



1 Timothy 1:1-11

Our Aim Is Love and Sound Doctrine

23rd Sunday after Trinity | Reformation Day (Observed)

INTRODUCTION

No one is here today just to play church. We don't get up early on a Sunday morning (when the rest of the world is sleeping in) just to pretend we're doing something important or meaningful. We don't do it just to look good in the eyes of others. We don't select a church from a list of behavior-modification programs we think might get better results than some other approach. We've actually been folded in with the church, adopted into it, by a sovereign act of *God* that magnifies His *glory*. We were chosen Eph1⁶ *to the praise of his glorious grace...* But even so, it is not easy to be the church. It is not easy to walk by the Spirit, or live in the power of the *pure gospel*. We still fight with our flesh. We're still distracted by the world, on many levels. We're still vulnerable to distorted *doctrine* that can all too easily confuse us and lead us astray.

We need to be called back to where we belong again and again, in order to make sure we're living as the church. And that is just what Paul does through Timothy for the Ephesian church, and for us. But what does this look like? Let's walk through his charge in three steps.

APOSTOLIC AUTHORITY IS GIVEN BY GOD TO PAUL – 1-2

¹ Paul introduced himself in this letter to his beloved *Timothy* (2), his spiritual son, as *an apostle of Christ Jesus by command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope*. He's acting under the direct orders of *God* the Father and *God* the Son. Paul's usual approach is to identify himself as *an apostle by the will of God* (cf. 1Co.1:1; 2Co.1:1; Eph.1:1; Col.1:1; 2Ti.1:1). So right off the bat we see that it's important for him to establish his authority in the matter he's addressing with *Timothy*. And his apostolic authority is granted by the Father, the ultimate Source of our salvation, and by the Son, our only *hope* of attaining it.

There's also a bit of a weightier tone in Paul's greeting, ² *... grace, mercy and peace...* Again, his usual language is simply *grace and peace* (1Co.1:3; 2Co.1:2; Gal.1:3; Eph.1:2; Phi.1:2; Col.1:2; 1Th.1:1; 2Th.1:2; Tit.1:4; Phm.3). But in both of his letters to Timothy he also includes *mercy*. *Grace* expands a typical Greek greeting, and *peace* expresses the typical Hebrew. But *mercy* seems to echo the Hebrew *hesed* (Kostenberger 499), and also seems to be added just for Timothy (1Ti.1:2; 2Ti.1:2), quite possibly because of

the challenging assignment he's receiving. He'll need God's *mercy* to see it through. So what is his assignment?

SHEPHERDING AUTHORITY IS DELEGATED BY PAUL TO TIMOTHY – 3-4

Paul gives it to him in these next verses. It involves his delegating of shepherding authority to *Timothy*.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 doctrine,*⁴ *nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith.* So there are certain persons, whom *Paul* and *Timothy* both know, who are (teaching) *different doctrine* (3). Their content seems like it was dangerous more because of its irrelevance than because of its falseness (Guthrie 45), but it was off-line in any case. We can see this down in v.6: these⁶ *certain persons... have wandered away into vain discussion.* They're⁷ *desiring to be teachers of the law, but without understanding either of what they are saying or of the things about which they make confident assertions.* *Timothy* has to do something about this. He must confront it.

THE AIM OF TIMOTHY'S CHARGE TO THE EPHESIAN CHURCH – 5-11

The whole purpose of his confrontation, the intended outcome, is for the church to be the church, to live in the saving, sanctifying grace of *God*.⁵ *The aim of our charge,* *Paul* writes, *is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.*⁶ *Certain persons, by swerving from these, have wandered away into vain discussion.* So it sounds like these *certain persons* were trying to steer the church toward *proper* behavior by appealing to *the law*—he says they're⁷ *desiring to be teachers of the law, but without understanding...* So they're swerving away from⁽⁶⁾ *this love that (flows out of) a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith* (5).

Of course they're swerving away from the *aim* of the church when they use *the law* this way, because this is not what *the law* was given to accomplish. *The law* can't make us righteous. We can never live the life *God* requires by trying to obey *the law* in the strength of our own will.⁸ *Now we know the law is good,* *Paul* says here, *if (we use) it lawfully*—if we use it the way *God* intended it to be used, namely, to identify our sin, to reveal His standard so we can be held accountable to it. But it can't save us, or make us holy, or make us loving. It can't make our *heart pure* or our *conscience* clean or our *faith sincere*. So *the law is good*, but it is weak. *Paul* wrote to the Romans: 8³... *God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh,*⁴ *in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but*

according to the Spirit. And he says the complementary thing here ⁹... *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...* It was laid down to identify the sinfulness of our sin—every kind of sin, everything that ¹⁰... *is contrary to sound doctrine.* And *sound doctrine* is defined as everything that is ¹¹ *in accordance with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God...*

So, *the law* can't make us holy. It can't help us be the church. It just shows us our sin and points out our need for a Savior. So only in *Christ*, by faith in Him, are we counted as having *fulfilled the righteous requirement of the law.* (Rom.8:3-4). Then by the power we receive in Him, we seek to live out that standard.

CONCLUSION

So *sound doctrine* that conforms to the *pure gospel* shows itself in our lives as *love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith* (5). That is what *Paul* wants *Timothy* to make room for in the church by pushing back false *doctrine* that steers people away from the primary *aim* of the *pure gospel*. He wanted *Timothy* to make room for the church to be the church—for their living in this *love* that spills over out of a *pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith* (5), that spills over out of lives and minds and hearts that have drunk deeply of *the gospel of the glory of the blessed God.* (11)

So, what does it look like when this happens? What does this *love* produce in action? It produces people who hear and receive and obey the instruction *Paul* gives through *Timothy* in the remainder of this letter. First, it produces people who are reconciled to *God*, like *Timothy*, and like *Paul* himself, as we'll see (12-20). Second, it produces people (c.2) who *(lift) up holy hands in prayer*, interceding for their governing officials toward *(leading) a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.* Third, it produces people (c.3) who recognize, affirm, and (c.5) *honor* not only godly leaders, but everyone else in the church, *older and younger*, and especially our *widows*. Fourth, it produces people (c.6) who *honor* their employers, and think well about *riches* and possessions and *(generosity)* in this life, trusting *God* as their provider and keeping their eyes fixed on the promised return of *Jesus Christ*.

That is what it looks like when *God's* people are freed up by *the gospel of (His) glory* (11) to *love (out of) a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith* (5). My friends, that is the church we're called to be. That is what it looks like. And *the gospel of (God's) glory* comes fully equipped to transform us into that very description. This transformation was *the aim of (Paul's) charge* to

Timothy in first-century *Ephesus*. And it is still *the aim of (his) charge* to the church in twenty-first-century Warrenville.

Do you long for this to be the description of our church in our day? Do you long to see *God* accomplish His *aim* here, given through *Paul* to *Timothy* to *Ephesus* and to us? This is our *aim* for GCD in our study in 1 Timothy: to be strengthened in *sound doctrine* that shows itself in this remarkable manifestation of *love*.

Pray with me that our Father will accomplish this *aim* here for His *glory* and our *good*.