The Epistle of First Timothy

Introduction and Chapter 1

 We are now about to study some “Pastoral” epistles (letters) the Apostle Paul has written to a couple of special ministers/evangelists he has trained, named Timothy and Titus. For this letter we will mention and discuss Timothy. Timothy was the son of a Greek father and Jewess mother named Eunice. Although as a Greek by his father’s side, Timothy was never circumcised into the Jewish faith, however, Timothy’s mother Eunice, raised her son in the scriptures (Tanakh) and we have met Eunice’s mother Lois (Acts 16:1 and 2 Timothy 1:5). Apparently, Timothy was young, but he had special gifts, mainly in Evangelism, and as he grew in knowledge Paul used him on, first, special projects and then in ministry.

 This letter, according to scholars, was written after Paul was released from his first incarceration in Rome, probably after 62 AD. Maybe around 64 AD. As far as where it was written, scholars are all over the place, but it could have been near The Western Asia Minor region which is now Turkey, maybe from Ephesus, or eastern Macedonia region near Philippi. It also could have been from Jerusalem because we know Paul had been back to Jerusalem to report or ‘debrief’ before he was again arrested about 65 AD, and possibly beheaded around 66 AD by Nero who was all about purging the Christian movement. Frankly, friends, nobody knows where this was written from, because we don’t have Paul’s itinerary after he was released from his first imprisonment in Rome. Did he go to Colossae as he promised? Or stop at Philippi or stay near the Macedonian area?

 Now, this letter is written to an individual not to a church, and is written to encourage Timothy and to set up, and maintain doctrinal purity within the Christian community, because of all the outside influences on the body of believers, and develop the pastoral responsibilities of Church leaders, which in turn will help to begin and then to maintain church unity. It is like a mother teaching her children to like a certain set of foods and another then coming in, telling her to try another set of foods, which the first mother doesn’t approve of. Just like today where many ‘New Age’ beliefs are creeping into the Church, or other faiths are dictating a doctrine other than the doctrine of God, to accept their beliefs as of an all-encompassing world religion or a cosmopolitan religion, that we as Christians MUST be accepting of blasphemous worship.

 A] “1 Timothy 1: 1 and 2; (read)

 1] “*Paul an Apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God, our Savior, and the Lord Jesus Christ our Hope,--”*

 In this writing to an individual, who is purportedly one of Paul’s dearest and closest associates, this seems quite formal for a greeting, but my guess is Paul has some serious things to say and wants the tenor of this letter to reflect his overall seriousness. He reaffirms his personal standing as an Apostle, by citing his credentials, he IS an apostle because he WAS called by Jesus Christ, by command of God through Jesus on that Damascus Road. A Divine appointment as it were. And he adds that Jesus being our hope which tells us that the mission is of such importance because of the Hope in Christ that drives the ministry, and the ministry is all about bringing that hope to the many who have no hope of salvation and no hope of their eternal life in Jesus.

 2]--“*to Timothy, a true son in the faith: Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”*

 With Timothy, we have a young man, led to the Lord by Paul, taught and nurtured in the faith by Paul, and carefully selected by Paul for the various ministries and evangelistic crusades throughout the region of Asia Minor and Macedonia as well as personally ministering to Paul in Rome. Timothy was as the obedient son in all that Paul requested of him, even to submitting, as an adult, to circumcision, (which in itself is quite painful as I understand it, and that discomfort lasts a while), so he could rightly minister to the Jews as well as the Gentiles.

 So, to open this greeting, Paul calls for Grace, (God’s unearned favor), God’s mercy, (God’s unmerited but tender caring love), as Timothy faces uncertain, and in all probability, dangerous situations, and God’s peace, (God’s love as a comfort blanket), as he is to be facing the unknown, and don’t we all long to have that peace of mind, knowing God is there with us. This is a greeting we should all think about when writing to others, but then again, who writes letters these days? Everything seems to be done with Email or Facebook, and formality is out the window. Very few if any of the people that we know still write as we were taught all those years ago, in our English classes.

 B] 1 Timothy 1: 3 through 11; (read)

 1] “*As I urged you, as I went into Macedonia—remain in Ephesus, that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine,--”*

 Okay; already, with these few words, we see trouble is afoot. Apparently, there are some coming into the Churches, teaching wrong or false doctrine. If we can remember from earlier studies in Ephesians, or in the letters to the Corinthians, false teachers, such as Judiazers, and Greek Stoics, as well as others, were striving to change the teaching and the message of Christ in these little startup churches by introducing false and misleading doctrine into the teachings Paul had left with the Church leaders.

 2]--”*nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which causes disputes rather than Godly edification which is in faith.”*

 With many Jewish teachers, there was the idea of using the Torah for both creating fables from Genesis regarding many of the stories of creation, the flood, and other events, and over the centuries had embellished many of them, as well as taking the genealogies leading to Jesus, trying to draw or illicit doubt regarding the Gentile inclusion into the Jesus Story. Akso striving to inject the Law of Moses into the conversation, as any Jew who had converted, was being thrust back into the Law, which Jesus had already fulfilled. Do we understand what all this is? All of this was causing friction and disputes within the body of believers, and this is why Paul wants Timothy to stay in Ephesus, to correct the situation.

 3] “*Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith,--”*

 How then, does Timothy deal with the heresy infiltrating the Church? Well as Paul now admonishes, you must do it from that agape love that is within you, and that agape love should permeate the Church which tells the church of its difference from the world, doesn’t it? It is up to Timothy, to have that Pureness of Heart that comes from the Holy Spirit, and knowing that what he does and says is right and true, having a good conscience in other words he is above reproach and free from the tongue wagging of the gossips, and above all, FAITH, a real belief in what he teaches. This is what is needed from our church leaders today, because the responsibility they hold, to bring the unvarnished truth of the gospel to the people is important and watched by God Himself.

 4]--”*from which, some having strayed, have turned aside to idle talk, desiring to teachers of the law , understanding neither what they say, nor the things which they affirm.”*

 So there were, in the Church, those who may have been Jews being influenced by the Judaizers, and through that influence truly believe that they themselves can introduce their version of the Jewish Law and will incorrectly expound on it. Dear friends today we have many people who decide they will become a Bible teacher with very limited understanding of what they teach. Frankly friends, this is something I have been trying to be very careful about, That I study-study-study, before I teach something, and I will not teach anything until I have studied and become assured, that I know what I am talking about. I truly do want and seek, educated pastors and teachers, to review what I write and teach. (sadly, very few will take the time)

 5] “*But we know that the Law is good if one uses it lawfully, knowing this: that the Law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers,--”*

 One of the truths of the Law is it serves to illuminate right from wrong. The law does set judgments, and punishments, both corporal and sacrificial. However, when God gave Moses the Law at Sinai, the Jews had no definitive measure of right and wrong. From that point as is done today, the bright lawyers strive to find loopholes in the law and try to twist the law to their own advantage. If one is truly righteous one need not fear the law, but if one is a criminal, the law shows his wickedness, and that brings fear of retribution.

 6]--”*for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine, according to the glorious Gospel of the Blessed God which was committed to my trust.”*

 Paul has been going through the basic commandments enumerating the various sins committed under each, and this verse continues with the sexual immorality that seems rampant in societies both then and now, and it seems the Christian community has this penchant to try to justify sexual immorality within the Church, by whatever means needed. However, sin is sin, then and now, according to the Law of God, and we cannot justify allowing any sin within the Body of believers.

 Paul then, brings up taking a person away from where they belong, against their will. This does include slavery, which I believe Paul might be referring to. Lying and perjury are related offenses and telling falsehoods under any circumstances is a no-no. Telling falsehoods under any circumstances seems to be a way of life in all societies especially the Christian society. Politics is the symptom of how the sickness of lies and half-truths prevail especially in our American society, and it infiltrates the church as the church in general has become part of the world today.

 Paul ends this up with any offense that may harm another that we know is wrong in any society, especially gossip against another. This is not living with a Christian attitude. How can a Christian, with the Holy Spirit living within actually be a part of sin? Paul alludes to anything that may be contrary to the Word of God and the Good News (Gospel) that He preaches.

 This pretty much gives us a picture of life in many towns where a Church has been established, doesn’t it? And sadly, after approximately 2000 years nothing has changed, or maybe it is worse. We have churches and denominations that blatantly seem to be accepting aberrant behavior, even to the point of actually encouraging it, sometimes.

 C] 1 Timothy 1:12 through 17; (read)

 1] “*I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me because he counted me faithful, putting me in the ministry, although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man, but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.”*

 Paul has begun this letter to Timothy, with the charge to never let other beliefs or doctrines into the Church that will create confusion and doubt and weakens the fellowship and breaks the unity of the believer. Now, he relates his own testimony showing how great Grace is, and how God in His mercy brought Paul from the shadows of sin to the pastoral position he now has. Now remember folks, God can bring such a person to the cross by His grace and mercy, we must never turn away someone who is searching for their salvation no matter the circumstances that they may have come from. There is Harold Morris who was pardoned by the Georgia Board of Prisons from a life sentence for robbery and murder, and wrote the book, Twice Pardoned, as God pardoned him, and he had a successful evangelistic ministry.

 2] “*And the Grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.”*

 Paul has given his confession, recognized God’s mercy and Grace in His almighty forgiveness of a serious and meanspirited sinner, and as bad as Paul had been, God’s forgiveness was all the more greater, and Paul is using this sentence as a transition sentence to explain his next point. As far as Paul is concerned, God’s Grace is overly abundant to all who would call on His name, and He IS faithful with His agape love shown through His Son Jesus.

 3] “*This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.”*

 That ‘faithful saying’ is “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” This is the Christian ‘motto’ as it were, but Paul is giving his testimony and he acknowledges, this is what he is about, he was the chief of sinners and it is this salvation through the atonement sacrifice of Jesus, that he is able to approach the Throne. He wants Timothy to understand this testimony, and even though Timothy has been like a son to him, he feels the need to emphasize to Timothy the importance of this testimony.

 4] “*However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me, first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life.”*

 Do we see what Paul is trying to get across? That for all the folks who are sinners, there IS hope for redemption or salvation, no matter how evil they may have been, because if he, Paul was counted worthy after all he did, then all who call on the name of Jesus can be saved. AS we see in the life of Harold Morris. Just using Paul and his life as the example, should bring hope, even to the vilest of sinners out there.

 5] “*Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever, Amen.”*

 Paul throws in an emphatic doxology or Hymn of Praise for this wise, loving God who is eternal, immortal, and invisible, but He is there, and He is all wisdom or ‘logos’. And this is Paul’s praise and thanks for what God did for him. This, however, does not end the letter, by the way.

 How many of us continue to Praise God for our salvation? Or have we just taken it as something that happened? Sometimes we need to remind ourselves of what we were before God took over our lives, don’t you think? Or we might just become too complacent.

 D] 1 Timothy 1: 18 through 20; (read)

 1] “*This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you might wage the good warfare,--”*

 From the previous comments Paul has made in this letter, he now gives the charge to Timothy, to take up the reins of the ministry and stand strong knowing now, the trials that await him in Ephesus. The ‘according to the prophecies’ statement hearkens back to an earlier time, where probably Silas who had been one of Paul’s companions and a man named Judas were purportedly prophets, (Acts 15: 32) or men who could see the potential in others and forecasted a great ministry for Timothy. Paul wants Timothy to remember what these men told him and live up to the expectations.

 2]--”*having faith and a good conscience, which having rejected , concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck, of whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.”*

 This probably refers those who have come into the assembly in Ephesus, and offered false testimony and among them were Hymenaeus who is also mentioned in the second letter to Timothy as having preached that the second coming had already come and their faith was in vain, or Alexander who could be the adversary of Paul’s, Alexander the Coppersmith. As for handing these men over to Satan, what could that mean? Except as Dr McGee put it, Paul exercised an Apostles authority to hand them over to Satan, or in other words expel them from the assembly, (or something like that). I am not that authority and as thus I can’t adequately explain it.