

Subject: A True Son and False Teachers

Scripture: 1 Timothy 1:1-11

This is the first of three letters known as Pastoral Epistles (1 & 2 Timothy, Titus). They are called Pastoral Epistles because they were written to pastors and the churches they served. As we study through the first letter to Timothy, think of it as reading the pastor's mail.

What was on Paul's heart and mind? What important subjects did he address? After a brief introduction, Paul gets down to business. He has a few words of greeting for his son in the faith and in the ministry and then a strong word about those who were false teachers. To counter false teaching Paul stressed the need for sound doctrine.

THE PERSONAL GREETING (vs. 1-2)

Paul identifies himself first, unlike our custom of writing a letter and then signing it at the end. He identifies himself as an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Savior and Lord Jesus Christ our hope.

Paul's calling – Apostles were chosen and appointed by Christ. Apostles along with prophets had a foundational role in the church. The word “apostle” means one sent on a mission, one sent with authority. Only a small and select number of men were chosen as apostles.

***Galatians 1:1** Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;)*

***1 Corinthians 15:8-10**⁸ And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.⁹ For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.*

Paul's confidence – Jesus Christ not only gives us hope; He is our hope. The word “hope” is not just positive thinking or a wish. It is a certainty. It is an anchor of the soul. My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness.

***Colossians 1:27** To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.*

Paul's concern – He wrote to Timothy, his own son in the faith. Timothy had been saved under Paul's ministry. The descriptive terms, “my own” refers to a legitimate child. Timothy was a real spiritual son, a genuine son to Paul. **2 Timothy 1:2**, *to Timothy, my dearly beloved son.* Timothy was a son in the faith. We hear a lot about faith these days. Someone says he or she is a man or woman of faith, but we don't hear much about the faith. That refers to the Christian faith and the basic truths that all Christians hold dear. Paul added the word “mercy” to his usual greeting of grace and peace. Grace is God's unmerited favor for those who are guilty of sin and deserving of judgment. Mercy is God's kindness and compassion for those who are weak and needy. Peace refers to the peace of God that brings a sense of calm and assurance that all is well. All people need grace, mercy, and peace, and pastors need a lot of all three.

THE PLACE OF MINISTRY (vs. 3)

Paul left Timothy in Ephesus, a great city at that time. It was a difficult place for a young pastor to serve (see Acts 19). Ephesus had a famous temple of Diana and the whole area was saturated with idolatry. When Paul preached in Ephesus there was a riot because the silver workers were concerned that people would stop buying their silver statues of Diana. Idolatry was big business.

Ephesus was difficult for another reason (see Acts 20). Paul had a meeting with the elders of the Ephesian church and he warned them of false teachers who would enter the church as vicious wolves among the flock. We have Paul's statement in ***1 Corinthians 16:8-9***⁸ *But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost.*⁹ *For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries.* That seems to always be the case in ministry. Wherever there is opportunity, there is adversity. Apparently Timothy was not too excited to stay at Ephesus because Paul began his letter stating that he besought (urged) Timothy to stay there.

THE PRIORITY OF MINISTRY (vs. 3, 5, 10)

Paul got right to the point with young Timothy (vs. 3). He must deal with false teachers and tell them to stop. The word "charge" is a strong word. It means to command. It is a military term. It is the same word used in ***Acts 1:4*** *And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me.* It is the same word used in ***Acts 17:30*** *And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent.*

Paul did not expect Timothy to use kid gloves in handling these false teachers. They must be commanded and they must be stopped. They must teach "no other doctrine." This is a single word meaning heterodox, the opposite of orthodox. This is a strong statement and it reminds us that there is right doctrine and wrong doctrine, true doctrine and false doctrine

In verse 5, Paul reminds Timothy of the purpose or goal ("end") of this charge (vs. 3) or command. It is a very practical purpose, love that comes from a pure heart, a good conscience, and sincere faith (faith without hypocrisy). These are the very things a pastor and members of a church are to aim for.

. In verse 10, Paul refers to "sound doctrine" which means healthy teaching. Sound teaching builds up and nourishes the soul, but bad doctrine damages and destroys. One boy heard the pastor mention good doctrine and bad doctrine and he thought he was talking about what doctors do to their patients. He said that he agreed with the pastor: good doctorin' makes people well and bad doctorin' makes them sick. The most important thing about any church is sound doctrine. Look at the emphasis on good doctrine in this first letter to Timothy:

1:3, that thou mightest charge some that they teach *no other doctrine* (i.e., false teaching)

1:10, *sound doctrine* (healthy teaching)

2:4, Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto *the knowledge of the truth*

3:15, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of *the truth*

4:6, nourished up in the words of faith and of *good doctrine*

4:13, give attendance (attention) to reading, to exhortation, to *doctrine*

4:16, Take heed to thyself, and unto *the doctrine*

5:17, the elders (pastors)... who labor in *the word and doctrine*

6:1, that the name of *God and his doctrine* be not blasphemed

6:3, *the doctrine* which is according to (in keeping with) godliness

THE PROBLEM OF FALSE TEACHERS (vs. 4, 6-7)

These false teachers were talking about fables (myths) and endless genealogies (vs. 4) probably based on the main characters of the Old Testament. Their teaching only caused the people to have more questions instead of building them up with solid truth from the Word. They majored on minors. I think we might be surprised to hear some of the things that are taught in churches today.

They have missed the goal (vs. 5) and swerved and turned aside to vain jangling (useless words). They wanted to be known as teachers of the law, but they didn't understand the purpose of God's law.

How thankful we are for the truth and for those who teach it accurately and clearly. The most important thing any church does is teach and preach the truth. There is nothing better than knowing, believing, and obeying the truth. There is nothing worse than rejecting, twisting, and mishandling the truth.

The danger posed by these false teachers and their teaching made Timothy's ministry even more difficult and more important. God has placed us here for such a time as this. We are to stand for all of God's truth and stand against all false teaching.