

## A Young (and every) Leaders Primary Task

1 Timothy 1:3-7

*"The aim of our charge is love from a pure heart, and a good conscience and a sincere faith"*

**Introduction:** The most dangerous kind of false teaching is that which is the most subtle, or even the most unexpected. When God calls us out of darkness and into the light by shining in our hearts the truth of Jesus Christ, we are immediately thrust into a war that is raging yet is unseen. We have an arch enemy who is active to take down individuals, families, and churches through various methods but the same means: **deception and lies**. Satan is the father of lies (John 8:44). Have you ever wondered how there can be such organized and powerful religions throughout the world that sway many to follow like Mormonism? It's because our enemy is the prince of the power of the air (Eph. 2:1) who prowls around like a lion seeing whom he can devour, and he is constantly scheming to blind people's eyes from the truth. We see that blinding today as people are indoctrinated to think life and truth is all about them, that they can rebel against God's order and creation, and somehow find meaning and happiness through the whole. But it also comes subtly into the church where God is a means to get what we want rather than goal, where being morally good is the goal and finding comfort in this life is the highest ideal, which is a far cry from "take up your cross daily and follow me" (Luke 9:23).

One of the primary tasks of any leader is to **teach the truth**, but that teaching must be backed up with a **life that consistently lives out that truth in love**. Unfortunately, the reality also exists that false teaching will ALWAYS begin to infiltrate the church, broadly from the outside (social pressure, cultural adaptation and capitulation), but most dangerously from the inside. A leader is one that is ready to identify false teaching, refute it, deal with the person teaching, and correct it. That means a load of unpopular work among friends or with those we have relationship with, to deal with those who may be convinced of another way. This was the task given to **young Timothy** as he was left back in Ephesus to deal with false teachers who were currently teaching in the church. Paul had dealt with a couple personally named Hymenaeus and Alexander, who he handed over to Satan (1 Tim. 1:20) or put them out of the church. But Timothy's task remained monumental, and we gain insight into his job as well as ours in this current day.

### Current Crisis

Timothy was to walk in the authority given to him by Paul to charge certain leaders not to teach different doctrines, to proclaim the right ones, to demonstrate a life of holiness, discipline, love, and doctrine, and to care for those who could not care for themselves. Our enemy will always try to invade our churches from within, where savage wolves dressed like sheep will come in and persuade people away from Biblical doctrine (Acts 20:29-30).

### Future Dilemma

There is one other way our enemy can take a church down as he did in Ephesus. It seems like Timothy was successful in bringing in pure doctrine and getting the church back on track, but within 30+ years, another fateful attack entered the church: **they abandoned their first love**. Within a few generations of Jesus' death and resurrection, the church grew apathetic in love for God and others. They labored. They called out evil. But they did not cultivate a loving heart for God and others.

### Extension of Apostolic Authority

A few other observations to consider in these first few verses. I bring you back to verses 1-2 and we see Paul calling himself "**an apostle of Christ by the command of God our Savior and Christ Jesus our hope.**" There are several key principles to glean here:

1) Notice that Paul claimed to be an **apostle**. This word, in the broadest sense, was used for someone who was *appointed for a special task or function*, like a messenger, steward, or ambassador. In the New Testament, we see this special function applied to the churches as there were messengers of the churches to the glory of Christ (2 Cor. 8:23), such as Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:25). However, there also were specific apostles, or Apostles with a "big" A, that were foundational to the starting of the church itself (Eph. 2:20), and this group was small (only 13), would not be reproduced, and had to meet certain requirements:

- Their task was to proclaim and preach Christ (Mark 3:14)
- They were commissioned personally by Jesus (Matt. 28:19ff; Mark 16:14; Luke 24:48; John 20:21-23; Acts 1:6-8)
- They had seen the risen Christ (1 Cor. 9:1; Acts 2:32; 3:15; 13:31)
- They were Spirit empowered (Acts 1:8) and accompanied teaching with signs and wonders (2 Cor. 12:12; Acts 5:12)

An Apostle carried a particular authority that came directly from Jesus. He was not taught by others but by Jesus Himself (Gal. 1:12). It was this authority by which he taught the church, appointed leaders, and corrected false teaching. It was this authority that he was extending to Timothy, who would have to teach on his own but who was representing Paul. Timothy was NOT AN ELDER of the church. When the apostles died they passed on their authority to elders/pastors in churches who would teach, lead, correct, and evangelize. There is not apostolic succession today, since the church has all it needs to be faithful: the gospel, a risen Savior, a completed canon of Scripture, and the Holy Spirit to guide.

2) Paul's only authority came from Christ Jesus and God the Savior - Paul was not rogue or a maverick, but came in the name of Christ Jesus. Its fascinating that most other writers in the New Testament (Peter, James) use the phrase Jesus Christ. Why? They actually knew Jesus as a man. Paul knew Jesus only as Christ, His Savior, Lord and teacher. He came in the name of Christ and the command of God the Savior, which is not a typical title either. Sometimes we think of Jesus as Savior and God as mean, the one whose wrath we need saving from. Most often people have an easier time relating to Jesus than God in the sense that Jesus seems to relate better with us, but Jesus actually points us to the Father and reconciles us to Him. That is how Christ Jesus is our hope.

### **Charged to Deal with False Teaching in the Church (3)**

*As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, **remain** at Ephesus so that you may **charge** certain persons not to teach any different doctrines*

#### **Remain when you want to go**

This letter has everything to do with how we are to think and live within God's church, but it is also a polemic against false teaching. Notice that the letter opens and closes the same way, with Paul calling Timothy to deal with those who had swerved from the truth (1:6; 6:21) and had turned away from the good deposit of the gospel that had been entrusted (1:4; 6:20). This means that Paul was not only writing in a positive way (this is what you should be doing), but was also refuting the teaching and living of the false teachers. This is why Paul **urged** or called alongside Timothy to remain as he left for

Macedonia. It was very likely that Timothy did not WANT to stay and would have preferred to go back home or to join Paul where he went, perhaps since he saw how Paul's confrontation with two elders had gone down. But a **leader is willing to do the hard things when the hard thing is the right thing to do**. When we want to take flight when it gets hard, a leader stays, endures, and willingly bears up under what needs to get done. Paul knew Timothy was faithful, so he could hand off the big jobs.

### **Speak when you want to stay silent**

We looked couple of weeks ago at Timothy's makeup and temperament, and though he was a servant he was not a boisterous leader but could function more on the timid side. So Paul used the word **charge** to Timothy, which was a military grade term meaning to give strict orders. He was to give strict order to those who were teaching novel doctrines, *heterodox teaching*, and they were to cease and desist. Timothy could have felt like he was not ready for the arguments, did not have the intellectual acumen, experience, or quick thinking to deal with such imbedded teaching, but his call was clear. When it comes to standing for the truth, it is most often a clear argument. The Bible was given to us to be known by the Spirit, and the keys of knowledge were not given to just a few to hold it over others heads. It can be understood by children and take a lifetime to come to grips with, and the reality of the gospel is understandable rather than hidden or mysterious. **A leader speaks truth, even to those in power positions or who are good at verbal judo.**

### **Charged to Identify the Nature of False Teaching in the Church (4a, 6-7)**

*nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies which promote speculations...Certain persons, by swerving from these, have wandered away into vain discussions, desiring to be teachers of the law without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions*

### **Problem with WHO was teaching**

It is clear from the letter that the false teachers were not simply low level, non-influential people but most likely elders themselves. They were: 1) **already teaching** - which was reserved for elders 2) The two that were already removed had to be removed by Paul himself, with his apostolic authority 3) The fact that Paul had to clarify the qualifications for and how to dismiss an elder speaks to the fact that the church and Timothy needed backing on this. Its why Paul reiterated that they should not be hasty to lay hands on an elder (5:22) since it is easier to install than remove an elder. The issue with false teachers is **influence** and when a leader makes **shipwreck of his own faith** (1:19) he will quickly make shipwreck of those who follow him. Its exactly why James said not many should become teachers in the church (James 3:1) since they will incur a stricter judgment if they lead people astray. This is why we desire for people in this church to grow in **discernment**, but reading a book by a false teacher and having one in the pulpit are two categorically different things.

### **Problem with WHAT they were teaching**

We are not told of the specifics of content of the false teaching, but we are told the general ways in which they taught. There was an interest in **myths or fables** (1 Tim. 1:4, 4:7; Titus 1:14; 2 Tim. 4:4), **genealogies** (1:4; Titus 3:9), **contradictions and babble they call knowledge** (1 Tim. 6:20), **teaching the law without a grasp of it** (1:7), **controversies, argumentation and speculation** (1:4; 6:4; Titus 1:10, 3:9; 2 Tim. 2:14, 16, 23). Most likely these came from a Jewish background and leveraged the law with genealogies to begin to teach what they wanted. This meant that their grid of interpretation was NOT literal or grammatical, but could easily turn to non-literal or allegorizing, meaning that words did not simply mean what they were intended in context, but there was a level of secret knowledge to truly

understand it. This put the authority NOT on the text but on the teacher, and the only restriction would be the amount of ingenuity possessed by the teacher. This would lead to confusion among people and make them dependant on the **teacher rather than Christ, on the secretive interpretation rather than Scripture.**

On top of this, they were teaching a **harsh asceticism, or moralistic view of the law** where they told people could not eat certain things or get married (1 Tim. 4:1-5). This is the ultimate **power play with Scripture: confuse people that they can not understand Scripture for themselves leaving them confused and without answers, then fill in the answers with rigid, supposed spiritual rules to follow!** This recipe still happens today, keeping people away from understanding God's Word, keeping them dependant on institutions, and strictly defining the way righteousness plays out.

### **Problem with WHY they were teachers**

These teachers seemed like they were sharp, that they held some level of expertise or mastery of spirituality, but behind it all they were hypocrites. **Lives always reveal what someone really believes, so a teachers life will always reveal the truth.** These teachers were **immoral** (1 Tim. 1:19-20; 2 Tim. 2:16,19). They had a **desire to be teachers**, not to serve the people of the church in love and to love, but rather that they would be seen and known (1 Tim. 1:7). They had **strayed, swerved, and ultimately missed the mark of right teaching.** They had seared consciences (4:2), and did everything for some sort of power or material gain (1 Tim. 6:5, 8, 10; Tit. 1:11; 2 Tim. 3:2, 4). This is almost ALWAYS the motive behind false teachers: **there is a desire for material gain.** They use slick arguments, emotional pleas, and fear tactics to get people to give power and money to them. Paul argued that he should make a living off the preaching of the gospel (1 Cor. 9:14), but the gospel is never a means to become wealthy.

All of this fell short of Biblical teaching, but it was also destructive in the church. That is why Timothy was to teach positively with a divine stewardship that would lead to LOVE.

### **Charged with a Divine Stewardship (4b-5)**

*....rather than the **stewardship from God that is by faith. The aim of our charge is love from a pure heart, and a good conscience and a sincere faith.***

### **Clarify God's Entrusted Plan**

These false teachers had **swerved away** from the timeless, entrusted, and redemptive purpose of God's saving plan. We have been entrusted (1:11) with this message, a sacred trust that we steward as ambassadors. False teaching will ALWAYS and INEVITABLY break down the same way: **salvation is somehow found in something we do, earn, gain, or give.** Even if it is mixed with a message of love and doing good for the world, it will ultimately bank on **human achievement for salvation.** The divine stewardship we have from God is that salvation in Christ is all about **DIVINE ACCOMPLISHMENT.** It is salvation that comes to us **by faith alone**, which God gifts us through His grace (Eph. 2:8-9). At the core, salvation through the work of Jesus Christ's life, death, and resurrection is miraculous, turning a heart of stone into a heart of flesh, bringing us from darkness to light, and from death to life. It is **being reborn** through the Spirit, something we could never do on our own or conjure up. We do not need to waver, move, or find a better message than that. It HAS to be miraculous for us to be able to accomplish the charge Biblical teaching gives us.

### **Keep the Goal of Love Central**

The goal of the false teachers was not Biblical love but self-love, since their own gain was the goal. The aim for all our teaching is **LOVE**, but not just any kind of undefined love. It is a love for God (Matt.

22:37-39), a love for each other (1 John 4:7-8; 1 Pet. 1:23) and a love for the truth (1 Pet. 2:2). This is not a love devoid of feeling and affection but not one that ONLY exists there. It is a love that is **volitional, a choice to love, and should be growing**. *This is key to understand the nature of this charge.* This kind of love can only come out of a **NEW HEART WITH NEW AFFECTIONS**. Something transformational had to take place for us to be able to love this way. That is why Paul described to Timothy what was needed to truly love:

- **A Pure Heart** - When God gives us faith to believe and turn to follow Christ, he washes us in regeneration and renews us by the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5). Jesus' blood cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:7) and from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). It is out of this newly created clean heart (Ps. 51:10) that we can now become obedient **from the heart** (Romans 6:17) and flee youthful passions to pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace (2 Tim. 2:22). Even though our hearts began deceitfully wicked above all things (Jer. 17:9), God renews our inner being and transforms us through forgiveness. This means that a one time cleansing assures that it will be continually cleansed, even as we battle sin. We have **confidence** to confess our sins BECAUSE we have been cleansed already.
- **A Good Conscience** - This purity of heart also allows us to function with a **good conscience**. The conscience is our moral self-evaluator, the umpire that allows us to see ourselves the way God sees us. Every person has this since the law is written on our hearts and our consciences bear witness (Rom. 2:15) and can both **accuse or excuse us**. In other words, we are all born with an active conscience that informs us when we violate the law of God, whether we know that law or not. But the conscience can be ignored and if we ignore it long enough and consistently enough, it can lead to a seared conscience (1 Tim. 4:2) that no longer feels the weight of accusation but simply excuses what we do. The consciences of false teachers are defiled (Titus 1:15) where the consciences of God's teachers are clear (2 Tim. 1:3). For us, a good conscience is ultimately freeing and joyful. It means that when we are aware of sin, even at the level of motive or intention, God makes it known to us through His Word and Spirit so we can confess it and find forgiveness. Our consciences can be refined, **as we know the truth more clearly** and walk with the Spirit more closely we will be MORE AND MORE aware of areas that need to be confessed so that we are clean vessels God can use (2 Tim 2:21) and our joy can be made full. A good conscience is a gift that comes out of a pure heart, which comes by faith in the gospel.
- **A Sincere Faith** - Finally, in opposition to the hypocritical actions of the false teachers, a clean heart and good conscience leads to a sincere faith. This faith is clear that we do not trust ourselves for salvation, humbly admit that we are sinners in need of cleansing, and that Christ is now our highest value, our greatest joy, and one to be followed with all our heart.

This is what is required for us to grow in our love, the love that has a growing appetite for truth, a growing desire for God in Christ, and a volitional choice to love each other as well as the lost, even our enemies.

This means we must continue to:

- Grow in our discernment of what is true. The only way to fight for what is right and call out what is false is to know what God has actually said. Its why its our job to train us all to know God's Word, to study it on our own, and to do so with the proper interpretive grid
- Grow in Biblical truth and understanding of the gospel so we will grow in our conviction and expression of LOVE.