

1 Timothy 1

A few years ago Terry and I were headed to Tennessee to visit my sister. We like to spend time in Lexington, Kentucky at the Kentucky Horse Park. Yes, it is out of the way but we just had to backtrack to get on the correct road. This particular trip I had it in my mind that I didn't need to backtrack. Terry is my navigator and she said, "This is the wrong way." I said, "I know where I am going!" She allowed me to drive for a while in the wrong direction. It took me a while to admit that I was going the wrong way and make a course correction. Sometimes we do the same thing in living our lives. For example, when we realized that we need Jesus in our lives, before we admit that we need Him, we resist Him and finally make the correct course correction. In 1 Timothy, Paul is writing to young Timothy about the fundamentals of faith.

"As Paul instructed and gave his personal witness, it became clear that God desires to save everyone, that his grace is abundant toward all people, that his love has broken through the barrier of sin. He wants to rescue us, to give us direction, to show us truth. But we must first admit we are drowning. We must acknowledge we are lost."

(Holman New Testament Commentary)

Read verses 1 – 2

1. Paul tells us that he is the author of this letter and he describes himself as an apostle. Remember that an apostle is someone that was taught by in this case, Jesus.
2. He also points out that his and our hope is in Jesus. Without Jesus then we can have no hope of eternal life. Our hope runs through John 3:16-17, 16 "*For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. 17 God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him.*"
3. So in verse 1, Paul identifies himself as the author and in verse 2 Paul identifies Timothy as the recipient of the letter. He calls Timothy "*my true son in the faith*". We have seen before that Paul calls a few young men his son. When we studied Paul's letter to Philemon, in verse 10 Paul said to Philemon, "*I appeal to you for*

my son Onesimus, who became my son while I was in chains." In Titus 1:4, Paul called Titus, "*my true son in our common faith*".

4. Paul finishes verse 2 with a common greeting used by Paul, asking God to bless Timothy with "*grace, peace and mercy*".

Read verses 3 – 4

5. The heading for this section in my Bible says, "Warnings against False Teachings". As it says in verse 3, Paul wrote this letter from Macedonia while Timothy was pastoring the church at Ephesus.

Guzik says, "Apparently, after his release (hoped for in Philemon 1:22 and Philippians 1:25-26 and 2:24), Paul returned to the city of Ephesus. There he discovered that during his absence Ephesus had become a storm center of false teaching. This was a sad fulfillment of the prediction he made to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:29-30, "*29 I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. 30 Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them.*"

6. Just as Paul saw in his missionary journeys, not all of the false teachings came from outside the church, some came from inside the church. Consider all of the denominations in the U.S. today. Much of the time, the new denominations spring up because of differences in theology and beliefs. Things like: Once saved always saved, you must be baptized to get into Heaven, the church has replaced the Jews as God's chosen, works are as important as claiming Jesus as your Savior, . . . The list goes on and on. It seems unbelievable that Jesus referred to "The Church" and today there are so many churches that believe they are the one true church.
7. When we studied some of Paul's letters, I pointed out that I couldn't believe that Paul would plant a church and then leave it to novices. When we studied Paul's letters to the church at Corinth, we saw that it didn't take long for things to get messed up.
8. Today, we have the Bible as the golden standard, these first century churches didn't have the formal printed Bible but that had many of the same pieces. They

had the Law and the Prophets or our Old Testament. They had some of Paul's letters and some writings of the Apostles. Unfortunately, there were also many false teachers and writings.

9. In verse 3, Paul warns young Timothy of the false teaching but in verse 4, he also says, as true teachers they are to be "*advancing God's work—which is by faith.*"
10. Today, you can see denominations or church splits caused by taking verses out of context or improper interpretation of a verse. In West Virginia there are churches based on snake handling which comes from Acts 28 where Paul was bit by a venomous snake and did not die. The Seventh Day Adventist still worship on Saturday and don't eat meat. There are those that believe in replacement theology where the church has replaced the Jews as God's chosen people. There are those that believe that God will bless you beyond measure if you just ask. Not to mention the evangelical churches that still practice speaking in tongues.
11. It wasn't any different in the first century. There were all sorts of negative influences in the early churches. For starters, the Greeks and Romans worshiped numerous gods. In Ephesus there was the temple of Artemis (Romans called her Diana) which was considered one of the seven ancient wonders of the world. The Romans in Ephesus even worshiped the Caesars as gods.

There were the Gnostics that John and Paul kept running into. "Gnostics believed the material world was created by a lesser deity, the demiurge, and that a divine spark within humans is trapped in the body, needing to be awakened by this special knowledge to return to the true, higher spiritual world. The figure of Jesus was often seen as a divine messenger who brought this saving knowledge to humanity."

Read verses 5 – 7

12. Paul points out in verse 5 that one of the true teachings that sets Christianity apart from these false religions in love. How does Jesus say that other people will know if we are His disciples in John 13:35, "*By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.*"

13. What did Jesus say was the greatest commandments? Matthew 22:37-40 *37 Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. 40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”*
14. Based on verse 5, the problem in Ephesus that Timothy is dealing with is Jewish legalism. The Jews were obedient because they were commanded to be obedient and not out of love. They studied the steps in the Torah. But God wants a personal relationship with His people. Jeremiah 31:3 says, *“The LORD appeared to him from far away. I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you.”* And Ezekiel 37:27 says, *“My dwelling place shall be with them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.”*

“If spending time in God’s word does not produce love from a pure heart, a good conscience, or sincere faith in us, something is wrong. Legalism may make us twist God’s word, so that instead of showing love we are harsh and judgmental; instead of having a good conscience we always feel condemned knowing we don’t measure up; and instead of sincere faith we practically trust in our own ability to please God.”
(Guzik)

15. Paul points out in verses 6 and 7 that some men become judgmental because they want to lord it over others and they do not correct others out of love. They do not have what Paul calls *“a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith”*. Paul uses the terms *“speaking meaningless talk”* and *“they don’t know what they are talking about”*. What does Pastor Brian say, “Don’t trust what I say, read the Bible for yourselves. Verify what I say!”

“Paul gave some descriptions of false teachers throughout 1 Timothy: They emphasized fables and genealogies (1:4–7; 4:7). They emphasized rigid asceticism, renouncing marriage and certain foods (4:3,8). They professed a special knowledge of God (6:20).” Holman New Testament Commentary

Read verses 8 – 11

16. Paul points out in verse 8 that the law isn’t the problem but it is how the law is used. It is similar to what Paul said in Galatians 6:1 *“Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person*

gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted ”. The law is not to be used as a club to correct sinners. We are to use it to correct them in love or gently. We should remember that we are all sinners and we should correct them how we would like to be corrected. There is nothing worse than a holier than thou Christian.

17. We should remember that the most miserable person is not the nonbeliever that is sinning but the most miserable person is a believer that continues to sin even though they are under the conviction of the Holy Spirit.
18. Paul says that the Law was given by God to help us to know what sin is. A righteous man will already know when he is sinning but the Law helps the *“lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious”*, Then Paul goes on and lists numerous types of ungodly sinners. Homosexuals are not any worse a sinner than others. Homosexuals are quick to say that the Bible doesn’t say anything bad about them. Paul has them on his ungodly sinners list and some denominations are ordaining them.
19. In verse 10, Paul sums up the list with *“whatever else is contrary to sound teaching”*. This pretty much says “and any other sinful lifestyle mentioned in the Word of God.”
20. Verse 11 includes the statement “according to the Gospel that Paul preached”. The Law cannot bring righteousness, it can only point out sin. Our only chance at true righteousness or being right with God is through the imputed righteousness that can only come from salvation through faith in Jesus. “Paul sensed his responsibility to preserve and guard the gospel, and to pass it on to Timothy and others.” (Guzik)

Read verses 12 – 14

21. In these verses, Paul humbles himself. Are there times in your life where you think what King David said in Psalm 8:4, *“What is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them?”* Who am I that God chose me to have salvation or that He even knows my name? He is not having a pity party, he is genuinely humbled before God.

22. He points out some of the things that he did before he met Jesus on that road to Damascus. I said last week “Consider that before he met Jesus on the road to Damascus, Paul persecuted Christians and even had them put to death. He even held the coats of the men that stoned Stephen to death.” He was traveling to Damascus to possible capture and crucify more Christians.
23. It was only by the grace of God that he was the man writing to young Timothy. It wasn’t anything that he had done to change his life. It wasn’t a 10 step process, it was the life changing power of Jesus, the Christ, the Son of the Living God. The Calvinists will like this statement but Paul didn’t choose to meet Jesus on that road. He didn’t bow his head and pray, “God forgive me, a sinner.” Jesus chose him.
24. Paul wrote in Ephesians 2:8, “*For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God*”. Paul handles grace and faith in Ephesians 2:8 but in 1 Timothy 1:14 he says, grace “*along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.*”

Read verses 15 – 17

25. In verse 15 and 16, Paul calls himself the “worst” of the sinners. Who knows what things you have done in your life better than you? Paul remembered all of his shortcomings. He knew his failings. In Romans 7:15-20, Paul wrote that he could not control what he has done in his life. It is the “I do what I don’t want to do” speech. In verse 18 of Romans 7, he calls it our or his “sin nature”.
26. Nothing humbles me any more than remembering my mistakes and failings. I can remember mistakes that I made while coaching Jason in T-ball 40 years ago. I am sure that Paul was haunted by helping to stone Stephen or helping to crucify believers before he became one.
27. *Consider the hymn “Amazing Grace”, John Newton, the captain of a slave ship* must have felt the same repentance when he penned, “Amazing grace that save a wretch like me.” The lives that he ruined by taking slaves from their family and selling them into slavery. He had to think as Paul did, “When God saved me, He

saved the lowest of the lows. He can save anyone, if He can give me salvation through faith. I don't deserve it."

28. Paul points out that God through our faith in Jesus offers eternal life to all, not just those that live perfect lives, which there are none. In this section, he was saying, "If God can give salvation to the worst of the worst then it is available for everyone."
29. In verse 17, Paul gives all glory to God. He takes no credit for his salvation. It is all about God and not about him. This is similar to the Doxology that we sing when we bring up our offering. "Praise God from whom all blessings flow; Praise Him, all creatures here below; Praise Him above, ye heav'nly host; Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost."

Read verses 18 – 20

30. Paul begins in verse 18 with a command to Timothy. In verse 19, he tells Timothy to hold on to his "faith and a conscience" (NIV). Remember the church at Ephesus was not an easy place to pastor. When Paul visited Ephesus the first time, he had to leave because he had incited a riot. The silversmiths were up in arms because they made the money making idols to the Goddess Artemis and Paul was preaching that they should worship the one true God and not idols.
31. Paul reminds Timothy of the gift of prophecy that others believe that Timothy possesses. Paul taught about spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12:6-8. When we think of the spiritual gift of prophecy, we think of predicting the future but Paul is speaking of teaching and preaching. These gifts are only useful to God if we know that we have them and use them. Paul tells Timothy that others see the gift of prophecy in him even if he does not.
32. Paul wants Timothy to "Fight the good fight" (NASB & NKJV). Remember in Ephesians 6:12, Paul says that, "*For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.*"

33. Finally in verse 20, Paul specifically calls out two men for their “shipwrecked faith”. He says, “*Among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme.*” I would hate to have been these two men.

“*Whom I delivered to Satan*”: “From other New Testament passages we can surmise that he did this by putting them outside the church, into the world, which is the devil’s domain. The punishment was a removal of protection, not an infliction of evil.”
(Guzik)

34. According to Dave Guzik, Paul gave Timothy at least six reasons why Timothy should stay there and finish the ministry God gave him to do.

- a. Because they need the truth (1 Timothy 1:3-7).
- b. Because you minister in a hard place (1 Timothy 1:8-11).
- c. Because God uses unworthy people (1 Timothy 1:12-16).
- d. Because you serve a great God (1 Timothy 1:17).
- e. Because you are in a battle and cannot surrender (1 Timothy 1:18).
- f. Because not everyone else does (1 Timothy 1:19-20).