

1 Timothy

Chapter 1

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

Paul's introduction to this letter gives us the reason he saw himself as an apostle of Christ, and that is he was under divine compulsion. Unlike most men, Paul did not choose his ultimate vocation, it was chosen for him from the beginning (Romans 1:1-4). Paul's choice of a vocation was that of a zealous Pharisee, but God changed his mind on the Damascus road. This is borne out by the word "commandment." "Commandment" in verse one is the Greek word (*epitagon*) which means a "military command from a superior to an inferior". This is in opposition to the normal word for "commandment" which is (*entolay*) and refers to a moral commandment, i.e. the Ten Commandments.

We also see in this verse the linkage between God and Christ. God is our Saviour, and God is Christ, and Christ is God. There is a unity between each of these titles which leads us to understand that Christ is God, and as God he is our Saviour. Moreover, not only is He our Saviour, but He is our hope, a present certainty of a future reality.

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

The recipient of this letter is Timothy, whom Paul calls "my own son in the faith." Only two men were called Paul's "only sons", Timothy (here) and Titus (Titus 1:4). This seems to indicate that Paul's relationship to Timothy and Titus was close, much like that of a mentor to a disciple.

It is interesting to note that of all the times "Father" is used in reference to God in the New Testament, it usually refers to the relationship between Christ and God. In fact, Jesus almost exclusively refers to God as "my father". The only time he broke this rule was when he was hanging on the cross bearing our sins. However, because of our identification with Christ, God is our Father as well. (Romans 8:14-17)

Timothy and Paul

1) Timothy is mentioned more than any other of Paul's companions.

Acts 16:2-3	lived in Lystra and Derbe area (Galatia)
Acts 17:14	in Thessalonica with Silas
Acts 18:5	in Corinth with Silas
Acts 19:22	sent to Macedonia (Thessalonica and Berea?)
Acts 20:4	sent to Macedonia
1 Corinthians 4:17	sent to Corinth by Paul
2 Corinthians 1:19	sent to Corinth
2 Corinthians 1:1	with Paul when writing 2 Corinthians
Philippians 1:1	with Paul when writing Philippians
Philippians 2:19	sent to Philippi by Paul
Colossians 1:1	with Paul when writing Colossians

1 Thessalonians 1:1	with Paul when writing 1 Thessalonians
1 Thessalonians 3:1	sent to Thessalonica
2 Thessalonians 1:1	with Paul when writing 2 Thessalonians
2)	Paul considered Timothy his son in the faith. In fact, Paul often used Timothy as a general trouble-shooter. Timothy was sent to Ephesus (1 Timothy 1:3), Macedonia (Acts 19:22), Corinth (1 Cor 4:17), Philippi (Phil 2:19), and Thessalonica (1 Thess 3:1).
3)	Timothy was with Paul in the writing of 2 Corinthians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, and 2 Thessalonians.

An Overview of 1 Timothy

1 Timothy is the first of the three “Pastoral Epistles” written by Paul, the other two being 2 Timothy and Titus. It is also the first chronologically, Titus being next and 2 Timothy being last.

1 Timothy does not fit chronologically into the book of Acts. General scholarship agrees that it was written after Paul's first imprisonment in Rome, occurring after Acts 28, and before his second imprisonment prior to execution. This is borne out by the fact that we find Paul free in 1 Timothy 1:3.

The book of 1 Timothy was written to Timothy while he was at Ephesus. According to 1 Timothy 1:3, Paul left him there to complete some mop-up chores dealing with doctrinal error. This letter was written to Timothy in order to strengthen him in this task.

The basic theme of 1 Timothy is given in verse three, “that thou mightest teach no other doctrine”. Throughout the book we find warning after warning given to Timothy regarding false teaching and the dangers of errant doctrine. From this, we surmise that the basic problem at Ephesus was false doctrine that began to creep into the church. In fact, in chapter 3 we find out that the source of some of this error was the elders themselves.

The key verse is 1 Timothy 3:15, “that thou mightest know how to behave thyself in the house of God”.

Doctrinal Error and 1 Timothy

Doctrinal error is one of the major themes we find in 1 Timothy. This is a partial list:

1:4	Error regarding worthless fables and genealogies as opposed to godly teaching
1:7-11	Error regarding the true place of the law
1:19-20	Error regarding godly living and a pure conscience
2:1-8	Error concerning the proper attitude towards the lost
2:9-15	Error regarding women in the church

3:1-13	Error regarding the qualifications of church leadership
3:15-16	Error regarding the diety of Christ
4:1-8	Error regarding the place of abstinence and observance of ritual
5:1-16	Error regarding the proper treatment of widows in the Church
5:17-25	Error regarding unqualified leadership and respect of persons
6:1-2	Error regarding proper servant/master relationships
6:3-21	Error regarding riches and the folly of human wisdom

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,

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

Paul now turns his attention to the most important and pressing issue facing Timothy, that of false teachers and false doctrine. It is essential that we understand that this is the singular most important reason that this letter was written.

These two verses contain a wealth of information critical to the understanding of the entire book of 1 Timothy. Note the following:

1. Timothy was bidden to stay at Ephesus in order to straighten out some errant doctrine.
2. This occurred as he and Paul were on their way to Macedonia. It seems that Paul had other plans, and as Timothy was considered his most trusted companion, Timothy was urged to stay at Ephesus. Note that we have no idea how long Paul was there.
3. Timothy's job at Ephesus was to counteract some false doctrine that was being taught there. Unfortunately, we have no idea what the specific false system of doctrine was, but we do know some of it's teachings.
 - a. It had to do with Jewish myths and fables. (1 Timothy 1:4).
 - b. It ignored the discipline of study while spending time about worthless questions. (1 Timothy 1:4) (See Greek notes on Verse four below)
 - c. It missed the whole purpose of the moral law of God. (1 Timothy 1:5-6)
 - d. It was in error regarding the true purpose of the law. (1 Timothy 1:7-11)
 - e. It had an element of moral corruption. (1 Timothy 1:19-20)
 - f. It had it's roots in Satan's domain. (1 Timothy 4:1)
 - g. It caused men's conscience to become seared and insensitive. (1 Timothy 4:2)

- h. It had elements of asceticism. (1 Timothy 4:3-6)
- i. It concerned itself with endless questions as opposed to healthy teaching. (1 Timothy 6:3-5)
- j. It elevated the importance of personal wealth. (1 Timothy 6:6-10)

Greek Notes on Verses 3-4

- 1) “Charge” in verse three is the Greek word παράγγελια (parangelias) which is a military term used to speak of the passing of orders down a chain of command. In other words, Timothy was told to pass the orders from Paul down to those who were teaching these false doctrines.
- 2) “Other doctrine” is ἑτεροδιδασκαλία (heterodidaskalein) which is a compound word formed from “heteros” = other, and “didaskalein” = teaching. This is a word found nowhere else in extant literature and was no doubt coined by Paul.
- 3) “Fables” in verse four is μύθοι (muthoi) from which we get “myths”. Anyone familiar with Jewish literature of that time, particularly the pseudopigrapha, is very much aware of the weird and far-out myths the Jewish rabbies taught and believed.
- 4) “Edifying” is the Greek word οἰκονομία (oikonomian) which means “administration” or “stewardship”. Therefore, we can interpret what Paul is saying as “Don't get hung up with myths and endless genealogies which raise questions but discipline yourself to care for the stewardship of truth that God has given you which was accepted by your faith”.

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

Paul now contrasts the results of true, apostolic teaching with that of the false teachers at Ephesus, namely results. One of the surest ways to spot truth is what is produced when one follows it. If we find love, holiness, and a good conscience, then we can identify the teaching as truth.

The first result of healthy teaching is a pure heart, (Greek καθαρά καρδία katharas kardias), a requirement of those who are to approach God. In Matthew 5:8 we are told that “the pure in heart shall see God”. See also Psalms 24:3-4. It is characteristic of false doctrine that it is powerless to transform the heart of man. Even though we may see an external veneer of morality, the heart of those in false systems of teaching are not pure. Because of that, they can never see God.

Secondly, godly teaching produces a good conscience, (Greek συνειδήσεως ἀγαθῆς suneidayseos agathas) which refers to that state of being whereby guilt is absent and a sense of rightness exists before God. Again, it is characteristic of false systems of doctrine that those who are enmeshed in them do not, nor can have, a pure conscience. They are forever haunted by their sins since without Christ sin can never be forgiven.

Finally, good teaching produces true faith, (Greek πίστεως ἀνυπόκριτης pisteos anupokritas) which literally means “unhypocritical faith”. A hypocritical faith is a faith which claims to

be something it is not. This again is a characteristic of false systems of teaching which can never produce un hypocritical faith in it's adherents.

The word translated "commandment" in verse five is (parangelieas) which is the noun form of the same word which is translated "charge" in verse three. Therefore, we can interpret "commandment" as referring to that which was to be passed on to those who were teaching the false doctrine. In other words, the "commandment" was the "orders" passed on to Timothy from Paul, which in turn was to be passed on to others.

6 From which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling;

7 Desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm.

Verse six gives us the flip side of obedience to the commandment, namely, a state of confusion. The word translated "swerved" has the idea of missing the mark and the word translated "turned aside" carries the idea of leaving the right path for a false one. These false teachers have missed the point of the "commandment" and as a result "turned off" of the true path and wound up in "vain janglings". The word translated "vain janglings" is μ (metaiologian) and means "empty musings" or "empty cogitations". The basic idea of verse six is that if we leave the "commandment" delivered to us, we lose the whole basis of truth and have nothing left but our own empty questionings and musings.

Verse seven gives us the desire of these false teachers, namely, that of being teachers of the law. Unfortunately, since they have "swerved" and "turned aside" from the true path, they have absolutely no basis for understanding the law or it's purpose. I can say from experience that one of the most frustrating things for a Christian is to sit under the teaching of one of the world's brightest Old Testament scholars who had no idea of the truth of the Scripture. Although he knew more facts than any Christian I have met, he had no ability to interpret or understand those facts, and as a result, only had questions and empty theories.

8 But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully;

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,

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;

11 According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.

Since these so called "teachers of the law" had so mangled the law's true purpose and place in God's plan, Paul takes these four verses to give us the law's true place.

In verse eight we find that the law is good (Greek $\kappa\alpha\lambda\omicron\varsigma$, kalos = interally and externally good), if it is used "lawfully". The word "lawfully" is the Greek word $\mu\omicron\iota\omicron\varsigma$ "nominos" which means "as originally intended". It is used only here and in 2 Timothy 2:5.

Unfortunately, the false teachers Paul addresses have not used the law correctly, and were therefore in error. To them the law was a set of rules to be followed and not the schoolteacher to point men to Christ who is the end of the law.

Verse nine presents a problem if we interpret it literally as meaning that the law was not given for righteous people. It is much better to see this statement as referring to the same concept

Christ was speaking of when he said “I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance”. Namely, if a person considers themselves righteous, i.e. keepers of the law anyway, then the law is not for them. This is what Christ was saying in the above verse, namely, “you Pharisees consider yourselves to be righteous, therefore, I cannot save you”. It seems that the false teachers at Ephesus considered themselves to be righteous which would seem to indicate that their system of belief made the keeping of the law as one of the requisites for salvation.

In verses nine to ten, Paul tells us who the law was meant for. It is interesting to note that each of these categories parallels one of the ten commandments.

1. The lawless (Greek *anomous*) and disobedient (Greek *kemai*). These are those who refuse submission to any kind of restraint or rules.
2. The ungodly (Greek *asebesi*) and sinners (*hamartalous*). The ungodly are those who exist with no thought of God. The sinners are those who practice sin as a way of life and was often used to speak of those who lived without any thought for moral standards, specifically God's. Compare this with commandments one and two.
3. The unholy (Greek *anosios*) and profane (Greek *bebalois*). These terms refer to those that exist outside of a sphere of moral standards. Compare with commandments three and four.
4. Murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers. Compare this with commandment five.
5. For manslayers, or murderers in general. Compare with commandment six.
6. For whoremongers and, literally, homosexuals. (The Greek word translated “them that defile themselves with mankind is *arsenokoitais* which means “homosexuals”). Compare this with commandment seven.
7. For menstealers. The Greek word here is *andrapodistais* and means “kidnappers”. Since one of the major commodities in the Roman Empire was slaves, the common way to obtain one was to steal a child or man from their home and force them into being a slave. Compare this with commandment eight.
8. For liars, (Greek *pseustais*), and perjured persons (Greek *epiorkois*). Compare with commandment nine.
9. And finally, for anything else contrary to “healthy” doctrine. The word translated “sound” is *hugiainousay* from which we get “hygenics” and “hygiene”.

Paul wraps us this section on false teachers by breaking into a praise in verse eleven. Note that the literal Greek of this verse would better read “the gospel of the glory of the blessed God”. It is not the gospel that it glorious, but it is God.

We also see a very important concept stated in this verse, and one that is woven throughout 1 and 2 Timothy. Paul saw the gospel as something that was entrusted to him. Paul was overwhelmed with the responsibility he had before God to care for the doctrine delivered to him. Note the following references with respect to this: 1 Timothy 6:20-21, 2 Timothy 1:14, 2 Timothy 2:2-3.

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

At this point in Paul's letter to Timothy, Paul digresses from his main point to interject a note of praise to God who "counted Paul faithful."

The New Testament continually reminds us that the truth of God is a divine trust given to us to guard and pass on. This idea was constantly in Paul's mind as he ministered the Gospel. Jude echoes this same idea in Jude 1:3 in which he called on his recipients to "contend for the once-delivered-to-the-saints faith". God's truth is a precious commodity and must be guarded carefully. Note the following passages regarding this: 1 Timothy 1:18, 4:6, 4:13-18, 6:12-15, 6:20-21, 2 Timothy 1:14, 2:1-2, 3:14-17.

The word "counted" in verse twelve is *hegeomai* which means to consider carefully and weigh all the facts. God was careful in choosing Paul. This made Paul extremely aware of the seriousness of his calling. In this same verse, "ministry" is the Greek word *diakonia* and refers to "service". The life of a true minister of the gospel is not one of ease, but one of unceasing service in the behalf of God and others.

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

Verse thirteen gives us a glimpse of Paul's past life by using three words which indicate his activities prior to conversion. The first word, blasphemer, refers to the act of a man whereby he slanders God. Paul, in his zeal to stamp out Christianity, reviled and spoke against the Lord Jesus Christ who is the second person of the trinity. "Persecutor" refers to his activities against Christians. In the early chapters of Acts we find that Paul is one of the most zealous persecutors Christianity has ever known. Lastly, "injurious" is from the Greek word *huberistes* and refers to a man who delights in violently harming others. Paul took great pride in dragging Christians out of their houses and throwing them into prison.

Note at this point that Paul obtained mercy because these activities were done in ignorance. In the scripture, there is a vast difference between willful sin, and ignorant sin. Those who sin willfully receive greater judgment than those who sin in ignorance. In fact, there are some people who have rejected the full revelation of God that are unredeemable. The New Testament calls these people "apostates". Paul, however, was not an apostate because when God finally revealed himself to Paul on the Damascus road, Paul responded to the truth.

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

Although Paul was the Church's greatest enemy, God reached down and changed his life. In fact, in verse fourteen we find Paul stating that God's grace "superabounded" to him. In spite of the greatness of Paul's sin, God's grace was greater. It reminds us of the first verse of that song by Julia Johnston:

Marvelous grace of our loving Lord,
Grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt!
Yonder on Calvary's mount outpoured,
There where the blood of the Lamb was spilt.

Grace, grace, God's grace,

Grace that will pardon and cleanse within;
Grace, grace, God's grace,
Grace that is greater than all our sin!

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

In verse fifteen we find the first of five “faithful sayings”. This particular phrase occurs only in the Pastoral Epistles and is used by some to argue against Pauline authorship. However, if we realize that the Pastoral Epistles were the last letters penned by Paul when the New Testament churches were well established, we can surmise that this statement only reflects a codification of some of the vital truths of the Christian faith.

The “Faithful Sayings” of the Pastorals

- 1) Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners - 1 Timothy 1:15.
- 2) If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work - 1 Timothy 3:1.
- 3) For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come - 1 Timothy 4:9.
- 4) For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him - 2 Timothy 2:11.
- 5) This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men - Titus 3:8.

The faithful saying we find in verse fifteen is that “Christ came into the world to save sinners”. Paul adds “of whom I am chief” as a personal testimony. There can be little doubt to the reader of the New Testament that Christ's single mission in life was to save sinners.

Paul's additional phrase “of whom I am chief” is his own personal opinion of his condition. The word translated “chief” is “protos” and carries the idea of “foremost”. Paul considered himself the foremost sinner. There is little wonder that Paul was overcome with the grace of God shown to him.

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.

Verse sixteen gives the reason for God extending grace to the “foremost” sinner. Basically, this verse puts forth an argument from the greater to the lesser, a favorite tactic Paul uses throughout his writings. (see Romans 5:6-8 on this). Paul states that if God can save him, the most rotten sinner imaginable, then God can save anyone. This removes the argument by some that “I am just too sinful to be saved”. God's superabundant grace shown to Paul should forever silence this argument. Note that “longsuffering” in verse sixteen is *makrothumiea* and refers to patience with people. God is extremely patient with sinners not willing that any should perish. (2 Peter 3:8 uses this same word).

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

Paul ends this short digression with a statement of praise. We find four great truths regarding God in this verse:

- 1) He is, literally in the Greek, the King of the ages. It is God who is in total control of all things.
- 2) He is incorruptible (*aphtharto*). God will never die and will never lose any of his perfection over time.
- 3) He is invisible. One of the cardinal truths of scripture echoed by Jesus in John 4:23-24 is that “God is a spirit”. We will never see the Father in eternity, only Jesus.
- 4) Lastly, He is the only God. The word “wise” is not in the Greek text.

Therefore, we can sum this verse up as follows:

Now unto the King of the ages, incorruptible, invisible, the only God, be honor, glory unto the ages of the ages.

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;

Paul now resumes his thought from verse eleven. The word translated “charge” is the familiar *parangelia*, a term used to denote military orders passed down a chain of command. The basis for Paul passing this charge to Timothy is the prophecies that pointed to Timothy as a minister of Christ. In the New Testament church, particularly in the early years, men were chosen for the ministry by the Holy Spirit. In Acts 13:2 we find the Holy Spirit choosing Paul and Barnabas for a specific task. On the basis of this, we can infer that Timothy was called in much the same way.

The wording “that thou by them mightest” in the Authorized version is somewhat confusing. What Paul is actually telling Timothy is that in the heat and fatigue of the battle, Timothy can always look back at the signs which pointed to him as a minister of Christ as inspiration. In other words, Timothy can gain strength in the battle by realizing that God called him to that task, and as someone so aptly put it, God's callings are God's enablings.

The Christian life is a battle. The victories go to the diligent who discipline themselves. Unfortunately, most Christians are AWOL when it comes to fighting. No wonder the modern Church is in such bad shape.

Note that we fight this warfare having faith and a good conscience. The word translated “holding” is *echon* and is best translated as “having in one's possession”. The only way to defeat the enemy is to have “faith” and a “good (Greek *agathos* = intrinsically good) conscience”. In Ephesians 6:16 we find the “shield of faith” while in 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 we find the good conscience.

These two things go hand in hand. To fight Satan successfully, one must have faith in God's provision of power and victory as well as a conscience devoid of unconfessed sin. Sin will always stifle the power of the Spirit in the life of the believer and make true spiritual victory unattainable.

Warfare and the Christian

2 Corinthians 10:3-5 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;

Ephesians 6:10-18 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

2 Timothy 2:3-4 Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.

2 Timothy 4:7 I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:

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

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

Verse nineteen introduces us to one of the problems faced in the Ephesian Church, namely, that some had “put away” a good conscience and as a result have become shipwrecked. The word “put away” is *aposomesoi* and carries the idea of “violently thrusting away”.

Also, we should note that religious error has its basis in moral rather than intellectual causes. A man is not in religious error because he has carefully weighed the evidence as much as he desires a system of belief that will make him comfortable with his sin. This is the error of the Pharisees who had lowered God and raised themselves so as to downplay the ugliness of their sin and diminish the perfection of God.

Verse twenty gives us two examples of men who have made shipwreck, Alexander and Hymenaeus. Although some have equated this Alexander with the Alexander mentioned in 2 Timothy 4:14, we cannot be dogmatic about this. Paul reminds Timothy of these two men whom Paul had personally put out of the Church. The idea Paul is stressing is that there is no place in the Church for moral evil.

“Delivered” to Satan is an interesting phrase. Without getting into a lot of theology, the idea here is that Paul had put these men out of the protection of the Church and as a result had exposed them to the full brunt of Satan's attack. This is one of the primary reasons we should identify with a local assembly of believers, namely that in that identification we find protection from Satan.

The above idea is illustrated throughout the Old Testament. We find many men receiving the blessings of God not because of their righteousness, but because of their outward identification with the people of God. Many ungodly Jews were blessed because of their Jewishness.

The stark truth of verse twenty is that it is possible through sin to expose oneself to the full power and attack of Satan. This is the reason sin is such a serious thing to be dealt with in the life of the believer.