1 Timothy

Lesson 1

**Introduction to 1 Timothy**

Most conservative NT scholars believe that, after the end of Acts, Paul was released from Roman custody circa 62 AD and engaged in further ministry, perhaps traveling to Spain (Rom. 15:24), and then east to Crete, Asia Minor, and Macedonia (1 Tim. 1:3; Titus 1:5). Paul left Titus in Crete to help the new churches on that island. (Titus 1:5.) Timothy was left in Ephesus to keep the churches in its vicinity on track. (1 Tim. 1:3.) Paul went on to Macedonia, where he wrote the letters of 1 Timothy and Titus circa circa 63-65, to give instructions to Timothy in Ephesus and Titus in Crete. When Paul wrote those letters, he apparently planned to travel to Nicopolis on the western shore of Greece for a few months, and hoped Titus could meet him there. (Titus 3:12.) At some point after Paul reached Macedonia and/or Nicopolis, the Romans arrested him, and he wrote his final letter, 2 Timothy, while in Roman custody awaiting execution. Scholars generally believe Paul was executed circa 67 AD in the vicinity of Rome during the reign of Emperor Nero. Nero’s reign ended in 68 AD, so scholars generally consider that year to be the latest possible date for anything Paul wrote, but all these dates are estimates.

**Key Verse:** “Although I hope to come to you soon, I am writing you these instructions so that, if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God’s household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.” 1 Tim. 3:14

**1 Tim. 1:1-3** Greeting

Following Greco-Roman convention for letters, Paul starts by identifying himself as the sender. He describes himself as an “apostle” of “Christ Jesus.” “Apostle” means emissary or messenger, and in Paul’s case it also includes the office of apostle—those men specially designated to serve as the original, authoritative NT witnesses of Jesus’s life, message, and resurrection, including the 11 Disciples, and a very few others (e.g., Paul, Matthias, James, and Judas). Paul is telling Timothy that the content of the letter is coming from Jesus through Paul to Timothy. Being able to cite an apostolic source would likely help Timothy deal with challenges to his authority. “Christ Jesus” is a claim that Jesus was the Messiah, or anointed one, predicted by the Old Testament to reign on David’s throne forever. Paul says that he is an apostle “by the command” of God the Father and Jesus. This is consistent with Paul’s presentation of his conversion experience: once Paul recognized the risen Jesus as Lord, Jesus commanded Paul to spread the gospel message, especially to gentiles. (Acts 9:5-6; 22:10, 21; 26:15-19.) “Savior” may be a term we associate more with Jesus, but Paul applies it to both God the Father and to Jesus in various places. Deliverance is a trinitarian activity. Paul describes Jesus as “our hope.” Jesus is the basis and object of a Christian’s hope to receive mercy and eternal life. (1 Cor. 15:12-28; Col. 1:27.)

Paul next identifies the recipient: Timothy, Paul’s “true son in the faith.” Paul had a long relationship with Timothy. It most likely began on Paul’s second missionary journey, in Derbe, when Timothy was probably a teenager. (Acts 16:1-5.) The references to Timothy in Paul’s epistles indicate Timothy was trusted with great responsibility and challenging tasks, and served with integrity and faithfulness. (Rom. 16:21; 1 Cor. 16:10; Phil. 1:1, 2:19-23; Col. 1:1.) Paul regarded Timothy with great personal affection and admiration.

Also in keeping with Greco-Roman style, Paul offers a short blessing for Timothy, in this case grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Jesus Christ “our” Lord. Any believer possesses those blessings through Christ in an ultimate sense, but it is appropriate to request that God allows us to experience more grace, mercy, and peace in this lifetime. The repeated use of “our” in the introduction emphasizes Paul and Timothy’s shared beliefs and status as followers of Christ.

**1 Tim. 1:3-20 Timothy’s ministry assignment: Continue enforcing sound teaching in the church.**

Paul’s first instruction is for Timothy to continue to work on the problem of men within the church teaching false doctrine. The passage has the following structure:

1:3-5 Oppose false teachers

1:6-7 false teachers described and critiqued

1:8-10 the law’s misuse and proper use

1:10—11 the measure of sound doctrine

1:12-17 a faithful teacher’s testimony

1:18-19 Exhortation to continue as a faithful rather than false teacher

The church has hierarchy/authority/rules

* There is clear hierarchy from Paul to Timothy to people who wanted to teach in the Ephesian church (1:3-4, 18);
* Paul believed he and Timothy had authority to identify and confront false teachers and, if they did not change, to suspend their standing in the Christian community (1:3-4, 19; 1 Cor. 5:1-5, 12-13);
* One of the areas where the NT Church had rules concerned who could teach and what could be taught (1:3-5, 18-19);

The characteristics of false teachers

* Wanted to be teachers of the OT law (1:7)
* Confident; believe their teaching is valuable (1:7)
* Focused on myths, genealogies, and other meaningless talk (1:3-6)
* Misunderstood relationship of law and gospel (1:8-11)
* Some departed from or rejected apostolic rule of faith and were on spiritual suspension from Christian community (1:6, 19-20)

The characteristics of false doctrine

* Focus on nonbiblical topics that generate controversy and meaningless talk rather than encouraging stronger faith (1:3-7)
* Inaccurate relationship between OT law and gospel (1:7-11)
* Rejection of apostolic authority and basic apostolic doctrines (1:19-20)

The characteristics of a genuine church leader

* Acknowledges Jesus Christ as Lord and source of strength (2:12, 17);
* Admits lack of personal merit and dependence on grace through Jesus (2:13-16);
* Displays fruit of the Spirit following conversion (2:12-16);
* Remains faithful to apostolic gospel message concerning Jesus (2:12-17)

The characteristics of genuine Christian teaching

* Emphasizes Jesus is messiah, savior, and Lord (1:1, 12-17);
* Emphasizes role of grace, faith, and mercy in salvation rather than personal merit (1:4-5, 12-17)
* Emphasizes purpose of faith and doctrine is to produce love and other fruit of the Spirit (1:4-5,15-16);
* Consistent with apostolic gospel message (1:8, 18-19);

The charge to Timothy/stakes

* Strive to advance the cause of Christ;
* Maintain his personal faith and testimony;
* Do not wander from or reject the apostolic doctrine and be shipwrecked like Hymenaeus (2 Tim. (2 Tim. 2:16-18) and Alexander (2 Tim. 4:14-15 (possibly));

**Discussion Points**

This passage concerns teaching inside the Christian community; that is the sphere where Paul believed he and Timothy had authority (1 Cor. 5:12-13);

How do we identify false teaching and/or teachers today? 1 Timothy indicates such people usually portray themselves as genuine Christian teachers.

* What should we use as the “measuring stick” for orthodox teaching?
* Which believers should be capable of identifying false teaching?
* What are some things we can do as a church to protect against false teaching?
* Who and/or how should we confront unorthodox teaching and teachers?
* What are some ways we can identify genuine teachers?

**1 Timothy 2:1-8 Instructions on conduct inside the church**

1. Pray for all types of people, including those in authority (2:1-7)

* Believers should pray for all types of people—not just other believers or their own ethnic group (2:1);
* One reason to pray for all types of rulers is the hope for peaceful, nonoppressive conditions that would allow believers to live out their faith openly (2:2)
* One reason praying for all types of people is good and pleasing to God, is that God desires all types of people to experience salvation (2:3-4; Ezek. 18:23, 30-32);
* A related reason to pray to God for all types of people is that there is just one God and Jesus is the only one intermediary between God and humanity, so the triune God is the only hope for all humanity (2:3-4);
* Another related reason to pray for all types of people is that Jesus, the human messiah, gave his life as a ransom for all types of people; this act testifies to God’s concern for all types of people; so it is fitting for God’s people to pray for all types of people (2:6; 1 John 2:2);
* Another example of God’s concern for all types of people is that God appointed Paul to take the gospel message to gentiles (2:7);

1. Men should lift their hands in sincere prayer and not be angry or contentious

* Paul want male believers “in every place”—likely meaning whenever and wherever the Ephesian church meets—to pray in sincere, holy, and unified appeal to God without wrath or contention toward other humans (Matt. 5:22-24, 6:14-15); Standing up with hands raised was a common prayer posture in the OT (e.g., Ex. 9:29; Psalms 28:2, 63:4); other passages show the attitude of one’s heart is more important than style (Luke 18:9-14) and that other postures such as kneeling were also used (Acts 21:5)