

# GUARDIANS OF THE MINISTRY

## 1ST TIMOTHY 1:18-2:7

### Notes on 1 Tim. 1:18-2:7

Having pointed out the errors of the teachers of the law and their false gospel in contrast to his own experience and faith in the true gospel, Paul now picks up where he left off in v.7, after his brief and deep digression into the workings of law and grace, and turns his attention again to Timothy himself. He would not be immune to the lure of the false ideas gaining traction in the Ephesian church, so Paul commands him to “wage the good warfare” (fight the good fight). He cannot compromise. Partial truth is falsehood. And Paul gives him four motivations for his fight: Their close bond (like a parent & child), the prophecies made about him (probably when he was ordained into ministry), the “faith” itself (the saving truth revealed by God), and his own good conscience. By affirming and building on these things, Timothy will do well in the fight that truly matters.

Then Paul goes on to give instructions concerning public worship, addressing its breadth of concern with far-reaching rather than only inwardly-focused prayer (vv.2:1-7) and its proper conduct particularly addressing the roles of men and women (vv. 8-15) which we will take up separately next week.

The emphasis concerning prayer is that it is for everyone. This is unlike other religious systems of the day (and some still today) where essential knowledge was secretive and salvation was for the elite, the illuminated, the initiated. This universal concern is presented four times in this passage: prayers are urged for “*all people*” (2:1), God desires “*all people to be saved*” (2:4), Christ “*gave himself as a ransom for all*” (2:6), and Paul was appointed for “*the Gentiles in faith and truth*” (2:7).

**v.8 - charge...** this is the same word from verses 3 & 5 (*parangelia* in Greek) and is a military term conveying “urgent obligation.” These are precious orders being given to Timothy...

**v.9 - faith and a good conscience...** These things work together (see back page)... “faith” here means “THE faith” or the revealed truth of God, particularly the truth of Christ’s

<sup>18</sup> This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, <sup>19</sup> holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith, <sup>20</sup> among whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.

#### Pray for All People

**2** First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, <sup>2</sup> for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. <sup>3</sup> This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, <sup>4</sup> who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. <sup>5</sup> For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time. <sup>7</sup> For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.

- 1 Timothy 1:18-2:7

uniquely saving work (see below)... **shipwreck of their faith...** literally “shipwreck concerning the faith”... It is how they, by pushing aside their consciences, have made a mess of THE faith (the truth of God), that is in view here...

**v.20 - Hymenaeus...** almost assuredly the same man mentioned in 2 Tim. 2:18 as one teaching the heresy that the resurrection of humanity had already taken place (and so he and people like him were already perfect, incapable of sin—thus ironically opening the way to any immoralities they wanted to pursue) which is an example of the kind of myths and speculations Paul has already warned against... **Alexander...** a much more common name, so we aren’t sure of his identity though other Alexanders are mentioned elsewhere (Acts 19:33; 2 Tim. 4:14)... **handed over to Satan...** (see also 1 Corinthians 5:5) The church is where God dwells while the devil lives and moves in the world, so this is a way of expressing that Paul has had them removed from the fellowship (excommunicated). The goal, though, is clearly redemptive rather than merely punitive. Without the protections of the church, the hope is that these men will face harsh realities that will help them **learn not to blaspheme**, to tell out and live in the truth of God rather than the lies they have been teaching.

**2:1 - First of all...** refers to the primary importance of worship and prayer in the life of the church...

**then...** functions like “therefore” and so links to the previous chapter, so in context this is not a new blueprint for how to “do church” but a reminder of activities already present and a call for those influenced by the erring teachers to return to or keep



maintaining these uncorrupted practices... This section will emphasize the scope of prayer which is universal (see above) **...supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings...** these overlapping phrases indicate that all kinds of prayers are to be used...

**v.2 - for kings and all who are in high positions...**

It is worth noting that at the time this was written there were no Christian rulers anywhere in the world. Again, the focus is outward and universal...

**v.4 - desires all people to be saved...**

Bible scholar Gordon Fee says this: *To say that God wants (and not "wills," and therefore it must come to pass) **all people to be saved**, implies neither that all (meaning everybody) will be saved (against 3:6; 4:2; or 4:10, for example), nor that God's will is somehow frustrated since all, indeed, are not saved. The concern is simply with the universal scope of the gospel over against some form of heretical exclusivism or narrowness...*

St. Augustine, and others after him suggest that *the apostle's meaning here is simply that no nation of the earth and no rank of society is excluded from salvation, since God wills to offer the gospel to all without exception...*

John Stott, with characteristic honesty, suggests that what we have here is an *antinomy—a logical contradiction which cannot be resolved* (Guard the Truth, p.66)...



**vv. 5-6** - To show the universal scope of God's desire, Paul may be quoting here a familiar creed or catechism... **there is one God...** foundational truth for both Judaism & Christianity. He is the only source of salvation... **one mediator...** This is what separates Christian faith from other monotheistic beliefs (like Judaism & Islam). Only Jesus brings the estranged parties—God and humankind—

together. And He does this perfectly well as the one who is fully God and also fully **the man Christ Jesus**. This is the Gospel... **he gave himself as a ransom...** This is how Jesus effected our salvation: He paid for our sin. He took our place and died the death we deserved so we could live the life He deserves forever with Him. This is the Gospel... **for all...** The emphasis, once more, is on the universal scope of Christ's saving work... **which is the testimony...**

This is THE faith. This is the truth of God revealed to Paul and to us. This is the witness of the life, death & resurrection of Christ Himself. This is the Gospel of Jesus the Messiah, our one and only Lord and Savior.

**v.7** - God appointed Paul to ministry so he would declare this Gospel message not only to God's "chosen people," the Jews, but to everyone else, the **Gentiles**, as well...

**Read & Reflect - 1:18-2:7**

**First Reading:** What in this passage do you find particularly encouraging? Particularly troubling?

**Search & Consider**

**1:18-20** - What is Paul's charge to Timothy? How is he to do this? Why? (What does the example of Hymenaeus & Alexander mean?)

**2:1-3** - For whom are prayers in worship to be made? Why?

**2:4** - What does it mean that God "desires all people to be saved?" Does this mean everyone is going to heaven? Why/Why not?

(Note: This is an extremely difficult question that has plagued famous theologians through the years. Thanks for giving it your best!)

2:5-6 - What elements of The Christian Faith do you find in these verses? Why would it be important for Paul to remind Timothy of these things in light of his situation in Ephesus?

2:7 - How do Paul's words about himself here support the idea that the Christian faith is not secret information kept locked in a Temple on a hill somewhere and only for a select few but an "open secret" available to anyone?

## Apply

1. What are some practical ways that you and people in your church can "wage the good warfare" in this day and age?

2. Put into your own words the "testimony" of basic Christian belief found in 2:5-7? This is the Gospel!

3. Make a list of people (all kinds of people... rulers, neighbors, nice people, ugly people, people you know, people you don't...) who need to hear what you wrote in the box above. Pray for these people, a good segment of Paul's "all people," with your group in the weeks ahead.

## For Small Group Discussion - 1 Timothy 1:18-2:7

- A. OPENER...** Who was your favorite teacher when you were a child in school? What made him/her special to you? Was there anything significant that he/she said to you that you remember to this day?
- B. 1 TIMOTHY 1:18-2:7...** Share your Personal Study Guide answers above... As time permits, you may also want to focus on these questions...
1. How have you experienced "faith and good conscience" or "believing and doing" working together in your life?
  2. What does it mean to you that Jesus is our "ransom" and that no one is beyond the reach of His love & grace?
- C. A FINAL THOUGHT...**
- Why is prayer, for "all people," such an important part of our life together as God's church?... Take some time to pray as a group for people suggested by each member of your group (see Apply #3 above)...

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## Believing and Doing: A Match Made in Heaven

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Having identified the problems in Ephesus—false teachers from within the church itself are undermining the truth from God concerning true belief and right behavior—Paul tells Timothy to fight the good fight, wage the good warfare. Defend the truth of God, the Gospel of Christ, against all that would oppose it or distract from it. Fight against men for their very lives according to the purposes and power of God. This is Paul's charge, and it is a precious thing Paul is handing to Timothy, and after him to us.

How is young Timothy to proceed with this warfare? By “holding faith and a good conscience.” This is a fascinating combination of good things. This “faith” must mean more than simply belief in something: It is “The Faith.” This is the vital collection of God-given truths that Paul had dedicated his life to

promoting, proclaiming and preserving. It is the truth of Jesus Christ and His saving work. This is the *objective* asset that Timothy has and will build upon as he fights this food fight. He knows the Gospel. He has heard and received God's self-revelation. “Hold on to it!” Paul says, for the speculations of the opponents are tricky and tempting. Compromise with them, try to combine them with The Faith, and your ship will run aground like has happened with Hymeneaus and Alexander. *Believe* what you have been taught in Christ, and *keep believing*. It must not be compromised.

God's people had a long history of compromise. The Jews of the Old Testament were always trying to join their faith and practices revealed and commanded by God with those of their pagan neighbors. “Oh, we'll keep worshipping Yahweh. We're just going to do a dance or two for Baal and Dagon and Chemosh too. We want to make sure we have a good harvest this year, don't we?” This process of joining is called “syncretism,” and Yahweh God would have none of it. It wrecked havoc with God's people, incurring His rightful wrath again and again, and this was not a matter of speculation. You could read about it throughout the Old Scriptures. Everybody knew the stories of golden calves, high places, etc. Yet still the spirit of compromise seemed to be thriving in 1st-century Ephesus even in the church. And how different are things for us in the 21st century church?

Timothy's *subjective* asset was his “good conscience.” It would remain good as Timothy did what was right and true. The message is simple and strong: Your conscience will help you wage the good warfare. “Hold on to it!” Listen to it, and you will be led back to The Faith. Muzzle it, and... well you know what happened to Hymie and Alex.

The Faith and a Good Conscience. Belief and Doing. They work together. Always have and always will.

What we believe demands some kind of action. If you won't do anything because of it, you probably don't believe it. Not really. And then when we do something because of our belief, we find that our belief grows stronger. It really is true! Things truly do work that way! I liken it to our two legs and walking. If I only believe—*Jesus is Lord! I belong to Him!*—but never do—*I'm too busy to go to worship or share what I have or serve others*—it is like doing the splits. Believe... believe... believe... Only one leg is moving... Ouch!... Somebody help me up! If I only do—*I'm in several service clubs and peacemaking committees and I give money for third-world orphans*—but cultivate a lazy attitude toward belief—*I'm a Christian but I don't want to make a big deal about it. There are lots of good religions out there.*—I may soon lose my motivation for good works because again... Do... do... do... Ouch!... I'm doing the splits.

Belief without doing, it seems to me, quickly leads to compromised belief and/or dead formalism, a bad disguise for no real faith at all. Doing without believing leads to action without motivation, running on empty, which makes it hard to keep doing

good things without becoming prideful or bitter. On the other hand, when believing and doing work together, it is like walking... Believe... Do... Believe... Do... Hey, now we're getting somewhere! I could go on like this forever! I think this is how we “wage the good warfare” well.

And this works in reverse as well. False belief encourages bad behavior. Embrace atheism and nobody has a real basis for judging what you do as truly wrong or sinful. Doing wrong strengthens false beliefs. Kill enough Jews in Nazi concentration camps, lynch enough black men in southern towns, traffic in enough children as sex object & your diabolically false beliefs in racial superiority,

might makes right, or moral relativism are bolstered tenfold and the whispers of your good conscience are silenced as it gasps for its final breaths. This is walking backward... Believe... Do... Believe... Do... And in this case it would be better to do the splits. Anchor your right beliefs, and you will limit your bad behavior because you can only stretch so far. Refuse to do what your good conscience clearly tells you is wrong, and false ideas will be on a leash that grows tighter the further your behavior strays.

I have always been fascinated by a little verse in Philemon (written by Paul to a wealthy slave owner in Colosse), Philemon 6. It says (NIV) “*I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ.*” This is the opposite of what I would expect. I would expect the knowledge of faith (a full understanding of what we have in Christ) to fuel the action (sharing with others)—“Go to Bible school, pray a lot, diligently cultivate your faith in Christ, and then you will be equipped to share your faith effectively.” Instead, it is the action (sharing) that fuels the knowledge and faith. That is believing and doing working in tandem. I believe this is by God's design, and it leads me to ask myself (and I think church families would do well to ask this as well), *what do I need to work on more today, my believing or my doing?*

A bad conscience is the  
mother of all heresies.  
- John Calvin