

1 Timothy 1

1st and 2nd Timothy are written to Timothy, who is a young church leader. Paul is commissioning Timothy to take care of some needed church business. Paul is an imprisoned overseer of many church start-ups. The ongoing chaos and errant teachings in some churches created an opportunity for young Timothy to do some housekeeping. 1 Timothy is all about setting things in order in the church; against the backdrop of societal anarchy. This book seems to resonate with our current world events surrounding the church in the following ways:

- God is a god of organization; without self-contradiction. We have shifted from being a clearly-defined and coordinated society.
 - The roles of men, women, children, deacons, and others has migrated. We now are making provisions for imaginary things; such as women who say they are men. We have mixed and trans-gender bathrooms in our schools.
 - We are seeing anarchy and misrepresentation over policing and the rule of law. Tearing down our system of justice for personal whims and preferences is an indication that we are becoming increasingly ignorant of reality and consequences.
 - The rights of select groups is getting preferential treatment over inaccurate statistics and intellectual dishonesty.
 - Our public virtues (such as environmental causes) and political correctness have trumped the fundamentals of economics.
 - Today; we are a people who blog every thought that enters our mind to the whole world; without weighing the impact on others. There is no consideration for the feelings of others.
 - There is no commitment to unity over self...much less meaningful sacrifice.
 - Society is experiencing anarchy; and the church needs to get back to providing a public example of unity, agape love, deference, and to more brightly reflect Christ in a post-Christian world.

Read 1 Timothy 1:1-7: Paul starts out with the fact that he is an apostle. You cannot have self-appointed experts coming out of left field with strange teachings. That was a big problem for Paul's start up churches. All of a sudden, you had

people rolling into town teaching weird doctrines and looking for a free meal. You should never sit for teachings that stray from scripture. It is not a time for personal opinions, conjecture, or any other questionable add-ons. This is important in a society that has self-appointed and misled individuals looking for followers.

Apostleship is defined as a person who Jesus has sent out on church business. They are going to be scrutinized and used for generalizations; and resulting opinions will be formed about the church.

Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. (James 3:1)

Paul refers to Timothy as his spiritual son. There is no blood relation; but Paul raised up Timothy from only having an elementary understanding of his faith. We begin our walk in faith as *babies* in Christ. A babe only receives spiritual nourishment from others. We need to take responsibility to read our Bible and pray to grow. A spiritual *youth* is one who has a lot of entanglements and is bullied by the demonic forces and an unwelcoming world. They can be like teenagers who are influenced by their feelings. They are becoming re-defined against much peer pressure. They are still a bit ego-centric in their world view. A *parent* of the faith is getting to know God from experience, and is quietly reproducing children of faith.

Discipleship is a high priority. We need to leverage our faith in the lives of others who can do the same. Old believers and existing churches stagnate and die unless there is new life branching out.

And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others. (2 Timothy 2:2)

Paul begins by telling Timothy to pack his bags and fix a doctrinal problem taking place in Ephesus. There were some teaching experiential and made-up doctrines. Today people will argue over how God sees things; without taking the time to study God's word prayerfully. **Sometimes idolatry is nothing more than making God into our image.**

Some were rehearsing all of the connections between those in authority and those who wanted to *assume their mantle*. The Kingdom of Heaven is not subject to

name-dropping and wielding influence to have more church-body authority. We need to steer away from church politics and questionable teachings. We also should not spend too much time arguing over non-essentials. People will pick up on our speculations, and communicate them to others as factual.

Read 1 Timothy 1:8-11: The books of Moses, known as *The Law of Moses* are written for people who do not truly love their neighbor or God. That makes them a potential public menace. The natural man does not want to be tethered to any set of rules. You can sense an immediate resentment to any rules, among those who have no intention of following God.

The natural man is more concerned about his own well-being than his neighbor. This leaves most people as powerless victims themselves; and allows some to become victimizers of others. Without consequences, those who are self-centered would trample upon their neighbors property and health and well-being.

We are called to be non-offenders of our neighbors. We represent more than ourselves. We represent a kingdom.

He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap. (1 Timothy 3:7)

Believers are to look out for their neighbor's interests as if it were their own.

So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets. (Matthew 7:12)

We are to go beyond the confines of outwardly-good behavior. We are to have a change of heart and intention. The Law allows you to begrudgingly help your neighbor. Faith in Christ goes beyond that. Living in the power of the Holy Spirit creates an unnatural love for our enemies. It brings about a willingness to make personal sacrifices.

"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor^[1] and hate your enemy.' ⁴⁴But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. ⁴⁶If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? ⁴⁷And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing

more than others? Do not even pagans do that? ⁴⁸ Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect. (Matthew 5:43-48)

The point here is that under religion and moral rule we can veer away from those who we might be otherwise obligated to help. We can turn a blind eye to the needy. God expects more than that. It is not enough for us to steer clear of sins of commission. We are also to not commit sins of omission and convenient blindness and deafness to needy causes.

*Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to act.
²⁸ Do not say to your neighbor, "Come back tomorrow and I'll give it to you"—
(Proverbs 3:27-28)*

Read 1 Timothy 1: 12-17: Paul holds himself out as an example of how the gospel of Jesus Christ has the power to transform lives. Paul considered himself to be among the worst offenders to the faith. Paul misrepresented God's intentions. He obtained the authority to hunt down and imprison any believer that he could find. He attacked the early church members with violence. He was a Pharisee. The Pharisees were like religious police. The Jews had lost their language and familiarity with the scriptures during their Greek control. They had to be taught their language and about God all over . The concept of being a Pharisee is good. Unfortunately, many of these religious leaders became more about making hard rules; then gently correcting sinners and encouraging a relationship with God. Paul was formerly-known as Saul of Tarsus. Paul had a hardness of heart towards any outward non-compliance to the Law of Moses.

Paul heard about a new *Way* movement. This was the beginning of Christianity. He considered it a cult; since they were not too focused on the Law. He tried hard to shut it down. Paul was there when Stephen was martyred. He heard Stephen's last words of how God desires love and mercy more than sacrifice and rituals. Paul heard first-hand from a martyr that his whole way of thinking about God was entirely wrong. It always has been. God was not just about keeping the rules. It was about helping people who have made mistakes to get back on their feet. It is more important to communicate and have dialogue and prayer with God. Paul could not see that God wanted a personal relationship. He was out to earn merit badges. We wonder why Stephen was allowed to be martyred. The Sanhedrin (Pharisee Superior Court) laid their jackets at Paul's feet as they picked up stones to stone Stephen to death. Paul heard the entire testimony of how the children of Israel had been unfaithful to God; especially the religious leaders. This must have infuriated Paul; but may have set some doubts in his mind about his path.

⁵¹ "You stiff-necked people! Your hearts and ears are still uncircumcised. You are just like your ancestors: You always resist the Holy Spirit! ⁵² Was there ever a prophet your ancestors did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered him— ⁵³ you who have received the law that was given through angels but have not obeyed it." ⁵⁴ When the members of the Sanhedrin heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. ⁵⁵ But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. ⁵⁶ "Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." ⁵⁷ At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, ⁵⁸ dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Meanwhile, **the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul.** ⁵⁹ While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." ⁶⁰ Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he fell asleep. (Acts 7:51-60)

Paul had to be humbled in order to see the kingdom of God. Most of us are pretty self-confident, until our world gets turned upside down. We tend to wait until we are desperate, before we consider asking God for help...or to reassess our path. It is interesting how even religion can be demonically energized.

Saul was still breathing out **murderous threats** against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest ² and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the **Way**, whether men or women, he might **take them as prisoners** to Jerusalem. ³ As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. ⁴ He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" ⁵ "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. ⁶ "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do." ⁷ The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. ⁸ Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. ⁹ For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything. (Acts 9:1-9)

Prior to getting knocked off of his horse and on to the ground and blinded, Paul thought he was the top religious example and enforcer.

I myself have reasons for such confidence. If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: ⁵ circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to

*the law, a Pharisee; **as for zeal, persecuting the church**; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless. (Philippians 3:4-6)*

Why did God choose a man like Saul of Tarsus (Paul) to become a forward example of God's kingdom? He had been doing the Devil's work; and was among the most feared persecutors of the church. Paul was sincere, but he was sincerely-wrong. The Bible tells us that every man is right in his own eyes.

Every way of a man is right in his own eyes: but the LORD ponders the hearts. (Proverbs 21:2)

How do you get through all of that self-confidence and lack of interest knowing God? The Holy Spirit works on our hearts, and we are put into hard circumstances that shake our confidences.

I believe that Paul also illustrates how God uses Satan like a puppet. Paul was chasing Christians hard. That is what caused the faith to spread from Jerusalem; to go around the world. Persecution might be the best thing for our faith. God also used Paul's Roman citizenship, Hebrew language, knowledge of scripture and the rules to make Paul a unique vessel for the kingdom.,

Read 1 Timothy 1:18-20: Being a follower of Christ is a privilege and an honor. It is not an opportunity for recognition. Paul speaks of things that can shipwreck our faith. That would imply that the journey goes no further. Trying to use faith as a venue to impress people is one way to become shipwrecked. Blasphemy is a misrepresentation of God. We can make doctrinal mistakes; but we should stick with what is laid out in scripture. Some teachers will build bridges between what is known and what is not known. Those speculations and conjecture can become retold as fact when they are repeated. We should not major in the minors. Some believers spend their time hunting down the most questionable biblical theories from unreliable sources. Sometimes you find people who are not adequately entertained by the Bible study; so they hunt down crazy codes, questionable artifacts, conspiracies, etc... Being a disciple means being disciplined to become rock solid in the fundamentals of the faith, in good practice.

What does it mean to *fight the good fight*? Fighting the bad fight would be to let hurt feelings and the desire to harm our enemy's effect our actions. It is probably not necessarily to resist evil from others. It could be to control our own sin nature, as we represent Christ in a frustrating world.

Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear

and trembling, ¹³for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose. (Philippians 2:12-13)

"In your anger do not sin"^[1]: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, ²⁷and do not give the devil a foothold. (Ephesians 4:26)