

I OVERVIEW OF I TIMOTHY

Purpose: To give encouragement and instruction to a young leader (Timothy).

Author: Paul.

Audience: Timothy, young church leaders and believers everywhere.

Date/Setting: About 64 A.D., just prior to Paul's final imprisonment in Rome.

Blueprint:

- 1) **Instructions on right belief (1:1-20)**
- 2) Instructions for the church (2:1-3:16)
- 3) Instructions for the leaders (4:1-6:21)

Megathemes

Theme	Importance
Sound doctrine	To defend the truth, we need to know it. We must cling to the belief that Christ came to save us regardless of doubts raised by the Enemy and from people who twists the words of Scripture for their own personal gain.
Public worship	Christian character must be evident in every aspect of worship. We must rid ourselves of any anger, resentment, or offensive attire that might disrupt worship or damage church unity.
Church leadership	Church leaders must be wholly committed to Christ. Seek to develop your Christian character first before taking on the responsibilities of church leadership. Be sure to seek God, not your own ambition.
Personal discipline	To stay in good spiritual shape, you must discipline yourself to study God's Word and live a godly life. Exercise your spiritual abilities or they will atrophy.
Caring church	Caring for the family of believers demonstrates our Christ-like attitude and exhibits genuine love to non-believers

II BACKGROUND

The First Century Christian church did not have the same resources that we have today. Although inspired by the Holy Spirit, an enormous advantage over Old Testament people of faith, there were limited New Testament Scriptural writings and a full understanding of the purpose of God's church was not yet fully revealed. God's final part of His special revelation (Book of **Revelation**) was not yet given to man; to be revealed to the apostle John while in exile on the Isle of Patmos in 95 AD. Accordingly, these early Christians had some fundamental questions about what they were to believe, and this gap was filled by many of Paul's Holy Spirit-inspired letters.

In response to what the church at Ephesus was to do, Paul was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write letters to Timothy and Titus, known as the Pastoral Epistles, to encourage and instruct them on how to lead their churches; forming a handbook of beliefs and practices applicable to all saints in any church, regardless of which century they were called.

These three epistles provide effective answers to the following broad questions:

- What is your attitude? **I Timothy**
- What will you do? **II Timothy**
- What can you add? **Titus**

Over the next three months, the Holy Spirit will reveal many deep truths in these three books to equip us and enable us to fulfill our call to holiness.

III SCRIPTURE

WARNING ABOUT FALSE TEACHERS (1:1-11)

I Timothy 1 - Fighting for the Faith

I Timothy was written from Macedonia (I Timothy 1:3) by Paul to Timothy sometime after his release from Roman imprisonment after Acts 28. After his release, Paul returned to the city of Ephesus where he discovered that, during his absence, it had become a storm center of false teaching; a sad fulfillment of the prediction he had made to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:29-30. This church was surrounded by a commercial, religious, and political center filled with pagan cultures, and some of the people brought their false ideas with them. Even worse, is that some masqueraded as teachers, flagrantly teaching false doctrines, such as Gnosticism.

Paul then left Timothy in charge of affairs at Ephesus, as his own personal representative, knowing that Timothy had a tough job ahead of him. He hoped that this letter would both equip and encourage him for the challenges he would face in the future.

(1) Identity of author, Paul: Paul emphasized his credentials as apostle and authority by the commandment of God as a personal encouragement to Timothy, so the letter could be used as a letter of reference before any Ephesian Christians that were driven to error by the heretical words of false teachers.

(2) Identity of recipient, Timothy: Paul considered Timothy a true son in the faith because he probably led him and his mother to the Lord on his first missionary journey (**Acts 14:8-20; Acts 16:1**). Timothy was a resident of Lystra, a city in the province of Galatia (**Acts 16:1-3**), son of a Greek father (**Acts 16:2**) and a Jewish mother named Eunice (**II Timothy 2:5**). Timothy was the interim leader of the church at Ephesus, assuming this important role until a permanent under-shepherd was appointed.

Grace, mercy, and peace is a familiar greeting of Paul in his letters to congregations. Here, he also applied it to individuals. God grants His grace, mercy and peace to churches and to individuals that are His body.

(3-4) Paul urges Timothy to stay in Ephesus and to stay with Scripture: Timothy had a tough challenge ahead of him and Paul wanted him to remain in Ephesus and continue the work after he left. He told him this because it appeared that Timothy was discouraged and wanted to give up and leave Ephesus. There was likely both external and internal pressure for him to leave. His job was to ensure that correct doctrine was taught in Ephesus.

God will place us in difficult situations as a spiritual growth mechanism and to enhance our dependency on Him. We must set our minds to meet the challenge, or we will give up (Galatians 6:9-10).

Correct doctrine that reveals truth is vitally important to God. Today, what one believes (i.e., their doctrine) is staggeringly unimportant to many people and this spirit of the modern age has also heavily influenced Christians. We live in a society today where Pilate's question, "What is truth?" (**John 18:38**) is answered in moral relativism terms, "Whatever it means to you."

Paul's concern was that Timothy would allow others to spread these emerging Satanically-inspired doctrines. Timothy had to stand firm against difficult people and tell them that they teach no other doctrine. **It's no wonder that he felt like leaving Ephesus.**

These anthropogenic doctrines gave birth to fables and endless genealogies (Romans 1:21-24). The great danger of these fables and endless genealogies was that they were speculative and silly distractions. The church at Ephesus got carried away by emphasizing the wrong things. Paul wanted to prevent the corruption that comes when people grant authority to fables and endless genealogies instead of true doctrine. Silly distractions are also dangerous, because they take the place of godly edification which is in faith.

Ancient Jewish writings delved into the most complex genealogies, connecting them with wild speculations about spiritual mysteries. A consuming interest in these matters will serve to **crowd out godly edification** which is in faith. The eventual fruit of these anthropogenic diversions is clear. Although they may be popular and fascinating mind candy in the short-term, they do nothing to build up the body of Christ in faith; wasting value time and resources. This neutralization of spiritual growth deeply pleases the Enemy.

One of the many heresies out there was the notion that salvation depended on finding favor with an endless chain of angels leading up to God. Some Ephesians actually constructed lists and biographies of angels (e.g., Gnostic genealogies of spirits and aeons) and acted as elitists as if they possessed some secret knowledge (e.g., Nicolaitans of **Revelation 2:6**). In **Revelation 22:7-9**, John was rebuked by an angel for his inappropriate worship of this created being.

It was the angel Moroni who gave John Smith the vision in the 1830's that led to today's heretic Book of Mormon, the foundation of the church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.

(5-7) Purpose of the commandment: The purpose of the law is found in its inward work upon the heart, not in mere outward observance. Without this understanding, it is easy to become shallow legalists, who are only concerned with the external appearance of things, and not the vital matters of the heart.

If spending time in God's word isn't producing love from a pure heart, a good conscience, or sincere faith in us, something is wrong. Legalism will make us twist God's word, so that: (1) instead of showing love we are harsh and judgmental; (2) instead of having a good conscience we always feel condemned knowing we don't measure up; and. (3) instead of sincere faith we practically trust in our own ability to please God (Hebrews 11:6).

Paul's reference to idle talk has in mind vain speculations about the Scriptures, which may have analytical and entertainment value, but were never meant to be our fundamental spiritual diet. In the King James Version, idle talk has the idea is of meaningless babble.

These false teachers were motivated by curiosity, power and prestige. Genuine Christian teachers are motivated by love (Romans 13:10; Galatians 5:14), truth and faith (Galatians 5:6) that transforms people. A genuine teacher is a bondservant to Jesus Christ (Romans 1:1; Jude 1) receiving only the joy of being a faithful servant.

These false teachers were also theological hairsplitters, arguing about the tiny details of Scripture. They constructed vast speculative systems and then argued about the details of their wholly imaginative ideas. They burned all of this mental energy and missed the whole point of Scripture and applied nothing of value to their lives. Professing to be wise, they became utter fools as their foolish heart was darkened.

Don't get commission mixed up with commotion.

(8-11) Paul's condemnation of legalists does not condemn the law: The purpose of the law is to **reveal** our sin to us, not to **relieve** it. The Law was not meant to relieve sin because you could not keep it, it was meant to reveal sin so that we would be proactive in dealing without our spiritual bankruptcy (**Matthew 5:3**). The proper understanding of the Law and our destitute spiritual state brings us to Jesus Christ (**Galatians 3:24-25**).

We must also resist the false doctrine of antinomianism, which purports that the more we sin, the more grace we will receive, since grace trumps sin (Romans 6:1-4). Since a Christian is free from the Law and dead to the bondage of sin, why go back into bondage?

The law wasn't made for the righteous person, who walks by faith according to **Galatians 3:11**, but for the lawless and insubordinate, to show them their sin. The law has nothing to say to the righteous person, for God has written His law on their heart (**Joel 2:28; Jeremiah 31:31-34**).

Many people will condemn anyone with higher standards as being a legalist. However, having standards and keeping them and our obedience doesn't make us legalists. We are only legalists when we think what we do is what makes us right before God. All of the believer's righteousness is imputed from Jesus Christ (Romans 3:21) and His payment of our sins (Romans 5:8).

GOD'S MERCY ON PAUL (1:12-17)

(12-14) Why was Paul entrusted with the gospel? Paul was entrusted with the gospel because **Jesus enabled Paul (John 6:44; John 6:65)** and Paul thanked Jesus for that enabling. Paul was enabled for this ministry because he was counted faithful for the ministry and his faithfulness made Paul "usable" by God (**Habakkuk 2:4**).

We often see our Christian service as a matter of volunteering. However, as Christians, in regard to Jesus and His church, we are not volunteers, but bondservants (Romans 1:1; Jude 1), duty-bound servants of Jesus, and faithfulness is expected of such servants. We should be faithful wherever God has placed us and our faithfulness should be shown in even the small things.

It is important to note that Paul's past did not disqualify him from serving God. God's mercy and grace were sufficient to cover his past and enable him to serve God. Therefore, we should never feel that our past makes us unable to be used by God. Paul also recognizes that he didn't know that he was willfully sinning or aware of his terminal spiritual condition when he was lost (**Isaiah 53:6; I Corinthians 2:14**).

When we sin willfully, God chastises us. Unbelievers are dealt with differently, because they are ignorant of God's will for them.

Paul reflects on the total transformation from a hateful elitist Pharisee, to a person overflowing with the Love of God. When we become Christians we often feel that our love for Jesus and others is inadequate. However, Christ will increase both our faith and love as our relationship with Him deepens through our continuous surrender to His Will (**Romans 12:2**).

God will not be able to work with you until you become “an empty vessel”.

Paul’s statement in I Timothy 1:15, “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance” introduces a statement of special importance, which he used 5 times, all in the Pastoral Epistles.

(15) Paul summarizes his personal experience of the gospel: Jesus came to save sinners, not those living under the illusion of their own righteousness. It is the sick who need a physician (**Mark 2:17**). Since Jesus came into the world to save sinners, this is the first necessary qualification for being a child of God; being a sinner. Sinners are not disqualified from coming to God, because Jesus came to save them.

“Even those who recognize that Christ’s work is to save admit that it is more difficult to believe that this salvation belongs to sinners. Our mind is always prone to dwell on our own worthiness and, as soon as our unworthiness becomes apparent, our confidence fails. Thus the more a man feels the burden of his sins, he ought with greater courage to betake himself to Christ, relying on what is here taught, that He came to bring salvation not to the righteous but to sinners.” (Calvin)

Aren’t we all equally sinners? No; “All men are truly sinners, but all men are not equally sinners. They are all in the mire; but they have not all sunk to an equal depth in it.” (Spurgeon)

Paul’s claim to be the chief of sinners was not an expression of some super-pious false humility. He genuinely felt his sins made him more accountable before God than others. He also felt his sins were worse because he was responsible for the death, imprisonment, and suffering of Christians, whom he persecuted before his life was changed by the resurrected Jesus on the road to Damascus (**Acts 8:3; Acts 9:1-2; I Corinthians 15:9; Galatians 1:13; Philippians 3:6**).

(16) Paul’s salvation is a pattern of mercy to others: If a man as bad as Paul obtained mercy, the door is open to others who are not as bad a sinner as Paul was. Another reason why God loves to save sinners is that they become a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him. God wants others to see what He can do by working in us; his ambassadors.

(17) Paul’s praise to the God who saved him: Paul could not think of how bad he was, and how great the salvation of God was, and how great the love of God was, without simply breaking into spontaneous praise which showed that he both knew and loved God.

- He knew God to be the King eternal, ruling and reigning in complete power and glory;
- He knew God to be immortal, existing before anything else existed, and being the Creator of all things (**John 1:1; Colossians 1:15**);
- He knew God to be invisible, not completely knowable by us; we can’t completely figure out God, or know all His secrets (**Isaiah 55:8-9**); and,
- He knew God alone is wise and we are not. We think our plans and insights are so important, but only God really knows and understands all things.

CLINGING TIGHTLY TO THE FAITH (1:18-20)

(18) Charge to fight the good fight: Paul resumes the subject that he began in verse 3, false teachers, exhorting Timothy to fight hard in the spiritual warfare (**Ephesians 6:11**) that is occurring at the Ephesian church. Paul indicated that several prophets had told him that Timothy had spiritual discernment and the gift of prophecy, and was therefore equipped to withstand the Satanic and demonic attacks that came with leading this particular church. Timothy was set apart for ministry when elders laid hands on him (**I Timothy 4:14**).

Again, the Greek word for charge (*παράγγελια*) is the same as in **I Timothy 1:3**; a military word referring to an order from a commanding officer. Paul wanted Timothy to consider what the Holy Spirit had said to him through others in the past, and receive the courage to remain in Ephesus from those.

Timothy should not focus on the prophetic word he heard in the past, but on the battle right in front of him now, where he must “fight the good fight.”

We must also be on guard against “extravagant” prophecy that declares that this person or that is going to have “the most powerful ministry the world has seen”, or such. These prophecies are extremely manipulative, because they are awkward to speak against.

Tom Stipe, in the foreword to “Counterfeit Revival”, speaks powerfully about this phenomenon, having been a leader in it before seeing how wrong it is:

After only a couple of years, the prophets seemed to be speaking to just about everyone on just about everything. Hundreds of . . . members received the ‘gift’ of prophecy and began plying their trade among both leaders and parishioners. People began carrying around little notebooks filled with predictions that had been delivered to them by the prophets and seers. They flocked to the prophecy conferences that had begun to spring up everywhere. The notebook crowd would rush forward in hopes of being selected to receive more prophecies to add to their prophetic diaries . . .

Not long after ‘prophecy du jour’ became the primary source of direction, a trail of devastated believers began to line up outside our pastoral counseling offices. Young people promised teen success and stardom through prophecy were left picking up the pieces of their shattered hopes because God had apparently gone back on His promises. Leaders were deluged by angry church members who had received prophecies about the great ministries they would have but had been frustrated by local church leaders who failed to recognize and ‘facilitate’ their ‘new anointing.’

After a steady diet of the prophetic, some people were rapidly becoming biblically illiterate, choosing a ‘dial-a-prophet’ style of Christian living rather than studying God’s Word. Many were left to continually live from one prophetic ‘fix’ to the next, their hope always in danger of failing because God’s voice was so specific in pronouncement, yet so elusive in fulfillment. Possessing a prophet’s phone number was like having a storehouse of treasured guidance. Little clutched notebooks replaced Bibles as the preferred reading material during church services.

Timothy had a job in front of him, and it was going to be a battle royal. It wasn’t going to be easy, comfortable, or carefree. He had to approach the job Paul left him to do in Ephesus as a soldier approaches battle (**Jude 3**).

(19) Warfare tools: faith and a good conscience: Two very important attributes of a spiritual leader is to: (1) cling to his faith; and, (2) keep his conscience clear. Keeping one's conscience clear is to always to do what is right and to be beyond reproach. Each time you deliberately ignore your conscience, you harden your heart and soon your capacity to tell right from wrong (a.k.a. your moral compass) will fade.

When you walk with God, He speaks to you through your conscience and will always let you know the difference between right and wrong. If you act on those inner tugs to do what is right, then your conscience will remain clear.

Faith and a good conscience are essential when battling for the Lord. They protect against the spiritual attacks of doubt and condemnation. Timothy had to have the faith that God is sovereign and always in control, and would guide him as Timothy continued to seek him.

Timothy also had to have a good conscience, because his enemies would be attacking him, and if he had not conducted himself properly, they would have good reason to attack. A good conscience isn't just a conscience that approves us, but one that approves us because we're doing what is right (i.e., connected with good conduct beyond reproach).

Paul speaks of some who have rejected these weapons, rejecting the faith and headed for ruin.

(20) Two people that rejected the warfare tools: Paul apparently disciplined Hymenaeus and Alexander for their disobedience to God in heresy and in conduct. Paul put them outside the church, into the world, which is the devil's domain. This punishment was a removal of protection, not an infliction of evil.

The Lord protects us from many attacks from Satan (Job 1:10; Luke 22:31-32), and much of this protection comes to us in what we receive as we gather together as Christians.

Hymenaeus' error is explained in **II Timothy 2:17-18**. He weakened people's faith by teaching that the resurrection of the dead had already occurred, and Paul had him removed from the fellowship of the church. Deliberate disobedience must be handled quickly and sternly to prevent the entire congregation from being infected, but done in a way to effectuate repentance and ultimate restoration.

Summary: Today, Christians should remain in the place that God has placed us, use our spiritual gifts, and not give up in difficult times for the following six (6) reasons:

1. Because people need to know the truth (**I Timothy 1:3-7**).
2. Because we minister in a hard place (**I Timothy 1:8-11**).
3. Because God uses unworthy people (**I Timothy 1:12-16**).
4. Because we serve a great God (**I Timothy 1:17**).
5. Because we are in a battle and cannot surrender (**I Timothy 1:18**).
6. Because not everyone else does (**I Timothy 1:19-20**).