



First Baptist Church Selmer

"ORDER IN THE... CHURCH!" • SOUND DOCTRINE • 1 TIMOTHY 1:1-11 • 3/3/2024

MAIN POINT

The foundation of a healthy church begins with distinguishing between Biblically sound doctrine and doctrine of the world.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

If you grew up going to church, what was your experience like?

If you didn't grow up in church, what was your perception of church growing up?

What is the central message that the church should strive to communicate clearly?

The central message of the church must be the gospel of salvation by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Because the church is full of sinners, it will inevitably falter in consistently delivering that message. Paul began his first letter to Timothy, a young pastor he had discipled, by warning him against false teachers who were distorting the gospel through petty arguments over myths and genealogies. By looking at Paul's warning to Timothy, we come to know why the gospel is good news and how God intends that good news to be the central message that guides us.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 TIMOTHY 1:1-2.

1 *"Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope,*
2 *To Timothy, my true child in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ*
Jesus our Lord." (ESV)

How did Paul introduce himself in this letter in verse 1? Why do you think he introduced himself this way?

Paul introduced himself in 1 Timothy as he did in many of his letters as *"an apostle of Jesus Christ."* His introduction establishes that he was *"commanded"* by God to deliver this message to Timothy and to us. Paul saw his apostleship and the authority with which He wrote as products of God's grace. Given that Paul would command Timothy to charge certain persons to stop teaching *"different doctrine,"* it was important for Paul to establish his apostolic authority up front. Paul referred to God as *"our savior"* and Christ as *"our hope"* to remind Timothy and his church that their only hope of living for the glory of God was to trust in the gospel of salvation by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

How did Paul describe Timothy in verse 2? What does that tell us about their relationship?

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 TIMOTHY 1:3-7.

3 *"As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge*
certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, 4 *nor to devote themselves to myths and*
endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by
faith. 5 *The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a*
sincere faith. 6 *Certain persons, by swerving from these, have wandered away into vain*
discussion, 7 *desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying*
or the things about which they make confident assertions." (ESV)

Why did Paul encourage Timothy to *"remain at Ephesus"* (v. 3)?

What was the result of the teaching of those who were teaching *"different doctrine"* in Ephesus (vv. 4, 6)? Why was Paul concerned about these false teachers?

What does Paul indicate sound biblical teaching should produce in the hearts of its hearers (vv. 4-5)?

While the exact nature of the false teachers in Ephesus remains unclear, Paul states the dangerous effect of their teaching: it produced *"speculations rather than the stewardship that is from faith"* (v. 4) and caused people to wander *"into vain discussion"* (v. 6). In other words this false teaching encouraged debates and speculations about secondary things rather than encouraging faith-driven devotion and gospel-centered living.

How do we sometimes get caught up in speculations or vain discussions about Scripture? What must we do to keep focused on the most important things concerning the gospel message?

What did Paul hope his and Timothy's teaching would produce in those who heard them (v. 5)? How was their goal different from the false teachers?

There is great danger in sitting among other Christians simply reading a passage and asking, "What does this mean to you?" For the elders in the Ephesian church, those inside the church had become their mission field. Accumulating knowledge became their primary focus instead of balancing knowledge of the Word with practical application. God's Word should indeed be faithfully and rightly divided (2 Timothy 2:15) but equally so, it should be trusted and obeyed.

"Sound doctrine is God's road map for living faithfully in the world." - Bobby Jamieson
(*Sound Doctrine*)

The goal of Paul and Timothy's teaching was to produce love that issues from *"a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith"* (v. 5). For our lives to be marked by such love requires that we come to know God personally by grace through faith in His Son (Paul will illustrate this further in verses 8-11 by describing the role of the law). No one is good (Rom. 3:10) and all have fallen short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23). The only way to have a *"pure heart... good conscience... and sincere faith"* is by trusting in Christ for the forgiveness of our sins and living faithfully according to His Word.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 TIMOTHY 1:8-11.

8 "Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully, 9 understanding this, 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, 10 the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else

is contrary to sound doctrine, 11 in accordance with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted." (ESV)

Why is the law so important? What is the purpose of the law?

How does the law point us to our need for Christ?

What does Paul state (v.10) leads to ungodly living?

The false teachers Paul warned Timothy of were likely promoting salvation by works in their various debates. Works-based theology has always been enticing because appeals to our pride by elevating the contributions of people over and above the grace of God. In verses 9-10, Paul laid out a list of sins that the law exposes, illustrating the law's limited usefulness. The law exposes our sinful nature but does not offer us forgiveness. Thus, the law demonstrates our desperate need for a savior, whereas the gospel is the only answer to the sin that separates us from God.

Doctrinal departure is followed closely by moral departure. Godly living walks hand in hand with sound doctrine. Simply, we must know the Word in order to live out the Word. Sound doctrine is at the heart of practical living.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

In what areas of your life has God recently revealed your need to grow in the Word of God?

In what ways can your group challenge one another to not only grow in your knowledge of God's Word but also in living it out?

PRAYER

Thank God for exposing our sin through the law and offering us the solution to our sin through the death and resurrection of Christ.

COMMENTARY

| 1 TIMOTHY 1:1-11

1:1–2. Paul’s introductory greeting to Timothy and the church at Ephesus comes loaded with authority. In his opening sentence, he drew attention to his apostleship, stating that it came by the command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope. The letter was addressed to Timothy (1:2), but it was intended to be read before the entire assembly at Ephesus. By addressing Timothy as a true child in the faith, Paul accomplished two intentions—to encourage Timothy, who was faced with the difficult task of untangling problems within the church, and to let the church know that Timothy came with the authority and approval of Paul.

1:3. From the church’s beginning there have been heresies, rumors, and defections. In the first century, new churches were being formed, and established churches were learning to create community and order. During these beginning years, false doctrine attacked the foundations of the faith. Some of the attacks came from without, but others sprang from within. Timothy, therefore, had been told to stay in Ephesus instead of continuing into Macedonia with Paul. He was to command certain men not to teach false doctrines any longer. They undermined the basics of faith and belief. These teachings were simply untrue. The standard for truth was the Old Testament, the words of Christ, and the teaching of the apostles. All else was wrong, false, untrue.

1:4. Paul condemned the false teachings which were being propagated in Ephesus, calling them myths and endless genealogies. The myths of the first century were more than fairy tales; they were legends used primarily to promote immorality. These were stories taken from the past and used to justify behavior that was contrary to God’s call to righteousness. Some teachers used the Old Testament to invent allegories and frivolous spiritualizing. Every truth was turned to symbol and every event became a metaphor, so that soon they had “proof texts” for their own ideas, biases, and desires. The phrase “*endless genealogies*” refers to histories and prophetic speculations rising out of guesswork and the desire to be different. Such people became the special interpreters of Scripture; they claimed special knowledge. Paul recognized that these teachings resulted in division. Rather than equipping the church, these false teachers were creating factions, confusion, and disrepute for the church of Christ.

1:5. The reason Paul wanted Timothy to stop these people from continuing their false beliefs and to prevent them from spreading destructive ideas was love. Instead of controversy, our lives should be marked by love—first for God, then for others.

A good conscience had a slightly different meaning for the Ephesians than it does today in Western societies. For first-century people, conscience dealt with a person’s conduct

within the chosen group. A good conscience meant living according to the standards and practices that the group (in this case the church) deemed proper and acceptable. It meant living without shame among one's peers or companions. We view the conscience as if it is concerned with right and wrong on an individual basis. We would do well to recapture the ancient meaning and sense of accountability. Sincere faith assures correct behavior because it comes from the revelation of God. The Word of God provides the directives for Christian conduct and belief. Paul's desire for the church was to produce people who embraced correct doctrine as formed through the Old Testament, the prophets, Christ, and the apostles; people whom Christ had cleansed from sin and who were living in that forgiveness through the continual purifying of their heart.

1:6. According to Paul, some of the believers had wandered away into vain discussion. The false teachers had turned a different way, their inner spirits becoming muddled by sin and wrong thinking, their behavior ineffective and at odds within the church, and their reputations built on controversy rather than love. Because of this, what they taught was meaningless. It was fruitless, empty, and wrong.

1:7. Paul asserted that these people want to be teachers of the law. It seems that the driving force of these teachers was to attract admiration and respect, to gain the title "teacher of the law." They wanted others to regard them as authoritative interpreters of Scripture. They wanted a following. But no matter their desire, they did not know what they were talking about. Their ideas and intricate systems of thinking were groundless. There was no truth in them, despite their confidence. They could assert a position, even when the structure of thought and belief was wrong. But sincerity does not automatically translate into truth.

1:8. Paul declared that the law is good if one uses it properly. Of course, the law is good, but like many good things, it can be misused. The good of the law is clear: It shows us what God is like and what He wants us to be and do.

1:9–11. Paul went on to elaborate on the "proper use" of the law as he put forth three pairs or groups of sinners: lawless and disobedient; the ungodly and sinners; the unholy and profane. This catalog of sins covers everything and everyone—those who by outward acts disobey the standard of God; those who defile themselves inwardly as in coveting, hatred, and disrespect; and those who are defiantly opposed to God's authority. No one escapes the judgment of the law. Paul selected perhaps the most abhorrent sins from these broad categories, each with a deliberate tie to "the law"—the Ten Commandments. He listed those who strike their fathers or mothers, as opposed to the command to honor

your father and mother (Exod. 20:12); murderers, in contrast to the command not to kill (Exod. 20:13); adulterers and perverts are set against the command not to commit adultery (Exod. 20:14); slave traders are contrasted with the law not to steal (Exod. 20:15), and liars and perjurers contradict the command not to give false testimony against your neighbor (Exod. 20:16). The purpose of the law is to point out how good and holy the Lord is and how righteous His doctrines are. It points out our inability to live righteously as God demands. The law points out our guilt and sentences us to condemnation (Rom. 3:19–20). But the law also guides us to the gospel as given in the apostolic writings. It shows us our need for the Savior (Gal. 3:24). The law does not save us; it points us to the one who can. True doctrine is not theoretical. It changes lives and produces a new kind of person.