

# CHAPTER 1

After the inscription (v. 1, 2) we have,

- I.** The charge given to Timothy (v. 3, 4).
- II.** The true end of the law (v. 5-11), where he shows that it is entirely agreeable to the gospel.
- III.** He mentions his own call to be an apostle, for which he expresses his thankfulness (v. 12-16)
- IV.** His doxology (v. 17).
- V.** A renewal of the charge to Timothy (v. 18). And of Hymenaeus and Alexander (v. 19, 20).

## ~~501~~ 1 TIMOTHY 1:1-4

### INTRODUCTION

Here is,

**I.** The inscription of the epistle, from whom it is sent: *Paul an apostle of Jesus Christ, constituted an apostle by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ.* His credentials were unquestionable. He had not only a commission, but a commandment, not only from God our Saviour, but from Jesus Christ: he was a preacher of the gospel of Christ, and a minister of the kingdom of Christ. Observe, God is our Saviour. — *Jesus Christ, who is our hope.* Observe, Jesus Christ is a Christian's hope; our hope is in him, all our hope of eternal life is built upon him; Christ is in us the hope of glory, ~~502~~Colossians 1:27. He calls Timothy his own son, because he had been an instrument of his conversion, and because he had been a son that served him, served with him in the gospel, ~~562~~Philippians 2:22. Timothy had not been wanting in the duty of a son to Paul, and Paul was not wanting in the care and tenderness of a father to him.

**II.** The benediction is, *grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father.* Some have observed that whereas in all the epistles to the churches the apostolical benediction is *grace and peace*, in these two epistles to

Timothy and that to Titus it is *grace, mercy, and peace*: as if ministers had more need of God's mercy than other men. Ministers need more grace than others, to discharge their duty faithfully; and they need more mercy than others, to pardon what is amiss in them: and if Timothy, so eminent a minister, must be indebted to the mercy of God, and needed the increase and continuance of it, how much more do we ministers, in these times, who have so little of his excellent spirit!

**III.** Paul tells Timothy what was the end of his appointing him to this office: *I besought thee to abide at Ephesus*. Timothy had a mind to go with Paul, was loth to go from under his wing, but Paul would have it so; it was necessary for the public service: *I besought thee*, says he. Though he might assume an authority to command him, yet for love's sake he chose rather to beseech him. Now his business was to take care to fix both the ministers and the people of that church: *Charge them that they teach no other doctrine* than what they have received, that they do not add to the Christian doctrine, under pretence of improving it or making up the defects of it, that they do no alter it, but cleave to it as it was delivered to them. Observe,

- 1.** Ministers must not only be charged to preach the true doctrine of the gospel, but charged to preach no other doctrine. *If an angel from heaven preach any other doctrine, let him be anathema,* <sup><118></sup>Galatians 1:8.
- 2.** In the times of the apostles there were attempts made to corrupt Christianity (*we are not as many, who corrupt the word,* <sup><117></sup>2 Corinthians 2:17), otherwise this charge to Timothy might have been spared.
- 3.** He must not only see to it that he did not preach any other doctrine, but he must charge others that they might not add any thing of their own to the gospel, or take any thing from it, but that they preach it pure and uncorrupt. He must also take care to prevent their regarding *fables, and endless genealogies,* and strifes of words. This is often repeated in these two epistles (as <sup><116></sup>1 Timothy 4:7; 6:4; <sup><115></sup>2 Timothy 2:23), as well as in the epistle to Titus. As among the Jews there were some who brought Judaism into Christianity; so among the Gentiles there were some who brought paganism into Christianity. "Take heed of these," says he, "watch against them, or they will be the corrupting and ruining of religion among you, for *they minister questions rather than edifying.*" That which ministers questions is not for edifying; that which gives occasion for

doubtful disputes pulls down the church rather than builds it up. And I think, by a parity of reason, every thing else that ministers questions rather than godly edifying should be disclaimed and disregarded by us, such as an uninterrupted succession in the ministry from the apostles down to these times, the absolute necessity of episcopal ordination, and of the intention of the minister to the efficacy and validity of the sacraments he ministers. These are as bad as Jewish fables and endless genealogies, for they involve us in inextricable difficulties, and tend only to shake the foundations of a Christian's hope and to fill his mind with perplexing doubts and fears. Godly edifying is the end ministers should aim at in all their discourses, that Christians may be improving in godliness and growing up to a greater likeness to the blessed God. Observe, further, Godly edifying must be in faith: the gospel is the foundation on which we build; it is by faith that we come to God at first (<sup><516></sup>Hebrews 11:6), and it must be in the same way, and by the same principle of faith, that we must be edified. Again, Ministers should avoid, as much as may be, what will occasion disputes; and would do well to insist on the great and practical points of religion, about which there can be no disputes; for even disputes about great and necessary truths draw off the mind from the main design of Christianity, and eat out the vitals of religion, which consist in practice and obedience as well as in faith, that we may not hold the truth in unrighteousness, but may keep the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.

## <sup><505></sup>1 TIMOTHY 1:5-11

### TIMOTHY REMINDED OF HIS CHARGE

Here the apostle instructs Timothy how to guard against the judaizing teachers, or others who mingled fables and endless genealogies with the gospel. He shows the use of the law, and the glory of the gospel.

**I.** He shows the end and uses of the law: it is intended to promote love, *for love is the fulfilling of the law,* <sup><530></sup>Romans 13:10.

**1.** *The end of the commandment is charity,* or love, <sup><518></sup>Romans 13:8. The main scope and drift of the divine law are to engage us to the love of God and one another; and whatever tends to weaken either our love to God or love to the brethren tends to defeat the end of the commandment: and

surely the gospel, which obliges us to love our enemies, to do good to those who hate us (<sup>4054</sup>Matthew 5:44) does not design to lay aside or supersede a commandment the end whereof is love; so far from it that, on the other hand, we are told that though we had all advantages and wanted charity, we are but as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal, <sup>4011</sup>1 Corinthians 13:1. *By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you love one another,* <sup>4035</sup>John 13:35. Those therefore who boasted of their knowledge of the law, but used it only as a colour for the disturbance that they gave to the preaching of the gospel (under pretence of zeal for the law, dividing the church and distracting it), defeated that which was the very end of the commandment, and that is love, love *out of a pure heart*, a heart purified by faith, purified from corrupt affections. In order to the keeping up of holy love our hearts must be cleansed from all sinful love; our love must arise *out of a good conscience*, kept without offence. Those answer the end of the commandment who are careful to keep a good conscience, from a real belief of the truth of the word of God which enjoins it, here called a *faith unfeigned*. Here we have the concomitants of that excellency grace charity; they are three: —

- (1.) A pure heart; there it must be seated, and thence it must take its rise.
- (2.) A good conscience, in which we must exercise ourselves daily, that we may not only get it, but that we may keep it, <sup>4016</sup>Acts 24:16.
- (3.) Faith unfeigned must also accompany it, for it is love without dissimulation: the faith that works by it must be of the like nature, genuine and sincere. Now some who set up for teachers of the law swerved from the very end of the commandment: they set up for disputers, but their disputes proved vain jangling; they set up for teachers, but they pretended to teach others what they themselves did not understand. If the church be corrupted by such teachers, we must not think it strange, for we see from the beginning it was so. Observe,

[1.] When persons, especially ministers, swerve from the great law of charity — the end of the commandment, they will turn aside to vain jangling; when a man misses his end and scope, it is no wonder that every step he takes is out of the way.

[2.] Jangling, especially in religion, is vain; it is unprofitable and useless as to all that is good, and it is very pernicious and hurtful: and yet many people's religion consists of little else but vain jangling.

[3.] Those who deal much in vain jangling are fond and ambitious to be teachers of others; they desire (that is, they affect) the office of teaching.

[4.] It is too common for men to intrude into the office of the ministry when they are very ignorant of those things about which they are to speak: they understand neither what they say nor whereof they affirm; and by such learned ignorance, no doubt, they edify their hearers very much!

2. The use of the law (v. 8): *The law is good, if a man use it lawfully.* The Jews used it unlawfully, as an engine to divide the church, a cover to the malicious opposition they made to the gospel of Christ; they set it up for justification, and so used it unlawfully. We must not therefore think to set it aside, but use it lawfully, for the restraint of sin. The abuse which some have made of the law does not take away the use of it; but, when a divine appointment has been abused, call it back to its right use and take away the abuses, for the law is still very useful as a rule of life; though we are not under it as under a covenant of works, yet it is good to teach us what is sin and what is duty. It is not made for a righteous man, that is, it is not made for those who observe it; for, if we could keep the law, righteousness would be by the law (~~ROM~~ Galatians 3:21): but it is made for wicked persons, to restrain them, to check them, and to put a stop to vice and profaneness. It is the grace of God that changes men's hearts; but the terrors of the law may be of use to tie their hands and restrain their tongues. A righteous man does not want those restraints which are necessary for the wicked; or at least the law is not made primarily and principally for the righteous, but for sinners of all sorts, whether in a greater or less measure, v. 9, 10. In this black roll of sinners, he particularly mentions breaches of the second table, duties which we owe to our neighbour; against the fifth and sixth commandments, *murderers of fathers and mothers, and manslayers*; against the seventh, *whoremongers, and those that defile themselves with mankind*; against the eighth, *men-stealers*; against the ninth, *liars and perjured persons*; and then he closes his account with this, *and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine.* Some understand this as an institution of a power in the civil magistrate to make laws against such notorious sinners as are specified, and to see those laws put in execution.

II. He shows the glory and grace of the gospel. Paul's epithets are expressive and significant; and frequently every one is a sentence: as here

(v. 11), *According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God.* Let us learn hence,

**1.** To call God blessed God, infinitely happy in the enjoyment of himself and his own perfections.

**2.** To call the gospel the glorious gospel, for so it is: much of the glory of God appears in the works of creation and providence, but much more in the gospel, where it shines in the face of Jesus Christ. Paul reckoned it a great honour put upon him, and a great favour done him, that this glorious gospel was committed to his trust; that is, the preaching of it, for the framing of it is not committed to any man or company of men in the world. The settling of the terms of salvation in the gospel of Christ is God's own work; but the publishing of it to the world is committed to the apostles and ministers. Note here,

**(1.)** The ministry is a trust, for the gospel was committed unto this apostle; it is an office of trust as well as of power, and the former more than the latter; for this reason ministers are called stewards, ~~401~~ 1 Corinthians 4:1.

**(2.)** It is a glorious trust, because the gospel committed to them is a glorious gospel; it is a trust of very great importance. God's glory is very much concerned in it. Lord, what a trust is committed to us! How much grace do we want, to be found faithful in this great trust!

## ~~5112~~ 1 TIMOTHY 1:12-17

### PERVERTERS REPROVED

Here the apostle,

**I.** Returns thanks to Jesus Christ for putting him into the ministry. Observe,

**1.** It is Christ's work to put men into the ministry, ~~4136~~ Acts 26:16, 17. God condemned the false prophets among the Jews in these words, *I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied,* ~~2221~~ Jeremiah 23:21. Ministers, properly speaking, cannot make themselves ministers; for it is Christ's work, as king and head, prophet and teacher, of his church.

2. Those whom he puts into the ministry he fits for it; whom he calls he qualifies. Those ministers who are no way fit for their work, nor have ability for it, are not of Christ's putting into the ministry, though there are different qualifications as to gifts and graces.

3. Christ gives not only ability, but fidelity, to those whom he puts into the ministry: He *counted me faithful*; and none are counted faithful but those whom he makes so. Christ's ministers are trusty servants, and they ought to be so, having so great a trust committed to them.

4. A call to the ministry is a great favour, for which those who are so called ought to give thanks to Jesus Christ: *I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath put me into the ministry.*

**II.** The more to magnify the grace of Christ in putting him into the ministry, he gives an account of his conversion.

1. What he was before his conversion: *A blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious.* Saul breathed out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, <sup><401></sup>Acts 9:1. He made havoc of the church, <sup><402></sup>Acts 8:3. He was a blasphemer of God, a persecutor of the saints, and injurious to both. Frequently those who are designed for great and eminent services are left to themselves before their conversion, to fall into great wickedness, that the mercy of God may be the more glorified in their remission, and the grace of God in their regeneration. The greatness of sin is no bar to our acceptance with God, no, nor to our being employed for him, if it be truly repented of. Observe here,

(1.) Blasphemy, persecution, and injuriousness, are very great and heinous sins, and those who are guilty of them are sinners before God exceedingly. To blaspheme God is immediately and directly to strike at God; to persecute his people is to endeavour to wound him through their sides; and to be injurious is to be like Ishmael, whose hand was against every one, and every one was against him; for such invade God's prerogative, and encroach upon the liberties of their fellow-creatures.

(2.) True penitents, to serve a good purpose, will not be backward to own their former condition before they were brought home to God: this good apostle often confessed what his former life had been, as <sup><403></sup>Acts 22:4; 26:10, 11.

2. The great favour of God to him: *But I obtained mercy*. This was a blessed *but* indeed, a great favour, that so notorious a rebel should find mercy with his prince.

(1.) If Paul had persecuted the Christians wilfully, knowing them to be the people of God, for aught I know he had been guilty of the unpardonable sin; but, because he did it ignorantly and in unbelief, he obtained mercy. Note,

[1.] What we do ignorantly is a less crime than what we do knowingly; yet a sin of ignorance is a sin, for he that knew not his Master's will, but did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes, <sup><026></sup>Luke 12:48. Ignorance in some cases will extenuate a crime, though it do not take it away.

[2.] Unbelief is at the bottom of what sinners do ignorantly; they do not believe God's threatenings, otherwise they could not do as they do.

[3.] For these reasons Paul obtained mercy: *But I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly, in unbelief*.

[4.] Here was mercy for a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an injurious person: "*But I obtained mercy, I a blasphemer,*" etc.

(2.) Here he takes notice of the abundant grace of Jesus Christ, v. 14. The conversion and salvation of great sinners are owing to the grace of Christ, his exceedingly abundant grace, even that grace of Christ which appears in his glorious gospel (v. 15): *This is a faithful saying*, etc. Here we have the sum of the whole gospel, *that Jesus Christ came into the world*. The Son of God took upon him our nature, was made flesh, and dwelt among us, <sup><014></sup>John 1:14. He came into the world, *not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance*, <sup><013></sup>Matthew 9:13. His errand into the world was to seek and find, and so save, *those that were lost*, <sup><010></sup>Luke 19:10. The ratification of this is *that it is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation*. It is good news, worthy of all acceptation; and yet not too good to be true, for it is a faithful saying. It is a faithful saying, and therefore worthy to be embraced in the arms of faith: it is worthy of all acceptation, and therefore to be received with holy love, which refers to the foregoing verse, where the grace of Christ is said to abound in faith and love. In the close of the verse Paul applies it to himself: *Of whom I am chief*. Paul was a sinner of the first rank; so he acknowledges himself to have been, for he breathed out



threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, etc., ~~491~~ Acts 9:1, 2. Persecutors are some of the worst of sinners: such a one Paul had been. Or, *of whom I am chief*, that is, of pardoned sinners I am chief. It is an expression of his great humility; he that elsewhere calls himself the *least of all saints* (~~488~~ Ephesians 3:8) here calls himself the chief of sinners. Observe,

[1.] Christ Jesus has come into the world; the prophecies concerning his coming are now fulfilled.

[2.] He came to save sinners; he came to save those who could not save and help themselves.

[3.] Blasphemers and persecutors are the chief of sinners, so Paul reckoned them.

[4.] The chief of sinners may become the chief of saints; so this apostle was, for he was not a whit behind the very chief apostles (~~491~~ 2 Corinthians 11:5), for Christ came to save the chief of sinners.

[5.] This is a very great truth, it is a faithful saying; these are true and faithful words, which may be depended on.

[6.] It deserves to be received, to be believed by us all, for our comfort and encouragement.

(3.) The mercy which Paul found with God, notwithstanding his great wickedness before his conversion, he speaks of,

[1.] For the encouragement of others to repent and believe (v. 16): *For this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to those who should hereafter believe.* It was an instance of the long-suffering of Christ that he would bear so much with one who had been so very provoking; and it was designed for a pattern to all others, that the greatest sinners might not despair of mercy with God. Note here, *First*, Our apostle was one of the first great sinners converted to Christianity. *Secondly*, He was converted, and obtained mercy, for the sake of others as well as of himself; he was a pattern to others. *Thirdly*, The Lord Jesus Christ shows great long-suffering in the conversion of great sinners. *Fourthly*, Those who obtain mercy believe on the Lord Jesus Christ; for without faith it is impossible to please God,

<sup><816></sup>Hebrews 11:6. *Fifthly*, Those who believe on Christ believe on him to life everlasting; they believe to the saving of the soul, <sup><819></sup>Hebrews 10:39.

[2.] He mentions it to the glory of God having spoken of the mercy he had found with God, he could not go on with his letter without inserting a thankful acknowledgment of God's goodness to him: *Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.* Observe, *First*, That grace which we have the comfort of God must have the glory of. Those who are sensible of their obligations to the mercy and grace of God will have their hearts enlarged in his praise. Here is praise ascribed to him, as *the King eternal, immortal, invisible.* *Secondly*, When we have found God good we must not forget to pronounce him great; and his kind thoughts of us must not at all abate our high thoughts of him, but rather increase them. God had taken particular cognizance of Paul, and shown him mercy, and taken him into communion with himself, and yet he calls him the King eternal, etc. God's gracious dealings with us should fill us with admiration of his glorious attributes. He is eternal, without beginning of days, or end of life, or change of time. He is the Ancient of days, <sup><709></sup>Daniel 7:9. He is immortal, and the original of immortality; he only has immortality (<sup><816></sup>1 Timothy 6:16), for he cannot die. He is invisible, for he cannot be seen with mortal eyes, dwelling in the light to which no man can approach, whom no man hath seen nor can see, <sup><816></sup>1 Timothy 6:16. He is *the only wise God* (<sup><815></sup>Jude 1:25); he only is infinitely wise, and the fountain of all wisdom. "*To him be glory for ever and ever,*" or, "Let me be for ever employed in giving honour and glory to him, as the thousands of thousands do," <sup><812></sup>Revelation 5:12, 13.

## <sup><818></sup>1 TIMOTHY 1:18-20

### PAUL'S CHARGE TO TIMOTHY

Here is the charge he gives to Timothy to proceed in his work with resolution, v. 18. Observe here, The gospel is a charge committed to the ministers of it; it is committed to their trust, to see that it be duly applied according to the intent and meaning of it, and the design of its great Author. It seems, there had been prophecies before concerning Timothy, that he should be taken into the ministry, and should prove eminent in the

work of the ministry; this encouraged Paul to commit this charge to him. Observe,

**1.** The ministry is a warfare, it is a good warfare against sin and Satan: and under the banner of the Lord Jesus, who is the Captain of our salvation (<sup>4300</sup>Hebrews 2:10), and in his cause, and against his enemies, ministers are in a particular manner engaged.

**2.** Ministers must war this good warfare, must execute their office diligently and courageously, notwithstanding oppositions and discouragements.

**3.** The prophecies which went before concerning Timothy are here mentioned as a motive to stir him up to a vigorous and conscientious discharge of his duty; so the good hopes that others have entertained concerning us should excite us to our duty: *That thou by them mightest war a good warfare.*

**4.** We must hold both faith and a good conscience:  *Holding faith and a good conscience*, v. 19. Those that put away a good conscience will soon make shipwreck of faith. Let us live up to the directions of a renewed enlightened conscience, and keep conscience void of offence (<sup>4400</sup>Acts 24:16), a conscience not debauched by any vice or sin, and this will be a means of preserving us sound in the faith; we must look to the one as well as the other, for the mystery of the faith must be held in a pure conscience, <sup>4500</sup>1 Timothy 3:9. As for those who had made shipwreck of the faith, he specifies two, *Hymeneus and Alexander*, who had made a profession of the Christian religion, but had quitted that profession; and Paul had delivered them to Satan, had declared them to belong to the kingdom of Satan, and, as some think, had, by an extraordinary power, delivered them to be terrified or tormented by Satan, *that they might learn not to blaspheme* not to contradict or revile the doctrine of Christ and the good ways of the Lord. Observe, The primary design of the highest censure in the primitive church was to prevent further sin and to reclaim the sinner. In this case it was for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus, <sup>4600</sup>1 Corinthians 5:5. Observe,

**(1.)** Those who love the service and work of Satan are justly delivered over to the power of Satan: *Whom I have delivered over to Satan.*

(2.) God can, if he please, work by contraries: Hymeneus and Alexander are delivered to Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme, when one would rather think they would learn of Satan to blaspheme the more.

(3.) Those who have put away a good conscience, and made shipwreck of faith, will not stick at any thing, blasphemy not excepted.

(4.) Therefore let us hold faith and a good conscience, if we would keep clear of blasphemy; for, if we once let go our hold of these, we do not know where we shall stop.