

1 Timothy Lesson 4

1 Timothy 1:15-20 – The Faithful Statement, Keeping Faith and a Good Conscience

INTRODUCTION

1 Timothy was written by Paul to Timothy around 62-67 AD, after his first stint in Roman imprisonment. This book is written following the conclusion of the book of Acts. Paul had planted the church in Ephesus, and upon their visit, there were problems that Timothy was to stay and deal with while Paul headed west. This wasn't written directly to us, but it's preserved for us to understand God, Jesus Christ, and the proper function of an assembly.

So far in 1 Timothy, we have Paul addressing Timothy in his responsibility:

- **Urgent Charge Against False Doctrines (1:3-4):** Paul urges Timothy to confront those teaching strange doctrines, myths, and endless genealogies, which fuel unproductive speculation and distract from God's stewardship plan that is advanced through objective faith and doctrinal knowledge.
- **True Goal of Instruction—Love (1:5-7):** The aim of apostolic teaching is agape love, arising from a pure heart (clean thoughts free of corruption), a good conscience (godly evaluation), and sincere faith (unfeigned, objective belief in God's truths), contrasting with those who swerve into fruitless discussions and teaching the Law incorrectly.
- **Proper Use of the Law (1:8-11):** The Law is good and advantageous when used correctly; not for the righteous (believers justified by faith) but for the unrighteous to reveal sin and the need for a Savior; misuses include seeking salvation or spiritual maturity through it.
- **Paul's Testimony of Grace and Mercy (1:12-14):** Christ enabled (the message) and appointed Paul to service despite his past, showcasing God's abundant mercy and grace in calling him to service when he should have been disqualified.

A TRUSTWORTHY STATEMENT (1:15-17)

By the end of Paul's ministry, the church had developed well-known doctrinal statements. Paul identifies these as "trustworthy statements." The Greek is "πιστὸς ὁ λόγος – pistos ho logos," which translated is "faithful the word."

The word "πιστὸς pistos" is an adjective and works as a quality of the noun "ὁ λόγος." This would then be translated into English as "The word is faithful."

"ὁ λόγος" refers to a message, a statement, or a doctrine in this context. This is not a reference to Jesus (ὁ λόγος in John 1). The phrase is found 5 times in the Bible, all in the Pastoral Epistles, and refers to a concise true statement.

We need to understand these statements not as being difficult but as basic doctrinal statements.

1 Timothy Lesson 4

1 Timothy 1:15-20 – The Faithful Statement, Keeping Faith and a Good Conscience

The first appears here in 1 Timothy 1:15; others are found in 3:1, 4:7-9, 2 Timothy 2:11-13, and Titus 3:4-8. What are these statements?

1. 1 Timothy 1:15 – Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.
2. 1 Timothy 3:1 – If any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires.
3. 1 Timothy 4:7-9 – Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness; for bodily training is just slightly beneficial, but godliness is beneficial for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.
4. 2 Timothy 2:11-13 – For if we died with Him, we will also live with Him; If we endure, we will also reign with Him; If we deny Him, He will also deny us; If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.
5. Titus 3:1-7 – Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed, to slander no one, not to be contentious, to be gentle, showing every consideration for all people. For we too were once foolish, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we did in righteousness, but in accordance with His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He richly poured out upon us through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

This statement is worthy of full acceptance. This refers to receiving the message into the mind with agreement. There is nothing to doubt about its truthfulness.

In 1 Timothy 1:15-17, we have a couple of points to make:

1. This is not exclusive, but it is of foremost importance (1 Corinthians 15:3-4).
2. “Sinners” is not judgmental, for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.
3. Paul considers himself, and rightfully so, as the chief of all sinners.
4. Paul being used by God demonstrates God’s perfect patience.
5. The example is for those who would believe (this includes us).
6. The attention goes to God alone.
7. Paul lists four of God’s attributes:
 1. King Eternal - This attribute highlights God's sovereignty throughout history. In the context of 1 Timothy, it underscores God's sovereignty amid false doctrines that distort truth (Psalm 145:13; Daniel 4:3).
 2. Immortal - Imperishable or not subject to decay/death. It describes something free from deterioration or mortality, emphasizing indestructibility and eternal constancy (Romans 1:23; 1 Peter 1:23).

1 Timothy Lesson 4

1 Timothy 1:15-20 – The Faithful Statement, Keeping Faith and a Good Conscience

3. Invisible - Unseen, denoting that which cannot be perceived by physical sight or senses. This highlights God's transcendence and spiritual nature, beyond human sensory experience, contrasting with visible idols or creations (Romans 1:20; John 1:18; Colossians 1:15).
4. Only God - Unique, emphasizing exclusivity as the one true deity. This declares God as the singular divine being, unrivaled by false gods. It underscores God's sufficiency and uniqueness in salvation (Psalm 86:10; Isaiah 41:4, 44:6-7).

KEEPING FAITH AND A GOOD CONSCIENCE (1:18-20)

Paul redirects Timothy by telling him that he is giving him a command. The word *command* is more of an instruction (to emphatically announce), and this instruction is given (set before him, entrusted is not a good translation) to Timothy and is in accordance with prophecies previously made.

We are not privy to this prophecy. But based on the information we have in the letters, we can say what this prophecy would have included. But we must make sure not to assume this is exclusive.

1. That he would be influential in defending the Gospel and the truth of Jesus Christ.
2. That the Holy Spirit gave Timothy what is necessary to teach and guide others.
3. There is NO indication that this involves tongues, prophecy, healing, or any other supernatural powers associated with the apostolic powers.

The instruction was to fight the good fight (of faith – 1 Timothy 6:12; 2 Timothy 4:7). The participle keeping is contemporaneous with fight, meaning that the instruction to fight the good fight is or at least involves keeping faith and a good conscience.

Keeping faith is about maintaining the doctrine of the Apostles and Prophets. This is the first and primary responsibility of Timothy and all who follow in his footsteps.

Keeping a good conscience involves behavior, purity, and love.

1 Timothy 3:9; 4:12; 6:11; 2 Timothy 1:13; 2:22; 3:10; Titus 2:2.

Paul concludes this section, stating that some have suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith. They did not keep the faith; they strayed from pure doctrine; they turned aside to fruitless discussion; they wanted to be teachers of the Law even though they did not understand either what they were saying. These two men were evidently so egregious in their failing in the faith that Paul is announcing an apostolic judgment against them.

What was this judgment? The typical thought is that there was some physical repercussion, similar to that of Corinth or Thyatira. Many have used this to warn believers about physical punishment for sin or falling from the faith. But we need to make a few observations here.

1 Timothy Lesson 4

1 Timothy 1:15-20 – The Faithful Statement, Keeping Faith and a Good Conscience

There is no instruction to Timothy or warning to others. This was a special situation where Paul decided what was to be done. Notice that Paul does not give any instruction to Timothy or to anyone to repeat this. Now that does not mean that failure and sin do not have their consequences, but we need to remove fear from our motivation and be trained by the grace and love of God for maintaining faith and godliness (Titus 2:11-12).

CONCLUSION

In this passage, the Apostle Paul provides the foundational truth for Timothy as he takes on the important task of leading the assembly in Asia Minor. He begins by presenting his own life as the ultimate testament to God's grace, showcasing how the "chief of sinners" was shown mercy to demonstrate God's perfect patience, as Paul was not only saved from judgment, but he was also called to be an apostle, even though he should have been disqualified. This serves as the backdrop to one of the "doctrinal statements that are faithful," that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Paul then issues a command to Timothy to "fight the good fight" by holding onto two crucial things: the faith, which is the pure, sound doctrine of the apostles, and a good conscience, which is a life of love and purity that reflects that doctrine. Paul then points out that some have strayed from sound doctrine and suffered shipwreck.

The challenge this week is very simple: Do we have a solid understanding of the basic doctrines of the Bible?

1. God provides salvation by grace when a person believes in Jesus.
2. The nature and character of the Tri-une God
3. The promises and faithfulness of God
4. The person and work of Jesus Christ as our example of humility and godly behavior
5. The hope of Jesus is what we are looking toward next.
6. We live in response to the grace of God.
7. Spiritual maturity is achieved through learning, believing, and being firm in the doctrines of God, not being driven by every wind of doctrine.
8. To be a complete believer, one needs to incorporate the doctrines of God into their thinking, have the mind of Christ, and use that to make good decisions.