

A Study of First Timothy

Week One

1 Timothy 1:1-2:7

Day One

1:1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope, 2 To Timothy my true son in the faith: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. 3 As I urged you when I went into Macedonia, stay there in Ephesus so that you may command certain men not to teach false doctrines any longer 4 nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies. These promote controversies rather than God's work — which is by faith.

v. 1 – Paul began a letter to his favorite disciple and son in the faith, Timothy. Here Paul told us that he wasn't an apostle by choice; He was commanded by God to be one. Notice that Paul mentioned Jesus twice in the first verse. There was never any doubt whom Paul served and who the focus of his ministry was. It was always Jesus!

The word apostle literally means “sent forth one.” It was not a title as it is used by some today, but rather a function. Paul referred to himself as a brother if he used any title at all. Yet his apostolic purpose was first and foremost in his mind and ministry, for it was the foundation upon which everything he did was built. **Who are you in the Lord's work? I'm not concerned with your title, but with your function. What is the work that God has given you to do, by His command no less?**

v. 2 – Timothy was Paul's true son in the faith. We read in Acts 16, how Paul came to know Timothy:

He came to Derbe and then to Lystra, where a disciple named Timothy lived, whose mother was a Jewess and a believer, but whose father was a Greek. The brothers at Lystra and Iconium spoke well of him. Paul wanted to take him along on the journey, so he circumcised him because of the Jews who lived in that area, for they all knew that his father was a Greek. As they traveled from town to town, they delivered the decisions reached by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem for the people to obey. So the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers (Acts 16:1-5).

I'm always intrigued by Timothy's preparation for ministry. It wasn't a seminar, Bible school or an internship. It was circumcision, the very thing that Paul preached against wherever he went! How ironic! How could Paul justify this action? I don't totally understand it, but look at it from Timothy's point of view. He was asked to submit to and trust Paul's authority in a humbling manner. This was how God required him to start his ministry. In fact that is how requires everyone to start:

All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble" (1 Peter 5:5).

v. 3 – Paul had been in the province of Asia, but then went west to Macedonia. Therefore he had urged Timothy to stay behind in Ephesus. Paul had a specific task in mind for Timothy to do: Urge men who were teaching weird things to stop. Paul’s goal of his teaching was faith in God. The goal of the false teachers was controversy. Paul wanted those who taught false doctrines, myths and endless genealogies to cease and desist and he wanted Timothy to be the one to stop them. Paul gave clear instructions to Timothy.

There are many today who teach these false doctrines. For example, there are those who perpetrate strange doctrines of the end times and make tons of money from their myths are some who come to mind. Then there are others who teach some things that sound so spiritual but don’t hold up under the scrutiny of Scripture. Will you pray the following prayer with me as we open this new study?

Lord, as we study your Word, deliver us from false doctrines and delusions. Don’t let us have a sense of confidence and smugness, but rather a spirit of humility and openness as we approach Your word. Help us to adjust where we have been wrong and help us to grow in wisdom and knowledge where You and Your word are concerned. Amen.

Day Two

5 The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. 6 Some have wandered away from these and turned to meaningless talk. 7 They want to be teachers of the law, but they do not know what they are talking about or what they so confidently affirm.

v. 5 – Paul’s aim was faith and love—faith in God and love for God and one another. If what someone taught didn’t contribute to those two things, then Paul wasn’t interested. You can see this from his epistles, where he usually spent the first half in doctrinal discussions and the second half in how to behave in everyday life. Paul was a practical man. How much better the Church would be if her writers and theologians were like Paul. I wish everyone who preached and wrote could somehow be forced to spell out the practical implications for what they taught. Better yet, I wish they would be forced to live among the results of what they teach!

It’s always interesting to me how often more Bible knowledge leads people to less, not more, love. I’ve often portrayed this people as God’s German shepherds, appointed as guard dogs for God’s integrity and righteousness. I’ve also said that God doesn’t need any German shepherds; He can take care of Himself!

Does your increasing Bible knowledge lead to and emanate from a pure heart, good conscience and sincere faith? Are you more tolerant or less tolerant of sinners than you were, say, five years ago? If not, then you have to answer whether your knowledge is leading you in the right direction.

v. 6 – It’s critical that you address the question I raised in verse five. If you aren’t careful, your knowledge can lead you to meaningless talk and Bible truth that has no relevance for everyday life. **How does what you believe and teach lead you and others to be a better employee, family member, citizen or servant in the church? Can you give specific examples? If you can’t, then I think you must re-evaluate what you believe and how you are applying it? Is your knowledge leading to more fruit of the Spirit being developed in your life? More patience, love, or joy?**

Again, I use those who fantasize about the return of Jesus as an example. What do their teachings and books produce? Usually they produce fear and confusion. That’s a significant indicator that what they teach isn’t biblical; it’s “mythology.”

v. 7 – Wow! Paul, or rather the Spirit through Paul, said it so well. There are many who are confident about what they say, but their confidence is off base. Their teaching often doesn’t lead men and women to behave as better Christians, but rather as men and women who know a little bit more about the concept of God. Does their teaching lead to more missions work being done, more people coming to know Jesus, more money being given to the ministry of the poor? If anyone’s teaching doesn’t produce those kind of results and more like them, then that teaching, no matter how “sound,” isn’t biblical.

Day Three

8 We know that the law is good if one uses it properly. 9 We also know that law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious; for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, 10 for adulterers and perverts, for slave traders and liars and perjurers — and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine 11 that conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me.

vs. 8&9 – Paul wrote about the Law to the Romans:

So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good. Did that which is good, then, become death to me? By no means! But in order that sin might be recognized as sin, it produced death in me through what was good, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful. We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good (Romans 7:12-17).

It seems that some used the Law to condemn others instead of using it to examine themselves. The Law was given to make man conscious of sin. Man was to acknowledge this sin and then cry out to God for help, which He gave in the person of Jesus. Instead some used the Law as a means to justify themselves, believing that they could follow a system of rules that would make them acceptable to God. Paul knew that the Law was good but no man could follow the Law perfectly, thus making that man a lawbreaker.

Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed. So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law (Galatians 3:23-25).

The Law was a tutor of sorts, teaching us about our need for Jesus and then leading us to Him. Some made it an end in itself rather than a means to an end.

v. 10 – There are some who look back at and condemn Paul and the early church for not taking a stand against slavery. I’m not sure I ever noticed before this study that Paul included slave traders in the list of immoral people in this verse. If Paul considered slaver traders sinners, then he had to consider slave trading and the institution of slavery a sin. I’m not sure why Paul didn’t say more about this; perhaps he did but never wrote about it.

We have a glimpse of Paul’s feelings about slaves in his short letter entitled *Philemon*. There he appealed to Philemon on behalf of Onesimus, who was an escaped slave once owned by Philemon. Now Onesimus was a believer and Paul was writing Philemon to he receive him back not as a slave but as a brother in Christ. Paul wasn’t recommending that Onesimus return to his role as a slave. That tells me that Paul wasn’t in favor of or neutral about slavery as some have taught or thought.

v. 11 – Paul saw that the gospel had been entrusted to him for safekeeping. It was a gospel that revealed the glory and grace of God, and Paul didn’t want anyone shutting people up to a Law of sin and condemnation. That’s why he said that some men were teaching the Law but didn’t know what they were doing or how to handle the Law as a means to lead people to Christ.

What has God entrusted to you? Are you being a faithful steward? What opportunities do you have to reveal God’s glory and grace? Do you represent a gospel of the Law, which is no “good news” at all, or do you represent a gospel of grace and forgiveness, accurately portraying God to people who encounter you?

Day Four

12 I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his service. 13 Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. 14 The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

v. 12 – If Jesus considered Paul faithful and gave him the ministry to the Gentiles on the Damascus Road, then when did God consider Paul faithful? My point is that God considered Paul faithful *before* the Damascus Road and chose him to go to the Gentiles based on his faithfulness as a Pharisee and a Jew. That’s hard to comprehend, but that’s

what Paul wrote. God appointed Paul to this ministry and service to others based on his record as a Jew! After Paul was appointed, then God also gave him the strength to do what Paul was appointed to do. Notice the partnership in ministry—God assigns, God strengthens, but we must be faithful to do what God has assigned to do.

What does God strengthen you to do? What has He appointed you to do? Are you faithful? How can you be even more faithful to the task at hand?

v. 13 – Paul was not a nice man when he was Saul. He was a violent man, even though he served the God of peace! God showed Saul mercy, because he acted in ignorance, coupled with unbelief. It's ironic that Saul served the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but didn't have faith in that same God. So is it possible to serve without faith? Obviously it is. It isn't our knowledge or faithfulness that pleases God, although those are important. What is most important is faith:

And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him (Hebrews 11:6).

Everything that does not come from faith is sin (Romans 14:23 emphasis added).

How is your faith at this point in time? What evidence can you provide that you are believing God for great things, believing to do great things? What are you doing that doesn't stem from faith? Whatever it is, it is "sinful," which means missing the mark. Are you missing the mark in your life right now?

v. 14 – There wasn't just grace present in Paul's life. There was a superabundance of grace, unusually large doses of grace, due to his lifestyle as Saul the Jew. **Do you have the same perspective of your life?** It's so easy to slip into thinking that we deserve what God has done in our lives. If we're not careful, we become the Pharisee in the parable that Jesus told:

To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable: "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men — robbers, evildoers, adulterers — or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.' "But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' "I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted" (Luke 18:9-14).

It's important that we maintain the attitude of the tax collector not just at our time of salvation but also throughout our walk with the Lord. Remember, God gives grace to the humble, but He resists the proud, even if the proud know Him.

Day Five

15 Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners — of whom I am the worst. 16 But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life. 17 Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

v. 15 – When Paul wrote that he was the worst of sinners, he wasn't making an idle statement. He put people to death and thought he was doing God a favor. He was a religious bigot, who thought he and people like him had an inroad to God. Saul was a nasty man, even though he was considered a holy man. Isn't that ironic?

Yet Jesus came to save men and women exactly like Paul, people who didn't think they needed a Savior but did (and do). While Jesus considered Saul faithful, Saul's faithfulness could not gain him right standing with God—only faith in Jesus could do that. Jesus came to save sinners, not hang with those who considered themselves righteous. **Are you following in His footsteps? Do you have grace for sinners?**

v. 16 – Lest anyone think God chose Saul for his redemptive qualities, Paul wrote that God chose him to serve as an example that *no one* is beyond the touch of God's grace and mercy. So as look today at the Muslim world, which seems to be beyond the reach of the gospel, we can take heart from Saul's example. We know that any Muslim convert would be hated by his former comrades just like Saul was hated by his. Yet God worked through Saul, and protected him until the time that it was appointed for him to die.

As a result, we should not despair no matter how hopeless it seems for anyone to be reached with and for the gospel. If God touched Saul, he can touch anyone—that remains the most important lesson from Saul's conversion and subsequent ministry.

Have you given up believing that God would touch someone? If you have, then be renewed in your faith and hope! God is still in the salvation business!

v. 17 – What should our response be to this abundance of God's mercy and grace? It should be the same as Paul's and that is worship. Paul was so moved by what he wrote about God's grace toward him that he interrupted his train of thought to give glory and honor to God. **When is the last time that you broke into praise and worship just thinking about what God has done for you? I hope it hasn't been too long ago. If it has, why not stop now and express your gratitude for God's mercy in your life?**

Day Six

18 Timothy, my son, I give you this instruction in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by following them you may fight the good fight, 19 holding on to faith and a good conscience. Some have rejected these and so have shipwrecked their faith. 20 Among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan to be

taught not to blaspheme. 2:1 I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone— 2 for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.

v. 18 – Most of Paul’s letters were directed to a large audience; this one was directed to one person, to Timothy, his son in the faith. We need those two dynamics in our life as well. We need God to address us as individuals but also we need God to address us as part of a group, as part of His body. If you have one without the other, you will be missing something that you need.

I know some who no longer go to church, relying on God’s ability and willingness to speak to them individually. Then I know others who hear God in church but are very skeptical of God speaking to them as individuals. **I think we need both, don’t you? Are you in a church where you hear God’s word as a group and then work out what you hear with other believers? Do you then spend time to meditate and pray, allowing God to speak to you in your individual situation?**

Paul urged Timothy to fight a good fight of faith, using the personal words and prophecies he had received as his weapons. That indicates that once you hear from God, you will have to work to maintain what you’ve heard and fight to see that it happens. Is that what Jesus meant when He said:

From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it (Matthew 11:12).

How violent are you when it comes to preserving and advancing the promise of God in your life? What can you do to recapture momentum that you may have lost?

vs. 19&20 – Paul handed two men over to Satan, so they may be taught not to blaspheme. Paul was actually using Satan as an agent to restore someone to righteousness. That’s certainly noteworthy. Paul did the same thing concerning a man living with his step-mother in Corinth:

Hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord (1 Corinthians 5:5).

I don’t understand what this means and it doesn’t seem like anyone else understands it either. I wonder if this wasn’t similar to what Nebuchadnezzar went through when he lost his mind but then was restored to sanity and the throne seven years later. He was delivered to Satan, in a manner of speaking, so that he could be taught the ways of God! (see Daniel 4).

Paul was confident in this process, whatever it was that happened when he turned someone over to the devil. I want that same kind of confidence when I work for God among His people, don’t you?

vs. 1&2 – Paul instructed Timothy to focus the prayer life of the saints by first praying for those in authority. Paul knew that Christians were so different that they would always attract controversy. After all, Christians were denying the legitimacy of the emperor divinity cult by declaring that Jesus was King, not Caesar. So he urged that the people pray for their leaders so that the leaders would provide an atmosphere where the gospel could prosper. It's easy for us moderns to forget just how radical the message of God's kingdom was when another Kingdom was declaring a gospel that was based on Caesar being lord.

Day Seven

3 This is good, and pleases God our Savior, 4 who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. 5 For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, 6 who gave himself as a ransom for all men — the testimony given in its proper time. 7 And for this purpose I was appointed a herald and an apostle — I am telling the truth, I am not lying — and a teacher of the true faith to the Gentiles.

vs. 3&4 – God wants all men to know Him and that requires an atmosphere where the good news can be proclaimed and discussed. Yet when that kind of freedom exists, the church seems to languish. When times are tough, people turn to God and the Church tends to grow and prosper. So we pray for peace, but we trust that God is in control and knows how to build His church, even in times of persecution.

v. 5 – This statement addresses the commonly held belief today that there are many ways to God. There aren't. Jesus is the only legitimate contender to that title:

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him" (John 14:6-7).

Was Jesus a liar? Absolutely not! He was the One who stated that He was the only way to God, the Father. As much as we would like to believe that there are other ways and that good and sincere seekers can be rewarded for their efforts, the truth remains that Jesus is the way, truth and life. Anyone who knows Him knows the Father.

v. 6 – Jesus knew what His purpose was, what He came to do and accomplish. He came to pay the ransom so that the captives, which included you and me, would be set free. One man died so many could live.

“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:44).

Jesus knew His purpose and could clearly articulate it. Can you state yours?

v. 7 – Jesus knew His purpose and Paul knew his—to take the gospel to the Gentiles. When Paul did that, God helped him and enabled him to succeed. If Jesus knew His purpose and Paul knew his, don't you think you should know yours?

Paul made tents for a living, but the only way we know he did is because Luke mentioned it in Acts 18. I think it's fascinating that Paul wrote 13 letters and never once mentioned his occupation. In every letter, however, he mentioned his purpose of taking the gospel to the Gentile world. Paul did not define himself according to what he did to make money; he defined himself according to his God-given purpose, which was clear to him.

Who are you? I didn't ask what you do, I asked who you are? My purpose is to create order out of chaos. I am 56 years of age as I write this and I have never looked for a job in my life. I never have to looking for chaos; chaos always comes looking for me. Every job I've had has been the same: I'm the first person in the position, I structure and order things to release its potential and then I move on to the next assignment. It's that simple.

I have many resources to help you clarify your purpose on both my website, www.purposequest.com, and my blog, www.johnstanko.us. I urge you to engage your own PurposeQuest if you haven't already to discover and clarify what it is that God created you to do and be. It's well worth the effort if requires to know.