

# FIRST TIMOTHY CHAPTER ONE

## The Faith Of The Church

Would you recognize heresy if you saw it? Do you think you would be able to recognize false biblical teaching? There are many churches, radio and TV programs as well as books and movies that supposedly teach us about religion. Are you able to figure out which ones are right and which ones are not? Paul had a serious concern about this for the early Christians. Let us begin by reading the first chapter of 1 Timothy.

1 Timothy 1:1-20 (NASB):

<sup>1</sup> **Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus** according to the commandment of **God our Savior, and of Christ Jesus, who is our hope,**

<sup>2</sup> **To Timothy, my true child in the faith:** Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

<sup>3</sup> As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus so that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines,

<sup>4</sup> nor to pay attention to **myths** and endless **genealogies**, which give rise to mere speculation rather than furthering the administration of God which is by **faith**.

<sup>5</sup> But the goal of our instruction is **love** from a pure heart and **a good conscience** and **a sincere faith**.

<sup>6</sup> For some men, straying from these things, have turned aside to fruitless discussion,

<sup>7</sup> wanting to be teachers of the Law, even though they do not understand either what they are saying or the matters about which they make confident assertions.

<sup>8</sup> But we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully,

<sup>9</sup> realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous person, but for those who are **lawless** and **rebellious**, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers

<sup>10</sup> and immoral men and **homosexuals** and **kidnappers** and **liars** and **perjurers**, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching,

<sup>11</sup> according to **the glorious gospel of the blessed God**, with which I have been entrusted.

<sup>12</sup> I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service,

<sup>13</sup> even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief;

<sup>14</sup> and the **grace** of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus.

<sup>15</sup> It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that **Christ**

**Jesus came into the world to save sinners**, among whom I am foremost of all.

<sup>16</sup> Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that **in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life.**

<sup>17</sup> Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

<sup>18</sup> This command I entrust to you, **Timothy, my son**, in accordance with the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you fight the good fight,

<sup>19</sup> keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith.

<sup>20</sup> Among these are **Hymenaeus and Alexander**, whom I have handed over to Satan, so that they will be taught not to blaspheme.

Three of Paul's letters are referred to as **Pastoral Epistles**: 1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus. They are called Pastoral Epistles because they were written to special servants of Jesus who were responsible for the care of God's people in locations such as **Ephesus**. These two young men had been converted through the teaching of the apostle Paul and had themselves then gone out to preach the Word under his supervision. Occasionally Paul would have one of them stay behind in one of these locations in order to insure that these newly formed churches would be grounded in truth.<sup>1</sup> First Timothy has to do with the affairs of the local church, the body of believers in as seen in the community. So, in reality, these pastoral epistles provide guidelines for all churches and pastors.

Both of these young men, Timothy and Titus, had a shepherd's heart and were eager to care for these new believers. Paul wrote to them because as shepherds there were a number of things they had to keep in focus, things which are also beneficial for all of God's people to know. So let us now take a closer look at the opening verses of this epistle.

1 Timothy 1:1-4 NAS:

<sup>1</sup> **Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus** according to the **commandment of God our Savior, and of Christ Jesus**, who is our **hope**,

<sup>2</sup> To **Timothy, my true child in the faith**: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

<sup>3</sup> As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus so that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines,

<sup>4</sup> nor to pay attention to **myths** and endless **genealogies**, which give rise to mere speculation rather than furthering the administration of God which is by **faith**.

The language here in the first two verses of 1 Timothy seems familiar and routine, so we tend to skim over it. But actually the greeting is an essential part of the whole message. In his opening words Paul (1) establishes his (and his letter's) authority, (2) introduces the

<sup>1</sup> Wood, D. R. W.: New Bible Dictionary. InterVarsity Press, 1996, c1982, c1962, S. 873

letter's dominant theme and (3) identifies himself closely with Timothy.

In the first two verses Paul sends his greeting to Timothy. He identifies himself as an apostle, thereby establishing his credentials and giving the reason why he should be paid attention to. An apostle is a "*sent one*." The meaning is almost the same as the word we use for "*missionary*," but the word "*missionary*" does not reflect the authority that went along with being an apostle of Christ. The apostles were appointed by Jesus and given the specific assignment of proclaiming His Gospel throughout the world. There are twelve apostles in the Gospels.<sup>2</sup> Paul was also considered an apostle in addition to the twelve, but his apostleship was of a special nature. Now Jesus must have expected great accomplishments from the twelve apostles because he made them a very special promise in Matthew 19:28 NLT:

*"Yes," Jesus replied, "and I assure you that when the world is made new and the Son of Man sits upon his glorious throne, you who have been my followers will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*

Paul was not included in that promise because he did not know Jesus during His life on earth; but Matthias, who replaced Judas, had been part of the group of disciples who also followed Jesus from the beginning of His ministry.

God had a special ministry for the apostle Paul. **God instructed Paul to take the Gospel to the Gentiles** throughout the world. A Gentile was any person who was not Jewish. So Paul's job was to take the Gospel message of Christ to all those who were not Jewish.

Paul was assigned this mission by God Himself as we see in verse 1. "*According to the commandment,*" he says, "*of **God our Savior**, and of Christ Jesus, who is our hope.*" Many think only of Christ as our Savior but we need to remember that it was God "*who so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life*" (John 3:16). Jesus' sacrifice on the cross for our sins was the expression of the love of God toward mankind. "*In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins*" (1 John 4:10).

So when Paul calls himself *an apostle of Christ Jesus*, he is reminding his reader that he is also one sent by God. He is affirming that he holds this office because of the command of God and Christ.<sup>3</sup> This happened shortly after Paul's conversion on the Damascus road. God had told Ananias, "*... he [Paul] is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel*" (Acts 9:15 NAS). Paul's reference to his identification as an apostle signifies the authority from God by which he preaches, teaches and writes. Although he did not need to convince Timothy of this, the letter was meant to be presented before the entire church (1 Timothy 6:21). Paul wanted his

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<sup>2</sup> Matthias replaced Judas in Acts 1.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Timothy 1:11; 2:7; Rom 1:1; 1 Cor 1:1; 2 Cor 1:1; Gal 1:1.

hearers/readers to know that his teaching was authorized by the authority of God and Jesus Christ, and on the basis of that authority Paul was appointing Timothy as their spiritual leader. Therefore, Timothy was to be regarded as an extension of the apostle Paul himself. In view of the difficult task that faced him, this may have been an encouraging reminder for Timothy as well.

But it is a good reminder for the Church today as well. Questions frequently arise within the church concerning the authority of Scripture. Unfortunately there is certainly no shortage of pastors and church leaders who are prepared to teach false doctrine in order to promote their own selfish agendas, which threaten the validity of the Gospel which Jesus taught. It was God's intention, and thereby certainly Paul's, for pastors and church leaders to guide the church through these stormy seas. Where does authority for such responsibility come from? Like Timothy, we depend on Paul, the apostle, whose writings are validated with the authority of God.

1 Timothy 1:2:

*To **Timothy, my true child in the faith: Grace, mercy and peace** from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Timothy was a man who had a good reputation. We read about that in Acts 16:2-5. As Timothy worked with Paul he became one in whom Paul had the utmost confidence. While others in the churches deceived him and were not trustworthy, Timothy proved to be one he could trust. Paul had led Timothy to the Lord, and they were very close.<sup>4</sup>

Paul addresses himself to Timothy as his **son**, and even uses the more intimate term, "*my true child in the faith.*" In what sense was Timothy his child in the faith? Well, you may remember that when the apostle Paul went to Lystra, as recorded in the Book of Acts (chapter 14), he was first welcomed as a god and then stoned. But as a result of his ministry there, a young man, half-Jew and half-Gentile, was brought to a saving knowledge of Jesus. This young man was Timothy. His mother, Eunice, and his grandmother, Lois, were Jewish and became Christians before him, although his father was a Greek.

Timothy by this time had been a committed student of the Old Testament, so when Paul came to Lystra and preached the Gospel, Timothy was ready to receive Christ. When Paul went to Lystra the second time, some years afterward, Paul had an interview with Timothy and decided to take him along with him on his journeys. There were no theological seminaries at this time in which young men could be instructed in the truth of the Gospel message. So during the course of his ministry and mission trips, Paul took several would-be pastors with him on various occasions including Timothy, Titus, Silas, and others. They were thereby able to gain experience and confidence which eventually allowed them to pursue their own ministry for the Lord.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> J. Vernon McGee, *Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee*, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1983), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "Chapter 1".

<sup>5</sup> H. A. Ironside, *H. A. Ironside Commentary – Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, (San Diego, CA: Horizon Press, 1947), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 7-18.

Paul's love for Timothy is emphatically expressed when he calls him, "*My true child in the faith.*" And he wishes him "**grace, mercy, and peace.**" Paul often greets people offering them "*grace, mercy, and peace.*" In Philippians 4:6-7, Paul writes:

<sup>6</sup> *Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.*  
<sup>7</sup> *And the **peace** of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (NRSV)*

The blessing in verse 2 occurs regularly in Paul's introductions (minus "mercy"). He calls down the benefits of God's covenant, which no one merits but God freely gives. **Grace** refers generally to all God's gifts and his loving disposition toward his people. **Peace** describes the one who is at rest in God. **Mercy** in this instance denotes God's special care of an individual in need. At the outset, Paul thus reminds Timothy that God's **gift** of love and peace will be continually available to His servants even in the most difficult of circumstances. We have that wonderful promise of God according to the authority of Scripture.<sup>6</sup>

People need **mercy**. Most people are well aware of their failures and shortcomings, even if they are unwilling to admit it. They know they have a need for help. "*Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord*" at first may appear to be the same as the introductions to Paul's other epistles. Yes, Paul has used the words "grace" and "peace" before, but we have another word here, and that is "**mercy.**" Mercy is a word that was used in the Old Testament and was equivalent to the word grace. In fact it was the Old Testament sacrifice that made the holy, righteous, and just throne of God into a **mercy seat.**<sup>7</sup>

When you and I come to God, we do not want justice. If God gave us justice, which is exactly what we deserve, we would need to immediately go shopping for a flame retardant suit. What we want and need from God is **mercy.** And God has provided mercy for all His creatures. He has all the mercy that you need. God is rich in mercy, but when He saves you, He saves you by His **grace.** God is merciful to you, and He is merciful to all sinners in the world, even those who insult Him and refuse to have anything to do with Him and turn their back on Him. He sends rain on the just and the unjust. He doesn't play favorites, even with His own people. There are sinners today who get rich and they prosper. They often seem to do better than God's own people. Yet God is merciful to these sinners. But when you come to God seeking salvation and eternal life, you must come by **faith** and then God will save you by His **grace** alone.

Mercy is what God provided for the need of sinful mankind. Grace is what God gives freely to save us because all the demands of His holiness have been satisfied. **Therefore,**

<sup>6</sup> Philip H. Towner, *The IVP New Testament Commentary Series – 1-2 Timothy & Titus*, ed. Grant R. Osborne (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 39-41.

<sup>7</sup> J. Vernon McGee, *Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee*, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1983), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "Chapter 1".

**because God is merciful, you can come to Him, and by His grace He'll save you.**<sup>8</sup>

A **do-gooder** is one who thinks he does not need the mercy of God, that his own good works will save him. H.A. Ironside tells a story about a man he once knew who, although he was on his deathbed, said to him:

*"'Preacher, you don't need to tell me that I need Christ as a Savior and that I need the mercy and the grace of God. I don't need it: I'm willing to stand before Him just like I am.' Then he went on to tell me all that he had done in his life. He had been deeply involved with the Community Chest and with an orphans' home and on and on. Oh, he was a do-gooder, and he was going to stand before God on that! My friend, a do-good salvation will not do you any good when you really need it. The salvation God provides will enable you to do good, the kind of good which is acceptable to Him. The righteousness of man is filthy rags in His sight."*<sup>9</sup>

What is the first thing you do when some kind of problem or difficulty arises? When you get into trouble, what do you do? Do you worry? Do you panic and react in a way that you think will solve the problem? Or do you say to yourself, *"God has told me not to worry about anything and to tell Him about it."* So instead of getting all stressed out, you stop and ask Him for help. Is that what you do? Well, in the first place, in order to be able to do this a person has to be born again. When a person trusts Jesus, when they believe the message of the Gospel they receive this new life; they are born again, and they have a right to look up to God and say, *"Father!"* Do you know God as your Father? He is a loving Father; He is deeply interested in every detail of your life.<sup>10</sup>

Moving on to verse 3 we read: *"As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at **Ephesus** so that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines."* Some men had come along and were teaching false doctrine in the name of Jesus. So Paul says to Timothy, *"Stay in Ephesus and help these new believers. Be sure to let those false teachers know that teaching false doctrine will lead to eternal judgment."*

This epistle deals with the Creed (a set of fundamental beliefs) and the conduct of the local church. Your creed must be right before your conduct can be right. It is almost an impossibility to think wrong and act right. It is sad that human beings often try to act right even though their thinking is very wrong. It is impossible to keep that up for very long.<sup>11</sup>

*"I urge you, as I did when I was on my way to Macedonia, to remain in Ephesus so that you may instruct certain people not to teach any different **doctrine.**"* **"Doctrine"** refers to the teaching of the church. What should be the teaching of the local church? It should be

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Op cit., Ironside.

<sup>10</sup> H. A. Ironside, *H. A. Ironside Commentary – Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, (San Diego, CA: Horizon Press, 1947), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 7-18.

<sup>11</sup> Philip H. Towner, *The IVP New Testament Commentary Series – 1-2 Timothy & Titus*, ed. Grant R. Osborne (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 42-46.

what it was from the very beginning. Following the Day of Pentecost it is recorded that *"they continued in the apostles' **doctrine**."* This was one of the four things which characterized that church: (1) The apostles' doctrine; (2) fellowship; (3) prayers; and (4) the breaking of bread, or the Lord's Supper (Acts 2:42). These are the four "fingerprints" of the Church. A church is not a true church of Christ if its doctrine is not the apostles' doctrine. We must hold to the apostles' doctrine, the basic truths of the faith. The apostles taught the integrity and inerrancy of the Word of God, and they taught the deity of Christ.<sup>12</sup>

Paul had left Timothy in Ephesus while he himself was in Macedonia. Ephesus was a very important city, and Paul had spent more time there than anywhere else and had his greatest ministry there. When Paul had first brought the gospel to Ephesus it had been a city full of idol-worshippers and persons involved in great wickedness. In response to Paul's preaching, many had turned to Christ and had burned their books of magic (Acts 19). So you can see that the Ephesians needed a solid grounding in the doctrines of Christianity. Timothy was to remind the Ephesians to teach no other doctrine than what Paul and he had taught them. If the teaching of the church is not right, it is not a church. It does not matter how many deacons, elders, pastors, song leaders, choirs, or Sunday schools it might have. If the doctrine is not there, it is not a church. The doctrine must be that of the apostles. The doctrine must be solidly grounded in Scripture.

Much false teaching continues in the world today and those who teach it and those who accept it will be judged and sentenced to an eternity in Hell. So then what is the truth that Paul wants made perfectly clear to these new believers? Let us go first to Acts 13:38-39:

Acts 13:38-39 NLT:

<sup>38</sup> *"Brothers, listen! We are here to proclaim that through this man Jesus there is forgiveness for your sins.*

<sup>39</sup> ***Everyone who believes in him is declared right with God— something the law of Moses could never do.***

You see many of the Jews at this time believed that they kept the Law perfectly and that they had a free pass into Heaven. Paul wanted to make certain that these Gentiles understood that the only way to heaven is through Jesus Christ.

Now why could they not be justified by the law of Moses? Because the Law condemned them. The Law was not given to save us, but to reveal that God is holy and that you and I are not holy. The Law shows us that we are sinners and that there is no way that anyone can obey all of it throughout their entire life. The way that God found to save us is by way of the Cross and the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ for our sins. Jesus says in John 14:6 NAS: *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life; **no one** comes to the Father but through Me."* The Law is not the way to God; Christ is the way.

John 3:16 NAS:

*"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever*

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

*believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.*

God provided the sacrifice, and Jesus is the One who came to earth and executed it.<sup>13</sup> Paul also refers to “*God our Savior.*” It is a designation that Paul uses only in the Pastoral Epistles, and with this designation Paul introduces his main theme, salvation. He also includes here the additional reference to *Christ Jesus our hope.* At the center of the false teaching Timothy encountered there was a distorted view of salvation. In fact the heretics maintained that the End had already come and the resurrection had occurred (2 Timothy 2:18) and the return of Christ was all but forgotten. Paul, therefore, wants to make it very clear to this church at Ephesus that they are living in the age of salvation, but the completion of that salvation awaits the Second Coming of Christ, *our hope.*

Christianity has a message of hope, especially for those who are hopeless and pessimistic. **Jesus Christ is our hope.** Now there are only two places in all of Scripture that we find Jesus referred to as our “*hope.*” One is here in verse 1. The other occurrence is in Colossians 1:27: “*to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the **hope** of glory*” (NAS).

Jesus Christ died to save you. He lives to keep you saved. He is going to come someday to take you to be with Himself and to complete your salvation. We are looking forward to His return and establishing His kingdom where we will find joy and peace. We are looking for Him to transform our sinful bodies and make them just like His.

The Christians in Ephesus needed help and special ministry, so Paul asked Timothy to remain in Ephesus and care for the believers there while he went on to Macedonia. He gave a special commission to Timothy.

Moving now to verse 4, we read: “*nor to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies, which give rise to mere speculation rather than furthering the administration of God which is by faith.*” Ephesus was the heartland of the mystery religions of that day. In that great center there was the temple to Hadrian, the temple to Trajan, and the great temple of Diana. All of that centered in Ephesus. These were all based on the mythology of the Greeks, and the Ephesian believers were to shun them.<sup>14</sup>

Paul's reference to “*fables*” or myths could possibly mean the philosophy of Philo. Philo was an outstanding and brilliant Israelite who took the Old Testament and spiritualized it. In other words, he attempted to introduce the myth viewpoint. They teach, for example, that the Book of Genesis is a myth, that the stories there are myths and the men didn't actually live. We have people like that today, who teach that the story of creation as recorded in Genesis is a myth and that evolution is the so-called “real” explanation of how the world came to be.

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<sup>13</sup> J. Vernon McGee, *Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee*, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1983), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "Chapter 1".

<sup>14</sup> Op cit., Towner.

*"Endless genealogies"* could refer to the false teaching that the church is just a continuation of Judaism, that it is just one genealogy following another. Such teaching leads to great confusion as to the positions of Israel and the church in God's program. Today, there are cults who put great emphasis on tracing your genealogy. There is nothing wrong with knowing who your ancestors are, unless you start thinking that knowledge is important for salvation.

As Paul opens his letter he tells Timothy that all these types of false teaching won't build you up in the faith. I think we can observe today in the liberal churches the fruit of their many years of unbelief. It has produced a hard core of almost heartless individuals who absolutely lack true faith. They have rejected the Word of God, and the results we see in their churches are unbelievable.<sup>15</sup>

When it comes to heresy or even misguided enthusiasm in the church, it is fairly obvious that history repeats itself. The denial of the deity and resurrection of Christ currently fashionable in parts of Christendom also presents parallels. Spiritual elitism, confusion about the times and subtle systems of interpretation—things that characterized certain Gnostic-Christian communities and troubled earlier New Testament churches—can also be found in certain quarters of the modern church. Justification by works (legalism) is yet another modern delusion, even in some "evangelical" churches. A close look at our situation will uncover many points of contact with the situation Timothy was to face in Ephesus.

As Paul saw it, heresy (belief in a false doctrine) posed a double threat. It endangered the church and individuals who would be drawn into error, perhaps beyond the reach of salvation. It threatened the church's evangelistic mission to the world, by contaminating the Gospel. Thus Paul's charge to Timothy is equally a charge to us.

And with this word (and what follows) Paul sets the beliefs and activities of the false teachers totally outside the bounds of true faith in Christ and service to God. For this reason Timothy must oppose the new interpretation.<sup>16</sup>

You and I have to be on guard today against false doctrine because it often works its way into the church so quietly and subtly. For instance, efforts to be "relevant" or to "communicate non-offensively" often water down the truth of the gospel. Emphasis on political correctness keeps some pastors from calling sin by its rightful name. Paul's cautions to Timothy are just as important today, not just for pastors and teachers, but for all who call themselves Christians and who want to tell their family and friends the Good News about Jesus Christ. Let us close with a quote from A. W. Tozer:

We have gotten accustomed to the blurred puffs of gray fog that pass for doctrine in churches and expect nothing better. ....Little by little Christians these days are being brainwashed. One evidence is that increasing numbers of them are becoming ashamed to be found

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

unequivocally on the side of truth. They say they believe, but their beliefs have been so diluted as to be impossible of clear definition. Moral power has always accompanied definite beliefs. Great saints have always been dogmatic. We need a return to a gentle dogmatism that smiles while it stands stubborn and firm on the Word of God that lives and abides forever.<sup>17</sup> -

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<sup>17</sup> <http://www.sermonillustrations.com/a-z/d/doctrine.htm>