

Paul's Epistles to Individuals

Lesson 2 – 1 Timothy 1:1-7

I. Greeting (vs. 1-2)

Paul greets Timothy in a way that indicates that the letter would ultimately be read by more than Timothy alone. By identifying himself as *“an apostle of Christ Jesus according to the commandment of God our Savior, and of Christ Jesus, who is our hope”* (v.1), Paul establishes the authority with which he writes. As an apostle of Christ, he writes under inspiration of the Holy Spirit and therefore with Divine authority. Although this letter has a personal component, it is not a private correspondence between two friends. If it was written strictly for Timothy, Paul would have had no need to introduce himself such a way. It is instead a business letter designed to instruct Timothy, a man of God (6:11) in the administration of the Lord's business and specifically how Christians are to conduct themselves (3:14). Therefore, it also has a broader audience and was intended by God to be consumed by others in perpetuity. As such, it is useful as inspired scripture for the benefit of all Christians (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Paul calls Timothy his *“true child in the faith”* (v.2), indicating their spiritual relationship. Paul begat Timothy in a spiritual sense as his teacher in the faith. Familial terms are used consistently to describe spiritual relationships in the Bible. “Brother” and “sister” are both used to describe equals, siblings in the faith. Abraham was called the *“father of all who believe”* (Rom. 4:11).

II. The Problem of False Teachers (vs. 3-4)

This letter illustrates the concerns related to the false teachings prevalent at the time from those who were attempting to bind principles of the Old Law on Christians and were being factious and divisive in the churches.

A. Strong Refutation is Necessary (vs. 3)

These divisive teachings had the potential effect of causing unlawful practices within local churches. When Paul left Macedonia he had Timothy stay in Ephesus to refute these teachings. The NASB here renders, *“in order that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines”* (v.3). This is less forceful language than the original Greek wherein the two words of interest are, “paraggello”, meaning to enjoin or command and “heterodidaskaleo”, meaning “anything else” or “any other doctrine”. So, Young's Literal Translation renders this section (v. 3) as, *“that thou mightest charge certain not to teach any other thing”*. Timothy was to be forceful in his correction of anything different because of the detrimental effects of allowing the false teaching to continue. Remember the results of the “different gospel” about which Paul warns the Galatians (Gal. 1:6-9).

B. The “Myths” and “Genealogies” (v.4)

The mention of these seem to be a direct reference to the Judaizing teachers. The Jewish Rabbis commonly wrote paraphrases, explanations and expansions of the old law to accompany the scriptures and these were called “Targumim” or singular, “Targum”. These were full of fables and stories that the people took as authoritative. Jesus condemned the Jews for hindering the people by complicating the Law and *“taking away the key of knowledge”* (Luke 11:52). By these additions to the Law, the Jewish leaders had created for others burdens they were unwilling to bear themselves (Luke 11:46). The Holy Spirit through Paul here invalidates these myths. The use of genealogies by the Jewish people began for the useful purposes as approved by God of

keeping the tribes identified (especially the Levites) and to trace the unbroken and distinct line of the Messiah. However, here the genealogies were no longer relevant because of Christ but still being taught and used as a divider between people and motivation to pervert the gospel (**Gal. 3:23-29**). The consideration of these things gives “*rise to mere speculation*” rather than “*furthering the administration of God*”.

III. A Godly Goal vs. a Selfish Motivation (vs. 5-7)

By inspiration, Paul compares the stated goal of righteous instruction with the selfish motivation of the Judaizing teachers.

A. *The Stated Goal (v. 5)*

The teaching of God’s Word in its purity, when contacted by an honest person, will produce love from a:

1. Pure heart,
2. Good conscience, and
3. Faith unfeigned. (Young’s Literal Translation).

A person cannot serve God without these things. The pure heart is a sincere heart that does the Will of God (**Eph. 6:5-6**) and not the hard heart that darkens understanding (**Eph 4:18**). This is a circumcised heart, not a Jew outwardly but one of the heart (**Rom. 2:29**). A good conscience causes a person to act honorably (**Heb. 13:18**) whereas hypocrisy and deceit destroys the conscience (**1 Tim. 4:2**). Paul tried to keep a blameless conscience before God and men (**Acts 24:16**). Jesus noted the contrast of a strong faith versus a weak faith in the story of the Centurion, about whom Jesus said, “*I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel*” (**Matt. 8:10**) and His fearful disciples in the storm at sea, to whom He said, “*why are you timid, you men of little faith*” (**Matt. 8:26**). In the Centurion, his faith caused assurance. In the fearful disciples, timidity. The goal of the faithful teaching of the gospel is to instill these things.

B. *Selfish Motivation (v. 6)*

Those who have turned from the stated goal have instead involved themselves in “*fruitless discussions*” (**v. 6**). Their motivation is specifically stated as “*wanting to be teachers of the Law*” (**v. 7**). These individuals wanted to be teachers for their own ego’s sake. Like those condemned by Jesus, they sought to be “*seen of men*” (**Matt. 6:5, 23:5**). Like Korah, they sought to be in a position of standing with the people (Num. 16:10), even though their heart is not right.

C. *Pride and Ignorance (v. 7)*

The combination of selfish pride and a lack of understanding has terrible results. Jesus included “*pride*” as one of the evil things that defiles a man (**Mk. 7:19-23**). Pride results in destruction (“*Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before stumbling*” – **Prov. 16:18**) and one should always be watchful for it in our own lives (**1 Cor. 10:12**). Combine this self-destructive pride with a lack of understanding and the problem progresses from damaging one’s own soul to affecting others’ as well. The ego creates a paradox wherein we may be confident and incompetent simultaneously. A lack of understanding or immaturity can result in an inability to differentiate good from evil (**Heb. 5:11-14**) and yet pride stimulates greed and a desire to teach so as to have followers (Korah, **2 Pet. 2:1-3**). This is the beginning of an apostasy as identified in Galatians. The false teachers were and are dangerous and must be refuted.