

## Introduction to 1 Timothy

1 Corinthians 11:1-19  
2 Corinthians 4  
Responsive Psalm 67

This morning we are going to be starting our journey through the book of 1 Timothy, by suggestion of Raze who wanted to go through them, and it actually works out pretty well following up from going through the letter written to the Ephesian churches, because that is where we find Timothy when Paul writes this letter to him. Over the next few months I think we will go through 1 and 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy is probably into Titus since these are considered the Pastoral epistles and are related in theme. The distinction of these 3 letters, is the personal and practical nature of these letters. Paul is writing here to Timothy, one of his associate and fellow travelers on his missionary journeys, this is not a general letter to a congregation, but a letter of instruction and encouragement to one single individual. So, this letter will differ slightly in nature, and context of what we see in some of Paul's other writings where he directs his instruction to a body of believers.

This letter was written somewhere around 63-66AD, in between Paul's Roman imprisonments. As there always seems to be, over the years there has been some debate and discussion as to the true author of this book, with some scholars arguing that it is not in fact Paul, but someone else penned the letter in Paul's name. But this idea has been largely thrown out, biblical scholars dating back to before 200AD and all the way up until the 19<sup>th</sup> century all agreed on the authorship of this letter, so there isn't really much of a compelling argument or debate otherwise. It seems to me, that some of these debates and arguments and new thoughts and perspectives of scripture that we can find today are often an attack on the legitimacy of the word of God. If one can prove that a letter such as this one, is not actually written by Paul..when in verse 1 it clearly says, "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the commandment of God our Savior and the Lord Jesus Christ, our hope, To Timothy, a true son in the faith."

If we begin to undermine and doubt even the most clear and obvious things then that casts doubt upon all of scripture. I think that these modern questions and doubts brought about by so called scholars largely is Satan's attack on the word of God in an attempt to bring doubt and unbelief into the true words of God, leading people astray, giving false hopes, and obscuring the real Jesus, the real apostles, and the true messages getting caught up in trying to disprove the little things casting doubt upon the bigger things. For instance, if this was indeed not written by Paul, this letter would not carry with the the Apostolic Authority that it has, making its instruction to Timothy lacking in weight and power. And if that proved to be true in this book, well, doesn't that cast doubt on every other book written? Doesn't that undermine the authority of scripture? I think it does, instead of personal instruction from a chosen Apostle of God, it becomes a book of morals and ideals and good suggestions.

Just like those who believe Jesus was a prophet, a good teacher, but not the Son of God. It is the same spirit of denial, the same spirit of doubt which feeds into false belief and deception. So these discussions of the authorship can be a worthy debate, but it isn't one that is worth for us to spend a lot of time in since we here all take scripture at face value, that is...if it says, "I Paul write this letter" Then we believe it was written by Paul. If there were such minor inconsistencies in scripture that would call into question the entire inspired nature of it causing it to all crumble and fall, for if it is not the word of God, then what are we even doing here this morning?

If this is not the inspired word of God, then our belief is false and we are without hope. So you can see the deception of Satan in undermining even these little things such as the authorship of a letter to bring about doubt into the authority, and authenticity of the word. There can be a tendency for some to hear the thoughts from bible scholars and run after them holding them as experts in high esteem, but one thing that we must always be wary of, is just because they are proclaimed to be scholars does not mean that they are likewise God's children. A few years ago now, Casey was downtown Holland, at a coffee shop there working on his own studies when we got into a discussion with one of the professors at Hope College. Now I don't remember what his area of focus was, but he was one of the biblical scholars, and taught in the Western Theological Seminary there. Casey said it quickly became apparent that this teacher, this scholar, this professor was himself not a believer, for every one of his points of discussion seemed to undermine the authority, and message of scripture.

His arguments, and his teaching of those students in his class, had with it, the echoing of Satan in the Garden..."Did God really say?" He was casting doubt in the legitimacy of scripture, and the person and work of Jesus Christ. So I guess my point, is that just because someone is an "expert" or "biblical scholar" doesn't always make them an authority on the subject. There are many wolves in sheep's clothing, false teachers and people who will lead you astray it really is one of Satan's attacks on Christianity, to discredit, and slander what it is to be a follower of Christ. There are so many bad examples and false teachers who wear the mantle of Christianity, by whom the world sees the hypocrisy and falsehood and judge all Christians by them, again, it is Satan's manipulation as he tries to undermine the effect and truth of the gospel. But, his power is limited and in the end it is always God's truth that prevails, for God goes to the heart, changes lives, and even the deception of Satan is no match for God's calling.

So just as we know this letter was written by Paul, the super obvious other point as we always look at a book is, to whom is it written. Well in this case, it is written to Timothy, who we can see mentions throughout many of Paul's other letters. So he was an important part of Paul's ministry and life. In the book of Acts, we get a little history of Timothy, it is mentioned in chapter 16 where it says, "Paul came to Derbe and Lystra, A disciple there named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek." Timothy was born in Lystra and in 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy we see that both his mother and grandmother were believers. Timothy joined Paul on his second missionary Journey, we can see that again in Acts 16. Paul and his previous missionary partner Barnabas had a disagreement on who should join them, so they parted ways and Paul paired up with Timothy. Throughout a lot of Paul's writings we can find mentions of Timothy, in fact in 6 of the epistles he is included in Paul's greetings.

So one thing to know about Timothy as we work our way through this letter is that he was a trusted, and loved friend and fellow missionary with Paul. This is not a letter written to merely someone Paul had heard about, but is written to a dear friend of whom Paul would be infinitely familiar with and would know his struggles, and his strengths as he writes to encourage and exhort him in this personal letter. And as we had already stated, Timothy stayed in Ephesus as Paul journeyed on to Macedonia, we can see this in verse 3 here of chapter 1. "As I urged you when I went into Macedonia-remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine." So we also see the reason behind why Paul wanted Timothy to stay in Ephesus, to combat some false doctrines that had likely been circulating among the churches there, and to confront those teachers to remain faithful to the word of God.

That seems to be the theme in many of Paul's books, an exhortation to remain faithful, rebukes to reject false teaching. Kind of circling around to my earlier point, we can see even through Paul's own ministry the effect, and threat of false teachers. This is something that we should take as a warning, and should always be wary of, testing all things with scripture and prayer, not blindly following teachers, scholars, or preachers...for they are to simply be the ministers of the word, and if what is being taught does not align with what scripture says then we should not be following them. We have been given the spirit to see, and to know God, and we know him through his word that he has given us, if what is taught does not align with his word, then it is a false view and understanding of who God is. Now in the time of Timothy, because the totality of scriptures had not yet been revealed, God worked through men like Paul, and Timothy in that gospel ministry, and by God's sovereign design we get insights into these things through these various letters and teachings of the Apostles, as they are showing how God has fulfilled his old covenant promises through the person and sacrifice of Jesus. So we today have been gifted this revelation, we can open the word of God and read it seeing how God has worked through generations to bring about his salvation extending to us today, through the teachings, and writings of these men.

As we have just closed out our own Study in the letter that Paul wrote to the Ephesians, we already get a sense of the troubles that were there, of which Timothy was likely instructed to remain there to address, and we will see it in more detail as we progress through this letter, It is apparent that false teaching has entered into these congregations and sort of infected them and was spreading, so it was Timothy's task to sort through such things, and preach the truth of the gospel to expose the lies and false teaching that was occurring.

Some of the issues that had arisen that we will see as we go through this book is Gnosticism was beginning to taking hold, which was an ancient movement that emphasized esoteric knowledge as the path of salvation. It taught that the material world is flawed and evil and that salvation came through the knowledge of a hidden divinity, attain only by a mystical insight. This knowledge was seen as being superior to all teachings and authorities of other religions. They believed that the world was created by an inferior being, thus being evil, but humans contained a divine spark which could be awoken to a new, and true nature by a savior who brings knowledge to liberate humans from the deception of the material world. Such a belief focus upon man and his own knowledge and ability instead of God and the spirit. Along with that came struggles with the old covenant law as well.

This letter was written for two purposes, it's first and foremost was to oppose false doctrine and teaching, to which Paul had left Timothy in Ephesus to deal with directly. And the second purpose was for the choosing of leaders within the local churches, giving instruction on the necessary requirements of someone who would be chosen to lead. Paul had left Timothy in charge there, to protect the church from false doctrine and this letter serves as a reminder and instruction as to his duties in that role. The heavy emphasis in this book is on this role of Pastor, or shepherd of the people of whom God has given. There is a lot of practical teaching here, setting up the standard of what such a leader must be, as they are to lead the people in a manner worthy of God. There are 2 key words that appear over and over throughout this book, they are Doctrine, and teach. Doctrine appears 8 times throughout this book, and the word teach appears 7 times. There is only 6 chapters, so that is more than once per chapter that either of these things are mentioned.

The importance of right doctrine, is a right belief of the word of God. It is the core foundation of which is built our understanding of who God is, and who we are in him. A solid foundation built upon the solid doctrines found within scripture is what helps us to fight against false teachers and those who would lead God's people astray. One of the main attacks of Satan against Christianity is to twist and obscure the message of the gospel, as we already talked about this morning if doubt can be sprinkled into the understanding of scripture, then we are open to believing things that are not true about God, that are not true about ourselves, and that are not true about our relationship with him. A simple example of this, is the doctrine of mediation, or understanding that Christ himself is our mediator, there is no other it is he who stands between God and man and mediates for us, it is he who has given his life for us and has become our great high priest. This is a doctrinal belief, a doctrinal stance of which we differ with the Catholic church, who believes the Pope is the mediator between the church and God. Such a view is a skewed view of the church, and of its purpose and role elevating a man to be the figurehead, when it is Christ who is the figurehead of his eternal holy church.

So even just in this example you can see the importance of doctrine, and having correct biblical understanding, our beliefs must come from scripture and scriptures alone, no amount of human tradition, or special revelation of hidden knowledge will bring about salvation, or sanctification. Many false beliefs are rooted in deception, or a twisted understanding of what the bible teaches. So, it is of utmost importance that we protect ourselves so that we are not deceived, and we do so by being students of the word, by prayer, and by the proper teaching and preaching of God's word. One of the foundations of proper teaching and understanding of the word of God, is that scripture interprets scripture, we find all that we need to know about God, what he has done for us, and our role in his kingdom right here, in his word. If anyone claims a special revelation, or secret knowledge which has been revealed to them, they are no different then the gnostics of old, false teachers who should be exposed and rooted out, for they can do damage to the people of God. Again that was Timothy's purpose of staying behind in Ephesus, was to stand against such teachings, and to properly preach the word based upon the doctrines and foundations of scripture itself, to root out the false teachers, and to protect the people of God through truth and love.

Likewise it isn't a bad thing to have your doctrines and beliefs tested either, for that is how we prove out what is true and what aligns with scripture. As humans we will never have a perfect understanding and have everything right all the time, so it is healthy to be challenged in your belief for that is how we are built up, that is how we are made stronger, and how we learn and grow in the word of God. All things must be tested by scripture, if it doesn't hold up, then we shouldn't hold to it. Which brings the importance of the 2<sup>nd</sup> most used word in this book...teaching, for it is by teaching of scripture that we learn and grow, being taught, and teaching others is both an avenue for growth in our understanding of God's word. Just as Paul wrote to the Corinthian church which we read this morning, instructing them in good conduct and order, he said "Now in giving these instructions I do not praise you, since you come together not for the better, but for the worse. For first of all, when you come together as a church I hear that there are divisions among you, and in part I believe it. For there must also be factions among you, that those who are the approved may be recognized among you." Doctrines, and practices should be tested and challenged to see if they align with scripture, and in some cases those divisions will prove out the faithful and true.

Paul says sometimes these divisions must come, that is a far cry from what we here in our churches today. There is a tendency to water down the truth of the gospel, to file down the sharp edges of Gods word and seek unity at the cost of truth. But Paul says divisions can be necessary to prove out the true, and the faithful.

But there must be a distinction made, between division over core doctrines and beliefs, and divisions over preferences and tendencies. We must also be careful to not seek division where there doesn't need to be any, for some error on that side as well. For instance, the statement that Christ is the Messiah, our Lord and Savior, is a core doctrine that must be defended, worthy of division with those who believe he was just a prophet, or teacher but not the Son of God, but lets say...speculation upon end time views, that is an area of debate that can be had without a call for division, though...some do. We also get an example of improper divisions in 1 Corinthians chapter 3, verse 3 “For you are still carnal, For where there is envy, strife, and all divisions among you, are not not carnal and behaving like mere men? For when one says, I am of Paul, and the other I am of Apollos, are you not carnal? Who then is Paul and who then in Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the lord gave to each one. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters but it is God who gives the increase.

So there are also improper divisions that can arise in a church body, we must be careful that if division comes...it is around the word of God, and it is because we are standing on the truth of what scripture says to the best of our understanding and ability, and we must likewise be willing and able to grow in our understanding, being challenged and tested having our understanding sharpened as a more effective ministry tool, which plays into really the 3<sup>rd</sup> purpose of Paul's letter to Timothy, which is to set things in good order. We have talked about this before, the importance of having good structure and order within the church, for it is what protects the church in these times of trials and divisions. The structure of a plurality of leaders, equal within the church keeps it from becoming like what we see in 1 Corinthians, factions and division following one man over another, and there must be a protection from false teachers, and those who would come in to cause unnecessary division, chaos, and deception. And again we humans can't be perfect in our judgments, but we must all strive to hold to God's word and defend this gospel for the sake of others, so that they may not be deceived, so that the gospel message rings true as it goes out into the world as a light, and reflection of who God is, and what he has done so others may come to know him.

That is all I have for this introduction his morning, next week we will start digging into this letter to Timothy