

1 Timothy Chapter 1 (vv.1-11)

The *opening* chapter of First Timothy is primarily concerned with Paul's charge to his 'own son in the faith' (v.2).

- vv.1-11: Timothy had been **entrusted** with a ministry to deal with false teachers abroad in Ephesus. He must command their teaching to stop (v.3) and administer the antidote of 'sound doctrine' (v.10). These individuals desired to be 'teachers of the law' (v.7) but did not understand the *nature* and *purpose* of the law in this dispensation of the 'glorious gospel of the blessed God' (v.11).
- vv.12-17: Christ had **enabled** Paul to fulfil a similar ministry in a wider sphere, thus Timothy could be confident of the power of the gospel to change lives.
- vv.18-20: Timothy should be **encouraged** by former prophecies which spoke of his **equipping** for the 'good fight'.

The Salutation of the Epistle [vv.1-2]

v.1: Paul introduces himself with his *Greek-Roman* name rather than his *Hebrew* name, Saul. The Latin word *paulus* means 'little' or 'small', fitting for one who saw himself as the 'least of all saints' (Ephesians 3.8). The self-righteous pride of his days as a Pharisee was gone. He may also have been small in stature (2 Corinthians 10.1, 10). Paul was an 'apostle (sent one) of Christ Jesus' (RV), an 'ambassador' by the *authority* of Christ to represent the *interests* of Christ. The reference to apostolic authority suggests that Paul intended the letter to be more than a personal communication with Timothy – he expected the church at Ephesus to 'overhear' (Fee). His apostleship was also by divine command (not human origin), or 'direct royal decree' proceeding jointly from the Saviour God and Christ Jesus who *is* our hope. 'God our Saviour' designates the concept of salvation as *planned* and *provided* by God though *executed* and *embodied* in Christ. Such a concept had a strong *OT* background (Deuteronomy 32.15; Psalm 24.5) as well as a *Gentile* relevance given that Nero had claimed the title 'saviour' for himself. Christ is the *embodiment* (substance) of our hope – its author, foundation and object. **v.2:** Paul writes to 'Timothy' whose name is comprised of two Greek words meaning 'honour' (*timao*) and 'God' (*theos*). This young man both honoured and valued his God. Paul describes him as 'my *own* son (child) in the faith' employing a word which means *legitimate* or *genuine* (*gnesios*) as opposed to *counterfeit*. He was the *spiritual* child of his father Paul because he manifested the same spiritual character. The absence of the definite article before the word 'faith' either means Timothy became Paul's spiritual child *through* faith (instrumental) or it defines the sphere (character) of their relationship. Paul concludes his salutation by desiring three blessings for Timothy, all of which flow from the source of 'God our Father'. 'Grace', the common *Greek* greeting, is the ongoing daily grace for life, i.e. God's provision for our every need when we need it. 'Mercy' is the active compassion and help of God for those in need, and 'peace', the common Jewish greeting, signifies comfort, tranquillity and well-being. The believer requires a continued experience of *all* these. Note. It is only when he writes to *individuals* that Paul adds 'mercy' to his common greeting (2 Timothy 1.2; Titus 1.4). Individuals are often acutely conscious of their own shortcomings and failure.

A Summary of the Charge [vv.3-5]

v.3: Paul reminds Timothy of his fervent 'pleading' with him to stay in Ephesus – which may suggest a reluctance on the part of Timothy to remain, especially as Paul was travelling to Macedonia (see 'Introduction to First Timothy' notes). Paul might have *commanded* by apostolic authority, but rather chooses to *appeal* in love (Philemon 8-10). Timothy's responsibility was to 'charge' *some* to 'teach no other doctrine'. The word 'charge' is a military word which could be translated 'command' or 'give strict orders to' as a superior to a subordinate. The fact these men were propagating teaching 'of a different kind' (*heteros*) clearly implies there was already a recognised body of apostolic doctrine to which this was contrary (cf. v.10). The NT is the norm (standard) by which all teaching must be measured. **v.4:** The character of the *heterodoxy* (false doctrine posing as true) was likely *Jewish* (cf. Titus 1.14) and involved 'fables' and 'endless genealogies' which these individuals must be commanded not to 'heed' (turn to *or* cleave). 'Fables' translates the Greek word *muthos* (myths), i.e. imaginative, fanciful legends based upon 'endless (limitless) genealogies'. This seems to have been an obsessive tracing of family lineage and descent far beyond that recorded in Scripture. For example, *Alexander the Great* claimed descent from *Achilles* on one side and *Hercules* on the other. Things of such character merely gives rise to 'useless speculations', arguments and disputes rather than 'the furthering of God's dispensation, which is in faith' (JND). The word 'dispensation' (*oikonomia*) literally means 'house law', speaking metaphorically of a *stewardship* entrusted by God **or**, more likely, the *purpose* (work) of God in the present age (i.e. the gospel). Such disputations over *genealogies* of the law do not *help*, but rather *hinder* both. Neither do they encourage the *preserving* and *presentation* of truth which is the stewardship of the house of God (3.15). In addition, the propounding of law (and possibly a works-based righteousness) was antagonistic and contrary to the principle of 'faith'. **v.5:** The word 'but' ('now' AV) serves to introduce a *contrast* between Timothy's message and the teaching of these men. The purpose of the gospel, and therefore Timothy's ministry, i.e. the 'commandment' (*noun* form of 'charge', v.3) was the promotion of **love** not 'disputes' (v.4). This love *flows* (or *grows*) from and is *displayed* in:

- ‘a pure heart’, i.e. free from admixture of evil. A person who is *pure* in affection and action towards others.
- ‘a good conscience’, literally a ‘knowing with oneself’. A conscience which commends one’s own actions as being in obedience and conformity to the word of God (cf. 2 Samuel 24.10; Acts 24.16).
- ‘faith unfeigned’, i.e. genuine or sincere faith, the opposite of a stage actor wearing a mask and pretending to be someone else (hypocrite). A person whose life is without pretense.

The Swerving of the False Teachers [vv.6-7]

v.6: The false teachers had ‘swerved’ from the target of sound doctrine and thus *missed* the target of ‘love’ and its *threefold* association (v.5). Indeed, they had ‘turned aside’ (to *twist* as dislocated limbs) onto another path altogether. Their doctrinal change of position resulted in ‘vain jangling’ or ‘useless talk’. Their teaching ministered *fruitless* discussion rather than the *spiritual fruit* of love. **v.7:** It is likely these teachers had a Jewish background given their motivating desire to be ‘teachers of the (Mosaic) law’. This word is used of authoritative ‘doctors of the law’ (Luke 5.17) and Gamaliel (Acts 5.34). Perhaps their aim was to enjoy the prestige of ‘professional’ interpreters of the law for material gain (6.5). Despite their desire, they did not understand what they were teaching, and even announced their error with confidence and assurance! As a clergyman once wrote in his sermon notes, ‘Argument weak here... shout!’

The Suitable (Proper) Use of the Law [vv.8-11]

v.8: The next two paragraphs (vv.8-11, 12-17) are somewhat of a digression (parenthesis). The affirmation of Paul’s charge to Timothy (vv.3-7) is resumed in vv.18-20. In his *doctrinal* detour, Paul presents the true character of the law (v.8), indicates its purpose (vv.9-10) and presents its proper relationship to the gospel (v.11). These false teachers misunderstood the very function and relevance of the law. Well instructed believers ‘know’ (*oida*) that the ‘law is good’ (*kalos*, intrinsically good) for it was given by God and reflects His righteous character (cf. Psalm 19.7; Romans 7.12-13). Paul was clearly not opposed to the use of the law, but required that it be used ‘lawfully’, i.e. in accordance with its original intention as a law for the lawless to deepen the consciousness of *sin* (Romans 3.19; 7.7; Galatians 3.19) and need of *salvation* (Romans 7.24-25). It should not be used *illegitimately* as a source of myths and endless genealogies!

v.9: Indeed, law is ‘made’ (enacted) for the lawless, not the righteous, i.e. a believer justified by faith rather than any morally upright person. A believer is liberated from the law – his *rule* of life is **love**, not law. Paul now describes those to whom the law applies in *two* groups. Taking the ten commandments as his basis, he first uses *three* couplets to describe the character of those arrayed against **God** (the first table). He then works through the second table of the law describing specific sins against **mankind**. The ‘lawless’ *ignore* or fail to *recognise* the law of God and thus become ‘disobedient’ (unruly), i.e. *refuse* to be subject to it. These individuals act as they please in flagrant disregard of the will of God. The ‘ungodly’ lack reverence for God and disregard His will. They are therefore ‘sinners’, missing the mark the law requires. The ‘unholy’ are *indifferent* to divine things and *impure* in character. Such individuals are ‘profane’, trampling over (desecrating) that which is sacred. Those who ‘murder’ fathers or mothers are in violation of the **fifth** commandment. The thought could also include those who ‘strike’ their parents in a loss of natural affection. ‘Manslayers’ or murderers are in direct violation of the **sixth** commandment. **v.10:** Ancient Ephesus was rife with sexual immorality and temple prostitutes. ‘Whoremongers’ (*pornos*) describes sexual immorality of any kind, including prostitution. A particular vice was those who ‘defiled themselves’ with ‘mankind’, i.e. male homosexuality. These actions contravene the **seventh** commandment. Those who *acquire* or *kidnap* people, often children, and sell them into slavery are described as ‘menstealers’. This violates the **eighth** commandment. Finally, ‘liars’ and ‘perjurers’ are guilty of lying on oath and breaking the **ninth** commandment. In fact, any action which is ‘contrary’ (in *opposition*) to ‘sound doctrine’, i.e. the teaching of the NT is equally a violation of the will of God as a breach of the OT law of commandments. The moral requirements of the law are now embraced in the fuller revelation of Christ enshrined in apostolic teaching (Allen). ‘Sound’ translates *hygiaino* (hygienic). The teaching of the apostles is spiritually *health-giving* and *wholesome* resulting in godliness, in contrast to the ‘gangrene’ of the false teachers (2 Timothy 2.17).

v.11: In conclusion, this proper use of the law (i.e. to show the lawless the degree to which their actions fall short of God’s moral standards) is in full accordance with the **gospel**. Like the law, the gospel also condemns and exposes sin. However, ‘the law exposes sin and leaves the sinner under judgment; the gospel exposes sin but clears the sinner from guilt’ (Riddle). The gospel is described as ‘the gospel of the glory of the blessed God’ (RV). The emphasis is *content* (not character), i.e. the gospel manifests the glory (excellence) of God. His nature and attributes of grace, mercy, love and righteousness are revealed therein. The glory of God has been fully revealed in the person of the Lord Jesus (Acts 7.55). The ‘blessed’ God signifies what He is in Himself. Blessedness is *enshrined* in God and He imparts this to men (Allen), cf. Ephesians 1.3. This is the gospel of the God who delights to bless. It is with such a gospel that Paul, ‘I, even I’ was entrusted as a precious stewardship (1 Corinthians 9.17).