

## 1 Timothy 1:1-11 – “Guarding the Gospel”

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**Who:** Paul wrote this letter to Timothy and this becomes the first of 3 letters known as the Pastoral Epistles (1-2 Timothy and Titus). Paul wrote much of the New Testament and he wrote this letter to a young protégé of his – Timothy. Timothy was from Lystra and was born to a Jewish mother and a Greek father (Acts 16:1).

Timothy had a believing mom, Eunice, and a believing grandma, Lois (2 Timothy 1:5; 3:15). He was raised up in the Scriptures and would have had an understanding of the word. Some have suggested that Paul led Timothy to a true saving faith when he passed through Lystra on his first missionary journey. That is possible, but what we do know is the first time Timothy is mentioned in Scripture is in Acts 16, where Paul passes through Lystra again on his second missionary journey. We read about Timothy in **Acts 16:1–4**, *"Then [Paul] came to Derbe and Lystra. And behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a certain Jewish woman who believed, but his father was Greek. <sup>2</sup> He was well spoken of by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium. <sup>3</sup> Paul wanted to have him go on with him. And he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in that region, for they all knew that his father was Greek. <sup>4</sup> And as they went through the cities, they delivered to them the decrees to keep, which were determined by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem."*

Timothy became a real faithful servant and blessing to Paul in much of his ministry:

**1 Corinthians 4:17**, *"For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church."*

**1 Corinthians 16:10**, *"And if Timothy comes, see that he may be with you without fear; for he does the work of the Lord, as I also do."*

**Philippians 2:19-22**, *"But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, that I also may be encouraged when I know your state. <sup>20</sup> For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state. <sup>21</sup> For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus. <sup>22</sup> But you know his proven character, that as a son with his father he served with me in the gospel."*

**1 Thessalonians 3:2**, *"and sent Timothy, our brother and minister of God, and our fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you and encourage you concerning your faith,"*

## **2 Timothy 1:2**, *"To Timothy, a beloved son: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord."*

The name **Timothy** means 'honouring God'. This he seemed to do well from what we read of him in Scripture. Timothy may not get the accolades of Paul, but he was a trusted servant and he honoured God. This is what God measures successfulness by. Not by what you've done, but by how you've done it. And Timothy was a successful minister of the Gospel, and he was a treasure to Paul.

His name also appears in the greetings of Paul's epistles more often than any other.

- What's interesting is that out of the city of Lystra came perhaps the apostle Paul's most difficult circumstance – he was almost stoned to death. Yet this place also produced Paul's most delightful companion.
- God has a way of bringing beauty out of ashes.

**When:** Paul most likely wrote this letter sometime between 63-65 A.D. while on a fourth missionary journey. This would be after the book of Acts concludes its narrative.

The book of Acts ended with Paul being taken to Rome where he was put under house arrest for 2 years. He was then released around 61-62 A.D. He then revisited some of the churches he established, taking Timothy with him once again. Ephesus was one of the places they visited, and he left Timothy there to do some clean up. There were some things that needed to get put in order. Later on Paul wrote this letter to him to encourage him in the ministry to the church in Ephesus.

**What/Why:** These letters known as the Pastoral Epistles are called that because Paul is addressing pastors (Timothy and Titus) and the duties that are to be carried out in the church. The emphasis in these letters is church function and order. While Paul was in Ephesus with Timothy it became clear that the very thing he warned the Ephesian elders on his third missionary journey had come to pass (**Acts 20:28–31**, *"Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. <sup>29</sup> For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. <sup>30</sup> Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away*

*the disciples after themselves.* <sup>31</sup> *Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.*"

Paul had to leave Timothy in Ephesus to carry out the work while he went to Macedonia. It's from Macedonia now that Paul writes to Timothy with instructions of conduct, order and contending for the faith.

The key theme or purpose of Paul writing this is found in **1 Timothy 3:14–15**, *"These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly; <sup>15</sup> but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."*

### Outline of 1 Timothy:

1. The Call of the Church – Ch. 1
2. The Conduct in the Church – Ch. 2
3. The Character of the Church – Ch. 3
4. The Contending by the Church – Ch. 4
5. The Care from the Church – Ch. 5
6. The Contentment by the Church – Ch. 6

What the church believes shapes how it lives, and how it lives supports and displays the truth of the gospel to the world. It's not merely about rules or structure – it's about the gospel producing a transformed community that reflects Christ's character.

Every section serves the goal of helping the church "behave" rightly as the pillar and ground of the truth.

### Summary Statement:

In 1 Timothy 1:1-11, Paul sets the stage for Timothy's ministry by emphasizing the necessity of sound teaching in the church and the dangers posed by false teachers who distort the message of the Gospel.

### 1. The Command to Defend the Truth – 1:1-4

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

Paul identifies himself as the author. He's an apostle, meaning he's been commissioned; sent out as an ambassador for Christ. This is his calling. Now usually he would say it's *'by the will of God'*. But here it's ***by the commandment***

**of God.** This puts a little different emphasis on his calling. In other words, this wasn't some suggestion for Paul to consider. This was a commandment. And if God calls and commands, we better do.

- There are many things as believers we've been commanded to do and be. Are we fulfilling that? You see, it's in the fulfilling of those things that you will experience the joy of living for God. His commandments are not burdensome (1 John 5:3).

**God our Savior** seems like a bit of an odd title. Isn't that usually attributed to Jesus? Yes, but God is the One who initiated this work of salvation by sending His Son Jesus to die on a cross to take the penalty of sin from us and pay our debt. It is not wrong to identify God as our Savior because of the fact He desires none to perish and has provided the means for us to be forgiven and to stand now in Christ's righteousness.

- Interestingly, at this time Caesar Nero was forcing people to basically worship him and call him saviour. Paul wants to make it clear who the only Saviour is!

**and the Lord Jesus Christ, our hope.** He is our hope because He did the work for our salvation. He died on the cross and rose three days later. He's alive today and we have a blessed hope in Him. We too one day will live eternally!

- This would have been great encouragement for Timothy who was struggling it seemed with confidence and strength. Jesus is our hope! He is sufficient when we don't feel sufficient.

**1:2 - To Timothy, a true son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.**

Paul calls Timothy **a true son in the faith**. We've looked at this special relationship that Paul had with Timothy. Many believe Paul led Timothy to a saving faith on his first missionary trip through Lystra. This is why Paul would refer to him as a son in the faith. Either way, Paul has seen this young Timothy grow in the Lord and he's had a big part of that growth.

Paul usually would just say 'grace and peace' in his greetings. But now he adds mercy. Now just for review, **Grace** is getting what we don't deserve. We didn't deserve salvation, but by God's grace, it's been given to us. **Mercy** is not getting what we do deserve. We deserved judgement; punishment for our sin. We deserved death. But by God's mercy, we were spared.

- I think that as we grow up and mature, we move from thinking I deserve the best things in life, to realizing I really deserve a big two by four to the back of the head. And near the end of Paul's ministry, I think he grew in this realization of the mercy he has received.

And when we fully understand the grace and mercy we've been shown by the Lord, we can experience this blessed **peace**! It's peace *from* God, but more wonderfully, peace *with* God.

**1:3-4 - *As I urged you when I went into Macedonia—remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine, <sup>4</sup> nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith.***

Paul's word to Timothy was **remain**. It seems that Timothy was ready to pack it in. Ephesus wasn't exactly an easy place for ministry. It was home to the temple of Diana – the Greek Goddess of fertility. Ephesus was a major city in Asia Minor and became a melting pot of religion, occultism, and hedonism. Though Paul saw great fruit, a riot eventually erupted.

Now Timothy is contending with those coming in to disrupt the church with twisted doctrines and an unhealthy focus on things that have nothing to do with the gospel. It brought disputes rather than edification.

Ministry can be tough and Timothy is ready to bail. Paul encourages him to stay. There's been a plethora of pastors who have written out their resignation letter first thing Monday morning. They're ready to leave after perhaps a difficult Sunday.

- You know one of the greatest and most blessed things about pastoring is being able to serve the people God has put in your care. And one of the most difficult things with pastoring is having to serve the people God has put in your care. It's a doubled edged sword.
- Timothy was facing people that he wasn't sure he had the fortitude to handle, or wanted to handle. But Paul says remain. You have a work to do, and you have the help of a Saviour who will see you through.

We're not sure what some of these things were that Paul lists but it's interesting to see these are similar things that still characterize some of the cults today like Mormonism (ie. focus on genealogies and wild stories about their founder Joseph Smith).

The key here is that Timothy is to charge (or command) that there be no other doctrine taught. Anyone that adds to the Word or takes away from the Word has no place in the church.

## 2. The Concern for Genuine Love – 1:5-7

**1:5-7 - Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith, <sup>6</sup> from which some, having strayed, have turned aside to idle talk, <sup>7</sup> desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say nor the things which they affirm.**

The purpose of the commandment (which speaks of Timothy needing to charge some to speak no other doctrine (vv.3-4)) is **love**. Those coming with different doctrines were very self-serving. The opposite of love is self. They desired to be teachers of the law but they didn't even know what they were talking about. It seems they were doing so to gain prestige or power.

But when right or true doctrine is the focus, the product of that is love. Love for God and love for others. And it's this that brings about **a pure heart, a good conscience, and sincere faith**.

“Here are two practical tests for us to apply to all teaching. The first is the test of faith: does it come from God, being in agreement with apostolic doctrine (so that it may be received by faith), or is it the product of fertile human imagination? The second is the test of love: does it promote unity in the body of Christ, or if not (since truth itself can divide), is it irresponsibly divisive? ‘Faith’ means that we receive it from God; ‘love’ means that it builds up the church.” <sup>1</sup>

So there were those that had strayed from this. They didn't have a grasp of the law or Scriptures, so their talk was idle, which means empty or vain talk. It went nowhere and helped nothing.

So after seeing the wrong use of the law, we look now at the right use of the law.

## 3. The Correction of the Law's Purpose – 1:8-11

<sup>1</sup> Stott, J. R. W. (1996). *Guard the truth: the message of 1 Timothy & Titus* (p. 46). InterVarsity Press.

**1:8-11 - *But we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully, <sup>9</sup> knowing 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, <sup>10</sup> for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine, <sup>11</sup> according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust.***

A lot of Christians love to say, we're no longer under the law. Christ has fulfilled the law. Yes, that's true! But that doesn't mean we are to be lawless. The law is still good, but you need to understand the proper purpose of the law.

First of all, the law is not meant to be our means of salvation.

- Yet the Word says, "The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul" (Psalm 19:7).
- But the law is not what converts us or saves us. It is the means to conversion.
- **Romans 3:19**, *"Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God."*
- The law is that tutor that's meant to keep us on a certain track, and that track is ultimately to lead to Jesus. It's in Jesus that we find the righteousness of God. It's in Him that we can be forgiven and saved.

The law is like an X-Ray that exposes where we're broken. But you don't take that X-Ray and wrap it around your broken bone to heal it. You need something more.

That's the law. The law doesn't save, but it leads us to see our need for a Saviour.

So Paul makes it clear, the law is not for the righteous, but for those who are unrighteous.

- Just like a 50km/h speed limit sign is not for the person putting along at 45km/h, no, it's for me!

In verses 9+10, Paul lists 14 people who are guilty of breaking God's law and were thus condemned under the law. To the proud and self-righteous, you need to give them the law to lead them to their guilt before God, but the goal is to lead them to the grace of Jesus Christ.

And interestingly, Paul seems to parallel the very 10 commandments found in Exodus 20.

The first 4 of those commandment deal with our relationship to God, the next 6 deal with our relationship to our fellow man.

ONE: *'You shall have no other gods before Me.'*

TWO: *'You shall not make for yourself a carved image - any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.'*

THREE: *'You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain.'*

FOUR: *'Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.'*

These three are summed up in ***the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane...***

FIVE: *'Honor your father and your mother.'* – ***murderers of fathers and... mothers.***

SIX: *'You shall not murder.'* – ***murderers of fathers and... mothers, manslaughterers.***

SEVEN: *'You shall not commit adultery.'* – ***fornicators, sodomites.***

EIGHT: *'You shall not steal.'* – ***kidnappers.***

NINE: *'You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.'* – ***liars, perjurers.***

TEN: *'You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's.'*

The only one Paul didn't give a direct correlation to was to not covet. And interestingly, all these commandments that pertain to our fellow man are an offense committed outwardly against them, yet the last one is an offense committed inwardly – it's a matter of the heart. And this is the command that convicted Paul. He said he wouldn't have known sin unless the law said clearly *'Do not covet'* (Romans 7:7).

But Paul does include at the end of this list anything that is contrary to sound doctrine. A person can do everything to try and look clean and pure, but there will always be the issue of the heart. There will always be the struggles inwardly because apart from Christ, we are ruled by the flesh.

**sound doctrine**... ὑγιαίνω [hugiaino /hoog·ee·ah·ee·no/] to be sound, to be well, to be in good health. We get our word ‘hygiene’ from this Greek word.

- And so, to be following sound doctrine should result in right living. They are connected.
- Now we must be careful that we don’t allow our right living to begin to make us think we’re right with God because of right living (legalism). Our desire to live right always flows from what Jesus has done for us. We get it wrong when we think we’re right with God based on what we do.

So Paul ties it all in with the **glorious gospel**. He’s been entrusted with a glorious gospel, not a system of laws. It was not an empty teaching as mentioned earlier, but rather a healthy teaching in accordance to “sound doctrine” which promotes spiritual health. This Gospel is the Good News of Jesus Christ. The law cannot produce righteousness, but the Gospel can because it’s Christ centered – it’s all about His grace. The gospel message is that Jesus came to save sinners, of which we were all in that category. We’re not saved by living by some rules and regulations, but by letting Christ rule in our life as our Lord and Savior. He alone paid for our sins and He alone is worthy to take up the throne in our lives. This has all been done by His incredible grace – we didn’t deserve any of this and we couldn’t earn any of this.

This is why Paul was so compelled to guard this incredible truth and reality of the gospel. Paul once lived by the letter of the law. But he saw the glorious gospel as being a much better way. Who needs the law to beat us down when we have the grace of God through Jesus Christ to lift us up.

Here in the first eleven verses of 1 Timothy, Paul has given Timothy (and us) a clear charge: Guard the glorious gospel. As we close, let these Points to Ponder settle into your heart and shape how you live this week.

#### Points to Ponder:

1. Am I guarding the Gospel in my life, or allowing distractions in?
2. Is my focus on truth making me more loving or more critical?
3. Are there legalistic tendencies in my life that need to be replaced by the Gospel?