

1 Timothy 1:2-7

Introduction

1. As we learned last week, 1st Timothy is one of three letters referred to as the Pastoral Epistles
2. They are referred to as the Pastoral Epistles because they were written by Paul to two of his young disciples, Timothy and Titus, with instructions for shepherding (or pastoring) the churches at Ephesus and Crete
3. These two men were not only traveling companions of Paul's, but fellow ministers who served not only along side him but often in his absence
4. The letters cover everything from dealing with doctrine and false teaching, the appointment of elders and deacons, general conduct for believers, care and respect for the elderly, and even warnings about the love of money and wealth

A. Paul wrote this letter to Timothy, one of his most trusted and reliable co-workers (READ 1:2)

1. First, a little background on Timothy:
 - a. He first met Timothy on his 2nd missionary journey when he stopped in Derbe and Lystra, and he was already a believer with a good reputation throughout the region
 - b. His father was Greek, but his mother and grandmother were faithful Jewish Christians who taught him the Word which led to his own faith in Jesus
 - c. Paul was so impressed with Timothy that he took him along on all of his subsequent missionary journeys
2. Over the course of their travels and working together, they developed a father-and-son like relationship, with Paul considering Timothy his spiritual child:
 - a. Here in v. 2 Paul refers to Timothy affectionately as "**a true child in the faith**"
 - b. 1 Timothy 1:18: "**This command I entrust to you, Timothy, my son...**"
 - c. 2 Timothy 1:2: "**To Timothy, my beloved son**"
 - d. 1 Corinthians 4:17: "**For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord...**"
3. Timothy took this relationship to heart and served Paul like a child would his father, and as a result he became one of Paul's most faithful and reliable co-workers (READ Philippians 2:19-24):
 - a. Paul's dependence on Timothy is seen throughout his missionary journeys in Acts
 - b. He mentions Timothy in eight of his letters, even co-authoring them with Timothy (not counting 1 and 2 Timothy)
 - c. Timothy even spent time in prison for preaching the Gospel (Hebrews 13:23)
 - d. As far as we know, Paul's final letter before he was executed was to Timothy (2 Timothy)
4. This was precisely why Paul could trust Timothy with what we read next

B. Paul entrusted Timothy with protecting the church at Ephesus from false teaching (READ 1:3-4a)

1. It's not certain when Paul issued this charge to Timothy because there is nothing in the book of Acts that matches it, and Paul likely wrote this letter after he was released from his first Roman

imprisonment (which took place at the end of Acts): **“As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus...”**

- a. The language of v.3 suggests that Paul and Timothy went to Ephesus together after Paul was released from prison
 - b. Paul apparently then left to go to Macedonia, but charged Timothy with staying behind at Ephesus
2. One of the reasons Paul left Timothy at Ephesus was to protect the church from the false teaching of certain individuals: **“...so that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines nor to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies...”**
- a. Let’s start first with who these men were:
 - 1) Your version may read **“certain persons”** because the masculine plural can be translated as just men or men and women; the NASB translates it as men here because the only false teachers Paul names directly in the pastoral epistles are men, but it could apply to both men and women
 - 2) Back in Acts 20, Paul warned the Ephesian elders that false teachers would not only come in among them (presumably from the outside) but would even arise from within their own church (READ Acts 20:31)
 - 3) The fact that Paul refers to **“certain persons”** means that he had particular people in mind, and we actually know the names of a few because he mentions them in this letter and in his letter to Titus: Hymenaeus, Alexander, and Philetus (we’ll learn more about these men in latter passages)
 - 4) These men were guilty of all sorts of false teaching: blasphemy, rejecting the resurrection, opposing Paul’s teaching, doing harm to Paul, and upsetting the faith of believers
 - b. So, Paul was rightly concerned and charged Timothy with two things: (1:3b):
 - 1) The first was putting an end to what these men were teaching: A more literal translation of v. 3 is **“so that you may command certain ones to stop teaching different doctrine”**—let’s break this down:
 - a) **“Command”**: Many translations use the word instruct—“instruct certain people” but the word is more literally to command or order
 - b) **“stop teaching”**: most English translations give the impression Paul was charging Timothy with the task to prevent false teaching, but Paul’s use of the present infinitive suggests it was already in process and Timothy was to put an end to it
 - c) **“different doctrine”**: Paul uses a single word which means to teach something different, but different than what?
 - First and foremost, Paul was referring to doctrines that are different than or contradict the Gospel
 - As we’ll see in a moment, the false teachers at Ephesus were teaching all kinds of things that, according to v. 11 were contrary to **“the glorious gospel of the blessed God, with which I [Paul] have been entrusted”**
 - However, according to 6:3, it applied to anything that **“does not agree with sound words—those of our Lord Jesus Christ—and with the doctrine conforming to godliness”**

- d) We'll learn in a moment that what these men were teaching revolved around mythical tales and stories and a form of legalism based on the Old Testament Law—both of which were contrary to the Gospel and God's Word
- 2) The second thing Paul charged Timothy with was calling on these men to stop **"paying attention to myths and endless genealogies"** (4a):
- a) It's not completely certain to what **"myths and endless genealogies"** refers, but they were probably made-up Jewish fables about some of the minor individuals mentioned in the Old Testament genealogies
- Paul told Titus to rebuke the teachers on Crete for obsessing over **"Jewish myths"** (Titus 1:14)
 - Later in 1 Timothy 4:7 Paul describes such things as **"godless (or profane) myths fit only for old women"**
 - So these were silly tales and stories that had no basis in history or fact
 - It's impossible to know for sure, but many of these mythical stories may be what we find reflected in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha (ancient Jewish writings from the intertestamental period)
- b) These false teachers were apparently enamored by these myths and fables and as a result they were **"paying attention"** to them, or as the ESV and NIV suggest they were devoting themselves to them:

This reminds me of a young Christian man I met at the gym while in seminary—he was converting to Catholicism after becoming engrossed in the early writings of the Catholic church; he was engrossed and spend HOURS at the library reading these rather than the Bible

C. Paul now contrasts the results of the false teaching with those of the Gospel (1:4b-5)

1. What these men were teaching led to **"mere speculation"** instead of furthering the Gospel (READ 1:4b):
- a. This word for speculation is defined in a variety of ways by different Greek lexicons including senseless or useless speculation, controversy, and aimless arguing
 - b. One of my favorite lexicons describes it as forming ideas which are unrelated to reality, normally with a negative connotation
 - c. In other words, stuff that originates in the mind or imagination of man that simply leads to as Paul says later in v. 6 **"fruitless discussions"**

This reminds me of the Jesus Seminar and their tossing of colored beads in a jar to determine what Jesus did or didn't say, did or didn't do

- d. None of what these false teachers were doing was **"furthering the administration of God which is by faith"**: this is a reference to God's redemptive plan which is the Gospel, salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ
2. In contrast, by putting an end to the false teaching Paul's goal was to further God's plan by fostering and encouraging love (ultimately through sound teaching; READ 1:5):

- a. Verse 5 begins more literally as **“the goal of the command”** which is a reference back to Paul’s charge to Timothy in v. 3; it’s the command to put an end to the false teaching
 - b. Paul writes that the goal of this command is love, but he doesn’t mention what the object of that love is (e.g. love for God, love for others, etc.)
 - c. This is because he is referring to the overarching principle of love that is supposed to characterize all Christians:
 - 1) We are to love God, love one another, love good, even love our enemies
 - 2) As Christians, our very disposition is to be one of love
 - 3) It should define our thoughts, words, actions
 - d. This sort of love overflows from three sources:
 - 1) It overflows **“from a pure heart”**:
 - A pure heart is one that has been cleansed from sin
 - As Paul says in Romans 2:29, it’s a heart that has been circumcised by the Holy Spirit
 - According to 2 Timothy 2:22, it’s a heart that flees **“youthful lusts and pursue[s] righteousness, faith, love, and peace...”** in serving the Lord
 - 2) It overflows **“from a good conscience”** (e.g. morally good):
 - The conscience is the moral compass that God built into each human being to help us determine good from bad, right from wrong
 - The problem is that the conscience can be seared (1 Timothy 4:2), rejected (1 Timothy 1:19) and defiled (Titus 1:15) because of sin
 - However, based on Hebrews 13:18, a conscience that is morally good is one that causes us to want to conduct ourselves honorably, or in the right way, in all things
 - 3) It overflows **“from a sincere faith”**:
 - A sincere faith is one that is real or genuine
 - It’s one that is without hypocrisy and demonstrates itself in not just words but behavior
 - 4) All three of these—a pure heart, a good conscience, and genuine faith—begin with faith in Jesus Christ and then grow and mature through sound teaching, ultimately resulting in love
3. The false teachers had strayed from these things and instead were engaging in meaningless discussions and promoting legalism (READ 1:6-11):
- a. They strayed from pure hearts, good consciences, and sincere faith and **“turned aside to fruitless discussion”** (6): these were discussions that had no beneficial purpose; they were meaningless; I love the way the King James translates this: **“vain jangling”** which referred to talking excessively or noisily; squabbling
 - b. These false teachers also fancied themselves teachers of the Law, but they had no clue what they were talking about (RE-READ 7):
 - 1) Based on Paul’s response in vs. 8-11, we can ascertain that these men were judaizers, a word Paul used in Galatians 2:14 to describe men who taught that Christians had to obey the Mosaic laws in order to be saved
 - 2) What they failed to comprehend is that the Law was not made **“for a righteous person (e.g. Christians), but for those who are lawless and rebellious”**

- 3) Listen to what Paul wrote in Galatians 3:23-26 (READ)
- 4) As Paul says in v. 10b-11a, what these men were teaching was “**contrary to sound teaching according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God**”

Takeaways

1. First, we need to keep a watchful eye out for false teachers because they exist inside and outside the walls of the local Church; they existed in Paul’s day and they exist now in ours:
 - a. In fact, the Holy Spirit warned that in later times, some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron...” (1 Timothy 4:1-2)
 - b. Jesus even warned that a time of apostasy would come, and many would fall away, and their love grow cold
2. Second, anything that doesn’t align with the Gospel and the Word of God does not further God’s redemptive plan:
 - a. There are all kinds of things that are taught in Christian churches today, published in books and the internet, broadcast on radio and TV, and even popularized through music that have nothing to do with the Gospel or God’s Word
 - b. Much of this comes from the imagination of man, mysticism, myths and fables, other religions, and even twisting the Scriptures
 - c. None of it promotes a pure heart, good conscience, or a genuine faith
 - d. In 2 Peter 1:3, it says that God has granted to us everything we need for life and godliness through a full knowledge of Jesus Christ
 - e. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says that this book, the Bible, “**...is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be equipped, having been thoroughly equipped for every good work.**”
3. Finally, Paul gave us some clues today on how to identify false teachers, and this is just the beginning of a longer list of traits we see elsewhere in the Bible:
 - a. They will teach “strange (or different) doctrines” and devote themselves to myths and fables, things that do not align with the Word of God
 - b. Their teaching will give rise to speculation and meaningless discussions and debate, rather than promoting love through a pure heart, good conscience, and a sincere faith
 - c. Like the false teachers at Ephesus, they may teach a means of salvation or spiritual growth through legalism or works, rather than through grace and faith
 - d. A final clue is that often these false teachers do not have a sound understanding of the Word of God