

## I TIMOTHY 1:1-7

### INTRODUCTION

Paul stayed in Ephesus for three years and God used him greatly in establishing the church there. When Paul was at Miletus he sent for the Elders of the church. Paul tells them that he is about to go to Jerusalem and he knows that none of these elders will ever see him again. So he gives them his parting words (Acts 20:26-35). He gives them the charge of keeping watch over God's church as overseers.

He proclaims that savage wolves will come and attack the church. The surprising thing about Paul's words is that he says that even among the very eldership there will be those who will distort God's word in an attempt to draw away some disciples.

Did Paul's warning come true? Well the answer is yes for we are looking at this section, which talks about those who are teaching false doctrines. It is Timothy's task to deal with those who are teaching false doctrines in order to maintain the purity of the church. Before we look at these false teachers and their false doctrines let us look first of all at:

### 1. TIMOTHY'S CREDENTIALS

Timothy's name means "one that honours God." His mother Eunice was a Jew and his Father was a Greek (Acts 16:1). As a child his mother and grandmother Lois brought him up. They taught Timothy the Scriptures from a very early age (2 Timothy 3:15). In many ways with a Greek Father and a Jewish Mother, Timothy had all the credentials for gaining access to both communities. Timothy was probably converted under the ministry of Paul and that is why he calls him his true son in the faith. Certainly he was Paul's friend and co-worker.

By the time 1 Timothy was written Timothy had probably been with Paul for about 15 years and during that time; he was Paul's constant companion.

Paul thought very highly of Timothy and says that there is no one else like him, for he takes a genuine interest in the welfare of the church and does not put his own interests before those of Jesus Christ (Philippians 2:19-21). For this reason it seems that he frequently served as Paul's trouble-shooter as Paul sent him to the churches at Corinth, Thessalonica, Philippi and now Ephesus. When Paul calls Timothy his true Son what he means the word true is genuine.

Paul is setting up young Timothy as an example of what a true child in the faith is like. This again is important if the false teachers are going to be exposed then the church must first of all recognise who is true, before it can judge who is false.

Now if we were looking for someone to send to a church in order to show them what Christianity really looks like, then could we send you or me? Would it be obvious to everyone that here is someone who is genuine? I sometimes here it said about someone that 'he is a real Christian.' What is meant is that, that person is so different from other professing Christians that it is obvious that he must be genuine and the others only pretenders.

Sadly within the church in general there is so much that is false; false professors abound, but O when someone is genuine then it becomes obvious and the genuine exposes the false. That is what Paul is doing in Ephesus. So the question for us is this; do our lives show that we are genuine and do we show clearly the difference between true and false professions of faith?

Timothy is told by Paul that he is to remain at Ephesus and is to urge or beg these false teachers to stop. The fact that Paul instructs Timothy to stay at Ephesus may indicate that he was

considering leaving. Even though Timothy was a true believer and a good example of genuine faith he was nevertheless quite timid (2 Timothy 1:7). It appears that he was a little intimidated by those who looked down at him because of his youth (4:12).

It appears that he suffered constant stomach problems and frequent illnesses (1 Timothy 5:23). He may even have felt inadequate to handle the arguments of these false teachers.

## 2. WHO ARE THESE FALSE TEACHERS?

Well first of all it is clear that Paul had a certain number of people in mind, perhaps even a small number but they are causing havoc in the church (v 3). They were probably at one time actually elders of the church because they were teachers of the law and only elders have such a function (1:7). Now exactly what these false doctrines were teaching we just cannot be sure. Paul describes it as false.

It certainly consisted of myths and endless genealogies and Paul says that such things are the teaching of demons (4:1). Paul also calls them worldly fables fit only for old woman (4:7).

What myths is Paul referring to or how were these teachers using genealogies is not very clear. Whatever form it took it was clearly contrary to God's truth. It probably had to do with a false idea of the law (1:7-10) and most commentaries think that it had to do with allegorical or legendary interpretations of the Old Testament. There is much Jewish writing that is full of these sorts of myths and fables. A book like the book of Jubilee with its mania for family trees is a good example of this.

The false doctrines probably had something to do with false self-denial (4:3), marriage was forbidden and they were to abstain from certain foods, presumably all in the name of godliness. They probably hoped to gain God's acceptance through legalistic rules and depriving oneself of certain good things. But instead of it leading to godliness, such false truths led only to controversies. It appears that certain people thrived on such things and loved to argue about words.

This only led to envy, strife malicious talk, evil suspicions and constant friction (6:4-5). All this false teaching does not promote God's work, which is by faith and not by some sort of works of the law, which is what such false doctrine ultimately leads to. Such heresy if left unchallenged would strike a blow at the gospel of saving faith.

Now there is an important application for us all in this. False doctrines come in all various shapes and forms but if you could break down the various false ideas, to their bear essentials, they will all show that at the root of false doctrine is a salvation of works; a salvation of human achievement. That is why false doctrines are so dangerous, because salvation is at stake. The church must hold to sound doctrine and we must do all that we can to fight tooth and nail to weed out any false doctrine.

But of course if we are going to do that, we ourselves must know and be able to recognise false truth. There is no excuse in our own land for any Christian to be poorly taught in Christian things. If they live in an area with no real evangelical church, there are so many good books; CD's and internet sermons available; so that we can all have a good knowledge of sound doctrine. Our problem in Britain is that we are lazy when it comes to spiritual things. We are so use to getting spoon fed, and having everything convenient today that when it comes to spiritual matters we expect the same.

Therefore we are not prepared to get some books and spend an evening studying the things of God, when it is much easier and less work to watch our favourite TV programme. It does concern me that Christians do not discipline themselves to read good Christians books. I was talking to

someone once who runs an excellent bookshop within his church, and he was bemoaning the fact that only a quarter of his church ever buys a book from him.

It's not that Christians don't read, for they do read other books, but it's just that Christian books cause us to think and study and that is just hard work in our modern world. Then there is the whole area of CD'S and internet sermons to explore. There is loads of good material to help us study our bibles so we do not need to struggle. The important thing is that we need to know God's truth so that we can recognise error and falsehood and then we will be able to deal with it and not led astray by it.

The Elders were talking about this at our Elders meeting this past week. It does not take much for a good church to move from its evangelical roots (the churches in Revelation are a good example). Within months a church that we would call solid and even reformed in theology could move into falsehood. Once any church entertains that path for a moment then they are on a slippery slope. Timothy could only spot false doctrine because he was grounded in the truth. Let us be men and woman grounded in the truth.

At one time churches like ours, which are reformed in theology, could be depended upon to know doctrine, but sadly even in our circles, we will find that doctrine is now less important. It might still be emphasised and preached from the pulpit, but sadly those in the pew can so easily be found wanting in this area. In Ephesus as I said it was probably some of the Elders who had wandered; so even being in a position of leadership, is no guarantee that we will remain steadfast and rooted in the truth.

We all need to watch ourselves, make sure that we have a good diet of spiritual food on a daily basis so that we can spot and deal with false doctrines as they arise. What is at stake when it comes to false doctrine? It is very often people's very salvation. Any false doctrine that proclaims a salvation dependant on works no matter how cleverly it might be disguised must be rejected, for the very souls of men and woman are at stake

### 3. THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THE GOAL OF THE FALSE TEACHERS WITH PAUL AND TIMOTHY'S GOAL (VS 5-7).

The goal behind Paul's command is to produce love in the church, but the goal behind the false teachers was promotion of self (v 7). Once you depart from truth, then you depart from true love for God, Christ and the Church. This can only lead to the promotion of self, even though it is obvious that such people do not know what they are talking about. They so confidently affirm certain things but have no idea what they are talking about (v 7).

Their goal to be prominent in the church and to be teachers of the law is all that matters, even though they have wandered from the true faith. But for Paul and Timothy their goal was not the promotion of self but the promotion of love within the church. This love springs from a heart that is pure, that has been cleansed by the blood of Christ. It flows from a conscience that is clear, good and wholesome and it flows from a faith that is sincere and not hypocritical (v 6).

Now the lesson for us is that the purpose of promoting and maintaining sound doctrine in the church is not to fill our heads with knowledge so that we can boast that we are reformed in doctrine, but it is to fill us with love. In order to promote love in a church we must promote sound doctrine. Far too often love is promoted without a sound knowledge of doctrine and what you end up with is an emotional sometimes sentimental sort of love that does not withstand the buffetings that comes upon the church. True love is promoted and lasts once we have a grasp of sound doctrine.

Let me illustrate this for you. Let's say we are studying the doctrine of Christ's atonement for ourselves. So we think about the pain and agony that Christ went through. We might think about

the mocking and abuse that He took from the Jews and from those in authority. Then when we think about His actual death and the reason for it. He died for my sin; just imagine that for a moment. My sin, the ugliness of it and yet He died to pay the penalty for it.

He took God's wrath from me and took it upon Himself. He placed upon me His righteousness; just think about the beauty of that. The consequence of all that Christ achieved on the cross is that I am now forgiven and justified in the sight of God. I am a child of the living God. Heaven is now my destiny instead of hell; grace and mercy is my portion instead of judgement and condemnation.

Now if after studying and mediating upon such truths I do not have a greater love of God then there is something wrong. What happens when I have a love for the Lord, I will have a love for God's people, His church? So the maintaining of truth and the refuting of error in a church is a sure way to promote and maintain love. So it is loving to preach the great truths of the Scriptures and it is unloving to neglect such things.

It is loving to expose and refute error in a church and it is unloving to allow false teaching to go on unchecked. Paul loved the church at Ephesus too much to allow false teaching to continue. What about us? Do we want to promote love in our church? Then we must study and preach the great doctrines of Holy Scripture and as we come to grips with them, love will penetrate every aspect of our lives.

But notice the result of false doctrines. Turning away from the true faith to what? To meaningless talk and to the promotion of self and to the promotion of truth that we do not even understand (vs. 6-7). Therefore as I finish let's grab this one main lesson. It is vitally important to know, love and hold to true doctrine. When we do that we will be able to see false doctrine for what it is, we will see through the goals of the false teachers and we will be able to maintain biblical truth that promotes true love for God and His people.

Amen