

Letters From My Father
Week 1
1 Timothy 1:1-11
"1st Day On The Job"

Introduction

To Timothy, my true son in the faith...

1 Timothy 1:2a

First and Second Timothy, as well as *Titus*, are distinct from the other books in *The New Testament*, for the simple fact that they were written individually to young pastors whom Paul had personally mentored. He considered these men to be family. In fact, he addressed both of them as "his true sons". Paul was especially fond of Timothy and considered him to be his most trustworthy ambassador to the churches that he had planted, often sending the young man to go to serve those congregations, when Paul could not. When Paul commissioned his young protege to visit any of the churches he had planted, it was with the understanding that Timothy be given as much authority and be treated with the same respect as Paul himself.

Therefore I urge you to imitate me. This is why I have sent Timothy to you. He is my dearly loved and faithful child in The LORD. **1 Corinthians 4:16-17a**

Now I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon so that I too may be encouraged by news about you. For I have no one else like-minded who will genuinely care about your interests; all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. But you know his proven character, because he has served with me in the gospel ministry like a son with a father. Therefore, I hope to send him as soon as I see how things go with me. **Philippians 2:19-23**

It was Paul who led Timothy to Christ, when the young man was still in his teens. And from that time on, the apostle had disciplined him in the faith. This is why Paul, who had no children of his own, had desired for Timothy to be the one who would continue with the ministry after the old apostle had gone on to his everlasting reward. I cannot even begin to imagine what it must have been like to have been chosen by this great man of faith to become his successor. After all, Paul had led a great many men to Christ. But he specifically chose Timothy as his protege. Timothy must have been a very special young man indeed!

In *1 Timothy*, we see that Paul had dispatched the young man on yet another missionary venture. The commissioning letter was written sometime around mid 60's A.D. One of Paul's favorite churches, Ephesus, was struggling and needed to be restored to its origins of the faith. False teachers had established themselves within the church and had risen to places of leadership. If these wicked men were not dealt with, there would be nothing left of this church that Paul had planted some ten or more years prior on his second missionary journey in 52 A.D. Paul had sent his young son in the faith into a hornets nest, and he knew it. But there was no one he trusted more to handle the crisis. Ephesus desperately needed a Godly pastor at the helm. So Paul appointed Timothy to the position (who would have been in his early thirties at the time).

Needless to say, there would have been older men serving as elders in the church at Ephesus who would not take it very well, when this young pastor showed up to take over. So Paul sent a personal letter of instruction, as well as, his personal recommendation of Timothy as the Senior Pastor over the Ephesian congregation. In order to fully grasp the full message of this letter, we must realize that although it was written to Timothy personally, Paul had also intended for it to be read aloud to the entire congregation. This would leave no doubt in anyone's mind that Paul himself had chosen this young man to lead them, and if any were to oppose his leadership, it would be considered as defiance to Paul himself. And such hostility would be dealt with accordingly. The letter clearly spells out Timothy's *Endorsement*, his *Enterprise*, and his *Enemies*.

His Endorsement (vs. 1-2)

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope: To Timothy, my true son in the faith. Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.
1 Timothy 1:1-2

While it was customary in those days to write the senders name in the greeting portion of a letter, Paul addresses this letter as if it were going to both Timothy and the church at Ephesus. He does this by stating his own credentials, reminding those who will hear the letter read to the church that he has been appointed by Christ Jesus to be an apostle. Therefore, he had the apostolic authority to command the church that he himself had planted in Ephesus.

A brief history of the church is needed to fully understand this dynamic. Paul, on his second missionary journey to Asia Minor (modern day Turkey), took along Priscilla and Aquila, a missionary couple who were living in Corinth at the time. The trio planted the church in Ephesus (**Acts 18:18-28**). Upon Paul's departure, he left Priscilla and Aquila there to help the fledgling church grow in faith and doctrine. The couple later recruited Apollos of Alexandria to become the first pastor there. Under the leadership of these devoted Christ followers, the church at Ephesus flourished.

On Paul's third missionary journey (A.D. 54-56), he himself spent between two or three years with the Ephesians, teaching them the sound doctrines of Christ. So, needless to say, Paul had a great deal of himself invested in this young congregation of believers. In A.D. 62, Paul penned his wonderful letter to the church (**Ephesians**) telling them of all that Believer's possess in Christ Jesus. This is one of the most beautiful books in all of the *New Testament*. It demonstrates just how much Paul loved the Ephesian congregation, and all that he longed to see them become as they matured in their faith.

Then in the mid 60's, Paul began to hear rumors of a shift in the doctrines being taught in Ephesus. False teachers had risen to prominent positions within the church and were attempting to undo all that Paul had done there. Satan always does his best to destroy a work of The Spirit, and what was happening in Ephesus would have completely erased Paul's efforts to establish this church on the firm foundation of the gospel of Christ. Paul was devastated at the news. So he quickly dispatched Timothy to deal with the problem.

The order of the words "Christ Jesus", rather than Jesus Christ is unique to Paul's writings. It was his normal way of speaking, to refer to Jesus' Messianic title "Christ" before saying The Saviors name. Perhaps it was to emphasize to his readers exactly Who Jesus was. He was The long awaited Messiah of the Jews. The only begotten Son, Who was Himself God in the flesh. And it was this same Jesus that had chosen Paul and gave him the authority to oversee the churches that he planted.

Paul continued in the greeting of his letter to endorse his "true son in the faith", so the congregation of Ephesus would fully comprehend that Paul had been endorsed by Christ, and Timothy was similarly endorsed by Paul. So, in essence, Timothy was coming to Ephesus at the direction of Christ Jesus Himself, and as such, Paul was sending him there with the blessings of grace, mercy, and peace. It was no subtle reminder that young Timothy was to be treated in like manner by the congregation.

Before Timothy was even dispatched, Paul had sent word that two of the "ring leaders" of false teaching, namely Hymenaeus and Alexander, were to be expelled from the church prior to Timothy's arrival (**1 Timothy 1:20**). Hopefully, this would leave two less trouble-makers for the young pastor to deal with when he came. Timothy would be called upon to clean house, as it were, when he arrived, and Paul hoped that rather than having to expel any more of the people, they would instead submit to young Timothy's authority and repent. It is for this reason, that the young pastor was given such a personal and undeniable endorsement to be read upon the letter's arrival.

His Enterprise (vs. 3-5)

As I urged you when I went to Macedonia, remain in Ephesus so that you may instruct certain people not to teach false doctrine or to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies. These promote empty speculations rather than God's plan, which operates by faith. Now the goal of our instruction is love that comes from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith. Timothy 1:3-5

Webster's Dictionary defines an "Enterprise" as: "a project or undertaking, typically one that is difficult or requires effort". This is the perfect description of what Timothy had been sent to Ephesus to accomplish! What was going on there was a nightmare, and it would be no easy task for the young man. One wonders, if upon his arrival, Timothy was immediately discouraged with what he had encountered. Perhaps this is why Paul reminds him in the letter that he had "urged him to remain there". The word that Paul uses "parakaleo" actually means *to beg, entreat, or beseech*. It makes me wonder if Timothy had considered "running for the hills" shortly after he arrived in the city!

Discouragement is such a common thing among pastors. It is hard to describe unless you have personally experienced it, but there is a constant feeling of unworthiness, coupled together with self-doubt and spiritual warfare that often causes those called to ministry to just give up sometimes. Paul wanted Timothy to stay the course, albeit a difficult task. Timothy was not bold and courageous like Paul. In fact, he was quite the opposite. And I am inclined to believe that the stress of the ministry had caused him to have stomach issues, for Paul had encouraged him to drink less of the local water and drink some wine perhaps to kill the bacteria in his digestive system (**1 Timothy 5:23**).

Sometimes, it is easy for us to overlook in The Scriptures that the people that God chooses are still just people. Timothy was a young, insecure, and frail individual. But these are the kind of people that God will use to do a mighty work. These are the kind of people who realize that the only strength they can rely on is the power of Almighty God. Paul knew full well that God was fully capable of using the weakest of men to fulfill His purposes.

Therefore, so that I would not exalt myself, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to torment me so that I would not exalt myself. Concerning this, I pleaded with The LORD three times that it would leave me. But He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is perfected in weakness." Therefore, I will most gladly boast all the more about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may reside in me. 2 Corinthians 12:7b-9

Paul admonished his young son in the faith to refute the false teachings that were going on in Ephesus. And instead, to return the church to the love that comes as a result a pure heart, one that has been washed clean by The Spirit and longs to follow Christ in sincere devotion, with a clean conscience that comes as a result of confessing one's sin and obedience to Christ. These are the result of a sincere faith that is based upon the gospel of Jesus Christ. A sincere faith in Jesus is solely focused on His praise and glory, as opposed to trying to gain status or praise for one's own selfish ambition (**vs. 5**). An entire sermon series could be preached on these things alone.

These are the things which represent how the church at Ephesus was first established, and Paul's desire was for them to return to "their first love", as it were. It is interesting to note that Jesus would admonish their failing love many years later in **Revelation 2:4**. Although they apparently would return to the true doctrines of the faith, their lack of love was to become a recurring theme throughout the church's history.

A true faith in Christ will cause His followers to adore Him and love one another. True faith produces love. While false doctrine produces division and discord. Anything that elevates self is from the evil one. And in Paul's time, a major enemy of the faith was Gnosticism, a teaching which denied the Deity of Christ and instead reduced Him to a lesser created being. The gnostics taught that God had

created a line of “lesser beings”, and it was from this lineage that Christ came. Thus classifying Him as less than God, but still empowered to some extraordinary things. This is more than likely what Paul is referring to when he mentioned “myths and endless genealogies”. The gnostics prided themselves as having a more in depth knowledge of the divine, when actually, they were simply pagans masquerading as Believers.

Timothy’s enterprise in the city of Ephesus was to become a difficult one indeed. And he was certainly not qualified for such an endeavor. But as Andrew Jackson was once quoted as saying, “*God plus one equals a majority.*” False doctrine within the church is a cancer that must be cut out of the body, or the body will not survive. Paul had sent Timothy to Ephesus to surgically remove the cancer, while keeping the body intact. And apart from the power of The Holy Spirit, it was an impossible task. But Paul had complete confidence that God would give his true son in the faith the grace, mercy, and peace to do the impossible.

His Enemies (vs. 6-11)

Some have departed from these and turned aside to fruitless discussion. They want to be teachers of the law, although they don’t understand what they are saying or what they are insisting on. But we know that the law is good, provided one uses it legitimately. We know that the law is not meant for a righteous person, but for the lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinful, for the unholy and irreverent, for those who kill their fathers and mothers, for murderers, for the sexually immoral and males who have sex with males, for slave traders, liars, perjurers, and for whatever else is contrary to the sound teaching that conforms to the gospel concerning the glory of the blessed God, which was entrusted to me. **1 Timothy 1:6-11**

Apparently there were two types of false doctrine being introduced to the church at Ephesus. First, as mentioned before, there was gnostic teaching, which espoused the idea that nothing in the natural world was good, and everything in the “spiritual realm” was divine. This is why the gnostics taught that Jesus could never have been God in the flesh, because the flesh was evil. For this reason they invented a long lineage of “specially created beings” to explain Jesus’ ability to perform miracles. The gnostics taught that while Jesus could not have been God, He was specifically created by God to do good works.

Also the gnostics taught that since the flesh was by definition evil, the best way to fully embrace the purity of the spiritual realm was by a fleshly indulgence of as much sinful behavior as humanly possible. In other words, don’t repent of your sin, but rather, embrace it. By so doing, you would gain more knowledge and appreciation for the beauty and purity of the so-called spiritual realm. In even plainer English, gnosticism was a religious movement that gave its followers a license to sin.

And a second set of false teachers were apparently claiming to be “teachers of the law”. These people were known as “Judaizers”. These men would infiltrate a Christian church and teach that in order to truly become a follower of Jesus, a person must first convert to Judaism and follow the Law of Moses. These were completely foreign concepts to Gentile converts who knew nothing of the Levitical laws and customary feast days of Judaism. Paul had to deal with this cultic sect throughout his entire ministry. Theirs was a doctrine founded in salvation based upon works, rather than grace, which is in direct opposition to the gospel. All the church at Ephesus needed to do was look to Paul’s wonderful letter he had written to them some ten years prior in order to understand the falseness of this teaching.

For you are saved by grace through faith, and this not from yourselves; it is God’s gift — not from works, so that no one can boast. **Ephesians 2:8-9**

Paul goes on to say in his letter to Timothy that The Law is good, but it was only intended to display God's perfection juxtaposed against man's imperfection. And by doing so, the Law was given to convict the sinner of his sin and drive him to repentance and faith in Christ Jesus. In this way, the Law is good, but it was never able, nor even intended, to save. It was meant to lead men to faith in Christ, the only source of salvation. To believe in Him is to be clothed in His righteousness, and therefore, we are no longer under the Law, but under grace. This is what Paul meant when he said that the Law was not meant for a "righteous person" (**vs.9**). For we are now clothed in Christ!

The Law was given to expose the sinfulness of man, and Paul went on to list several sins (in reference to the Ten Commandments). The list is as follows: the lawless, rebellious, ungodly, sinful, unholy, and irreverent. This is in reference to those who have no regard for God. Thus they are in rebellion according to the first four commandments that speak of loving God with all our heart, soul, and mind. The ungodly are repulsed by this notion of love and reverence for our Creator.

Then Paul adds to his list the sins we commit against one another: Murderers, as well as, those who dishonor their parents, sexually immoral, slave traders who kidnap people to profit from their enslavement, liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching. These are in reference to the last six commandments which require us to love our neighbors as ourselves. Taken as a whole, these represent the Holy Law of God.

Now, we know that no one has the ability to fully live according to The Law. Therefore, a person will either be judged according to the righteousness of Christ, or they will be judged according to The Law. It is only by trusting in Christ that we can hope to escape the coming judgment. Any doctrine that teaches a person must believe in Jesus, but must do additional works in order to be saved is blasphemous and false teaching. So, Timothy was sent to Ephesus to put a stop to all this nonsense and redirect the church back to its origins; namely, salvation by grace through faith... and faith alone.

False doctrine is the enemy of The Church. And it is the devil's favorite tool to use to corrupt the work of The Spirit. In **Matthew 13:24-30**, Jesus told of an "enemy" who came and sowed bad seed amongst the good seed sown by the farmer. The owner of the field had sown wheat in the hopes of a bountiful harvest. But the enemy sowed a specific seed, known as "Darnell Wheat" according to the Scripture. Darnel is a very interesting weed. In its early stages, it looks just like wheat. But as it matures, the seeds it produces are not grains of wheat, but rather poisonous black seeds.

This is the perfect picture of those Satan sends to infiltrate The LORD'S churches. At first these false believers appear to be just like the rest of us. On the surface, they appear to be spiritual and seem to share in our faith. But as time passes, the spiritual fruit they produce is the blackness and poisonous fruit of sin. And if we are not careful, they will destroy the entire crop. It is the responsibility of those who lead the church to not only expose false teaching, but to root it out from among us lest it take hold and destroy the faith of many. Those who are truly saved will never lose their salvation, but their influence can be greatly harmed by the false teacher, who seeks to undo all that we do for the kingdom. So, let us be wary of all that is false and remember to take a stand for God's truth at all cost.

In Paul's letters to Timothy, he clearly lays out how a true church based upon the gospel of Christ should and must operate. My prayer for us as we study these "Letters from our Father" is that we will come to understand and obey these truths so that we may produce a great harvest for The Savior, to present to Him upon His return. So let the journey begin!

And let all of God's faithful say... Truth!!!