

# Lesson One

## CORRECT FALSE TEACHERS

### I Timothy 1:1-20

#### SECTION I 1:1, 2

**1** Paul, an apostle 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.

Vs. 1, 2 — With the exception of I, II Thessalonians, Phillipians, and Philemon, Paul always begins an epistle with a declaration of his office. He is writing an *authoritative* letter ("apostle") combined with a *personal* letter ("to . . . my true child"). Paul is his "father" since he probably baptized Timothy and nurtured him in the faith. Watch for parts of these epistles directed specifically to Timothy (1:3; 4:6:5:1; 5:23, etc.) and those more general comments directed to the church (2:1ff; 3:1ff; etc.).

Paul's apostleship ("one sent") was not self-assumed but one given him by God's command. Read the threefold account of his call to this office — Acts 9:15, 16; 22:15; 26:15. His apostleship also came from Christ, "our hope." He not only gives hope, but is our Hope. (An interesting

project — run a concordance check on all the names and attributes given to Christ with their implications, i.e., peace, water, light, priest, door, etc.)

One unusual feature of the Pastorals is this six-time designation of God as Savior (1:1; 2:2; 4:10; Tit. 1:3; 2:10; 3:4). Too often we forget God's part in our salvation. Also note Paul's departure from his customary designation of "grace and peace" by adding "mercy." **Grace**, God's unmerited favor, covers our *past* sins. **Mercy**, the empathetic compassion with one who suffers, comes from Jesus to help us in *present* difficulties. **Peace**, the resulting state when one has his sins covered and God working in his life, comes from the Holy Spirit as we face *future* struggles. God has indeed provided for our every need!

## DISCUSSION STARTERS:

1. Why does Paul not mention his apostleship in four of his epistles?
2. Is God or Jesus our Savior?
3. Can one have peace without first receiving grace and mercy?

## EXHORTATION

### SECTION II 1:3-7

3 As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, 4 nor to occupy themselves with myths and endless genealogies which promote speculations rather than the divine training that is in faith; 5 whereas the aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and 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 assertions.

V. 3 **urged** — Paul "exhorts, beseeches, encourages" his son to CHARGE (very strong word of command — cf. 1:3; 4:11; 5:7; 6:13, 17 where same word is used) certain persons about false teaching. Paul urges strong measures to be taken against those who pervert the Gospel. He tactfully omits their names (except the apostate ringleaders — 1:20) lest he harden their hearts toward repentance. Attack ideas and doctrines, not the people who hold them, if you wish to change them (cf. II Thess. 3:11,

## THIRTEEN LESSONS ON I, II TIMOTHY & TITUS

15; I Cor. 1:12; 15:12; II Cor. 3:1; Gal. 17).

**different doctrine** — The Greek word for “different” (heteros) suggests a teaching of another kind or nature than that which Paul preached. Gal. 1:6-9 declares the same idea and expresses even stronger abhorrence that anyone dare pervert God’s Word. Our function is not to rewrite Scripture, but to proclaim it. As someone noted, “New theology is not true theology, and true theology is not new theology.”

V. 4 **myths** — Stories of non-historical nature usually embossed some great deed done by an ancient with the design to create admiration or worship in the heart of the hearer. What a shame to resort to “fairy tales” when we have the factual miraculous events of the Scripture to teach (II Pet. 1:16). Repudiating myths is a common charge Paul issues in these epistles (4:7; II 4:4; Tit. 1:14; cf. I, 6:4; II, 2:16; Tit. 3:9).

**genealogies** — Shaking the family tree to see what “nuts” fall out. What pride-filled joy to discover that “I am related to Moses or Abraham!” Our worth comes not from whom our ancestors were, but from Whom our Father is! And this “genealogy” is open to all. Genealogy-tracing produces snobbishness and idolatry (ancestor worship) if we are not careful. Thus, the content of the different doctrine consisted of half-truths (myths), arrogant gloating (genealogies), and legalistic perversion of God’s Old Testament (vs. 8-11).

**speculations** — Not only is this teaching wrong because of content, it is doubly wrong because of result. Its end result is not growth in “divine training,” but argumentative “speculations” and “vain discussion.”

V. 5 **aim** — False teaching must be replaced by something positive. God’s program produces love. If our teaching is producing bad results, we need to recheck our attitude and content. Wm. Barclay notes five characteristics of these teachers: (1) desired novelty, v. 3; (2) preferred argument to action, v. 4; (3) substituted head knowledge for Christian action, v. 4; (4) arrogant rather than humble, v. 7; (5) dogmatic without knowledge, vs. 6, 7. But the Christian teacher as seen in verse 5 has his thinking: (1) based on faith; (2) motivated by love; (3) from a pure heart and conscience; (4) without deceitful hypocrisy.

Does Paul suggest that one cannot produce this kind of love if his heart is defiled, his conscience deadened, or his faith hypocritical? The key concepts in this section are faith and love contrasted to arrogance and intellectual speculation.

V. 6 **vain discussions** — Talk that goes nowhere. Again Paul looks to the result of our teaching. Our preaching may be interesting, but if it does not exalt Jesus and move our hearers into a closer fellowship with Him, then we have missed our goal.

V. 7 **without understanding** — James 3:1 warns teachers who lead

without knowledge. Death claims both when a blind guide leads a blind follower down twisting mountain paths. The opposite is also true (4:16).

**assertions** — The Greek word indicates a bold, confident, strong affirmation. Paul supports this charge by showing how these teachers misuse the law in binding legal precepts on Christians who should walk by faith and love (8-11).

## DISCUSSION STARTERS:

1. Is it wise to name specific groups or persons when denouncing false ideas? (cf. 1:3 and 1:20) Are there times when we should and times when we should not?
2. Paul suggests two motives for false teachers (1:5; 1:7). Are there others?
3. Is it enough to denounce sin, or must we substitute something better?

## EXPLANATION

### SECTION III 1:8-11

8 Now we know that the law is good, if any 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 murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, 10 immoral persons, sodomites, kidnapers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine, 11 in accordance with the glorious gospel of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted.

**V. 8 law is good** — Evidently these teachers were using Scripture as a basis for their twisted teaching so Paul explains the proper use of the O.T. Lest any misunderstand, Paul affirms the goodness of the law. Some of its blessings were: revealed man's sin and need for a Savior (Rom. 3:20); provided men with God's thoughts (Rom. 3:2); foreshadowed and prophesied Christ (Col. 2:7); brought man to Christ (Gal. 3:24); and provided patience, comfort, and hope by examples of God's goodness (Rom. 15:4). But Christians are not bound by the O.T. law any longer (Col. 2:14; Eph. 2:15; Gal. 3:13; II Cor. 3:1-11). We now live by the Spirit. It is as silly to teach the alphabet to a college professor as to teach law to a Christian. Both have gone far beyond these basics. The law is a restrictive cage that prevents man from doing wrong. The Gospel provides

## THIRTEEN LESSONS ON I, II TIMOTHY & TITUS

wings that man might soar into the presence of God. Thus, law is not for Christians but for the type of evildoers mentioned in the next few verses.

Notice that Paul's list parallels the ten commandments of Ex. 20:1-17. **Lawless and disobedient**, they make themselves god and break the first of the ten. **Ungodly**, without God in mind, and **sinners**, without God in actions, breaks the second commandment forbidding graven images as man worships things as god and serves them. **Unholy** men no longer keep the Sabbath sacred. **Profane** men use God's name in vain. **Murderers** (literally "smiters") of fathers is far from honoring father and mother. **Manslayers** forget the commandment against murder, and **immoral persons** commit adultery. (**Sodomites** go even a step further with their homosexuality.) **Kidnappers** steal more than a man's things as they carry off the man himself to sell into slavery. **Liars** and **perjurers** bear false witness. And **whatever else** probably includes the prohibition against coveting, the starting point for so many other evils. The **sound doctrine** is the basis for our English word "hygiene," that which is pure and health-giving. This recurrent phrase, not found elsewhere in the N.T., emphasizes the spiritual health produced by God's milk, the Word (6:3; II, 1:13; Tit. 1:9; 2:1, 2, 8). In contrast, false teaching is a cancer producing rottenness (II, 2:17).

Christians have experienced the **glorious gospel** as exemplified in the transformation of Paul (1:12-17) and no longer need the narrow restrictions of the law to guide them. As Augustine exclaimed, "Love God and do what you will." If one loves God, he will not blaspheme His name, nor steal, nor do any other evil.

### DISCUSSION STARTERS:

1. Should a Christian keep the law? Should he obey its bare minimum or excell its demands? (cf. Rom. 13:1-7; Tit. 3:1)
2. If everyone lived as a Christian, what laws could we do away with?
3. Should a Christian read the Old Testament now that we have the New?

### EXAMPLE

#### SECTION III 1:12-17

12 I thank him who has given me strength for this, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful by appointing me to his service,  
13 though I formerly blasphemed and persecuted and insulted him;

but I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, 14 and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. 15 The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. And I am the foremost of sinners; 16 but I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience for an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life. 17 To the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

V. 12 — Law condemns, but God's Gospel exalts. Paul, contrasting what would be taught, uses his own conversion as an example of Christian teaching.

**strength** — Our word dynamite, a great power, comes from this and is also found in Rom. 1:6; Phil. 4:13, and Acts 2:22. God, not ourselves, provides the strength to live the overcoming life.

**appointing me** — God saves us by His grace; we serve Him as our due. And so each one has a ministry and gifts for service (Rom. 12:3-13; I Cor. 12:4-31).

V. 13 **blasphemed** — Paul had breathed out "threats and murder against the disciples" (Acts 9:1) and against God. He had sinned in *word*.

**PERSECUTED** — He sinned in *deed* as he imprisoned the saints and "tried to make them blaspheme" (Acts 26:11). Does this suggest torture?

**insulted** — He sinned in *attitude*. This word denotes insolence, violence, one who "outrages the feelings" of others. Rom. 1:30 uses this same word after "haters of God." Paul could condemn himself no more strongly than this. To excuse our sin is to increase its power over us; to confess our sin to God is to destroy it.

Paul suggests two reasons why God saved him. (1) He was ignorant of the whole truth (1:13); that is, he thought he was serving God; he did not sin against his conscience (Acts 23:1). When we sin deliberately, we harden our conscience and can make repentance impossible (Heb. 6:4). (2) God wanted to use the "chief of sinners" as His number one example of His cleansing power (1:16).

V. 15 **saying** — The five "faithful sayings" of the Pastorals (3:1; 4:8, 9; 11, 2:11-13; Tit. 3:4-8a) were proverbs or hymns capsulating the truth for easy remembrance much as our motto, "Where the Bible speaks, we speak." These five are worth memorizing.

**foremost of sinners** — Note the verb tense, "am." Paul still felt the sting of his former insolence and even though many considered him "chief of apostles" he saw himself as "chief of sinners." In the Greek,

## THIRTEEN LESSONS ON I, II TIMOTHY & TITUS

the "I" is intensified. "I, even I . . ." If God can save the worst, He can save anyone. Paul's conversion is a good example of how one comes to Christ. Paul's pride was broken with blindness (Acts 9:8); repentance and faith filled his heart (9:9); baptism washed away his sin (22:16); service to God's call filled his life (22:21). Paul was not saved *on* the road to Damascus, but only after he had completed the sequence begun on that road for he was yet in his sins until his baptism (22:16).

V. 17 When Paul remembers that glorious experience, he bursts into a paean of praise. Few, if any, experiences of life are more joyous than this.

### DISCUSSION STARTERS:

1. Who is harder to win — one who is an active persecutor of Christians or one who is indifferent? (cf. Rev. 3:15, 16)
2. Do some people refuse God's grace because they think they are too evil?
3. When is a man saved? From what is he saved? Who saves him?
4. Does God have a "ministry" for each of us?

## EXCOMMUNICATION

### SECTION IV 1:18-20

18 This charge I commit to you, Timothy, my son, in accordance with the prophetic utterances which pointed to you, that inspired by them you may wage the good warfare, 19 holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting conscience, certain persons have made shipwreck of their faith, 20 among them Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.

V. 18 **charge** — A resumption of the thought begun at 1:3. **Commit** means to "deposit, entrust" as with a treasure that must be guarded. Paul names two in 1:20 who were false to their trust and lost their treasure.

**prophetic utterances** "which led the way to thee" (American Standard Version) or "which went before on thee" (Twentieth Century New Testament). These words led Paul to chose Timothy for this ministry, or these words foretold the wonderful things that lay in the young man's

future as he served God. Compare 4:14 and II, 1:6. These passages suggest that Timothy also received some type of gift at the time of his ordination to help him in his ministry. These words would encourage the young man who could remember that God had spoken special words concerning him.

V. 19 **faith and a good conscience** — cf, 1:5, 6. The idea that a strong Christian life is possible only when one does not violate conscience permeates these epistles. Paul urges Timothy to “charge” from a good conscience (1:5); the apostle is saved because he had not violated his conscience (1:13); these have fallen away because they lost their good conscience (1:19); evil teachers even lose their conscience (4:2); deacons hold God’s word in good conscience (3:9); and Paul served God with a clear conscience (II, 1:3). Our conscience may be wrong if limited in knowledge as Paul acknowledges he persecuted Christians in “good conscience” because his knowledge was limited (Acts 23:1). But he also warns against going against what our conscience approves as right (Rom. 14:23; I Cor. 8:11; 10:28, 29). We must obey our conscience while educating it through God’s Word.

V. 20 **Hymenaeus and Alexander** — Paul reveals in II, 2:17, 18 that their basic sin was denying the resurrection, a cardinal truth of the Gospel (I Cor. 15:12). So Paul **delivered them to Satan**. Some see this as reference to bodily affliction such as struck Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 6) or Elymas (Acts 13:4). Probably refers to excommunication from church fellowship (Mt. 18:15-17; Ro. 16:17; II Thess. 3:14; Tit. 3:10) for when one is put out of God’s kingdom, he is thrust back into the devil’s stronghold (Acts 26:18; Col. 1:13; Mt. 4:8). Compare I Cor. 5:5 where the “destruction of the flesh” indicates destroying the carnal nature of the incestuous man by disfellowshipping him.

## DISCUSSION STARTERS:

1. Does God’s Word help us wage our warfare? (cf. Mt. 4)
2. Is a good conscience lost all at once, or by slow stages?
3. Is disfellowshipping apostates contrary to the Lord’s command not to judge? (Mt. 7:1)