

Introduction to 1st Timothy

Foundation

I remember, I was not that old, I cannot remember exactly how old I was, but I guess I was too old to spank for the impact my father wanted. I do not remember what I had done but I remember like it was yesterday what my father did and said to me those many years ago. He sat me down, looked me in the eye and told how disappointed he was in me. He told me the only thing of true value he had to pass on to me was his name and what I had done that day had devalued his name. He said the name his father had given him and he had given me, was a name of value and honor. The name "Butler" was known for hard work and honesty. He told me how I lived my life would determine the value of his name and for my name that came from him and it would set the value of our name given to my children. His talk made a deep impact on me and changed the way I saw my name and my behavior, and how the two are related. What name do you bear?

The Apostle John wrote of Christ as, "The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. ¹¹ He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. ¹² But to all who did receive him, **believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God,** ¹³ who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God." (John 1:9-13) As a believer you bear the name of God by the grace of Christ and your name is Christian. What value do you give His name, which He has given to you as your name, and what value of God's

name will you pass on to your children. The name of God is not worth much in many corners of the globe. What value is His name in your life and your home and in your church?

This is exactly what Paul is concerned with, the value of the name of God. How will he demonstrate by his life how he values God's name and how will his son Timothy live the authority of God and represent God's name to the churches in Ephesus? To find the answer we look to Paul's letter to Timothy.

Background

This first letter to Timothy appears to be written after Paul's release from his first imprisonment. This would mean it was written after he penned his letters from prison to the: Philippians, Colossians, Ephesians and his two letters to the Thessalonians. Paul had appeared before Caesar, but the charges levied against him proved to be insufficient for his execution and he was released. After his release it appears he traveled as far west as Spain and then returned to the Asia Minor preaching the Word of God, establishing churches and commissioning elders or overseers to lead these churches under his authority. After a few years Paul is rearrested and taken to Rome and from prison he wrote his second letter to Timothy, as he knew his death approached.

Please turn in your Bibles to 1st Timothy. Paul begins his first letter as we read, "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope,"² To Timothy, my true child in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord." This seems to be a simple and straightforward opening to a letter, and it is. However, with the Bible in general and Paul more

specifically there is always controversy. The controversy is based on sinful men not wanting to come under the authority of God. A tremendous effort was launched in mid-twentieth century to discredit both Paul and his writings in a hope of avoiding his authority and that his teachings were from God and therefore normative for living one's life as a Christian. To a certain extent this attack has succeeded, all one has to do is look at the spiritual state of some denominations.

As with all attacks on the Bible, even though there are many, they build "straw dog" arguments by taking scripture out of context and using non-normative approaches to history, linguistics and theological concepts to build their case. **The Bible's historical, linguistic and theological structure confirms its content as the only unchanging truth over the millennia.** I believe in the Bible as the inspired words of God and His truth. Therefore, I believe Paul is God's apostle and his letter to Timothy authoritative and the norm for living a Christian life.

The evidence points to Timothy as a very real human being, just like you and me, with all the vulnerabilities we possess. To begin with we know he is young when Paul writes this first letter to him. Paul writes, "Let no one despise you *Timothy* for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity." (1 Timothy 4:12) Just a couple of years later Paul writes Timothy a second time saying, "So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart." (2 Timothy 2:22) The question I wanted to know is, "How old was Timothy?" I did some research and found that in their ancient culture it is unlikely Timothy would have been asked by Paul to join his mission team traveling from place to place to preach the gospel before he was 18 to 20 years old. The Jewish culture did consider one to begin the

process of manhood at 9 to 13 years old, but one was not fully a man until he was independent enough to be on his own and able to marry. Paul is writing his letter 13 to 15 years after Timothy joined him, so it would seem that Timothy was in his early thirties. This was still considered within the time of “youth” in the ancient cultures.

Irenaeus was a student of Polycarp and Polycarp was a student of the Apostle John. Irenaeus was an early church father and a bishop in Gaul or modern day France. His writings were formative in the development of Christian theology. He wrote in the second century, “... thirty is the first stage of a young man’s age, and extends to forty, as all will admit.” For Timothy to have authority over the churches in Ephesus while in his thirties he would have been considered young. Thus he is working under Paul the apostle of Christ and his authority.

Timothy is young and therefore needs encouragement from Paul, and in addition we also know he is physically ailing and possibly frail. In chapter 5 Paul writes, “No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.” (1 Timothy 5:23) So we can construct an image of Timothy from Paul’s references in his letters to Timothy and his expressions about Timothy in his letters to the Corinthians. Timothy is considered young for overseeing several churches, and this makes him self-conscious and he suffers from frequent ailments. In the Jewish religious environment these would have probably disqualified Timothy from leadership. However, it is these qualities that endear Timothy to us, because he is like all of us – struggling to overcome our weaknesses. Paul tells Timothy the grace of God is sufficient, “You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus,² and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”³ Share in suffering as a

good soldier of Christ Jesus.” (2 Timothy 2:1-3) Paul calls Timothy to overcome and press on, fight the battles for the glory of Christ. Paul understands the need to overcome; in his letter to the Corinthians he wrote of himself, “So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited.” (2 Corinthians 12:7) Paul understands the need to overcome weaknesses and be a soldier for Christ fighting the battle for God’s glory and this is what he is calling Timothy to and by way of his letter recorded in the Bible Paul is calling us, you and me to fight the good fight for God’s glory.

Now we understand the purpose and expression of Paul’s letter to Timothy, they are concerned with pastoral care and oversight of the local church. As we work our way through 1st Timothy over a few months time we will discover there are six main topics Paul is concerned about. Paul’s first concern, as often is the case, is the church’s doctrine and how to keep the truth of the Word of God at the center of the church. Paul was also highly concerned about keeping the Word of God uncorrupted by false teaching that he warns of it in all his writings. So it is before us this day. **We are to hold fast to God’s truth in a world that works hard to avoid the truth.** My beloved, may we, live the Word of God to His glory!

The second concern of Paul is the church’s public worship. It’s prayer for each other and the world. The preaching of the true Word and proper structure of Christ’s Church. Foundational to this is the roles of men and women within the church. At the time of Paul women had little legal or social standing apart from their father or husband. Today women, to the most part, have equal standing with men. Men and women are spiritually equal, both of whom are made in the image of God. They

have equal access to God and are both called to serve others for God's glory. Both men and women are called to serve and develop their full potential in ministry. However, today there is confusion between being spiritually equal and living the roles given to men and women by God. This confusion began in the Garden and has escalated until today. People are working hard to change the God given roles of men and women. This is an effort from the evil one as he works to weaken and destroy the church from within, thus robbing God of His glory. In this letter, Paul lays the foundation for the distinctive leadership roles within the church given to qualified men. The leadership of the church is grounded in the order of creation, the fall and the plan of redemption given by God the Father to Christ and defined in the holy writings of Scripture.

The **third** concern of Paul is the qualifications and quality of the pastorate. Pastorate is defined as the office, state, jurisdiction or tenure of the office of a pastor or body of pastors. Paul clearly writes to the conditions of eligibility and service for Overseers or Bishops or Elders or Pastors as all these titles can be used interchangeably.

Fourthly, Paul outlines the church's moral instruction, which ascends naturally from the doctrine of creation and call for personal godliness. Paul addresses the local church leadership as to how their teachings should be received and even though they are not perfect the Word of God is. I say, amen to this for I am far from perfect.

Paul then addresses his **fifth** concern as to how the church is to handle its social responsibilities. Not just to widows but also to elders and their service. Paul continues with how to deal with an elder's sin and he finishes with the difficult issue

of slaves. This is so needed in today's church – the serving of others with love, grace, mercy and peace. **The church's calling is to uphold the Word of God.**

Therefore, the church has a responsibility to love and serve even those who deny God and their own sin.

Paul's final or **sixth** concern is one we, as Americans, struggle with and that is how some equate godliness and favor with God by their financial status and material wealth. Paul approaches this problem from two directions; covetous and wealth.

As we travel through Paul's letter to Timothy we will find wisdom for the local church for every generation and in every location. The Scripture of God is old, but it is not out-of-date. John Calvin wrote of this letter saying it is "highly relevant to our times." Calvin's time was the mid-fifteen hundreds or almost five hundred years ago. It is amazing that today we can say the very same words as Calvin. We can say of Paul's letter to Timothy, is "highly relevant to our times." Truly the Bible is timeless.

Opening

Now let us turn our focus to Paul's letter. Reading 1 Timothy verses 1 and 2, "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope, ²To Timothy, my true child in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord." The Apostle wrote thirteen letters found in the New Testament. Of these Paul calls himself, "an apostle of Christ Jesus" in nine. He then tells us that his letter is to Timothy and that God is the source of grace, mercy and peace.

Paul says he is, "an apostle of Christ Jesus by command of God our Savior and of

Christ Jesus our hope.” Paul is claiming to be an apostle on the same level as those who walked with Christ and whom Christ **named** as His apostles, “~~he~~ *Jesus* called his disciples *together* and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles: ¹⁴ Simon, whom he named Peter, and Andrew his brother, and James and John, and Philip, and Bartholomew, ¹⁵ and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot, ¹⁶ and Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.” (Luke 6:13-16) Paul claims the same authority as these chosen men based on the fact that the resurrected Christ chose him. Paul did not elevate himself to the office of an Apostle, nor did the church appoint him. Paul also made clear he was not an apostle with a little “a” or as we call them today “missionaries.” Paul was chosen, called, appointed, equipped and authorized directly by Jesus Christ. Paul further adds that God the Father was involved in his commissioning. Look again at verse 1 “**Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by command of God our Savior.**” So it is by the command of God, by two personalities of the Trinity; God the Father and God the Son that Paul was chosen. Paul did not believe and God arranged for him to come to believe on the road to Damascus as recorded in Acts 9. **We also did not believe yet God arranged for the Holy Spirit to regenerate our souls to bring us to faith.** Paul was traveling to Damascus, which is about 140 miles north and slightly east of Jerusalem; this journey would have taken 7 to 9 days. As he neared the city his eyes were blinded, but the light of Christ penetrated his soul. Where were you when the light of Christ penetrated you? Was it as life changing as it was for Paul? So, Paul met Christ just outside of Damascus. Who can tell me what country Damascus is located in? Correct, Syria, which today is 90% Sunni Muslim, but at one time had a strong Christian population. How could this have happened? That is a whole other lesson that we may explore some day.

Back to Paul's letter, we can see in the very first verse that Paul has set his authority for being an Apostle and for authorizing Timothy to be overseer or a pastor of pastors of the churches in Ephesus. However, the first verse contains even more. Paul says "God our Savior" chose him. Savior refers to the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus and then he adds "Christ Jesus our hope" referring to the second coming of our Lord. The second coming of Jesus Christ is the true hope of all Christians. Further the structure of this opening sentence may well imply the time between "God our Savior" and the coming of "Christ Jesus our hope" or what we refer to the church age, a time of the spreading of the Gospel throughout the world. Paul may have been thinking of Jesus words recorded by Luke, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (Acts 1:8) These words were spoken to the 12 Apostles to give them authority and Christ also gave this authority directly to Paul and the writers of the New Testament recorded Jesus' words to give every believer the same mandate and authority.

As we finish our time this morning, read verse 2 with me, "To Timothy, my true child in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord." Whereas, Paul is a true Apostle of Christ, so too, Timothy is a true son of Paul. The Greek word translated here as "child" means a child by birth, a legitimate heir. Paul helped bring Timothy to belief in Christ or to be "born again" and as Paul's spiritual son he has proven faithful in following and teaching what Christ taught Paul and what Paul imparted to him.

So, in the first two verses Paul establishes his authority and that of Timothy's authority for the churches in Ephesus. Their authority comes from God who is the

God of grace, mercy and peace, which makes Paul and Timothy part of the family of God or God's chosen children and they are God's authorized ambassadors. By joining "God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope" in one sentence Paul has established that God the Father and Jesus Christ are one source of divine blessing for Paul and for Timothy and for that matter, for all believers. The same is true today God has given authority to you through His Son, Jesus Christ. But, you must choose to exercise His authority and speak into the lives of people. The speaking of eternal truth brings eternal life through the power of God's Word. If you believe God, if you believe His Son, Jesus Christ, if you believe Paul and if you believe what I have taught this morning – then what are you waiting for? Fulfill your destiny by living the words of God, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:19-20)