

1 Timothy Lesson 2

1 Timothy 1:1-7 – Combating False Teaching

INTRODUCTION

We're kicking off this expositional series on 1 Timothy, and our goal is to move through it fluidly, drawing out the principles that reveal God's truth for Timothy, Ephesus, and us. This letter, written by Paul to Timothy around AD 62-67, comes from a real historical moment. Paul had planted the church in Ephesus, a massive Roman city in Asia Minor, full of trade, temples like the one to Artemis, and a mix of Jewish and pagan influences. Bad doctrine was around every corner, and some were twisting teachings in ways that distracted from the core message.

Paul left Timothy in Ephesus to sort things out, urging him to stay put and deal with these issues head-on. This wasn't written directly to us in the 21st century, but it's preserved for us to understand God as our Savior, Christ as our hope, and how the Holy Spirit enables a life rooted in grace. Salvation comes by grace through what we believe about Christ: His death, resurrection, and promise; and living the Christian life flows from relying on that same grace, not our own efforts.

Today, we're covering verses 1-7, where Paul sets the stage by affirming his authority, charging Timothy to combat deviant teachings, and pointing to the true goal: love from a proper doctrinal understanding. We'll break it into three points, keeping things focused on the text and understood according to proper hermeneutical principles. Think of this as a mentor's heartfelt letter, showing us how to advance God's stewardship, which is all about completing His will in the function of the church.

PAUL'S APOSTOLIC GREETING (1:1-2)

Right away, Paul identifies himself as an apostle, not by his own choice, but by the direct command of God our Savior and Christ our hope. In Greek, *commandment* is ἐπιταγή (epitagē), meaning an authoritative order. This emphasizes that his role comes straight from a divine authority. This sets up the whole letter: everything Paul says carries weight because it's from God Himself. Historically, in Ephesus, where false ideas were swirling, this reminded Timothy and the church that true teaching isn't opinion, it's anchored in God's word.

He addresses Timothy as *my true child in the faith*. That word *true* is γνήσιος (gnēsios), meaning legitimate or genuine. It's not contrasting with "fake children" in a literal sense, but it's a warm term of endearment, highlighting Timothy's authenticity as a spiritual son. Timothy stands out as a proven and faithful worker for the Gospel and the establishment of the church. Paul mentored him during his missionary journeys (as we see in Acts 16), and this relationship models how doctrine and mentorship build the body of Christ (2 Timothy 2:1-3).

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The greeting wraps up with *grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord*. *Grace* is God's unearned favor; it's how we're saved, not by works but by believing in Jesus Christ. But we also receive grace as believers, having every spiritual need met and our eternal destiny being secure. *Mercy* adds compassion despite our failings and permits us to function in the administration of God, even when we fail. *Peace* brings wholeness, contentment, and assurance with and from God as we understand His grace and love and dwell on these things (Philippians 4:8-9).

In the broader sense, this echoes greetings in other letters like Romans or Galatians, where Paul stresses grace as the entry point to salvation and daily living. For us today, this principle means our identity in Christ isn't earned; it's received through grace. Whether you're a leader like Timothy or someone learning and living your life, this is your main viewpoint as a believer. Our standing before God is secure because of what Christ did, not what you do. Therefore, live in accordance with the truth and love of God out of thankfulness, not fear.

THE URGENT CHARGE TO COMBAT FALSE DOCTRINES (1:3-4)

Paul recalls urging Timothy to stay in Ephesus while he headed to Macedonia. The purpose? To "instruct" or charge certain people not to *teach strange doctrines*. In Greek, that's ἑτεροδιδασκαλεῖν (heterodidaskaleō), meaning to teach other or different things, deviations from the standard apostolic doctrine. The vocabulary points to alternatives that stray from the core teachings of the apostles and prophets.

These deviant doctrines are tied to, but not entirely separate from, *myths and endless genealogies*. *Myths* (μῦθοι, mythoi) are fabricated stories or fables, likely speculative tales drawn from Jewish traditions or local folklore. *Genealogies* (γενεαλογίαι genealogiai) refer to lengthy lineage lists, perhaps twisted to claim special spiritual status or add esoteric layers to the faith. They're not wholly distinct; the myths and genealogies are examples of how these strange doctrines are manifested, people devoting attention to them instead of the gospel.

How do they *give rise to mere speculation*? The Greek says they "provide inquiries" (ἐκζητήσεις, ekzētēseis), meaning they fuel endless debates, questions, and controversies that go nowhere productive. Instead of building up, they distract, cause confusion, and lead to error. The NASB adds "furthering" for clarity, but the Greek contrasts them directly with *the administration of God* (οἰκονομίαν θεοῦ, oikonomian theou), God's stewardship or household management plan. This plan operates "by faith," where faith means "that which is believed," the doctrinal content which is:

- Based on knowledge (Ephesians 4:11-13; Colossians 2:2-3)
- Is objective (Titus 1:9; 2 Timothy 3:16-17)
- Is not capricious (1 Corinthians 14:33)

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In the rest of 1 Timothy, this ties into warnings about false teachers (4:1-3, 6:3-5), and biblically, it parallels Titus 1:14 or 3:9, where similar Jewish myths and genealogies are called out. Historically, in Ephesus's diverse environment, these could blend Jewish legalism with pagan mysticism, pulling people away from simple doctrine.

THE TRUE GOAL OF INSTRUCTION – LOVE (1:5-7)

The *goal* (τέλος, telos) of apostolic doctrine is *love* (ἀγάπη agape), the unconditional, self-sacrificial desire (or activity) for the betterment of the other, regardless of reciprocation. But it springs "from" (ἐκ, ek) three sources: a pure heart, a good conscience, and sincere faith.

- *Pure heart* (καθαρός καρδιά, katharos kardia) – *pure* indicates something that is unmixed, clean from corruption. The *heart* is not emotions, but the inner recess of the mind. The goal of biblical doctrine is to cleanse your thoughts, to keep your mind clear and free of corruption (Romans 12:2; 2 Corinthians 10:4-5; Psalm 119:9-11).
- *Good conscience* (συνείδησις ἀγαθός suneidesis agathos) – *good* is of a godly standard. God defines what is good. This is compared to "kathos," which is beneficial or helpful (1 Peter 2:12). *Conscience* is another thought word. This is a compound word from "with" and "what is known through seeing." Understand this as "a proper evaluation" or "a better understanding"—making a decision within oneself with a godly proper evaluation (Philippians 1:9-10; Colossians 1:9).
- *Sincere faith* (πίστις ἀνυπόκριτος pistis anupokritos) – *faith* is a doctrine that we are convinced is true. *Sincere* is actually "not insincere." The root word is "krino" which means to decide or judge. This is not a word that means pretentious, but what is judged without speculation, a belief that is based on substance rather than meaningless speculation. This is unfeigned doctrine, that which is believed for a good reason. This isn't subjective, but the real, objective content rooted in God's truths.
- All of these lead to and should result in love.

Sadly, some "strayed" from these and "turned aside" (swerved) to *fruitless discussion* (ματαιολογίαν, mataiologian - empty babble). They want to be "teachers of the Law," but they don't grasp what they're saying or the things they "make confident assertions" about (strongly affirm or declare emphatically).

These men desire status but lack understanding, babbling nonsense and boldly claiming authority on unbiblical matters. Some biblical examples include the Pharisees in Matthew 23:2-7, confidently teaching traditions but missing the Law's intent, or Job's friends in Job 4:7-8, 8:5-6, asserting boldly about suffering without insight, later rebuked (Job 42:7). Even the

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Sadducees in Mark 12:18-27 confidently denied resurrection and were ignorant of Scripture. These show the danger: confident but misguided claims divide and distract.

Now we must bring this back to home. It is clear what Timothy was dealing with, and now we know what the goals are. In our day and time, we also deal with other doctrines, myths, and teachings that are based on speculation and pointless debates, which lead nowhere.

Some examples include:

- Rapture date setting
- Bible code
- Prosperity Gospel (American Gospel)
- Gap Theory/Day Age Theory (Creation Alternative views)
- Replacement Theology (Church replaces Israel)

In 1 Corinthians 4:6, Paul tells the believers in Corinth not to exceed (go beyond) what is written. This is why we emphasize that all doctrine (theology) must be observed objectively, free from man's traditions or baseless opinions.

This is accomplished by holding the Bible in the highest regard, depending on the text alone and not personal experience or leaps of inference.

How to read the text is just as valuable. We must read the Bible plainly and take it in its historical context, ensuring that we understand the original languages based on vocabulary and grammar.

Challenge: Identify an "other doctrine" in your life and replace it with a doctrine that is solid, objective, and leads to love.