

ADULT

Lesson Commentary

Spring Quarter, 2018

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American Baptist Association Through-the-Bible Series Sunday School Lessons

	Winter	Spring	Summer	Fall
2018	Ephesians	1 Timothy 2 Timothy Titus	Jeremiah Lamentations 2 Kings 24; 25 2 Chronicles 36	John 1—10
2019	John 11—21	Ezra; Nehemiah Habakkuk; Haggai Malachi; Esther	1 Peter 2 Peter	1, 2, 3 John Jude
2020	Daniel Ezekiel Zechariah	Revelation 1—11	Revelation 12—22	Genesis 1—11 Job
2021	Genesis 12—50	Matthew 1—13	Matthew 14—28	Exodus
2022	Romans	Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy	Hebrews	Joshua Judges Ruth
2023	Acts 1—14	Acts 15—28	1 Samuel 2 Samuel 1—4 1 Chronicles 1—10	Mark 1—8
2024	Mark 9—16	2 Samuel 5—24 1 Chronicles 11—29 1 Kings 1; 2	James 1 Thessalonians 2 Thessalonians	Psalms 1—72
2025	Psalms 73—150	Galatians	1 Kings 3—22 2 Chronicles 1—24 2 Kings 1—13 Joel; Obadiah	1 Corinthians
2026	Proverbs Ecclesiastes Song of Solomon	Luke 1—13:21	Luke 13:22—24	Hosea; Amos; Micah; Jonah; 2 Kings 14—16 2 Chronicles 25—28
2027	2 Corinthians	Isaiah 1—39 2 Chronicles 29—32 2 Kings 17—20 Nahum	Isaiah 40—66 2 Kings 21—23 2 Chronicles 33—35 Zephaniah	Philemon Philippians Colossians

About the Writers

Recognized for their knowledge, wisdom and understanding of the Holy Scriptures, the writers of the Adult Lesson Commentary are faithful pastors, teachers and spiritual leaders among the Lord's churches. The following are a few biographical notes about these men.



Dr. David Harris was born in Pine Bluff, Arkansas in 1953. He was saved at age nine and baptized by the authority of Harmony Missionary Baptist Church where he surrendered to preach at age sixteen and was later licensed and ordained.

He graduated from Glendale High School in 1972 and entered the Missionary Baptist Seminary in Little Rock the same year. He received Bachelor, Master and Doctor in Bible Languages Degrees from the Little Rock school.

He has pastored the Pine Grove MBC near Holly Grove, Arkansas; Hickory Ridge MBC of Hickory Ridge, Arkansas; Westlawn MBC of Texarkana, Texas; Calvary MBC of Van Buren, Arkansas; First Immanuel MBC of Pine Bluff, Arkansas; and presently serves the Temple MBC of Benton, Arkansas.

He is a current member of the faculty of the Missionary Baptist Seminary in Little Rock where he has taught for twelve years and where he serves as assistant editor of the Searchlight published by the Seminary.

Before he began to write the Adult Lesson Commentary for New Testament Studies, he had twenty years experience writing for Bogard Press and the Baptist Sunday School Committee. He has previously written Jr. High Sunday School, Jr. High BTC and the Adult Quarterly.

He may be contacted at drdavidharris@hotmail.com.



Roger W. Stewart was born and raised in Fort Smith, Arkansas, where he attended Central Baptist Church throughout his entire childhood. He was saved and baptized at age nine. At age seventeen he announced his call to preach before graduating from Northside High School in 1984. He soon found himself a student at the Missionary Baptist Seminary where he earned a Bachelor of Theology degree in 1991.

Meanwhile, Brother Stewart married Gena Ashlock in 1986 and was ordained to the gospel ministry by

Victory Missionary Baptist Church in Sherwood, Arkansas, later that same year. God blessed the Stewart's with two boys—Brett in 1989 and Hayden in 1991. After pastoring in Michigan for nine years, Brother Stewart returned to Southeast Arkansas where he was afforded the opportunity to complete his Master of Theology (2006) and Doctor of Theology (2008) degrees at the Missionary Baptist Seminary.

He is pastor of Olive Branch Missionary Baptist Church in Pine Bluff, Arkansas. He has served ABA churches in Holly Grove, DeWitt and Star City, Arkansas as well as in Coloma, Michigan. He is currently a member of the Standing Missionary Committee where he serves as Clerk. Brother Stewart is Vice President of the Alumni Association for the Missionary Baptist Seminary.

He may be contacted at drrwstewart@sbcglobal.net.



Jason Carlton is the pastor of Memorial Baptist Church in De Queen, Arkansas. He graduated from the University of Central Arkansas in 1998 with a bachelor's degree in business management. He earned his Bachelor (2004) and Master (2005) Degrees in Bible Languages from the Missionary Baptist Seminary in Little Rock. Jason enjoys running, cycling and photography as hobbies. He and his wife Melanie live in De Queen with their daughters Riley Catherine and Amelia Elizabeth.

He may be contacted at jcarltonphotos@yahoo.com.

Counted Faithful

I Timothy 1:1-20

People who are faithful are trustworthy, reliable, dependable, loyal and steadfast. Faithful people are true to their pledge; true to the facts; true to the original pattern. They do not deviate. They do not desert. They stay in place, fulfill their commitment and perform the duty they were assigned without complaint.

Paul was such a person. He was faithful. He was faithful to the One who called him to be a preacher, teacher and an apostle. He was faithful to the truth of God as revealed to him and as expressed by him in the inspired letters which he wrote. He was faithful to the churches which he started during his missionary ministry, and he was faithful to the people who assisted him in those far-flung efforts to go where no one had gone before with the good news of the gospel.

Likewise, Paul wanted others to be faithful. In particular, he wanted young Timothy to be faithful in the work to which he had been assigned. This was one of the chief reasons he wrote to Timothy; he wanted to encourage him to be faithful. Christian workers, including preachers and pastors, need encouragement to be faithful. The temptation to quit is real. The pressures are great. The enemy is tireless. God's people need to be encouraged to be faithful. They need it now as never before.

The Introduction to the Letter (1 Timothy 1:1, 2)

The letter known to us as 1 Timothy is a very personal letter from the apostle Paul to his son in the faith, Timothy. The letter expresses Paul's love and concern for Timothy as the young man did his best to fulfill the expectations of his mentor and to remain true to the charge he had been given.

The Writer (verse 1). The letter was written by, "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope." Paul is the human author of thirteen New Testament books—all the books from Romans to Philemon. Some think he wrote the book of Hebrews, but no one knows with certainty who wrote Hebrews.

8 / I Timothy 1:1-20

Paul was born in the city of Tarsus as a Roman citizen (Acts 22:3, 28). Paul was his Roman name. The name is from the Latin, Paulus. It meant little or small. We get the English word pauper from this word. But Paul was also a Jew and, therefore, had a Hebrew name. His Hebrew name was Saul. Some have speculated that his Hebrew or Jewish name was after Israel's first king seeing that both were of the tribe of Benjamin, but it is only speculation. Saul, his Hebrew name, was the name by which he was known during the time he was a fierce opponent of the teachings of Jesus Christ, which he perceived to be a threat against his beloved Judaism. However, after he was converted and after he began his first missionary journey, he came to be better known as Paul. He was a chosen vessel to take the gospel to the Gentiles throughout the Roman empire. Thus, Paul, his Roman name, was the name used by him and attributed to him after he began his first missionary journey (Acts 13:13). Another view is that Saul changed his name to Paul after making his first convert, Sergius Paulus, while on the island of Cyprus (Gromacki 18).

Paul was "an apostle of Jesus Christ." The term "apostle" comes from a compound word which literally means "one sent forth" (Vine 55). The original twelve apostles were those men who were specifically chosen by Jesus after a night spent in prayer (Luke 6:12-16). They received special training from Him and were endowed by Him with power to cast out demons and to work miracles of healing (Matthew 10:1-4). Paul was not a part of the original twelve apostles, but was uniquely chosen and commissioned "by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Timothy 1:1). The word "commandment" is a military term indicating orders from a superior officer. Paul did not get his apostleship from men, but by the commandment of God. Paul's apostleship was, however, oftentimes challenged by his critics. The book of 2 Corinthians was largely written as a defense of his apostleship. Perhaps, there were those in Ephesus who needed to be gently reminded of Paul's apostleship and authority. The church needed to respect the authority of Paul and of his designated representative, Timothy. Likewise, churches today need to be reminded of the authority of Scripture and of those who preach it rightly.

The dual source, "God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ," shows that God the Father is the ultimate source of salvation and that Jesus Christ is the channel of salvation. In the Roman emperor cult, Nero wanted to be known as the empire's savior-god. Paul, much like Isaiah, wanted everyone to know that there is only one God and Savior (Isaiah 45:21, 22). Furthermore, identifying God as "our Saviour," and Jesus Christ as "our hope" brings the two together in such a way that it affirms the deity of Jesus Christ. It also should be noted that the word hope indicates a sure and steadfast assurance. There is no suggestion of doubt in the word.

The Recipient (verse 2). "Unto Timothy, my own son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord." Paul wrote this letter to Timothy. Timothy was a young man who had a great reputation among the brethren at Lystra and Iconium. Timothy's mother was a Jewess who "believed; but his father was a Greek" (Acts 16:1). While in this region during his second missionary journey, Paul wanted Timothy to join with him,

“and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek” (Acts 16:3). From that point forward, Timothy was with Paul and was used by Paul throughout the remainder of the apostle’s life.

Paul addressed Timothy as his “own son in the faith.” Some have taken this to mean that Paul led Timothy to the Lord when he went through the cities of Lystra and Iconium on his first missionary tour. Others take it to mean that Timothy was like a son to Paul in faith and in the work of the Lord. It is possible that both suggestions are true; however, we have no specific mention in any of the New Testament books that Paul actually led Timothy to Christ. It may have been Timothy’s mother and grandmother who had that privilege (2 Timothy 1:5). The word “own” means real, genuine or true. The phrase “the faith” refers to the sphere of believing faith, rather than the system of doctrine known as the faith.

“Grace, mercy, and peace” form the typical Pauline greeting. Some form of it appears in every letter he wrote. One of the arguments against Paul being the author of the letter to the Hebrews is that it contains no such greeting. There is a natural order in the words grace, mercy and peace. “Grace” is the undeserved, unmerited favor of God which precedes and makes a way for mercy and peace. Paul was the champion of grace. “Mercy” is “the compassionate disposition to forgive an offender or adversary” (Elwell 1440). “Peace” is the result of God’s grace and mercy working within the heart of a believer. The word includes more than an emotional feeling of well-being. It refers to a wholeness and harmony which exists between God and the believer. The dual source of the threefold greeting, “from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord,” is yet another testament to the equality and deity of Jesus.

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Paul’s Son in the Faith (1 Timothy 1:2): The being born of a Greek/Gentile father and a Jewish mother (Acts 16:1) made Timothy an illegitimate child in the eyes of the orthodox world of Judaism (Acts 16:3), but his relationship with the great apostle Paul was anything but improper. Indeed, Paul stressed the genuineness of Timothy’s faith and his confidence in this young man of God by including Timothy in his ministry and mentioning him on several occasions—Acts 16:1-3; 1 Corinthians 16:10, 11; 2 Corinthians 1:1; 1 Timothy 1:18; 2 Timothy 1:2; Philemon 1 and Hebrews 13:23. The language indicated that Paul viewed Timothy as his very own son via a faith relationship. The only other person with whom Paul made this comparison was Titus (Titus 1:4).

The Purpose of the Letter (1 Timothy 1:3, 4)

Paul wrote to Timothy in order to encourage him, instruct him and to, perhaps, give him a written record of his delegated authority as an apostolic representative of Paul to the church at Ephesus.

The Exhortation (verse 3). Paul reminded Timothy why he was in Ephesus saying, “As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia.” A bit of a review is in order. Paul did not go to Ephesus on his first

Genealogies**Word Study #1076**

I Timothy 1:4. Our English word genealogies is simply a transliteration (to transcribe the letters of one alphabet into the letters of another) of the Greek word *genealogia*. It is built on the Greek word *genea*, which is birth or generation. These discussions of ancestry are not inherently evil in themselves but can form a spiritual distraction. Many people in Paul's day focused more on their human ancestry than on their own spiritual relationship with God.

missionary journey, but near the end of his second journey he stopped for a brief time at Ephesus (Acts 18:18-21). Later, while on his third missionary journey, he ministered there for at least three years (Acts 19:1— 20:1). During the three year stay in Ephesus, Paul sent Timothy ahead into Macedonia. Timothy then followed Paul into Greece where they stayed in Corinth for three months. As they were about to sail into Asia, they learned the Jews were lying in wait for them, so they returned instead into Macedonia by foot (Acts 20:1-3). A special delegation of men went with, or ahead, of Paul across the

Aegean Sea into Troas (verses 4, 5). Paul, Luke and, perhaps, Titus, took five days to cross the Aegean and finally caught up with the others at Troas (verse 6). It was at Troas that a young man by the name of Eutychus fell asleep while Paul was preaching and had a fatal fall from the third loft. Paul went down, embraced him and raised him up (verses 7-11).

During the voyage to Jerusalem, the ship took port at Miletus. Paul used the opportunity to summon the nearby Ephesian elders to meet him there in Miletus (verses 17, 18). During this meeting, Paul expressed his expectation that they would never see him again (verses 18-38). However, it seems Paul did, in fact, visit Ephesus on what might be called his fourth missionary journey. This journey is not included in the book of Acts which concludes with Paul imprisoned in Rome. There is a general consensus among commentators, however, that Paul was released from this first imprisonment and made a fourth journey which included a stop in Ephe-

MANNA**Fables and Families (1 Timothy 1:4):**

A collection of some six hundred fables dating back to the fifth century BC were credited to an ancient Greek storyteller and, consequently, became affectionately known as *Aesop's Fables*. Such fables and others common in the first century AD were stories with specific morals attached as teaching points. Some fables, however, merely raised additional and unnecessary questions. Paul's point seems to have been that if a fable raises questions regarding biblical truth, then disregard the fable and heed the Scripture.

The issue of family genealogies consumed much time, effort and energy in the late first century AD, since, in the late first century BC, Herod the Great destroyed all the birth registries in an attempt to legitimize his seat on the throne as king of Judea. Paul, subsequently, pointed out to Timothy the need to focus on spiritual matters.

sus (Barker 1738-1739). This was when Paul besought Timothy to "abide still at Ephesus," while he continued "into Macedonia" (1 Timothy 1:3).

The Charge (verse 3). Paul further reminded Timothy why he left him in Ephesus, saying, “That thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine.” Paul besought, or encouraged, Timothy to stay behind, but he did so that Timothy might “charge” others. The word carried the force of a commanding officer to a subordinate. In his second letter to Timothy, Paul encouraged Timothy to “endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ” (2 Timothy 2:3). It seems Paul wanted Timothy to step up and act with the authority with which he had been given. Timothy may have been a bit timid and somewhat frail (1 Timothy 4:12; 5:23). He needed the encouragement Paul gave in order that he might be the leader he needed to be.

False doctrine is not to be advanced or accepted. Paul said for Timothy to charge “some that they teach no other doctrine” (1 Timothy 1:3). Not everyone in the church was guilty of advancing false doctrine, but some were. They were to be charged, or commanded, to stop doing what they had been doing. They were advocating “other doctrine.” The word means another of a different kind. They were teaching a doctrine that was different from what Paul had taught at Ephesus when he was there for three years. The seriousness of preaching another gospel can be seen in what Paul said to the Galatians when he wrote, “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed” (Galatians 1:8).

Furthermore, Timothy was to command the false teachers to “neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do” (1 Timothy 1:4). Rather than preach the truth as Paul had laid it out for them when he was there, some of the teachers in the Ephesian church were giving “heed to fables.” They were apparently consumed with it. It was their hobbyhorse. “Fables” refer to Jewish myths which turned people from the truth (Titus 1:14). They were fictitious, extra-biblical stories that may have mesmerized the listeners, but had no merit. The “endless genealogies” refer to the allegorical or fictitious interpretations which were derived from the Jewish genealogical registers.

These fables and endless genealogies may have impressed some, but Paul recognized their grave danger. They served only to “minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith.” These myths and stories led people to depend upon their genealogy and their Jewish customs rather than to place their faith in Christ which brings salvation.

The Purpose of the Law (1 Timothy 1:5-11)

Paul explained both the reason for his instructions and the right use of the Law of Moses.

The Reason for Paul’s Command (verse 5). Paul said, “Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned” (verse 5). The word “commandment” (noun) is related to the word “charge” (verb) in verse 3. It is not a reference to the Ten Commandments or to the Law of Moses, but rather to the instructions which Paul gave

Unfeigned Word Study #505

I Timothy 1:5. This is the Greek *anhupokritos*. The reader may note the root word's similarity to our English term hypocrite. The Greek term *hypokrites* originally has no religious connotation, but simply refers to a stage actor. It comes to describe one whose true nature is concealed—a pretender. Our faith should be sincere, genuine and not concealing any false motives.

Timothy and which Timothy was to relay to the church. The phrase “end of the commandment” can be understood as the goal of our instructions.

Paul's goal or purpose was charity, or love. What the false teachers taught led to pride and prejudice. What Paul taught led to love. Neither legalism, nor any other form of false doctrine, issues out of love or leads to love. The apostle John defined love, saying, “And this is love, that we walk after his commandments” (2 John 6). Jesus taught that love one for another was the true mark of His disciples (John 13:35).

Paul said that the kind of love he was talking about issued from a threefold source. First, it is “out of a pure heart” (1 Timothy 1:5). A “pure heart” is a cleansed, or regenerated heart. The Old Testament Law required the people to love one another (Leviticus 19:18); however, the Law did not provide the inner, spiritual strength to obey. The indwelling Holy Spirit does. Romans 5:5 says, “The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.” In another place, Paul said that we “are taught of God to love one another” (1 Thessalonians 4:9).

Second, such loves comes from “a good conscience” (1 Timothy 1:5). All men have a conscience because all men are created in the image and likeness of God; however, the conscience of the unsaved or natural man is not a reliable guide. It can become seared or calloused and, therefore, unresponsive. The saved, however, have the inner witness of the Spirit and have their consciences sharpened by the truths of God's Word. True love issues from a good conscience.

Third, this love comes from “faith unfeigned,” or from sincere faith. “Unfeigned” is an old English word which means genuine, sincere, without hypocrisy. This manner of faith is centered in Christ and founded on truth. Thus, the need is to teach the truth and command that no other doctrine be taught.

The Description of False Teachers (verses 6, 7). Paul identified the source of the problem and described the false teachers, saying, “From which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling; desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm.” Four things are said about these troublemakers. First, they had “swerved” from the truth and from the things just mentioned in verse 5. This word is used two other times in the New Testament and is translated “erred” both times (1 Timothy 6:21; 2 Timothy 2:18). It means to go astray, to lose one's way, to abandon (Louw Nida 31.68). It means “to be wide of the mark or to shoot past the goal” (Lea 69).

Second, they were “turned aside unto vain jangling.” The word translated “turned aside” is “a medical term meaning ‘to turn or twist out,’ used of limbs

which were dislocated” (Wuest 30). Vain jangling is meaningless, empty talk. The errant teachers had taken a hard left turn from the path of truth, twisted the Scriptures completely out of context and had immersed themselves in worthless discussions which accomplished nothing spiritually satisfying or edifying unto Christ or for the church.

Third, they were “desiring to be teachers of the law.” They were self-called. Their desire arose from their own will. They were motivated by pride and set themselves up as authoritative teachers of the Law of Moses. They were self-appointed experts in the Law. They may have imposed circumcision and other tenets of the Law upon the people, but Paul did not get into those specifics at this point. (Compare Acts 15:1).

Fourth, “understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm.” Simply put, they did not know what they were talking about. They pretended to know, but they did not. They were emotional and enthusiastic, but they were still ignorant of the purpose and content of the Law. Sadly, this same tragedy is being repeated today. Preachers are substituting stories and enthralling personal illustrations for the straightforward exposition of the Bible, and the people “love to have it so” (Jeremiah 5:31).

The Right Use of the Law (verses 8-10). Paul explained the right use of the Law in order to counter the misuse and misinterpretations of the false teachers. He said, “But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully” (1 Timothy 1:8). As to both its character and its content, the Law was good (Romans 7:12). It could not have been otherwise because it was given by God. Yet, like so many other good things which God has given, man has misused it and abused it. The Law was given to reveal sin for what it was. “By the law is the knowledge of sin” (Romans 3:20). Paul testified, “I had not known sin, but by the law” (Romans 7:7). The point of the Law was to prove to man that he was a sinner and utterly unable to save himself. Yet, through the sacrificial system included within the Law, man was to understand that he needed a substitutionary sacrifice on his behalf; that is, he needed Christ. Thus, Paul wrote in Galatians 3:24, “Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.” The Law never saved anyone but showed everyone how to be saved (Galatians 3:19-22).

Paul said, “Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man” (1 Timothy 1:9). If everyone were inherently righteous, the Law would not have been needed. In fact, laws in general would not be needed if everyone were perfect. Nevertheless, it was needed because man needed to know he was a sinner, and he needed to know how to find salvation in God’s gracious

Vain Jangling Word Study #3150

I Timothy 1:6. This is the Greek compound *matailogia*, which is composed of *mataios* (that which is vain, empty, ineffective or not what it appears to be) and *logos* (speech). This is the opposite of the unfeigned faith mentioned in the previous verse. It only appears here in the New Testament and describes useless, unprofitable discussions.

Profane Word Study #952

I Timothy 1:9. This word appears five times in the New Testament; four of them are in Paul's letters to Timothy. It is a compound of the Greek words for crossing over a threshold. It is to make something subject to being trampled and describes that which is common. It is the opposite of that which is sacred or hallowed.

provision of a substitute. The only way to be made righteous is through the imputed righteousness of Christ.

Paul said it was needed “for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine” (verses 9, 10). Fourteen specific things are mentioned here by Paul. He then added

the all encompassing phrase “and if there be any other thing.” (1) The “lawless” are those who have no respect for or commitment to any law. They feel as if they are not obligated and are, therefore, (2) “disobedient.” They rebel and otherwise refuse to submit to any law. (3) The “ungodly” feel no obligation to God. They have no regard for what is sacred. (4) “Sinners” are paired with the ungodly. They constantly miss the mark or come up short of God's glory (Romans 3:23). (5) The “unholy” are contrary to the holiness of God; they are wicked. (6) “Profane” is based on a word for threshold and describes those who trample under foot the things of God. (7) “Murderers of fathers” and (8) “murderers of mothers” are the antithesis of the fifth commandment: “honour thy father and thy mother.” (9) “Manslayers” are violators of the sixth commandment: “thou shalt not kill.” (10) “Whoremongers” is translated from a word which forms the basis of our English word pornography. It includes a wide range of sexual immorality. It violates the spirit of the seventh commandment: “thou shalt not commit adultery.” (11) Those who “defile themselves with mankind” are those who commit sexual immorality with members of the same sex. Homosexual acts are an abomination to God (Leviticus 20:13; 1 Corinthians 6:9). (12) “Menstealers” includes kidnappers and slave traders. It is a violation of the eighth commandment: “thou shalt not steal.” (13) “Liars” break the ninth commandment: “thou shalt not bear false witness” as do (14) “perjured persons” who lie under oath.

The Relation Between the Law and the Gospel (verse 11). Having explained the purpose of the Law, Paul continued, saying, “According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.” The Law and the gospel go hand in hand. The Law identifies the malady; the gospel provides the remedy.

Three things about the gospel are identified. First, it is “glorious.” It is glorious because it reflects the glory of God and brings glory to God. It magnifies His holiness (God is infinitely holy, perfect, separate from sin), manifests His justice (God's holy nature demands that sin be punished) and demonstrates His grace (forgiveness is possible through the provision made in the sacrifice of His Son). Thus, the gospel clarifies His view of sin, shows the penalty of

violating His law and extends His grace to those who repent and believe on His Son (Romans 3:21-28).

Second, the gospel is “of the blessed God.” God is the source of the gospel; it comes from Him. God is the source of every good and perfect gift (James 1:17). He is the eternal spring of blessedness and happiness. The root meaning of the term blessed is happy. The word is used nine times in the passage known as the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-11).

Third, the gospel “was committed to my trust,” Paul said. The term “committed” is based on the word translated believe. As used here, it means to entrust something of value to another person. The priceless treasure of the gospel was committed to Paul at the time he was called and commissioned by Jesus Christ (Acts 26:12-18). He took great care to guard the precious truths of the gospel and to defend the gospel against such errors as those being purported by the false teachers in Ephesus who were substituting myths, fables and endless genealogies.

The Power of the Gospel (1 Timothy 1:12-17)

Sound doctrine is critical because it is the only thing that will bring the lost to salvation and change lives for the better. Paul knew this to be true because he had personally experienced the power of the gospel in his own life.

The Gospel Enabled Paul (verse 12). Paul said, “And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry.” Paul gave all the thanks to Christ Jesus the Lord. There was no more pharisaical pride left in Paul. He had been overcome and truly humbled by the appearance of Christ on the Damascus Road. His utter inability and Christ’s all-sufficiency had been clearly made known. Now, he gave constant, ongoing thanks to the One he owned as his Lord.

It was the Lord Jesus who “enabled” Paul, or who gave him strength. Early in his ministry while in Damascus, “Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ” (Acts 9:22). In the midst of his ministry, he testified, saying, “The excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us” (2 Corinthians 4:7). Again, during the first Roman imprisonment, he said, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Philippians 4:13). Finally, at the very end of his life, while awaiting his death, he confessed, “The Lord stood with me, and strengthened me” (2 Timothy 4:17). Paul’s entire Christian life was marked by divine enablement.

The Lord “counted me faithful,” Paul said (1 Timothy 1:12). “Counted” means to deem or consider. Christ deemed Paul faithful. “Faithful” means trustworthy, dependable, reliable. The number one requirement of a steward is that he be found faithful (1 Corinthians 4:2). Paul’s faithfulness was demonstrated and proven between his salvation experience on the Damascus Road (Acts 9:3-6) and his being sent out as a missionary by the church at Antioch (Acts 13:2).

Paul gave thanks to the Lord for “putting me into the ministry” (1 Timothy 1:12). Paul affirmed that his ministry was given to him by the Lord; it was

not something he chose for himself. “Putting” means “to appoint, to designate, to assign” (Louw Nida 37.96). What God put Paul into was the “ministry,” or service of the gospel. During Paul’s previously mentioned visit with the Ephesian elders, he explained his commitment to the ministry, saying, “But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:24).

The Gospel Changed Paul (verses 13, 14). Paul magnified his ministry and the graciousness of God’s call by contrasting his previous life, saying,

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Paul’s Past (1 Timothy 1:13): Paul’s past made him neither proud nor superior, though for any other man it might have done both. When the apostle wrote to the Philippians while imprisoned for preaching the gospel (Philippians 1:12-14), he listed his many qualifications stating that all were willingly sacrificed for the cause of Christ: “Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ” (Philippians 3:4-7).

“Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief” (verse 13). Paul was amazed and humbled by the thought that God would allow him to be used in the ministry of the gospel because he had previously been a “blasphemer.” A blasphemer is one who defames or speaks against. Blasphemy is injurious speech designed to hurt its object. Paul had vehemently spoken against Jesus of Nazareth and those who followed Him as the Messiah. Paul had also been a “persecutor.” To persecute is to harass or afflict so as to injure. Acts 8:3 says, “As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison.” Paul was also “injurious.” Injurious means harmful; it has to do with causing injury. In his defense before Agrippa, Paul admitted, “I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and

being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities” (Acts 26:11).

Nevertheless, Paul said, “I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief” (1 Timothy 1:13). This was an explanation, not an excuse. He said, “I did it.” He admitted it. Yet, he obtained mercy from God. One of God’s great attributes is that He is merciful (Exodus 34:6, 7). God did not give Paul what he deserved; He showed mercy. Likewise, to us all God has extended His mercy and grace. Paul’s previous life had been lived in “unbelief.” He did not know who Jesus really was, nor did he comprehend the truth of the gospel. Paul actually thought he was defending the truth when he put Christians into prison.

Nevertheless, Paul said, “And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 1:14). In superabounding grace, God showed grace and forgiveness to Paul. Truly, where sin did abound, grace did much more abound (Romans 5:20). God’s grace came to Paul “with faith and love” (1 Timothy 1:14) which found their source in and were centered in Christ Jesus. Paul exercised faith in response to the grace of God and loved Him for what He had done for him. Indeed, all believers must admit, “We love him, because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19).

The Gospel Saved Paul (1 Timothy 1:15, 16). Paul said, “This is a faithful saying.” This expression is unique to the apostle Paul who used it five times in the Pastoral Epistles (1 Timothy 1:15; 3:1; 4:9; 2 Timothy 2:11; Titus 3:8). It means that what he was about to say was trustworthy, credible and reliable. Furthermore, it was “worthy of all acceptance” (1 Timothy 1:15). That is, it should be received readily and wholeheartedly. Paul wanted Timothy to have complete confidence that it was true and accept it without reservation.

What Paul said was “that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief” (verse 15). Paul confirmed the doctrine of the incarnation when he said that Christ Jesus came into the world (Luke 2:7-11). He also affirmed the purpose for which Christ came. It was as Jesus Himself said, “To seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). Jesus came to “save sinners.” To save meant to “deliver from a direct threat; to bring safe and sound out of a difficult situation” (TDNT 4982). The word can be used to refer to either a physical or spiritual deliverance, but Paul used it to speak of his soul’s salvation.

“Sinners” (1 Timothy 1:15) are those who have come short of the perfect standard of God’s infinite holiness. All men are sinners and, therefore, in need of being saved or delivered from the penalty of sin which is physical, spiritual and eternal death (Romans 3:23; 6:23). Thus, Jesus came. He stands ready, willing and able to save all who come to him in repentance and faith.

Paul saw himself as “chief” of sinners. He believed he was the worst. Paul also said he was “less than the least of all saints” (Ephesians 3:8) and viewed himself as the least of the apostles because, he said, “I persecuted the church of God” (1 Corinthians 15:9).

Paul also saw himself as a pattern for the working of the gospel. He said, “Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting” (1 Timothy 1:16). Paul did not say he deserved mercy, but that he obtained mercy. Likewise, every sinner is undeserving of God’s love and life everlasting. The reason God saved Paul was so that He could shew forth or make a display of His “longsuffering” and make Paul something of a “pattern” to which others could look and see that God can save and give eternal life to any and all who believe no matter how great their sin or how obstinate their unbelief (Hebrews 7:25).

The Gospel Evoked Praise from Paul (verse 17). Paul extolled the Lord God for what He had done for him saying, “Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.” God

is King eternal. He is King of kings, and He is such from eternity to eternity. He is “immortal.” God is not susceptible to death because He is not subject to sin. He is invisible. God’s substance is Spirit; therefore, He is invisible (John 4:24). He is “the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see” (1 Timothy 6:16). He is “the only wise God” (1 Timothy 1:17). He alone is God; there is no other true and living God. We get the word monotheism from the Greek word translated “only.” Furthermore, He is wise. All wisdom, knowledge and intelligence resides in Him. He is omniscient, or all-knowing. Moreover, He is deserving of “honour and glory for ever and ever” (verse 17). Honor is the worth or value ascribed to a person. Glory is praise. God deserves it all, and He will receive it all in eternity for ever and ever. And to that, we say, “Amen.”

The Perversion of the Faith (1 Timothy 1:18-20)

In the closing verses of chapter 1, Paul returned to the matter of the charge he made to Timothy and to the theme of preserving the true doctrines as they had been given.

Timothy’s Charge (verse 18). Paul reminded Timothy, saying, “This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before

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How Serving God Is Like Warfare

(1 Timothy 1:18): Military metaphors were among Paul’s favorites. Several of his epistles contain the imagery of war and soldiers going to war as noted in the second letter written to the young pastor at Ephesus (2 Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:7) and in his second letter to the Corinthian Christians (2 Corinthians 10:3-5) as well as in his admonition to the Ephesians to “stand against the wiles of the devil” (Ephesians 6:11-17). Under Roman authority, with strategic military outposts dotting the Roman countryside, the first century citizen had little trouble imagining Paul’s point when he compared serving God to fighting in a war.

on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare.” This “charge” refers to the charge made in verse 3 where Paul charged Timothy to charge others not to teach anything contrary to the doctrine which Paul had preached and taught. To commit means to set before and can be used as a banking term in the sense of entrust or deposit. Paul had set the truth before Timothy and entrusted him with the responsibility of passing it on to others.

All of this was in accordance with “the prophecies which went before on thee.” When Timothy joined Paul’s missionary team at Lystra in southern Galatia while on Paul’s second missionary journey, they apparently had an ordination service wherein Paul and other elders laid hands on Timothy (1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6), during which time prophecies were uttered regarding Timothy and his service to God. Before

the New Testament was completed, prophets were used by God to reveal the word and will of God. As the New Testament was completed, the gift of prophecy was done away.

Timothy was enjoined to remember those prophecies, “that thou by them mightest war a good warfare” (1 Timothy 1:18). He was to use the spiritual gift or gifts which he had received, whatever they were, in his ongoing fight against the enemies of the truth; and, thereby, insure doctrinal correctness for the church at Ephesus. Timothy would need all the spiritual enablement he could get in order to combat the evil spiritual forces which were acting contrary to the truth.

Timothy’s Conscience (verse 19). Paul said, “Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck.” “Holding” is having, keeping and retaining. “Faith” is saving faith. Timothy was to constantly walk and war by faith. “Conscience” was referred to earlier in verse 5 and will be again in 1 Timothy 3:9 and 4:2. Conscience is the inner voice which God has placed within all men and which serves to accuse or affirm depending on whether we disobey or obey (Romans 2:15).

Some had “put away” (1 Timothy 1:19) concerning conscience and faith (literally the faith). They willfully and deliberately rejected their inner moral guide, made “shipwreck” of the faith, and embraced error which allowed them to follow the lusts of the flesh. Truth always leads to godliness (Titus 1:1), but error leads to ungodliness. “Most religious error is born of moral rebellion” (Lea 1:19). “In a sense, they pulled up their moral anchor and caused their lives to be tossed by the winds and waves of heresy” (Gromacki 44).

Timothy’s Counterparts (verse 20). Paul named names, saying, “Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme.” Hymenaeus is mentioned in 2 Timothy 2:17, 18 where it is said, “Their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some.”

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Shipwrecked Faith (1 Timothy 1:19):

The apostle Paul chose his words wisely. He understood the word picture seen in the word “shipwreck” as he had personally experienced said calamity. To that end, in writing his letter of response to the Corinthians, he mentioned being shipwrecked three times (2 Corinthians 11:25). In Acts 28, Luke detailed what might have been the most perilous of those occasions for Paul and his companions. It seems Paul’s choice of words intended to emphasize that the suffering shipwreck resulted in the loss of everything save one’s life. Only tragic loss can result from an apostate faith. Said another way, letting loose of the rudder of faith can only lead to catastrophe on the rocky shores of life—spiritual and otherwise.

Blaspheme Word Study #987

1 Timothy 1:20. This is a transliteration of the Greek verb *blasphemeo*. It is to speak with the intent to harm. In Titus 3:2 it is used of other individuals and in Acts 19:37 of pagan deities. Paul does not specifically state the exact nature of the blasphemy of these two men, only that their transgression was serious enough for Paul to hand them over to Satan.

Alexander may have been the same man described in Acts 19:33–41 who addressed the riotous crowd in the theater. We cannot be sure. In Paul’s second letter to Timothy he wrote, “Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works” (2 Timothy 4:14).

Whoever these men were and whatever they did, Paul “delivered unto Satan.” This is most likely a reference to church discipline. The church is thought of as a sanctuary from Satan and his devices. Thus, to be put out of the church was to be put in the sphere where Satan could freely attack. Expulsion from church membership does not cause people to lose their salvation; salvation can never be lost. Church discipline does, however, serve to humble those who are genuinely saved and, thereby, cause them to seek restoration through confession and repentance. Thus, Paul said, “That they may learn not to blaspheme” (1 Timothy 1:20). The purpose of church discipline is always to be restorative, not punitive. The ultimate goal is inclusion, not exclusion, even though exclusion may be necessary for a time.