

The Church And It's Message

1 Timothy 1:3-11

Introduction

Paul pleads with Timothy to stay true and stand true to God's ministry entrusted to him (vv.1-11). In broad terms this letter to Timothy serves as a blueprint for leaders to understand the church and its message (chapter 1) and the church and its members (chapter 2); and the church and its minister (chapter 3 and 4) and the church and its ministry (chapters 5-6). It would appear that perhaps Timothy had grown weary or burdened or may have been suffering what we call 'burn-out'. We all experience times of trial, difficulty, opposition, exhaustion and want to give up our job or give up some task that has been assigned to us by God's grace. Since God has entrusted Timothy with His ministry (vv.1-11) he will also enable Timothy to do that work (12-17). This will also include equipping for the battles that lie ahead (vv.18-20). Dr. Robert Gromacki—gives the title "Stand True to the Charge" in his brief but beneficial commentary on this letter. In order to stand true to the Church and its message Timothy will have to affirm the message of the gospel and resist the false teachers and false teaching that had crept into the church. Is it possible that these false teachers were in part contributing to Timothy's troubles—wondering whether or not he was the right man in the right place at the right time. Timothy was a young man seeking to minister to older people; not an easy task (see 4:12; 5:1-2). It may be that Timothy missed Paul and was ready to move on from Ephesus (1:3; 2 Tim.1:4). It may be that Timothy like so many Pastors and leaders may have been tempted to neglect his pastoral duties or personal devotions (chapter 4:11-16).

Is there a right time to stay and a right time to go? After all Paul himself stayed in Ephesus for three years and then moved on. In the end the ministry is the Lord's. Paul may have been the one who God used to entrust the ministry at Ephesus—but in the end it was God's ministry. One of the reason Paul picked Timothy was because Timothy shared Paul's values, Paul's philosophy of ministry and was able to articulate the true gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul knew that false teachers would arise and promote their own peculiar brand of Christianity. Paul points out that false teachers teach false doctrine (v.3); engage in superficial, trivial but divisive arguments (v.4); false teachers are more interested in controversy than faithfully spreading the gospel (v.4); and false teachers turn away from the personal evidences of God's presence in their life to 'meaningless' talk' (v.6). False teachers like all the benefits that go along with being a teacher but they really had nothing valuable to say (v.7). False teachers were willing to pit the law and the gospel against one another not understanding the important role both play in the plan of God (vv.8-11).

False Teachers And Their False Teaching (vv.3-4)

1 Timothy 1:3–7 (NKJV) 3As I urged you when I went into Macedonia—remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine,

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Paul urges Timothy to remain in Ephesus. Urgency requires action—and for Timothy that meant staying the course at that time. Sometimes urgency does not mean doing something new—it means renewed effort or perseverance under pressure doing what has always been done!

We should pause for a moment and ask this question; “Lord, what are the responsibilities that you have entrusted to me? Am I faithful? Have I grown lukewarm or half-hearted? Do you have someone in your life urging you to remain faithful to the Lord Jesus and His people?

Timothy did not need to embrace the false teachings being brought by the false teachers but rather that Timothy “*charge some that they teach no other doctrine*”. The word *charge* is a military term which means ‘command.’ This is a word that carries with it the idea of a lawful order given by a superior to a subordinate with the expectation that it be obeyed! Paul writes charge some (not everyone)—it would appear that the false teachers and their false doctrine may have been few in number—yet influential in the congregations.

Well aren't we all entitled to our opinion? Not when it comes to the gospel. Not when it comes to the identity of Jesus and the method of salvation.

“*teach no other doctrine*” this is a compound word in the Greek language that means “of a different kind” and “doctrine”. The false teachers were teaching doctrines different from what the apostles of the Lord Jesus were teaching (see 6:3-4; Acts 2:43; Gal. 1:6-7).

Paul believed doctrine mattered (v.3). Paul believed truth mattered (1 Timothy 2:4,7,; 3:15, 4:3; 6:5).

Let's be honest for a moment. What Paul is asking Timothy to do is difficult. But Paul believes that Timothy can and will do as he says. In the simple sentence “teach no other doctrine” are the blueprint for pastors in every generation! We teach. We teach sound doctrine (v.10).

4nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith.

What are these fables and endless genealogies? They seem to be fabricated or fanciful stories made up and manufactured by teachers who appealed to Jewish roots or mystery religion sources. It may have included those who manufactured allegorical interpretations of real Jewish genealogies. In reality they were doctrines of demons posing as God's truth (see *The Bible MacArthur Commentary*; p.1775).

The controversies promote disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith. The word translated *godly edification* is interesting (Greek *oikonomia*). The word serves as the root word for our own English word *economy*. In this context—it means God's Word—or God's economy—or the things that make life possible for Christians. In that sense—Paul is making reference to

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God's work, God's economy or management—which is in faith—that is we define and refute or defend—controversies—by the Bible and by the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

These are teachings that divide rather than unite! The Bible does not teach that we deny or ignore or dismiss truth. Paul warns Timothy and condemns those whose lives are a parade of controversies disputes and nonsense.

What can we place on the nonsense list?

False Teachers Promote Empty Talk Above Love (vv.5-6)

5Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith,

Why would Paul give such a charge (commandment see v.3)? Timothy is under orders. The order has been given; love from a pure heart, and a good conscience and sincere (without hypocrisy) faith; these are things that require constant attention and vigilance. Think carefully: when love is absent—when the heart is impure—and the conscience defiled, and faith becomes a fabrication—then we have abandoned the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul gives the charge to Timothy to promote the virtue of godly leadership in the church. “The goal of preaching the truth and warning of error is to call people to true salvation in Christ which produces a love for God from a purified heart; a clean conscience and genuine faith” (See *The MacArthur Bible Commentary*; p.1775-1777),

What motivated the false teachers?

Love? Not really.

Purity? Not really.

A good conscience? Not really.

Sincere faith. Not really.

The false teachers seem motivated by something else. Something far more sinister. Self-promotion. Self-exaltation. It would seem they are motivated by curiosity—or the desire to gain a following or intellectual credibility. The true teacher must be motivated by love. In Matthew 5:8 Jesus says; “Blessed are the pure in heart”. A pure heart is devoted to God and free from guilt and corruption. The pure in heart see God. Why? Because they can't see anything else. The pure in heart desire holiness over personal gain or happiness. In order to love properly we must love from a pure heart and a clear conscience. We must not be driven by guilt or sin or pride or personal gain. When we attempt to love others without godly faith in the Lord Jesus Christ—our love becomes hollow or sentimental or self-serving. Why did you give that person money or a job or whatever? It made me feel good. But that is not love from sincere faith. We serve people and love people in Christ's name in order to bring people to Jesus to love Jesus and serve Jesus. Do we serve for service sake? Not according to Paul. Do we serve in the hope that

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people will come to Jesus? Of course. Will we serve even if they don't come to Jesus? Of course. We are told to do good to all, but first to those who are of the household of faith.

Paul desires Timothy to teach—to serve—in Christ's love and sound and sincere truth. Just like a mother desires to feed her children wholesome uncontaminated food so we seek to serve people sound doctrine and the truth found in God's Word.

When God first called me to Colorado to plant our church the Lord impressed this passage upon my soul. Why plant a church? Why do it in Colorado? There were plenty of churches in Denver. But could the world use one more church where Christ was honored, the Bible taught and the people raised in an atmosphere of love? Do people need Pastors and leaders with pure hearts, good conscience and sincere faith?

6from which some, having strayed, have turned aside to idle talk,

What is Paul describing? Idle talk refers to conversations that do not seem to have reason or logic. This is talk that is irrelevant and does not accomplish anything that is good or edifying! The word can be translated 'fruitless discussion'.

Where does false doctrine lead? In the end—its fruit is darkness and deception and disaster.

False Teachers Place Personal Ambition Above The Truth (v.7)

7desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say nor the things which they affirm.

Paul notes that these false teachers base their authority on the Law of Moses. They claim the Law and Moses as their source to promote their strange ideas. It would appear that these were either legalistic Jews or Gentiles (who fancied themselves as Jews) impressed with Judaism. Paul points out their presumption—'desiring to be teachers of the law'—a role reserved for elders (see 3:2; 5:17). Later Paul details the qualifications for elders (chapter 3:1-7).

Are these self-styled teachers true teachers of the law? Not really. Why? They neither understand the purpose of the law or the promises of the law but rather offer a kind of legalistic heresy that suggested that salvation could somehow be obtained by grace through faith in combination with adherence to the Mosaic law!

I am going to suggest that these false teachers acknowledged Jesus—grace and the cross—but taught **wickedly** grace and the sacrifice of Jesus are insufficient to bring salvation. Observance of the Mosaic Law was also necessary! What exactly did they affirm? If the rest of the New Testament provides us with clues—these are false Jewish teachers who want to impose circumcision and Jewish ceremonies on the church as necessary elements for salvation.

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False Teachers Pretend Self-Righteous Is Above God's Gospel (vv.8-11)

1 Timothy 1:8-11 (NKJV) *8But we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully,*

In short—Paul lays out the purpose of the law. The law is good. The word *good* means ‘useful’ rather than the opposite of bad or evil. The law is useful—because it reflects God’s holy character and will and righteous standards. It shows sinners their sin (Rom.3:19) and their need for a Savior (Gal. 3:24). “The Law forces people to recognize that they are guilty of disobeying God’s commands, and it thereby condemns every person and sentences them to hell” (see *The MacArthur Bible Commentary*; p.1777).

The law has legitimate applications. The law is good (useful). It gives us direction for living a holy life. It offers direction but not justification (see Gal. 2:11-21). Paul told the Romans (7:2) that the law was holy—but following the law would never make us acceptable to God. The law guides us away from sin and guides us to standards of behavior that make personal and civil life possible. The law convicts us of sin and offers the opportunity to ask forgiveness from God and those we offend. The law was meant to drive us to the sufficiency of Christ by the Holy Spirit because of our repeated failure to keep the Law. The false teachers want to be famous teachers. They want to be teachers of the law.

What constitutes an unlawful use of the law?

9knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers,

One what basis is a person made righteous? Keeping the commandments? The self-righteous cannot be saved (see Luke 5:32). The false teachers did not understand the purpose of the law!

Paul claims the Law exists not for the innocent but the guilty.

The false teacher rightly believed the Law was given to reveal God’s standards! But the false teacher imagined that they could live up to those standards and please God—remember—these are false teachers who believe in Jesus and the Cross and grace and the resurrection but insist that keeping the Law of Moses was **essential to salvation**. Paul points out that the law was for (surprise) the lawless and insubordinate. Paul then gives a list of three couplets—six characteristics that point to sins from the first half of the ten commandments. These are the Commandments that deal with a person’s relationship to God. The lawless are those who have no commitment to any kind of law or measure or standard—which makes those people in abject rebellion and insubordinate. There are those who have no standard, no sacred boundaries—which means they are sinners without regard to God’s Law.

Paul lists sins against God. Paul draws this list from Exodus 20:1-11.

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Lawbreakers and rebels who will not receive instruction or discipline. The godless and sinful who show no reverence or respect for God—but rather oppose God and are unholy and profane. Our Government and leaders claim submission to the Constitution and the laws of the land (but not really). Our Government and many of its leaders—claim that the Law of God lay no claim on them—and are free to redefine gender or marriage and legalize rather than criminalize perverse sexual behavior! Paul argues that the Law must be allowed to reveal the Law breaker and allow for the punishment of the law breaker. Unholy people are indifferent—and sometimes hostile—to the Law.

Now Paul draws further from Exodus 20:12-16; those who kill father or mother—what could be more dishonoring to parents; murder, adulterers and perverts—dealing with all manner of sexual sin.

10for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine,

Our culture has come to the place where we celebrate sexual expression and perversion as wholesome and normal. The word “sodomites” (*arsenokoitai*) is sometimes translated ‘perverts’.

There are powerful forces at work to try and legalize and legitimize perversion; and those forces have won the day. We live in a culture that esteems sexual freedom and expression as the highest freedom and expression. The Bible teaches that it is disgusting and dishonoring to God. The Bible teaches that homosexual behavior is sinful, evil, wrong (Leviticus 18:22; Romans 1:18-32; I Corinthians 6:9-11). In our politically correct and theologically correct society we are told to condemn the practice but not the people. Can the same be said for kidnappers, liars, perjurers or if there is anything contrary to sound doctrine? What do all the sins on this list have in common?

They are all contrary to sound doctrine. They are harmful. But there is forgiveness and hope for all who repent of their sin and trust Jesus Christ as Savior.

Paul charges (commands) Timothy to refute false doctrine (v.3) and remind everyone about sound doctrine (v.10)! And what constitutes *sound doctrine*?

The word Paul uses for sound (*hygiene*)—means healthy—whole—clean. Christian doctrine must not be—unhealthy, broken or sick.

11according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust.

Sound doctrine is that teaching that is *according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to Paul's trust!*

In that pregnant sentence lies everything that Paul says about the Gospel and God!

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What might that include? Everything you read about in the book of Acts. Everything you read in all of Paul's correspondence.

Conclusion

How do we recognize the false teacher and false teaching?

The false teacher may seem to know a lot about the Bible but the false teacher invites his or her disciple to abandon Christ and follow them. The false teacher does not usually come right out and say—"abandon Christ and follow me" but it has the same net effect. The false teacher promotes controversy instead of helping people come to Jesus and love Jesus and walk with Jesus (v.4). It would appear that the false teacher's motivation for ministry is 'to be somebody' or make a name for themselves (and often name their ministry after themselves; see v.7). The false teacher's teaching will stray from Bible essentials—the departure might seem simple and subtle—but invariably means distancing themselves from the truths of the Scripture and the teachings of the Bible. How can we protect ourselves and our families from false teachers and their false teaching? We have to learn what the Bible teaches and remain steady—and steadfast in our faith. Our faith is everything that the Bible teaches about Jesus and His message. Safe teaching and safe doctrine must be found within the pages of our Bible.

The gospel is simple. We have salvation and forgiveness of sins in Christ Jesus. We are tasked with teaching the Bible—simply—and simply teaching the Bible. We are to apply the Bible's truths to our lives and then teach the Bible to others. How do we know if something is valuable or meaningful or helpful in our Christian walk? It will unite. It will edify. It will glorify the Lord Jesus Christ.