

Righto, so we're beginning our new series on 1 Timothy.

Just under half of the books of the New Testament, were written by the Apostle Paul. And they were actually letters. In the Greek ἐπιστολήν (epistolēn), hence our word “epistle”. And there's different styles of “epistles”:

- normal letters, that were written to various churches;
- prison epistles, letters that Paul wrote to various churches while he was in prison;
- 1 Tim; 2 Tim; & Titus, and these three letters, are known as the pastoral epistles.

They're very different sorts of letters, because they weren't written to churches. They were written to individuals. They're very personal letters, written to Timothy and Titus – men who had been fellow missionaries with Paul. They had journeyed with Paul; they had learned from Paul, and he had trained them well in the faith.

And so, in these “pastoral epistles”, some of the great theological topics that Paul would normally expound upon, he doesn't do that (he has no need to)...

So for example, Easter's coming up pretty soon. And so, in preparing for this series, I wanted to keep some suitable passages up my sleeve for Good Friday and Easter Sunday. And normally, in Paul's letters, he talks a lot about the cross and the sacrifice of Jesus Christ,, and that's what I was looking for for Good Friday, and you know what? In 1 Timothy, nowhere to be found. Paul **always** talks about the cross, but no need to tell Timothy about it – Timothy was well-versed in the cross.

And for Easter Sunday, I looked for a good passage teaching us about the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ ... Once again, nowhere to be found...

And the reason that teaching on these essential topics, isn't in the Pastoral Epistles, is Paul is writing to his very trusted and much loved fellow missionaries... He would be preaching to the choir. He didn't need to lay the foundation again. They knew the foundations, and knew them well...

In some of his other letters, (written to entire churches) Paul would say, "I wish I could take you beyond just feeding you milk, but I find I have to keep re-telling you the basics of the Gospel, because you still haven't got it yet".... Well, Timothy and Titus, he **could** take them beyond the milk, because they knew the Gospel, and they knew it well.

And my hope is that our church, and all who are listening to this, are ready to go beyond just being fed milk.

So, who is Timothy, and what's the purpose of Paul writing to Timothy?

In the Bible, Timothy first appears in Lystra (home town). And he comes from a mixed family. His Mum was a Jewish Christian woman, and his Dad was a Greek.

And when Paul and Silas passed through Lystra on his 2nd missionary journey, Paul was very impressed with this young man named "Timothy", and he had a good reputation with the locals. And so, Paul took him under his wing as his young apprentice missionary.

And as they journeyed together.

- There were highs, when people heard the Gospel and believed (e.g. Berea)
- Dangers as **un**believers would rise up against them, and run them out of town (e.g. Thessalonica)
- Heartache when false teaching would come into the church and take people away from the true Gospel (Ephesus)
- And more heartache as a church would lose its love for each other and promote self-spiritualisation (Corinth)

Timothy was often with Paul. He was a party to his letter-writing. In fact, Timothy gets a mention, in all but 3 of the letters that Paul wrote, and often he was part of the letter-writing..

Even in this letter, Paul greets Timothy like this:

² To Timothy, my true child in the faith

I suspect that Paul could see that Timothy & Titus (and men like them) were the next generation of preachers, who would continue the work that Paul and the other Apostles had already begun.

You see, time was running out for Paul.

The Pastoral epistles, are the very last of the writings of Paul. He wrote them after the conclusion of the book of Acts, which finishes with Paul under house-arrest in Rome, ,, And sometime after Acts he was later imprisoned and executed in Rome.

Between the time of his house-arrest and his later execution, we **know** that Paul must've done another missionary trip, and hints of that trip come out in the letters to Timothy and Titus...

But we don't need to go into that now...

So, that's who Timothy was. What's the purpose of the letter???

Over the years, I've run numerous Young Adult Bible Studies. And in Young Adult Bible Studies, the letters to Timothy are favourites. The reason they're favourites are because he's young. And Paul's urging Timothy, "Don't go thinking you can't do this because you're too young." You've been called to this, and what God calls you to, God will empower you to do, despite your age.

You see, Timothy had been called into leadership in the church: Some would say "as an elder"; Some would say as a "teacher". But it seems pretty clear, that whatever we might call it, Timothy was called and functioning in the role of what we today would call a Pastor/Minister of a particular church in a particular town.

You see, we're at a time in the Church's history where the missionaries have done their initial work of evangelising the Gospel into these regions (& that would continue)... And **now** churches are beginning to form (for the want of a better word) "structure". Positions of Leadership are being recognised within the church. In 1 Timothy, we see

Elders/Deacons/Bishops... We see the establishment of leadership and Godly authority within the church.

Now, some folk don't like the thought of that. Some folk don't like to have **any** authority over themselves, and they like to look back to the heady days of the beginnings of the Christian church (when the gospel was first beginning to be preached) and they say "This is the way it's supposed to be; nobody exercising authority; just doing whatever I feel led by the Spirit..."... Not so. There wasn't lawlessness and free-for-all in the beginnings...

In the beginnings of the Early church, the Apostles exercised authority, and by the time we get to 1 Timothy, the apostles are dying out – and we're seeing that the church is being prepared for authority to be exercised by others – through Elders/Deacons/Bishops(overseers) and whatever Timothy was – let's call him a "Pastor"... And let's be clear about this – the **Apostles** are raising these men up to authoritative leadership.

But, why did the Apostles see the need to establish these leaders of authority in the church? And why today, does the church need men of:

- Godliness
- Good character
- faith
- who know the good confession – who are able to clearly discern right teaching from wrong?
- who are able to exercise these characteristics in authority within the church

Well, to understand this, let's take a look at the church that Timothy was pastoring – the church in Ephesus.

Timothy's home town was Lystra in Galatia, but Paul urged him to take up residence in Ephesus (Asia) (Turkey). The reason: there was constant friction in that church, and the friction was because certain persons (in that church) saw themselves as teachers, but they weren't teaching the pure gospel. What they would do, was bring in speculations and myths and genealogies, that to some folk may have been really interesting, but they were speculations nevertheless. And speculations are not, **the stewardship from God that is by faith.**

They'd deserted some of the basic tenets of the Gospel, and elevated myths/speculations... And in V5, Paul reminds Timothy ⁵ **The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.**

Alright, we know the Gospel: Jesus died on the cross to save us from our sins, so that by faith we are forgiven and washed clean of all of our sins. And we receive eternal life as a gift of grace...

But if we receive the gospel, without embracing the aim of V5, we've missed the point completely... ⁵ **The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.**

Now, the church in Ephesus: we know a lot about the church in Ephesus.

In chapter 18 of the book of Acts, we hear of when the Gospel was first preached at Ephesus. At first, there was interest in the Gospel. And Paul; Apollos and Priscilla and Aquilla each at different times, ministered there.

In Chapter 19, Paul returns to Ephesus, and the Christians are baptised in the name of The Lord Jesus, and they received the Holy Spirit.

And for 3 months, Paul would go to the local synagogue, and preach boldly, and this is where the trouble began. **Acts 19:9**

(ESV) 9 some became stubborn and continued in unbelief, speaking evil of the Way

Alright, so Unbelieving Jews rejected these new disciples of Jesus... They rejected the Gospel; And they would revile/abuse them. And it was so bad, they couldn't continue in the synagogue, and so they shifted camp to a local lecture hall.

And a very real spiritual battle took place in Ephesus. As the Gospel was preached, there was a very real repentance before God.

Those who used to practice magic (quite common in Ephesus BTW), had a real repentance before God. They burned their books of spells, and this was no little matter. The value of the

books that were burned (the cost of their repentance) was 50000 pieces of silver. A piece of silver was a day's wages, so the value of what they burned, was about \$10 000 000 in our money....

Acts 19:(ESV) 20 So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily.

It sure did...

But not long after this, a major issue arose.

I love the way this verse says it:

Acts 19:(ESV) 23 About that time there arose no little disturbance concerning the Way.

Let me translate that for you: **It was a disaster...**

The local businessmen who made their living out of magic and evil spirits & idles & trinkets saw the repentance, and the movement of God that's taking place **in their town...** And they realised (quite rightly) that their livelihoods were at stake...

Let me tell you, when a **true** revival comes to a town, the publicans shake in their boots, and drug dealers have to find a different living.

In Ephesus, the temple of the goddess Artemis was the local tourist attraction – it was what defined Ephesus, and those who profited from this trade, were worried that it would be devalued... There was a real spiritual battle going on... And it led to a riot, and violence – they wanted to see these Christian preachers dead...

And it was a town clerk – a civil authority who finally quietened them down... Quite often, it was the civil authorities, maintaining law and order, that held back violence against the gospel preachers, and we'll talk about that some more in a few weeks.

Anyway, things got too hot in Ephesus for Paul, and so he moved on.

The next we hear of Ephesus is Acts 20, when Paul speaks to the Ephesian elders. And trouble is at foot once again. Only this trouble wasn't from the outside – it would come from the inside. Some who would have the appearance to be Christians, would come in, only they would be “**fierce wolves,...** not sparing the flock”.

Acts 20:30 (ESV) and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.

And what we read in Acts, sets the tone, for pretty much every encounter we know about Ephesus. The same problems, being repeated over and over again. And a fair bit of the time, the same **people**, are at the centre **of** the trouble.

The Spiritual battle continued. From prison, Paul wrote a letter to the church in Ephesus (Ephesians)... And it's in this letter, that Paul says “

Ephesians 6:(ESV)¹¹ Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

So, what was going on at Ephesus?

1. There was a spiritual battle going on;
2. The church needed to be reminded of the Gospel. Why?
3. There were some of their own number, who would speak twisted things and lead people astray.
4. This was a church in need of love;
5. It was a church who had to learn to live in Unity...

We see some of these same things coming through in 1&2 Timothy. I'm not going to say much about them now because over the next few weeks we'll see them...

But the final word on Ephesus comes direct from the assessment of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. In the book of Revelation, Jesus dictates 7 letters to 7 churches, and the first one of those letters is to the church in Ephesus.

Now, it seems that some of these things that Ephesus was dealing with, with God's help, they've stayed strong. Jesus said, "I know:

- your works;
- your toil;
- your patient endurance;
- how you tested the false teachers/apostles;
- how you didn't put up with them; and

- how you haven't grown weary, and
- how you patiently bear up for My Name's sake...

and He said, but I have this against you:

- You don't love like you loved at first...

So, they didn't manage to get everything right, but the issues have been pretty similar all the way through. And the role of Timothy has been to help them as a church, to grow in Christ...

I'm going to say, "As a pastor", Timothy's authority and His role, was to:

- lead by example;
- teach;
- rebuke;
- encourage;

- keep them away from pointless speculations;
- to develop good order in the church, so that it **wasn't** a free-for-all, so that those who would twist things, **couldn't** just get up and throw in red-herrings that would only serve to get the whole place muddled and at each other's throats...
- And the aim: love.

So, that's what we've got ahead of us in 1 Timothy.

And I promised you we were only going to have the introduction today and the first 2 verses, and we haven't really touched on them yet, but I very quickly will, right now.

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by command of God our Saviour 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.

Timothy was placed, to be a pastor of a church that had "friction". And the opening blessing for Timothy, he's going to need...

Grace, mercy, and peace ...

For a Christian, "**Grace, mercy, and peace**" – it's more than a "wish" – it's a blessing... It's a blessing from **God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.**

And as **we** study this letter to Timothy, my prayer, is that we also would be blessed with **Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.**

My prayer, is that some of us would hear the call of God on our lives, and would receive the encouragement that Timothy receives, in this letter – Encouragement to not be timid, but to have the courage to step up, to serve as God calls us to serve.

Let's pray:

God our Saviour and Christ Jesus our hope,
as we study this letter to Timothy,
Lord we surrender ourselves to You.

Soften our hearts;
We submit our will to You;
And we seek, "Your will be done in this church,
and in us."

Lord,
may we (as Timothy)
be true children in the faith.
Not impostors;
Not half-hearted spectators...
but true children in the faith.

Lord, we ask,
bring us into Your ministry and mission
in this world.

And bless us with:

Grace, mercy, and peace
from *God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Amen.