

**SESSION I: DID GOD GET IT RIGHT?**  
**I TIMOTHY 1: 1-2**

<sup>1</sup>*Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope,*

<sup>2</sup>*To Timothy my true son in the faith:*

*Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.*

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**OBSERVATION & INTERPRETATION**

1. It was Augustine in the 4<sup>th</sup> C and Thomas Aquinas in the 13<sup>th</sup> C who described one or other of these letters (I & II Timothy and Titus) as ‘pastoral’. However, it was only in 1703 that D. N. Berdot referred to all three of the letters as ‘the Pastoral Epistles’.
2. Timothy, left in charge of the church in Ephesus was expecting Paul to visit soon. But, somehow, Paul was delayed. So he wrote these instructions to Timothy on regulating the life of the churches (3:14f; 4:13).
3. Although the letter was addressed to Timothy personally, it was an open communication to the church at Ephesus. One indication is that Paul’s final greeting was expressed in the plural: “*Grace be with you.*”
4. There are 6 concerns the apostle addressed:
  - Getting our Beliefs right
  - Getting our Public Worship right
  - Getting our Leadership Requirements right
  - Getting it right despite Youth and Inexperience
  - Getting our Social Responsibilities right
  - Getting our Attitudes to Material Possessions right
5. Paul begins the letter conventionally. He announces himself as the author and Timothy the recipient. God is the Source of grace, mercy and peace, the 3-fold blessing which he wishes Timothy would enjoy.
6. In 9 of the 13 letters, Paul calls himself *an apostle of Christ Jesus*, and usually adds a reference to the call, command or will of God. Here, it is *by the command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope* (v.1). This indicates Paul considers himself on par with the Twelve, whom Jesus had named ‘apostles’, giving him the same teaching authority as Christ’s disciples. There was no ecclesiastical mediation in his calling. Paul was directly chosen, called, appointed, equipped and authorized by Christ.

7. The formula, *by the command*, was apparently used on official notices, meaning 'by order of', which suggests a royal command which must be obeyed.
  8. Paul sees his work as situated between the saving activity of God the Savior in the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus and culminating in His personal and glorious coming, which is *our hope*. The implication is that between the two termini of Christ's birth and return, our task is to spread the apostolic gospel throughout the world.
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1. *To Timothy my true son...* (v.2)

Paul refers to Timothy as his *genuine, authentic* son. The word is used of children born within wedlock, i.e. legitimate. Since Timothy's father was a Greek, Jewish law will have regarded him as illegitimate. His parents' marriage was racially and religiously mixed. Marrying Gentiles outside Palestine became quite acceptable, especially in more 'upwardly mobile' families. Eunice and Lois are Greek names, so Timothy's mother, Eunice may have followed her mother's example, or even a family tradition, in marrying a Greek (2Tim. 1:5).

Timothy's father would be tolerant of his wife's faith. As a 'Roman-Greek' he would smile indulgently at the native Lystrans adding the Greek Zeus and Hermes into their galaxy of local gods. He may have attended sacrifices at Zeus' temple but he would not have personally believed in him. If his wife believed in the Jewish God, well and fine, as long as he was not expected to join in.

2. The Jewish community disapproved of Timothy. When Luke introduced Timothy, he said *all the Jews in those places knew that Timothy's father was Greek*, and they objected to it (Acts 16:3). His Greek father disqualified him in their eyes from being an evangelist to the Jews. To strict, conservative Jews, marrying a Gentile was sin. Did not Moses forbid it? Did Ezra not force erring Jews to divorce their foreign wives and turn their children away? Did not Malachi voice God's displeasure at intermarriage? (Dt.7:3-4; Ezr. 9-10; Mal. 2:10-12). The Jews had a custom of holding a funeral for Jews who 'threw themselves away' on a Gentile partner. Eunice may have been cut dead this way.
3. Timothy was not an outright Gentile, which would have rendered him an inferior being. But, his mother was a Jewess. Timothy was neither here nor there. He was uncircumcised, though. That was the stock insult for all Gentile men. It meant unclean, impure and unblessed. Timothy probably faced sarcasm and outright criticism as he tried to serve God.

4. It is no accident Timothy means “God values us to the full.” When he was considered “not kosher”, “impure”, “unacceptable”, God fully accepts him.
5. Timothy’s father probably died when Timothy was in his formative years. Luke says that *all the Jews...knew that Timothy’s father was Greek*, implying that he was no longer alive when Paul recruited Timothy (Acts 16:3). Almost certainly, his father died still unhappy with Timothy’s choice of race and faith. This is evidenced in Timothy not being circumcized despite his mother’s spiritual influence, probably in deference to his father’s wishes. The boy would have to cope with an unfinished relationship – no chance to make it up to dad, or win him over.
6. Timothy was comparatively young when Paul wrote this letter to him. Paul did not allow anyone to disparage Timothy because of his age (4:12). Some two years later, Paul urged Timothy to *flee the evil desires of youth* (2 Tim. 2:22). Scholars think Timothy was either in his late teens or early twenties when Paul recruited him, which places him in his mid thirties when this letter was written. Evidently, Timothy felt inexperienced and immature for the heavy responsibilities which Paul was laying upon him. To be sure, Timothy felt diffident, so Paul had to affirm, encourage and reassure him that God had not given us a *spirit of timidity* (2Tim. 1:7).
7. Timothy was apparently suffering from a chronic gastric problem. Paul referred to his persistent ailments, especially of the stomach. Paul prescribed, *Stop drinking only water, and use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses* (5:23).

## APPLICATION

1. Timothy was the least likely candidate to be Paul’s assistant. Paul was a first rate thinker, entrepreneurial innovator, engaging debater with a fiery aggression, impulsive impatience and dominating personality. Timothy was anything but. Did Paul make a mistake? Did God allow the mistake? Did God get it wrong?
  - Socially Unacceptable – not kosher
  - Religiously Compromised – not circumcized
  - Timid Demeanor – no presence and power
  - Chronically Impaired – frequent illnesses
  - Fatherless Upbringing – no male role model
  - Inexperienced and Immature – age credibility
2. If Christ is the Hope of the World, then it is not only at the end of time, but for every season of life. Timothy can only bear that message of hope if Christ is the hope for all the liabilities in his life.

3. Paul's "Trinity of Blessings" must become reality before Timothy could be a steadfast servant of Christ. Grace, Mercy and Peace from God...and Jesus Christ.
- Grace: 2 dominant ideas – A characteristic **charm and winsomeness**; and **sheer generosity** as opposed to debt or obligation, something totally unearned and undeserved. Imagine Timothy unflustered by the harsh criticism of those who thought ill of him, but displaying magnanimous confidence and goodwill to all he meets.
  - Mercy: A new word in the apostolic blessing. The O.T. translates *hesed* as loving-kindness. Simply, Paul was wishing that God would be good to Timothy. It is wishing God's "active intervention to help." For one to be confident, the hand of God must be clearly discerned. It is all too easy to perceive God's finger when we want to justify ourselves too. We need to remember that even ruthless and godless kings can claim God's favor in granting them victory in battles (e.g. Cyrus of Persia), but they were unwitting instruments in God's hand. We need to wait till the end of His Story before we make judgements. But, the hand of God cannot be discerned without the consciousness of the Divine and active obedience to Him. God's mercy is active to save. Only when we experience God's active intervention regularly can we serve selflessly.
  - Peace: The traditional Jewish greeting that expresses not simply the absence of trouble, but the "most comprehensive form of well being." To think Timothy can serve God and Paul effectively when the barbs of his detractors are hurled unrelentingly at him! Only when God's peace is experienced can service be uninterrupted when there is turbulence around us.