

1st Timothy Chapter 1 “Good Doctrine”

1st Timothy is a letter written from one Pastor to another. Paul, the great church-planter of the 1st century, is writing to Timothy, the young man he personally led to Christ, and then instructed in the growing and nurturing of churches, and then left behind to Pastor the church in Ephesus.

Paul knows some of the challenges Timothy is going to face as he pastors this Ephesian church, and he is writing to encourage Timothy...but not to feel sorry for him. Timothy has the unparalleled privilege of shepherding a group of believers in Jesus Christ. He's a Pastor – he has the best job in the world. But his is probably going to suffer, as Paul himself suffered. In fact, before Paul left Timothy at Ephesus there had been a city-wide riot because Paul was teaching the truth and growing the Ephesian church. (Acts 19:21-41). That is the situation Paul left with Timothy.

As we talk through this 1st chapter of 1st Timothy, don't forget: This is not a letter to shore up someone who is about ready to give up and throw in the towel. Not at all. This is just a little helping hand from an experienced Pastor to one who is beginning.

(:1) Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the commandment of God our Savior and the Lord Jesus Christ, our hope,

There is a small phrase which is used in this greeting verse, which is not used in any of Paul's other greeting verses in any of his other letters – “our hope”. Paul is using it to describe Jesus Christ. Why do you suppose Paul included this phrase as he writes to Timothy, but didn't include it in any of his other letters?

I think it's because Paul had been in Timothy's shoes often enough to realize that Timothy would come up against, as a Pastor, times when the hope of seeing Jesus someday would be all that would get him through. The hatred Timothy would face...or the difficulty of living life in a community hostile to the Gospel...or the friends who would desert him...or the haze of bad teachers and teaching Timothy would have to sort through....these things would often bring Timothy to the end of himself. And Paul knew that the hope of eternity with Jesus would bring sweet relief to this young Pastor –

just as it had for Paul. In John 14:1-6 Jesus promised He would someday return. And then all the way through the Revelation, beginning in chapter 5, when Jesus takes the scroll from the hand of the Father, through chapter 19, when Jesus returns to earth on His white horse, the promise is spelled out. We will see Jesus again! No matter how hard things get here in this life, we have hope – we will see Jesus again! Look at Revelation 21:1-4 and bask in the wonder that someday Jesus – God Himself – will live with us forever. Ahhhh...our hope.

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

As you look up the following verses, note the things you learn about Timothy:

Acts 16&17&18 &19 and Acts 20:1. This is the narrative about Paul's first meeting with Timothy, when he led him to faith in Jesus, and then took him with him on his Missionary journeys. In Acts 20 is when Paul possibly left Timothy behind in Ephesus, to lead and Pastor there.

Romans 16:21, I Cor. 4:17, II Cor. 1:19, Phil. 2:19-23, 2nd Timothy 4:21 Here are some of the places where we see Paul mentioning Timothy's involvement in the work of spreading the Gospel and planting churches:

- Timothy is with Paul when he writes Romans.
- When Paul is writing I Corinthians he says that he is sending Timothy to Corinth.
- In II Corinthians he mentions that Timothy has been one of the ones who preached in Corinth.
- As he is writing Philippians (from prison), Timothy is with him, and Paul is about to send him to Philippi.
- And then in 2nd Timothy, Paul asks that Timothy will come to him.

2 Cor 1:1, Philippians 1:1, Colossians 1:1, 1st Thessalonians 1:1, 2nd Thessalonians 1:1, Philemon 1. These are all of Paul's letters where he mentions that Timothy is with him and they are sending the letter together.

Acts 16:1-3, 2nd Timothy 3:15, 2nd Timothy 1:6: In these verses we see a little of Timothy's story. He was raised in a home which taught the scriptures. His mother was a Jew, his father a Greek...which is probably the reason Timothy had not been circumcised as a baby. He was from the area of Derbe and Lystra. And at some point Paul had laid hands on him and committed him to a life of serving Christ.

Hebrews 13:23: This verse gives us a peek into a little-known fact – it is mentioned only here in this verse – that Timothy, too, had been in prison at one time.

(:3&4) As I urged you when I went into Macedonia—remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine, ⁴ nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith.

Now Paul jumps right in, giving Timothy some advice. Paul had gone on to Macedonia when he left Timothy behind in Ephesus.

He left him behind specifically to make sure that no one began to teach wrong doctrine in that very important church. Ephesus was a center of Gospel outreach, and what went out from Ephesus could very possibly affect the message of the Gospel to thousands of people.

Paul tells Timothy to just not even give attention to fables and endless genealogies....things which simply detracted from the Gospel message. Paul knew that Timothy had a right understanding of doctrine – or – truth, so he knew he would be able to discern what was wrong or hurtful.

In today's world, some of the things which Paul might warn against would be:

- "Books of the Bible" which were never included in the Bible.
- Special messages or "words" from God, which come from men, but are not found in the Bible – and do not agree with scripture.
- Hidden secrets in the Bible
- Anything which is a religious "secret".
- Hidden codes or special messages from God which not everyone could understand.

God gave us His Word so that we could clearly understand Him. Yes, there are things we will not understand until we get to heaven, of course. God is bigger than any of us mere mortals can put our arms around. But God did

not give us the Bible only to have us not be able to understand it. If anything is billed as "secret truth", or "something no one has ever understood before"...be suspicious. Or if you are encouraged to participate in "secret" ceremonies, run away. God's ways are open and genuine and transparent for all. And good doctrine is learned from the Bible, and nowhere else.

What is the result of "fables and endless genealogies"? They cause disputes (because one person may know the secret and others not), and they do not grow people in the Lord.

(:5) Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith,

What is the result of good doctrine? Love. Bad doctrine causes disputes and stunted growth. Good doctrine brings out love in believers. Love which is a result of a heart free from guilt, and conscience free from guilt, and a walk of faith with the Lord. With good doctrine people grow in their faith in Jesus. With bad doctrine people stop growing.

(:6&7) from which some, having strayed, have turned aside to idle talk, ⁷desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say nor the things which they affirm.

When teachers stray away from good doctrine, what happens? (also look at 1st Timothy 6:3-5). The teachers begin to just babble. They don't understand what they are saying, even if they tell you they do. They confuse the people who are listening to them. Look at all the horrible descriptions you find in 1st Timothy 6:3-5 – descriptions of men and women who promote bad doctrine: they are proud, they know nothing, they are obsessed with disputes and arguments, and they produce envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, useless wranglings. They are people of corrupt minds, they have no truth, and they are just using religion for personal gain.

Wow! We should run, run, run away from bad doctrine!!!!

(:8-11) But we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully, ⁹knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, ¹⁰for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine, ¹¹according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust."

Apparently, what Timothy may be facing in Ephesus are some teachers in this church who are focusing on the law – but not teaching the total truth. My guess – they are teaching that a person has to keep the law in order to be saved. Or has to do good works in order to earn a better position with God after they are saved.

So Paul makes a very good point here about the law...what is it? (see also in another letter Paul wrote: Galatians 3:10-13). His point is that the law is made for lawless, ungodly, unholy and profane people...murderers, fornicators, sodomites and kidnappers and liars. So, Paul is saying, if these teachers are focusing so much on keeping the law in order to please God, then these teachers must be pretty rotten people indeed. ☺ A little tongue-in-cheek humor from Paul. The ones teaching this bad doctrine are putting themselves forth as especially righteous...but their emphasis on pleasing God by keeping the law is pointing them out as just the opposite of righteous.

(:12&13) And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, ¹³ although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.

Paul has every right to tell Timothy that these false teachers are, indeed, false – because Paul was entrusted with the truth of the Gospel, and he knows the false teachers are messing with the truth.

Timothy would have known very well Paul's own history...that he was a persecutor of Christians back in the day. And Timothy himself certainly had his own sins to remember. So I think Paul reminds him here that both of them – both Paul and Timothy – are only in the leadership positions they are in because God decided to use them – not because of anything great in themselves.

(:14&15) And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. 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.

Paul realizes what he is. He is a rotten sinner...in fact...the chief of sinners. There is no arguing that point.

(:16) However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life

But the LORD showed Paul mercy so that he could use Paul as “Exhibit A” – an example of God’s grace. Certainly not an example of man’s righteousness.

(:17) Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

This is one of those places in Paul’s letters where he just seems to jump out of his thoughts and explode with praise to his King, Jesus. It seems appropriate, somehow, that he does this right here – because there is no person which deserves praise for what God has done. None at all.

(:18&19) “This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, ¹⁹having faith and a good conscience....”

So...what is Timothy to do once he receives this charge – this letter - from Paul? He is to wage warfare. Pastoring a church is not a walk in the park.

Paul has such obvious love for Timothy. I don’t know if Paul “worried” about Timothy (worry is wrong, right?). But I know in my heart that Paul kept a mental picture of Timothy before his eyes at all times and never was far away from a whispered prayer for him.

(:19b & 20) “...which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck, ²⁰of whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.”

Now, at the last of this chapter, Paul is back to serious - he is naming names. Who are two men who have rejected Paul’s leadership? Hymenaeus and Alexander. Note those names. Paul is not being discreet here. We must know who is leading people away from truth and be willing to speak their names out loud in polite company. These men were doing something evil...and Paul has prayed that God would remove His protection from them and let them experience whatever satan wants to throw at them. Why? Because they have left the truth, fought against the ministry God gave to Paul, and in the process blasphemed God Himself.

May God remove His protection from all those leading people into false doctrine. And all those fighting against good churches. So that those false teachers will learn to worship God and do things His way. (I Corinthians 5:1-5)

Questions you can use for your own devotional time, or for group discussion:

- 1.** (:1) There is a small phrase which is used in this greeting verse, which is not used in any of Paul's other greeting verses in any of his other letters. What is it?
- 2.** Why do you suppose Paul included this phrase as he writes to Timothy?
- 3.** (:2) Who is Timothy? Look up the following verses and note the things you learn about him as you read through them:
 - Acts 16&17&18 &19 and Acts 20:1
 - Romans 16:21, I Cor. 4:17, Phil. 2:19-23, 2nd Timothy 4:21, II Cor 1:19
 - 2 Cor 1:1, Philippians 1:1, Colossians 1:1, 1st Thessalonians 1:1, 2nd Thessalonians 1:1, Philemon 1.
 - 2nd Timothy 3:15, 2nd Timothy 1:6, Acts 16:1-3
 - Hebrews 13:23
- 4.** (:3&4) Paul jumps right in, giving Timothy some advice. Where had Paul gone when he left Timothy behind in Ephesus?
- 5.** What is some of the advice Paul gives in these verses?
- 6.** What is "doctrine"?
- 7.** What are some things today that Paul might consider "fables and endless genealogies"?
- 8.** What is the result of "fables and endless genealogies"?
- 9.** (:5) What is the result of good doctrine?
- 10.** (:6&7) When teachers stray away from good doctrine, what happens? (also look at 1st Timothy 6:3-5)

- 11.** (:8-11) Apparently, there are some teachers in this church who are focusing on the law – but not teaching the total truth. My guess – they are teaching that a person has to keep the law in order to be saved. So Paul makes a very good point here about the law...what is it? (see also in another letter Paul wrote: Galatians 3:10-13)
- 12.** (:12&13) Paul has every right to tell Timothy that these false teachers are, indeed, false – because Paul was entrusted with the truth of the Gospel, and he knows the false teachers are messing with the truth.
Why did God put Paul in such an authoritative position?
- 13.** (:14&15) How does Paul look at himself?
- 14.** (:16) What is one of the reasons the LORD showed Paul such mercy?
- 15.** Do you realize the LORD has also shown you such mercy? What is the reason He showed you such mercy?
- 16.** (:17) This is one of those places in Paul's letters where he just seems to jump out of his thoughts and explode with praise to his King, Jesus. Why do you think he does that in this particular place?
- 17.** (:18&19) What is Timothy to do once he receives this charge from Paul?
- 18.** How does Paul feel about Timothy? Do you think he ever worries about him?
- 19.** (:19b&20) Who are two men who have rejected Paul's leadership? What has Paul done to help bring them back to a place of loving the truth? (I Corinthians 5:1-5)

APPLICATION:

- 20.** Are you sure you have "good doctrine"? Why?
- 21.** What areas of "good doctrine" could you learn more about?
- 22.** How does a person go about learning "good doctrine"?