

SOUND WORDS IN THE CHURCH

PLEASE do not read these comments until you have read the Scripture for this lesson. First let the Holy Spirit teach you directly from His Word.

Summary and Historical Background

This first letter to Timothy was more than a personal communication from the Apostle Paul to a dear "son in the faith." It was intended by Paul to be an official document for the benefit of the local churches for at least two very good reasons. First, the spread of error by false teachers was always a threat in the early centuries, but apparently the newly organized church at Ephesus was especially vulnerable. Second, the Apostle Paul must have sensed that a written letter from him as an apostle of Jesus Christ would serve as an authoritative document to which they could appeal when settling questions and disputes arising from time to time in the churches. This letter was intended to be a handbook which would expose error and would set forth practical rules regarding the functioning of the "assemblies" so that both the pastors and believers might know how to behave in the house of God (3:15).

Paul used this first chapter to charge Timothy concerning sound doctrine. The apostle was greatly concerned because the church at Ephesus had been infiltrated with teachers who taught another doctrine, a doctrine of myths, empty speaking, and genealogies (that is, allegories and invented tales based on Old Testament genealogy lists). Timothy was to order such teaching stopped (1:3). He was also to correct false teachers who used the law of God improperly. They applied it to Christians as a system for righteousness, whereas in truth, the law was supposed to be applied to the "lawless and disobedient"; it was established as a standard of righteousness for judgment upon the wicked. In fact, Paul even used himself as an illustration of this error: before he was saved he was a zealous law-keeper but was at the same time a blasphemer and persecutor.

In the closing words of this chapter, Paul repeated his whole thesis by exhorting Timothy to keep his faith (sound doctrine) and a good conscience (sound practice). That would be the only way to avoid the spiritual shipwreck of Hymenaeus and Alexander.

I. Salutation — 1:1-2

A. The Author — 1:1a

1:1a — The apostle Paul identifies himself as the author.

B. The Authority — 1:1b

1:1b — "Apostle" - Paul was an apostle. He was sent into the world by God with a message and given the proper credentials to be His messenger.

"Commandment" — Paul was sent out by the commandment of God the Father and Jesus Christ. He was not an apostle by his own choice, but had been chosen by God for this position and commanded to do it. "Commandment" indicates an order which must be obeyed.

"God our Savior" — He was sent by the Father with Whom salvation originated and so He is called our Savior (Jn 5:24; 17:3).

"Our hope" — He also was sent by Jesus Christ our hope. He is our expectation of glory (cf. Col 1:27).

C. The Addressee — 1:2

1:2 — "Timothy" - Paul calls Timothy "my own son in the faith." Paul had led Timothy to the

Lord for salvation.

"Own" — Means "true" or "genuine." Timothy was Paul's true son, manifesting the characteristics of his life.

"Grace" — Speaks of receiving favor that is not deserved.

"Mercy" — Speaks of not receiving judgment that is deserved.

"Peace" — This is a product of God's grace and mercy through salvation in Jesus Christ (cf. Eph 2:8; Titus 3:5).

II. Serious Threat of False Doctrine — 1:3-11

A. Timothy's Obligations — 1:3-7

1:3a — Paul asked Timothy to remain in Ephesus because of those who were teaching false doctrine. This request gave authority to Timothy.

1:3b — Timothy was to "charge" false teachers to stop teaching false doctrine. "Charge" is a military term that implies an order which is passed from one rank to another without losing its authority. The doctrine they taught was another doctrine, a different doctrine (cf. Gal 1:6-7). They wrongly interpreted the Mosaic doctrine and made it another doctrine.

1:4 — "Fables" - Myths. The Jews had added many legends to the Old Testament that were not true.

"Endless genealogies" — The false teachers would add to the genealogies by inventing stories from them. They were not to "give heed to" or "attach themselves to" these false teachings.

"Questions" — The result of these teachings lead to useless and vain questions rather than producing godly lives, which requires faith built upon truth.

1:5 — "Commandment" - This is the same word translated "charge" in 1:3, 18. The result of this charge was love. This love comes from a pure heart - one which is made pure by Christ and does not tolerate false doctrine. It also comes from a good conscience - one which is not defiled by false doctrine. Finally, this love comes from unfeigned faith - faith which is not hypocritical. This faith is built upon truth which is practiced.

1:6 — The false teachers had departed from love.

"Having swerved" — Means "having missed the mark." Once the false teachers followed the true doctrine, but now they were following a false doctrine.

"Vain jangling" — They engaged in useless talking. It was useless and vain because it did not lead to godliness.

1:7 — These teachers wanted to teach the law, but they did not know the true purpose of the law. They did not understand what they were teaching.

B. Timothy's Opponents — 1:8-11

1:8 — The way that false teachers used the law was bad because it put believers in bondage, whereas God's purpose for the law was good because it showed people their sins so they could be delivered from bondage.

1:9 — The false teachers applied the law to righteous people rather than the wicked. This was their error. They said keeping the law was the way for believers to become righteous, but the law has no power to do this. The law can only show people their sins. Then it is God's plan for them to go to Jesus to become righteous. He alone has the power to remove their sins by His death and resurrection. The Ten Commandments without the death and resurrection of Jesus

Christ will not make us righteous, nor will the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ without the Ten Commandments make us righteous. The two must go together.

"The lawless and disobedient" — This identifies those who disregard the law as God's standard for righteousness and then disobey it.

"The ungodly and . . . sinners" — This identifies those who disregard God and sin against Him.

"Unholy and profane" — This identifies those who disregard holiness and treat sacred things lightly.

"Murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers" — This refers to those who disregard and dishonor their own parents (cf. Ex 20:12; 21:15). They cause the death of their parents by mistreating them.

"Manslayers" — These sinners disregard the sanctity of life.

1:10 — "Whoremongers" - Identifies those who disregard morality with the opposite sex. These sinners are heterosexuals.

"Them that defile themselves with mankind" — Identifies those who disregard morality with the same sex. These sinners are homosexuals.

"Men stealers" — These sinners disregard other people's rights. In Paul's day, children were often kidnapped and sold into slavery.

"Liars ... perjured persons" — These sinners disregard the truth. They are guilty of bearing false witness either in their daily walk or on the witness stand. Notice, Paul has used laws 5-9 to illustrate his point.

"Any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine" i.e., a general statement to cover all wicked practices of men.

"Sound" — It is the word for health. We get our word for hygiene from it. Here it is used in a moral sense. "Sound doctrine" is healthy doctrine that will promote spiritual health, which is the opposite effect of false doctrine (cf. 6:4).

1:11 — The purpose of the law was not to show good men how to be righteous, but to show wicked men their sin, so that they might see their lack of righteousness. Righteousness is obtained by seeing their desperate sinful condition and receiving the glorious gospel of God. This is the good news that Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins and was bodily resurrected to share His eternal life with us. This is the gospel which God entrusted to Paul. This is the gospel which the false teachers denied.

This false doctrine was fought and conquered in Ephesus (cf. Rev 2:1-7).

III. Sincere Testimony of the Apostle Paul — 1:12-17

Paul used his testimony as an example of the sinfulness of the human heart until it is changed by the gospel of Jesus Christ.

A. Paul's Call — 1:12

1:12 — Paul was grateful to God for what the gospel had done for him.

"Enabled me" — God clothed him with divine power (cf. Phil 4:13).

"Counted me faithful" — God found him trustworthy. Paul had talents and education, but what was most important was his dependability.

"Putting me into the ministry" -- Christ had not only redeemed him, but had placed him in His work.

B. Paul's Conversion — 1:13-14

1:13 — "Blasphemer" - Paul had spoken against Jesus Christ (cf. Acts 26:9).

"Persecutor" — Paul had persecuted Christians (cf. Acts 9:2).

"Injurious" — Paul was an arrogant bully; one who did outrageous acts against God's people (cf. Acts 8:3). Paul tried to keep the law, but his unbelief blinded his mind so he was ignorant of its true purpose (1 Cor 1:14; 2 Cor 4:4). Therefore, God showed him mercy.

1:14 — God showed abundant grace to Paul when He saved him by Jesus Christ. This grace was overflowing ("exceeding abundant") with faith and love, which was given to him through Jesus Christ.

C. Paul's Commission — 1:15-16

1:15 — Christ's purpose for coming to earth was to save sinners (Lk 19:10). This truth is faithful (trustworthy) and should be accepted without any doubt.

1:15-16 — Christ saved Paul as a pattern for the salvation of others. Paul considered himself to be the chief of sinners, since he persecuted the Church. However, Christ saved him so all others could have perfect confidence that He could save them, too.

D. Paul's Commendation — 1:17

Paul praised God, the Father, for Who He is. He is not describing the Son of God, who also is in the Godhead (Col 2:9).

1:17 — "The King eternal" — God is the Sovereign of all ages.

"Immortal" — God is incorruptible, unchanged and will live forever.

"Invisible" — God, the Father, is spirit and cannot be seen by human eyes in contrast to His eternal Son Who can be seen and showed His disciples Who the Father is (Jn 14:8-11). Also, the visible creation reveals His Godhead and eternal power (Rom 1:20).

"The only wise God" — There are many false gods, but all are totally without wisdom. The true God is wise in all matters. He has all wisdom in saving sinners from the ungodly rule of Satan and giving them to the righteous rule of His Son as His inheritance. It was God's wisdom in saving Paul as the chief of sinners that caused him to erupt in this praise of God.

IV. Solemn Charge to Son Timothy — 1:18-20

Timothy was to stop false teachers from teaching their doctrines as a part of his good warfare.

A. Timothy's Charge — 1:18

1:18 — Timothy's charge was given to him in 1:3-4.

"Commit" — The charge was entrusted to him by Paul.

"According to the prophecies" — Timothy had previously been marked out by God for special service as a good soldier of Jesus Christ (2 Tim 2:3).

"War" — Paul used the word that referred to a military conflict (*strateua*). Concerning his conflict, Timothy was to continue to fight against false teachers as a soldier in a military battle.

"Good warfare" — It was a good battle in the church at Ephesus because it was for God's glory. Fighting for God's cause is called a good fight. Paul used a different word (*agona*) to describe the Christian's fight in 1 Tim 6:12; 2 Tim 4:7. This word suggests the struggle that a Christian endures in an athletic contest to be victorious.

B. Timothy's Conduct — 1:19a

1:19a — "Faith" - He was to continue holding the faith, i.e., sound Christian doctrine.

"Conscience" — He was to continue maintaining a good conscience by moral and spiritual purity. This would be accomplished by obeying the doctrine of God (cf. 1:5; 3:9; 4:1, 2).

C. Timothy's Contenders — 1:19b-20

1:19b — "Some" - Hymenaeus and Alexander are named in v. 20 as those who deliberately sinned and ruined their good consciences. This in turn wrecked their faith. The true doctrine of the gospel was wrecked by their false teaching and as a result, their personal faith was in shambles.

1:20 — Paul names the two men who had departed from the truth.

"Delivered unto Satan" — Implies the ban from Christian fellowship and suggests physical suffering (cf. 1 Cor 5:5, 13).

"That they may learn not to blaspheme" — The purpose in their discipline was to correct them and bring them to repentance.