

A Study on 1 Timothy

Week 2 | 1:1-7; 6:20-21

Teaser | Doctrine doesn't matter. Or does it?

Overview |

The church in Ephesus, that Paul had planted just fifteen years prior, had begun to drift from the gospel. False teachers had begun to dilute the message of truth that had been entrusted to the church and, in doing so, many were departing from the faith.

The issues that Paul addresses in 1 Timothy are similar to the critique of the Ephesian church in Revelation (2:1-7) – they had abandoned their first love. They had done many good things but had forsaken the most important thing – the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Introductory Questions |

1. What dangers face the church when Christ and the gospel are no longer central?
2. What are some of the characteristics of a church (and individual Christians) that has wandered from the gospel?
3. When the gospel is central what effect does this have on the way the church relates to each other and to outsiders?

The Greeting | 1:1-2

Paul uses the customary greeting formula (states who he is as the author of the letter and then addresses who the letter is written to).

Paul then offers a specific Christian greeting as is customary in his letters to the various NT churches.

A few things to note about the greeting:

1. Paul establishes that he is writing by the command of Jesus – his words bear the authority of Christ himself (v. 1). See also 2 Peter 1:20-21.
2. This letter is written specifically to Timothy (with the understanding it would be read to the entire church – the final address in 6:21 is the plural “you”).
3. Grace, mercy, and peace
 - a. Grace – God’s unmerited favor toward undeserving sinners
 - b. Mercy – not getting what we deserve; divine compassion toward sinners
 - c. Peace – the cessation of hostility between sinners and God; the restoration of things to the way they should be

The Structure | 1:3-7

A. 1:3, 4a – False doctrines being taught

B. 1:4 – Result of false doctrines being taught is confusion and controversy

C. 1:5 – The goal of having right doctrine taught is faith leading to love

B. 1:6 – Result of false doctrines being taught is people wandering from the faith

A. 1:7 – False doctrines are being taught

The Problem | 1:3, 4, 7; 6:20

False teaching was infiltrating the church. We are given two categories of this teaching:

1. Myths
 - a. These are “mere speculation based on anecdote, rumor or imagination without any secure footing in the truth.” – Macleay p. 46
 - b. These often were not just “legends” but rather intentionally misleading stories used to justify immoral behavior.
2. Genealogies
 - a. Most likely refers to the practice of Jewish Rabbis where they would go beyond what Scripture teaches, embellishing upon the lives of biblical figures in ways that would suit their own agendas.
 - b. It’s possible that some in Ephesus were doing this very thing.
 - c. Some scholars believe this also had to do with people lobbying for position in the church using their own family pedigree and history as a means for power and influence.

The biggest problem is that those who were teaching these errors were uninformed but were teaching with great confidence and in doing so, misleading many.

The Implications | 1:4, 6; 6:20, 21

This false teaching was creating a great disturbance in the peace and purity of the church. It led to:

- Controversies (1:4)
- Conflict between members of the church (6:3-5)
- Vain discussions (1:6)
- Irreverent babble (6:20)
- People wandering (swerving) from the faith (1:6; 6:21)

The Solution | 1:1-5

A return to the gospel

- It is our hope in Jesus Christ (1:1).
- It is the source of grace, mercy, and peace from God (1:2).
- It guards us from trusting in works (1:7) or worldly knowledge (6:20).

An emphasis on godliness

- The hoped for result of right teaching is right practice (orthodoxy leading to orthopraxy).
- The goal of Paul’s letter is that the church reflect love that comes from a pure heart, good conscience, and a sincere faith (1:5).
 - Pure heart – The heart was seen as the center of one’s thoughts and emotions. It represents the total inner life of a person. A pure heart would be one that has been cleansed by the blood of Christ, refined by truth, and with renewed motives and instincts.
 - Good conscience – One with this ability knows and adheres to God’s law written on his/her heart.
 - Sincere faith – This is true saving faith, not just verbal affirmation to the faith but a faith that is grounded in truth and lived out in obedience.

So What? |

Why does this matter?

Resource List

Teaching 1 Timothy by Angus Macleay (Primary Source for class)

1 Timothy by Philip Graham Ryken

Let's Study 1 Timothy by W. John Cook

1-2 Timothy & Titus by Philip H. Towner

Commentary on 1 Timothy by John Calvin

ESV Study Bible