

# Study 6: 1st Timothy Chapter 1

## **Introduction**

Paul gets “straight down to business” as he discusses the situation in Ephesus, and gives instructions to Timothy to deal with the situation. The situation in Ephesus was serious, and Paul had attempted to straighten things out whilst he was there, however those who were causing the trouble (of leading others astray) had apparently refused to leave.

## **Body of the Study**

### **Introduction**

### **The situation in Ephesus**

### **The purpose of the Law**

### **Thanksgiving for God’s grace**

### **Charge to Timothy**

## **Homework and preparation for next week:**

- *If Paul had “all authority” as an apostle, why could he not straighten out the problems in the church in Ephesus whilst he was there? Why did he need to have Timothy do something that he was unable to do himself? What does this tell you about the powers of an apostle?*
- *The problems in Ephesus appear to have come from the leaders with in the church leading people away with them. How do we make sure that this doesn’t happen in the church today? What safety valves has God put in place in the church to stop this happening?*
- *Read the notes as a review of the study*
- *Read chapter 2 in preparation for the next study,.*

## Notes for study 6: 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy Chapter 1

Paul gets “straight down to business” as he discusses the situation in Ephesus, and gives instructions to Timothy to deal with the situation. The situation in Ephesus was serious, and Paul had attempted to straighten things out whilst he was there, however those who were causing the trouble (of leading others astray) had apparently refused to leave.

### **Introduction**

As with the introduction to Titus, Paul has no need to establish his credentials with Timothy whom he regards as “...*my true son in the faith...*” (1:1:2 NKJV). However, he asserts his authority as an apostle, so that the readers of the letter (specifically Timothy, but generically the Ephesian brethren, and also us) might know that he is writing as an apostle (not as Citizen Paul) with God’s full authority behind what he has to say. “...*an apostle...by the commandment of God our Saviour and the Lord Jesus Christ, our hope...*” (1:1:1 NKJV).

Unlike Paul’s other letters, there is only a very brief introduction. [And hence there is no exercise to identify the key points from the introduction and the conclusion.] The letter gets straight down to business. Like the Thessalonian letters, Paul emphasises the full deity of Jesus when he describes Him as “...*the Lord Jesus Christ...*” in 1:1:1 & 1:1:2.

The purpose of the letter is given in 1:3:14-15 “...*that you might know how you ought to behave in the church...*” and in 1:1:3-4 “...*remain in Ephesus to command certain men not to continue to teach false doctrines, or myths, or endless genealogies...*”

Like the instructions to Titus, Timothy was to set the disorderly church (in this case in Ephesus) in order. The instruction to Timothy (what he has to do) is clear:

- Command *It was a commandment, and not optional*
- certain men *It wasn’t everyone, but only some*
- not to continue *They were already doing it, and they needed to stop*
- teaching false doctrines *They were not teaching the truth*
- or devoting themselves to myths *They were not believing and practicing the truth*
- and endless genealogies *Most likely these were the Judaisers*
- which cause division *God wants us to be united, not divided*
- rather than godly edification *God wants us to be “built up” not destroyed by controversy over minor issues*
- which is by faith *We must trust in God, and walk the way He wants us to, whether we can see the reason behind what He says, or not.*

### **The situation in Ephesus**

Paul spells out the reason why he has given these instructions (commandments). It does not come because of any malice towards anyone, but “...*the purpose of this commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith...*” (1:1:5 NKJV). Paul’s motives are pure, and he wants to encourage the brethren to grow towards perfection.

However, there were some in the church at Ephesus (some of the elders Acts 20:30) who did not have these pure motives “...*some, having strayed, have turned aside to idle talk...*” (1:1:6 NKJV)

Rather than being the leaders that they ought to be, who because of their knowledge and experience are equipped to teach others, they are not competent to teach “...*desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say nor the things which they affirm...*” (1:1:7 NKJV).

## ***The purpose of the Law***

Paul gives a brief discussion on the purpose of the Law (of Moses), which suggests that the problem might have been with the Judaisers trying to bind it on the Gentiles – although there is no definite article (*the* Law), so the discussion could refer to Law in general. The discussion follows closely to Paul’s line of argument in Rom 7:7-25. The law has a place, and through it we learn good and evil, however the law really only *points out* good and evil, and if we are doing good then we do not need the law. “...*the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly, and for sinners...*” (1:1:9 NKJV).

He points out a *list of sins* that identify the nature of the unrighteous who ought to be brought into line by the Law:

- lawless
- insubordinate
- ungodly
- sinners
- unholy
- profane
- murderers of fathers or mothers
- manslayers
- fornicators
- sodomites
- kidnappers
- liars
- perjurers
- anything else that is contrary to sound doctrine

The list is typical of Paul’s writing (c/f Rom 1:24-32), the first six covering three groups of pairs (lawless and insubordinate; ungodly and sinners; unholy and profane). The next groups follow the fifth to the ninth commandments. In conclusion, Paul adds “...*anything else that is contrary to sound doctrine, according to the...gospel...which was committed to me...*” (1:1:10). He acknowledges the strange situation in which *the chief of sinners* was to be entrusted with *the glorious gospel of the blessed God*, and he uses this as the introduction into the next section.

## ***Thanksgiving for God’s grace***

Paul is thankful that he has been entrusted with the gospel, and “...*He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry...*” (1:1:12 NKJV). Usually Paul’s addresses of thanksgiving are directed to God, but here he directs it to *Christ Jesus our Lord*, as he emphasises the Lordship of Jesus.

Despite having persecuted and wasted the christians, Paul “...*did it ignorantly, in unbelief...*” (1:1:13), and for this reason he “...*obtained mercy...*” (1:1:13). We should point out, that even though Paul sinned against God by his actions (just as we all sin), and his sin was in ignorance, he did not obtain pardon without obeying the gospel. There are many in the world who are lost in ignorance. They can obtain God’s forgiveness just as Paul did – by obeying the gospel. We have a responsibility to go out and teach them. Ignorance does not mean that God will overlook sin.

But, because Paul’s heart was open to God, he repented of his sin, and obeyed God through faith and was baptised into Christ. God was merciful to him in giving his grace to overpower the sin “...*the grace of God was exceedingly abundant, with faith and the love which are in Christ Jesus...*” (1:1:14 NKJV). Paul could look back at his situation and recognise that “...*Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief...*” (1:1:15 NKJV).

Although he had been *the chief of sinners*, he became the great example of God’s forgiveness. If Paul could be saved, then anyone can! “...*for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me,*

*the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life...*” (1:1:16 NIV). He concludes with a prayer of thankfulness to God “*...to Him be glory and honour for ever and ever...*” (1:1:17).

### **Charge to Timothy**

Paul emphasises the instruction that he has given to Timothy, as he empowers him to go about fulfilling his mission of setting the disorderly church in order. He was “*...to wage a good warfare...*” as he went about his duty “*...having faith and a good conscience...*” (1:1:19 NKJV). The reference to “*...the prophecies previously made concerning you...*” may well have reference to the spiritual gifts that Timothy has (1:4:14), or it may be that Timothy was selected for the work in a similar way to Paul and Silas (Acts 13:2).

Paul makes a strong contrast between faith and good conscience. Some of the leaders in Ephesus had “*...rejected their good consciences, and because of that they had made shipwreck of the faith...*” (1:1:19). They had learned the truth, but had moved away from it and rejected it – against their conscience.

As in 1 Corinthians 8:1-13, Paul equates the belief of error with the weak conscience. If a person has been mistaught, his conscience is defiled (1 Cor 8:1-13). If he refuses to be taught better and persists in his misknowledge or misunderstanding, he is an opinionated heretic (Tit 3:10). If he reaches a point where he is no longer sensitive to the truth, his conscience is seared (1 Tim 4:2). One must not miss the force of the relationship between “sound doctrine” and “good conscience” in 1 Timothy which accords with what Paul teaches everywhere. The root cause of all the trouble is false teaching. In 1 Corinthians 8, as in 1 Timothy, Paul’s discussion links conscience (*suneidesis*) with true knowledge (*gnosis*). In the fight against Gnosticism, one fact stands out: the good conscience is equal to a knowledge of the truth and a love of the truth<sup>1</sup>.

Two of the leaders are named Hymenaeus and Alexander. Hymenaeus is named first here, and again in 2:2:17 which suggests that he might have been the ringleader. Alexander is described again in 2:4:14 where he is said to be a coppersmith. Paul had already disciplined these two men whilst he was in Ephesus “*...whom I delivered to Satan that they might learn not to blaspheme...*” (1:1:20 NKJV). However, it appears that they refused to leave, as Paul now instructs Timothy to deal with them, and he has to do so again in the second letter.

---

<sup>1</sup> Spain, Carl. “The letters of Paul to Timothy and Titus” The Living Word Commentary, ISBN 0-8344-0006-5 p.38  
Study of the Pastoral Epistles by Graeme Offer