

## **Knowing Our Roots – 1 Timothy 1:1-11**

**Our goal is NOT to talk about politics or other churches.**

**Main Idea:** The Church is found wherever the will of God is present.

### **I. The Warning | 1 Timothy 1:1-5**

The first letter written from Paul to Timothy is not a manual written to an anonymous church situation but to his disciple and church start at Ephesus. When Paul writes about how to conduct oneself in the house of God, it is the Ephesian house of God with which he is immediately concerned. This letter is a document addressing specific issues within a community of believers. There are, therefore, several reasons why Paul wrote the first epistle to Timothy: (1) To encourage Timothy to stay on at Ephesus and deal with the significant and challenging issues that had arisen. (2) To provide authoritative instruction on how the household of God was to conduct itself. (3) To combat false teaching directly and remind Timothy of how he was to conduct himself as a leader in the church. Although the letter starts with a singular benediction to Timothy, the benediction at the end of chapter 6 is given in the plural (6:21), indicating that, like the rest of Paul's Epistles, this letter was for the whole church. Paul offers his purpose statement in the third chapter of the letter, "I am writing these things to you so that you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God" (3:14-15). Paul's main concern was distortions of essential doctrines of the faith he once taught the church, and now, under the influence of false teachers, began to be ignored and draw people away from God's design for the church.

The presence of false teachers was no surprise to Paul. When he made his tearful farewell speech to the Ephesian elders in the book of Acts, he warned them about this: "I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them" (Acts 20:29-30). The contemporary church faces the same danger. True bible-based churches must be ready to oppose self-appointed leaders and teachers. The threat in the church of Ephesus was internal, not external. The problem was not coming from outside but from within the church. The problem was also not caused by people who did not know what they were doing; the false teachers knew precisely what they were doing. This group of people which Paul identifies as "false teachers," has been purposefully teaching God's flock what Paul defines as "false doctrine." These teachers thought of themselves as the theological masters of the time; they were placed in leadership positions in the church without being called by God to be there. If a local church is not instructed regularly and faithfully in the Truth, the people will become susceptible to individuals who appear as sheep but are wolves seeking to lead people astray from the Truth.

### **To Ponder:**

1. When it comes to Spiritual Leadership in the church, in what ways do you see our culture valuing secular influences over Biblical truth?
2. Why is the teaching of sound doctrine so important? Can you give examples of "false doctrines" taught in churches today?
3. How can a church help you become a better disciple of Christ? What can we learn from Paul's way of discipling Timothy?

## **II. The Standard | 1 Timothy 1:6-7**

In verses 6-7, Paul describes the problem and what Timothy must do about it. The false teachers were dedicating their theological knowledge to teach the church based on OT law by producing meaningless speculations rather than solid biblical doctrine. Paul emphasizes his opposition, not toward the law but toward the self-appointed teachers of the law in Ephesus. To distort the law is to tell God that He is wrong, and we are right. The false teachers in Ephesus were masters in doing this; they were trained theologians just like the Pharisees and Scribes. However, the main purpose of the church is not to produce theologians but to produce disciples of Jesus Christ. And to be a disciple, one must not only know the Truth but also live according to the Truth. In verse 7, Paul says the opponents want to be teachers of the law but are ignorant of it. They were using the law to govern the lives of people in the church rather than to guide people in the Truth.

Paul's emphasis on sound doctrine is particularly a valuable corrective for the pluralistic times we live in, in which many say, "Your theology is just your opinion. I interpret the Bible one way, and you another way." In this case, someone is wrong (if not both). The Bible has one meaning, and its interpretation relies on the Bible itself. A true biblical teacher defends the text by pointing the challenge of biblical Truth to the Bible (Matthew 9:9-13; 12:7; Hosea 6:6).

### **To Ponder:**

1. What does it take for someone to be a leader/teacher in a church?
2. What kind of "vain discussions" should we avoid in the church?
3. How do you look for answers when you have questions regarding the Bible? How do you measure what sound doctrine is and what it is not?

## **III. The Purpose | 1 Timothy 1:8-11**

Wrong views about God stem from wrong views about our human condition. In verses 9-10, Paul highlights that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine (v.9-10). The law exposes the most extreme forms of defiance and insubordination to God. The law is, according to Paul, for "whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine, in accordance to the glorious gospel of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted" (v.10-11). The whole point of the law is to expose our need for God and forgiveness found exclusively in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus is not the law but the fulfillment of the law. The purpose of the law is to point sinful human beings to their need for repentance, which is why the first thing sinners need to know is they are sinners; that is the entryway to the Gospel. No one who does not understand their sinful condition will ever be able or willing to receive Christ in their hearts. Sinners are the real enemy of the law (Rom.3:20). However, sinners are also the real target of the Gospel (Luke 19:10).

Those who love the Gospel want to see sins denounced and submit to what God says about them. Those who love the Gospel are able to profit from the fact that God does not allow their iniquities unconsciously to fester or their sins to go unpunished, and this is what true biblical churches teach. The purpose of teaching sound doctrine is to lead people toward a lifelong pursuit of godliness. A willingness to be rebuked by the Bible is the beginning of life as a disciple of Christ.

### **To Ponder:**

1. What role does the law play in the life of a believer?
2. Are you more tempted to disregard the law and live without correction or make the law an overbearing, legalistic standard in your life?