

Bible Study # 27

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Paul's 1st Letter to Timothy

Saint Timothy

- *Timothy* was born in *Lystra, Lycaonia*, the son of a Greek father and a Jewess converted to Christianity mother
- He was said to have been acquainted with the Scriptures since his childhood
- When Paul returned to *Lystra* with *Silas*, (on his Second Missionary Journey), *Timothy* was a respected member of the Christian community as were his grandmother, *Lois*, and mother, *Eunice*
- In order to make *Timothy* more acceptable to the Jews in the area, Paul had him circumcised
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Saint Timothy (Cont)

- In 52 AD, Paul and Silas took *Timothy* with them on their journey to *Macedonia* during Paul's Second Missionary Journey
- When Paul went to *Athens*, *Silas* and *Timothy* stayed for some time in *Beroea* and *Thessalonica* before joining Paul in *Corinth*
- While Paul was in *Ephesus* (54-57) on his Third Missionary Journey, Paul sent *Timothy* to *Macedonia* and eventually to *Corinth*
- *Timothy* arrived in *Corinth* just after the arrival of Paul's First Letter to the *Corinthians* which was not well received, causing *Timothy* quickly returned to *Ephesus* to report to Paul

Saint Timothy (Cont)

- *Timothy* was with Paul in *Corinth* during the winter of 57 -58 AD when Paul sent his letter to the *Romans*
- *Timothy* was the co-author of 2nd Corinthians, Philippians, Colossians, 1st and 2nd Thessalonians, and Philemon
- Paul summoned *Timothy* to *Rome* during his second imprisonment for a final farewell
- The apocryphal *Acts of Timothy* states that in the year 97 AD the 80 year old *Timothy* tried to halt a procession in honor of the goddess Diana by preaching the gospel. The angry pagans beat him, dragged him through the streets, and stoned him to death

Purpose of the Letter

- Paul wrote the First letter to *Timothy* who was stationed in *Ephesus* on a special assignment
- As a loyal friend and traveling assistant, *Timothy* was well suited for this task as he had been sent on a previous assignment to other young Christian Churches in *Philippi* and *Thessalonica*
- The *Ephesian* Church at that time was threatened by a serious pastoral crisis with teachers and shepherds leading the flock away from the certainties of divine revelation into the mists of conjecture and speculation

Purpose of the Letter (Cont)

- *Timothy* was charged with the difficult task of repairing the damage done by these troublemakers, two of whom Paul was forced to excommunicate when he passed through *Ephesus* on his way to *Macedonia*
- Unable to return immediately, Paul wrote to admonish Timothy and authorized his mission to help this struggling congregation to safety
- The bulk of the letter is personal and informal in arrangement, and covers the gamut of *Timothy's* pastoral responsibilities
- Paul was counting on him to stabilize the Church in *Ephesus* with sound doctrine and appoint reliable pastors to shepherd the flock

Outline of Paul's 1st Letter to Timothy

- **1. Opening Address (1:1-2)**
- **2. False Teaching in Ephesus (1:3-11)**
 - A. Speculation and God's Law (1:3-7)
 - B. The True Purpose of the Law (1:8-11)
- **3. Paul's Conversion and Charge (1:12-20)**

Outline of Paul's 1st Letter to Timothy (Cont)

- **4. Paul's Pastoral Instructions (2:1-6:2)**
 - A. Prayer and Intercession in Christ (2:1-7)
 - B. Men and Women in the Liturgy (2:8-15)
 - C. Ordaining Bishops and Deacons (3:1-13)
 - D. Timothy as Teacher and Shepherd (3:14-4:16)
 - E. Ministering to Widows, Elders, and Slaves (5:1-6:2)

Outline of Paul's 1st Letter to Timothy (Cont)

- **5. Final Admonitions (6:11-19)**
 - A. The Dangers of Error and Wealth (6:3-10)
 - B. Faithfulness and Generosity (6:11-19)
- **6. Closing Appeal (6:20-21)**

First Timothy 1

- **1 Tim 1:1-7** *“Paul, an Apostle of Christ Jesus by command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope...without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make assertions.”*
 - Once again Paul used his typical opening address and greeting
 - Then he launched into another attack against the **Judaizers** (circumcision party) who traveled to *Antioch, Jerusalem, Galicia, Colossae*, and most likely into *Philippi*, and *Ephesus* *

First Timothy 1 (Cont)

- **1 Tim 1:8-17** *“Now we know that the law is good,....the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen”*
 - Paul strongly emphasized the word “provided”, meaning that is the law is good *if* it is used in keeping with its purpose
 - The purpose of the law was to reveal sin and to lead to Christ
 - Paul elaborated on the kind of sins, and sinners that it was meant to expose
 - Although not exhaustive, the list roughly followed the order of the Ten Commandments
 - Then Paul identified his former self as a supreme example of one who lived that sinful lifestyle

First Timothy 1 (Cont)

- Paul reminded *Timothy* that he committed these sinful acts out of ignorance
- Yet, Christ gave him an abundance of grace leading to his conversion
- On the other side of the coin of Paul's sin was the Lord's patience, longsuffering, and mercy for those who would follow Paul in receiving them
- If God could show His mercy to a sinner like Paul, how could He refuse it to anyone else who would believe in Jesus Christ?*

First Timothy 1 (Cont)

- **1 Tim 1:18-20** *This charge I commit to you,....whom I have delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.”*
 - Paul returned to the directive he gave earlier (1:3-5) which stated that *Timothy’s* call to the ministry was from God
 - He encouraged him to “hang in there” in the struggle of his vocation
 - He called *Timothy* his “child” in the manner of a father handing on a precious heritage to his son

First Timothy 1 (Cont)

- Paul pairs the words “faith” and “good conscience” three times in this letter
- His conscience must be formed by this faith in Jesus
- Those who rejected “conscience” and had made a shipwreck of their faith, were the two opposition leaders who opposed Paul in *Ephesus*
- Handing them over “to Satan” was a technical term meaning he had them “excommunicated”*

First Timothy 2

- **1 Tim 2:1-7** *“First of all, then, I urge that supplications,...a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.”*
 - Paul, as an apostle, understood himself to be in a very high position, even above the kings of the earth
 - For this reason he used the pronoun “we”
 - He discussed the ways in which God wills:
 - He wills that all men be saved (but Paul knows that all men will not be saved)
 - This does not mean, as Calvin said, that God willed certain men not to be saved
 - What Paul means is that God allows some to choose not to be saved based on their own free will

First Timothy 2 (Cont)

- God, like a parent, wills that everyone choose Him
- But as with our children, we will and hope that they will always do good but we can't force them to do that
- As parents we watch them, pray for them, hope for them to make the right decisions but we allow them to make their own choices and watch them make mistakes
- Then we pray for them and hope that they will not make the same mistakes again
- Here, we see the image of a loving Father

First Timothy 2 (Cont)

- The statement that “*Christ is the **one mediator** between God and men*”, has led to many Catholic-Protestant misunderstandings

- Protestants often see the Catholic use of priests, the Blessed Mother and the Saints as mediators to be in conflict with this statement

- The answer is that as Catholics we believe that there is only one mediator between man and God and that One is Jesus Christ

Jesus, as the body of Christ, contains *Timothy*, Paul and the rest of the believers

- The reason that we can ask others to pray for us is because we are all part of the “body of Christ”

First Timothy 2 (Cont)

- Paul (in 2:1) asks *Timothy* for “*prayers*”, and “*intercessions*”
- He is not being inconsistent when he asks Timothy to be a mediator even though there is only supposed to be one mediator
- Paul is encouraging *Timothy* and the Church to pray for fellow Christians, especially for those who are in most need of prayers
- Paul is saying that there is only one mediator between God and men and that is the man Jesus Christ because only in Him can we be saved. *

First Timothy 2

- **1 Tim 2:8-10** *“I desire then that in every place the men should pray,...as benefits women who profess religion”*
 - Paul, in referring to women in this manner, was using a Semitic way of speaking “not this, but that” - one is preferred over the other
 - He was saying that women should first think of adorning themselves with “virtues” before adorning themselves with jewelry
 - He also did not want women to come to church all decked out in the most gorgeous outfits and jewels and be distracting to the poor and others around them

First Timothy 2 (Cont)

- Father Sebastian said that he would like to drive a Ferrari, but he is not sure that it would be appropriate for him as a Christian to spend that much money on a car
- Paul was calling for a sense of hierarchy
- Paul was not saying that women should not braid their hair or wear earrings or pearls
- He was calling on them to adorn themselves with things that made them “glorious before men” which was their behavior as Christians *

First Timothy 2 (Cont)

- **1 Tim 2:11-15** *“Let a woman learn in silence with all submissiveness....if she continues in faith and love and holiness, with modesty.”*
 - A better translation here for “woman” would be “wife”
 - Paul was saying this to promote good order
 - He believed that if a woman was teaching in church, while her husband was not, it made the husband look bad (like he didn’t know how to teach), creating disorder within the family*

First Timothy 3

- **1 Tim 3:1-5** *“The saying is sure: If anyone aspires to the office of bishop,...how can he care for God’s church?”*
 - The term “aspire” meant to “offer” or “present” himself for an office
 - This would be like someone coming to *Timothy* asking to be consecrated bishop
 - Paul said that this was a noble task and was a good thing for the candidate to do
 - But Paul reminded *Timothy* that he must be careful before he ordained anyone

First Timothy 3

- He must first ask him some personal questions about his background and how he came to the faith
- Then *Timothy* should check his responses to make sure the candidate knew the faith
- Through this process he should be able to ascertain if he has only been married once or if he was divorced and/or had multiple wives
- But this does not mean (as some Protestants believe) that the bishop must be married *

First Timothy 3 (Cont)

- **1 Tim 3:6-7** “*He must **not be a recent convert**,...or he may fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.”*
 - Father Sebastian suggested that the Church today should adhere to this admonition
 - Sometime a lifelong Protestant becomes a Catholic and suddenly becomes a superstar on EWTN or starts writing books
 - He said that we should be careful, for sometimes someone who jumps into the boat of Catholicism after a year or two falls out the other side taking others with them
 - It would be a good idea for the convert to spend some time in the pew learning the faith before they move into some of these areas *
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First Timothy 3 (Cont)

- **1 Tim 3:8-16** *“Deacons likewise must be serious,... taken up in glory.”*
 - The position of Bishop and Deacon had very similar traits
 - Paul used the term “mystery” about 20 times
 - His use of the term “the mystery of faith” can be understood as the “pascal mystery” which culminates in the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus, the sending of the Holy Spirit to the Church and the bringing of it to glory
 - Next, Paul shifted general issues (doctrine, prayer and ministry) to a parallel set of directives dealing with Timothy, widows, and presbyters

First Timothy 3 (Cont)

- Paul was saying that ministry was not just “a job to be done” but a sacred service to God’s household
- He frequently used the Old Testament term “the living God”, and contrasted the God of Israel with the idols in *Ephesus*
- He used two other metaphors to complete the picture of the Church
 - **Pillar** - to refer to a person who was a strong supporter of institutions, cities or families
 - **Foundation** - which was translated as “support”, “bulwark” or “buttress” *

First Timothy 4

- **1 Tim 4:1-3** “*Now the Spirit expressly says ...with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.*”
 - Again, this verse is sometimes taken out of context and used as an anti-Catholic verse
 - What Paul was talking about here were the *Gnostics*
 - He was predicting that in the future the *Gnostics* would continue to creep into the Church
 - By 90 AD *Gnosticism* was a full-blown heresy in the Church
 - This was a major enemy that St. John addresses in his gospel, three epistles, and the Book of Revelation *

First Timothy 4 (Cont)

- **1 Tim 4:4-16** *“For everything created by God is good,...for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.”*
 - As Catholics we fast and abstain from certain things for a limited period of time because those things are good
 - Our priests are not celibate because marriage is bad
 - They give up a “good” for a “higher good”, for a more efficient way to proclaim the gospel

First Timothy 4 (Cont)

- Paul pointed out that this was a much more practical way of life for the early church missionaries like himself
 - Paul wrote 14 Epistles
 - Peter (who was married) wrote 2 Epistles
 - James (who was married) wrote 1 Epistle
- Paul wished that all were like him because he believed that they would be more efficient in spreading the gospel if they were not encumbered with a wife and family
- The church took to this lesson early and called her priests to a life of celibacy as a higher good
- As Catholics we do not fast from meat because meat is dirty, unclean or bad, but for a higher good *

First Timothy 5

- **1 Tim 5:1-8** *“Do not rebuke an older man but exhort him as you would a father...he has disowned the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.”*
 - Paul was laying out the needs for a minister to be sensitive to the needs of different groups within a community according to age, gender and office
 - Today we see this play out in our parishes via the availability of youth groups, young adults groups, separate retreats for men and women, etc.
- Paul was particularly concerned about the treatment of widows

First Timothy 5 (Cont)

- It was estimated that 40% of women between forty and fifty in the ancient world were widows
- We saw this problem arise early in the life of the church leading to the office of Deacon
- The “real widow” was one who was totally alone having no one but God to rely on and spent her life in constant prayer
 - The prophetess Anna who “never left the temple, but worshiped night and day with fasting and prayer (Lk 2:37)
 - The persistent widow and the unjust judge in Lk 18:1-8
 - The widow’s mite in Mk 12:42 *

First Timothy 5 (Cont)

- **1 Tim 5:9-12** *“Let a widow be enrolled if she is not less than sixty years of age,...and so they incur condemnation for having violated their first pledge.”*
 - This was the first time since 1 Cor 7 where Paul talks about celibacy among the laity
 - He suggested that widows who are still young should not enter into the “sisterhood” until they were at least 60 years old
 - This is much different that the young nuns and sisters of today who are part of what was called “consecrated virgins”
 - Paul was speaking of women who God called to the vocation of marriage but their spouse died *

First Timothy 5 (Cont)

- **1 Tim 5:13-22** *“Besides that, they learn to be idlers,...nor participate in another man’s sins: keep yourself pure.”*
 - From these passages it seems that Paul preferred for younger widows to marry, but directed that only the older ones be consecrated and enrolled as consecrated women
 - He then listed a series of temptations that may impact on the younger widows
 - Based on these ideas we must remember that the early church not only cared for its widows but gave them a ministry which was primarily of prayer
 - The following section identifies the “duties” of Timothy and the church toward presbyters *

First Timothy 5 (Cont)

- **1 Tim 5:23-24** *“No longer drink only water,... they cannot remain hidden.”*
 - Paul was talking about “wine”, not grape juice
 - Grape juice is not good for the stomach and may make a stomachache worse due to the gas it contains
 - Wine has a little bit of alcohol which may help calm an upset stomach or ulcers
 - *Timothy* may have chosen to only drink water because he was somewhat of an aesthetic who was a Christian even before he met Paul
 - He may have been fasting all of his life *

First Timothy 6

- **1 Tim 6:1-19** *“Let all who are under the yoke of slavery...so that they may take hold of the life which is life indeed.”*
 - Paul began this last section dealing with the issue of Christian slaves
 - Again, we need to look back to the letter to *Philemon* to understand Paul’s attitude toward the master-slave relationship
 - We do not see an effort within the early church to abolish the institution, but we see the call for a new community of love on the part of both slave and master
 - In some ways these teachings of Paul can form the foundation for modern employer-employee relationships to include the bond of justice coupled with the bond of love as practiced by Jesus Christ

First Timothy 6 (Cont)

- Paul also reminded *Timothy* of the dangers of wealth which could often blind the eye
- The “love of money” may not be the only root of evil but it is the most common and evident one which has led some to abandon the faith all together
- As Paul moves to conclude this letter he addressed *Timothy* in a more insistent and solemn manner by addressing him as a “man of God”
- This was an old Testament title reserved for Moses, David, and the prophets

First Timothy 6 (Cont)

- This gives us a glimpse into the conditions that *Timothy* was facing which might tempt him to become discouraged and indecisive
- Paul reaffirmed his divine calling and harkened him to act courageously
- He challenged *Timothy* to seek the goal of all that he is striving for which was the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ within the second coming at the climax of the Christian life *

First Timothy 6 (Cont)

- **1 Tim 6:20-21** “*O Timothy, ... Grace be with you.*”
 - In order to reinforce the dangers of the new philosophy toward the church, Paul concludes by providing *Timothy* with one last warning against the dangers of *Gnosticism* *

Transition

- We will now look at the third and final pastoral letter, 2nd Timothy