

GOSPEL STEWARDSHIP

1 Timothy 1.1-11

Paul, a Pharisee and persecutor of Christians, was converted on a journey to Damascus (Acts 9, 22, 26; Galatians 1.11-16; Philippians 3.4-11). He was then commissioned to preach Jesus to the nations. Paul encountered Timothy in Lystra, and they began serving the Lord together (Acts 16.1-5; Romans 16.21; 2 Corinthians 1.1).

By the time of this letter, a still young Timothy was pastoring the church in Ephesus (1 Timothy 4.12).

We need people on our journey of following Jesus who speak into our lives. Paul invested in a younger man for the sake of ministry multiplication. This intentional reproduction serves as a model for discipleship through the ages (Cf 2 Timothy 2.2). Crucially, Paul provided clear direction on matters of faith and worship. This is why this letter, along with 2 Timothy and Titus, are often referred to as “the pastoral epistles” or “the pastorals”.

Be aware of the threats to faithful obedience

False teachers descended on Ephesus. They “swerved” and “wandered” from the truth (1 Timothy 1.6). We can reconstruct some of the content of their error.

- i. They were interested in peripheral matters such as “myths”, “genealogies”, and “vain discussions” that led to “speculation” (1 Timothy 1.4, 6). Our faith is anchored in the Lord Jesus.
- ii. They were uninformed about what they were teaching (1 Timothy 1.7). Do we have a version of the “aesthetic fallacy”? Do we think that because someone has a platform and speaks in “confident assertions” that what they are saying is true?
- iii. They were not teaching the Old Testament Law accurately. They failed to understand that the Law was given to expose our sin (Romans 7.7-12). They were teaching self-righteousness.

These threats lurk today. Is there a tendency for me to major on the minors? To be a great theologian is not to parse obscurities, but to proclaim the main truths of the faith.

Let’s see our ministry as a faithful stewardship

Paul understands his calling as a Christian as something that has been “entrusted” to him (1 Timothy 1.11). The faithful church is one that practices responsible “stewardship” of the Gospel. It is a recognition that what we have is from God and apprehended by faith (1 Timothy 1.4). We hold to the “sound doctrine in accordance with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God” (1 Timothy 1.11).

Let's see the connection between "sound doctrine" and honorable living. Apprehending an accurate theology leads to a "pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith" that gives way to love (1 Timothy 1.5).

For example, an accurate view of the incarnation teaches us about the connection between love and humility. An accurate view of the atonement teaches us about the connection between love and sacrifice. An accurate understanding of the church grounds our practice of the "one anothers" or "others-mindedness".

The false teachers at Ephesus taught a "different doctrine" (1 Timothy) anchored in self-sufficiency.

Throughout history we see the re-working of doctrine to justify desired behaviors.

Key Idea: Guard the Gospel with faithful stewardship

Application Questions:

What is the nature of the false teaching invading Ephesus? Why is Paul concerned about it (Cf. Galatians 1.8-12)?

What does this passage teach about the connection between right belief (orthodoxy) and right behavior (orthopraxy)?

Why is it so important for more mature Christians to speak into the lives of younger Christians? How can this happen constructively?

How does every member of Providence Church play a role in guarding sound doctrine?