know that he did not write on his own authority, but his message was from God.

1. Why was it important for Paul to stress his apostolic authority?

Though the letter was addressed to Timothy it is clear that it was expected to be read throughout the churches. Paul would not need to stress his apostolic authority to Timothy his child in the faith if the letter was meant only for him. We can safely assume that in the ten or eleven years Timothy and Paul had worked together Paul would have already taught Timothy everything found in this letter.

Paul viewed Timothy as a son in the faith because he most likely led him to Christ and we know that Paul trained him for ministry. It is common for the one who disciples

another to be thought of a spiritual father/parent. The mention of Timothy as a “*true*”¹ child in the faith is probably made because Timothy’s father was a Greek while his mother was Jewish. The Jews viewed such a one as illegitimate by birth, but Paul stresses that in Christ he is in no way illegitimate.

2. What three words did Paul use in greeting in verse 2 and what are their meanings? What is the origin of these blessings?

False Teachers 1:3-7

In verse 3 Paul warns of the danger of false teaching within the church. Paul “*urged*” Timothy to “*charge*” certain persons not to teach any different doctrine. A different doctrine is one which is contrary to what they had originally been taught by the apostles. The use of the words translated “*urged*” and “*charge*” show Paul believes this to be a serious matter that needs urgent attention.



3. Where was Timothy located when Paul wrote?

4. Why did Paul consider false doctrine so dangerous?

Paul had warned the elders in Ephesus that false teachers would arise in Acts 20:29-30 and now this has come to pass. The false doctrine Timothy is to confront in Ephesus had to do with “*myths*” and “*genealogies*” which speculated about matters not described in Scripture. The genealogies probably had to do with the way in which the Jews meticulously cherished their ancestry. The Jews had oral traditions about their forefathers and how God had blessed them. Often these stories were completely fictitious and were impossible to substantiate since they are not found in Scripture.

Whatever the exact nature of the controversy in Ephesus there was no answer to be found in God’s Word so endless speculation was fruitless. These teachers loved to major in minor matters or endlessly debate controversial subjects for no profit.

These teachings were detrimental to the church since it kept the believers from being able to carry out the work God had entrusted to them. Christians are to believe and follow God’s Word, but cannot dogmatically insist others agree on matters which the Bible does not address.

“The ultimate aim of a Bible teacher should not be to generate debate and controversy. It should be to cultivate the lives of his or her students so they manifest love in their

¹ All Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

daily living. This love should spring from a pure heart, a conscience void of shame, and a genuine trust in God.²

5. In verse 5 Paul calls for love. What is “love” as used here and how was it incompatible with this controversy?



6. What is the three-fold source of love as outlined in verse 5?

- a.
- b.
- c.

7. In what ways does swerving from this three-fold source of love lead people away from truth?

8. Why were the discussions of verse 6 referred to as vain?

Some individuals in Ephesus had “*swerved*” from a pure heart, a good conscience, a sincere faith and in so doing had “*wandered away*” into vain discussion. They were off course and involved in speculations that were useless and harmful. These ones who spoke about what they did not understand sought to teach others.

The desire of these false teachers was to instruct on the law (that is the Law of Moses). They looked to the Old Testament to “discover” teachings to bind on the church. They were confident in their teachings though they were badly off course. Confidence or an air of authority does not prove that a teacher/preacher is speaking the truth.

The Purpose of the Law 1:8-11

The Law has value when one understands it and its purpose. Christians do well to spend time reading and knowing all the Old Testament teaches as it shows the heart of a God who hates sin and strives to protect his people. The Old Testament is inspired by God and is as true as what is found in the New Testament.

The law stands as the measure of what is right and what is wrong. It confronts those who rebel against God through their sin. Christians live under the New Covenant and are not bound to Old Testament laws not repeated in the New Testament, still it is in the Old Testament we learn about the Creator and his demands for holy living from his people. We learn about sin and the come to understand that we have no hope outside of Christ.

² Constable, Thomas L. *Notes on 1 Timothy* p.9

The “*just*” (vs 9) have no need to fear the Law. The “*just*” as used here probably describes Christians who have been justified through their faith and obedience to Christ. The law opposes evil doing and sin.

9. List the ways the lawless are described in verses 9-10.

Paul is in no way exhaustive in his list of various violations of the law, but concludes them with an all inclusive “*and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine.*” The law is opposed to the lawless and lawless deeds are contrary to the gospel.

Whatever is taught in the church is to conform to the glorious gospel. The gospel can be described as glorious because it was given by the God of glory and is designed to magnify him as well as to benefit man. The good news is that Jesus Christ died for the law violations (sin) of man and those who are Christians enjoy the blessings of the glorious gospel.

Paul as an apostle of Christ had been entrusted to carry the message of the gospel and to provide true teaching for the church. The words that are recording in Scripture are inspired by God and contain truth.

Practical Application

1. Know the Word of God.

- a. The teaching of false doctrine is a serious matter because it violates the truth of what God has said and involves people in controversy and deception. Christians should daily study their Bibles to know what God says and expects.

2. Teachings not clearly addressed in Scripture should never be used to build doctrines or to create controversy.

- a. Not all teachers are true even if they appear confident and/or intellectual.
- b. Be wary of those bring “new” or “unique” teachings; especially when they make this the major component of their teaching.

3. God expects his people to live lives in accordance with the standards he has described in His Word.

4. God provides the glorious gospel to his people which brings hope, grace, mercy, and peace for those who love and obey Him.

