

Welcome

Good morning Crossroad Church. I am pleased to be delivering the mail for you today. We have a letter from The Apostle Paul to unpack this morning so please turn with me to 1 Timothy. If you are using the pew Bible you will find your place on page number...oops, looks like you are on your own.

The theme or title of this message is “Guarding the Gospel of the Glory of the Blessed God” and it is lockstep with next week’s lesson so I hope you can make it next week as well. Debbie read us our main text which is the first chapter, but the message today is really the main point of the whole letter, not just the first chapter. Today we will fly at a few different altitudes to get a correct view of what Paul is saying and how it applies to us. We will look broadly, but briefly, at how 1 Timothy fits into all that Paul wrote. We will also look at the whole letter to see the thrust of what he is saying, and then we will drill down on the first chapter as the backbone of his letter. This will be a task to cover in the time allotted so let’s seek God’s blessing before we continue.

Book Overview

So looking at 1 Timothy within the Pauline Epistles. This letter is intended to exhort and instruct the church in Ephesus but is of course directed to Timothy and is therefore categorized as a pastoral epistle. In the pastoral epistles Paul comes against false teaching that has been called the Ephesian heresy by scholars. There is debate over the full content of this heresy but it is noted to be Jewish and is related to the law and it depreciates the role of Christ. The first letter to Timothy has now been divided into six chapters.

Chapter one is the backbone and sets the stage for guarding the gospel of the glory of the blessed God. Though stated a bit simplistically, the remaining chapters explain how to accomplish this in the congregation.

Chapter two contains instructions to guard it in the prayer closet by intercession for those with influence, so we would rely on Christ alone as mediator to God, and that we would hold to orderliness and complementary roles within the congregation.

Chapter three contains instructions to guard it in the structure of the church by proper oversight in the congregation; holding onto the mystery of godliness in the incarnate Messiah.

Chapter four contains instructions to guard it in the pulpit by right doctrine and practice that holds to the right content of faith, relying on Christ alone for godliness.

Chapter five contains instructions to guard it in their relationships by understanding the church to be the household of God, with proper leadership and accountability for all, and a place where we honor those who carry the responsibility to lead. The church is not a social or political or leisure club, not a business, not a classroom or library, not even a hospital, but this is a family that is in covenant together manifesting a visible gospel for the world to see. On this note I want to read you our membership covenant that defines our relationship as members of this body. [Read membership covenant] You may not have been familiar with this, even some members, but we plan to ensure that all prospective members affirm this statement when we admit them and we will re-affirm this statement at member quarterly meetings that we will begin on Sunday November 15 after the service. Next week we will include this with details in the announcements.

Now back to Paul's letter...Chapter six contains instructions to guard it in private devotion by pursuing righteousness with contentment; fighting for the faith, not for selfish gain.

Now the remainder of our time will be in chapter one, which again I suggest sets the foundation for the letter. You have notes for this chapter in the bulletin and on the back you will find questions to answer as you listen and consider the text. There is an error at roman numeral IV. It was supposed to be Capital letter B under Roman numeral III.

Exposition

Paul is a messenger by the authority of God, who is our savior, and by the authority of Christ Jesus, who is our hope or the means in which God saves us. We have God as the authorizing source, Paul as the authorized messenger, and the gospel of the glory of the blessed God as the authorized message. Timothy has received the message and has trusted in its content. He is a true child. His faith is genuine...as opposed to faith that is shipwrecked later in the letter.

Grace, Mercy, and Peace is a unique greeting for Paul. Only found in the letters to Timothy, it is particular to the purpose of these letters. This is evidenced by the focus of his letter aligning well with this greeting. It sets itself up as a progression from one to the next and really becomes the heart and summary of Paul's point.

Saved by grace, through mercy, for peace. Grace is the source or foundation of our peace with God. This begins with God, whom Paul refers to as our Savior. According to (1 Tim 1:11, 2 Tim 1:9, Eph 1:3-6, and 2:8-9) salvation begins with its purpose in the glory of the grace of God. It is God's doing. He is the savior. Mercy is

the means or hope of our peace with God. Salvation is not by any kind of merit or accomplishment or group affiliation, rather it rests solely on the mercy of God in Christ. This is well supported by Titus 3:4-7, Rom 9:16, 11:32-36, and Jude 21.

(Titus 3:4–7, ESV) “4 But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, 5 he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, 6 whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior; 7 so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”

This mercy is set upon us by promise, which relies on God’s faithfulness, not by law, which relies on my faithfulness (see Gal 3:1-9 for more support here). We will return to mercy as we move through this text but for now we will move onto peace. Peace with God in Christ Jesus is the end state or goal of our justification and a central component of salvation. This is reconciliation with the God who we have rebelled against. This peace is beautifully described in Rom 5:1-2, Rom 8:1, Acts 10:34-36, Eph 2:12-16, and Col 1:20.

(Romans 5:1–2, ESV) “1 Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”

Through Christ we have access. By faith in Christ we have access to the mercy of God, which grants us a standing in his grace. Faith and mercy are corollaries. Understand saving faith as relying on the mercy of God in the ability and merit of Christ over and against your own inability and demerit. Now moving to vv3-4.

Here we have Paul’s exhortation regarding the need to guard the gospel. Which he describes as maintaining the right doctrine or message (right beliefs) and the right behavior (right response). Guard the doctrine Paul tells us. This is the teaching or as we said already the message or the beliefs. There is one true message received from God. Any other is false and the teacher is cursed (Gal 1:6-9). Summarized above as grace-mercy-peace. Guard the practice (devotion, living, behavior, or as we said above the response). Notice the response of those who got caught up in the heresy. It is not a humble response of love from the inner man as we will see in the next verse. Paul expects us to practice stewardship with the gospel. This should be our response. The idea is being responsible to an authority for something valuable that has been given to you. For the teacher, it means being content to be a mailman who delivers the authorized message to the glory of God. For all of us it means having

a focus on the point of the message with a trust in God who is authorizing it and Christ who delivered it in his flesh. So Paul expects stewardship and he warns against speculations.

The idea here in speculations is a focus on words and forms rather than on the intent and the meaning or point of the teaching. This is difficult to concretely identify and is related to the broader Ephesian heresy that we don't have time to investigate further. Whatever it is- it is not based on a trust in the one authorizing the message and not in a fulfillment in Christ. Myths and genealogies are falsehoods and reaches of some kind at finding secret knowledge or alternative purposes. It is a loss of stewardship and replaces it with empty or worthless talk that harms unity.

Here in verses 5-7 Paul explains the aim or goal or reason for this exhortation to guard the gospel. The right gospel with a right response produces the right kind of love. The kind of love (for God and others) in view here is from the inner man...not some mechanical obedience that relies on external motivation, external validation and external confidence.

This love is from a pure heart...Motives that are washed, clean, redeemed by the blood of Christ. Not for self interest or gain. This is heart level motivation of the inner man rather than conformance to an external standard for a reason separated from the law giver (Sermon on the mount).

This love is from a good conscience. Actions that are aligned with the internal conviction of the Spirit of God and the revealed will of God in his word. This is heart level validation of my actions before God rather than external approval of man (sermon on the mount).

This love is from a sincere faith (correlate to true child). Trusting in Christ as my hope rather than in myself. I have the right object of faith. This is heart level confidence of my acceptance by God based on my union to Christ rather than an on an external tally of my performance compared to his law. It's trust in God's promise that depends on his faithfulness. Not trust in God's law that depends on my faithfulness. It's dependence upon Christ's accomplishment. Not a dependence on my accomplishments. It's reliance upon his ability. Not a reliance upon my ability. In the end, I am grateful and want to demonstrate his righteousness to the world and celebrate his mercy. Which is opposed to being proud and wanting to demonstrate my righteousness to God and celebrate my merit.

Now in the next couple of verses we see that swerving from the true doctrine and a humble response of the inner man leads to vanity and the exchange of the real gospel message of faith for a confused and misunderstood message of law-keeping.

Paul speaks of specific people who have made this error. This is not hypothetical or just conjecture. People are doing this even today! People are walking headlong into vanity and shipwrecking themselves by adding their ideas and empty thoughts to the message and by living with a devotion to discovering a different message that what has been given plainly.

Here in verse 7 is the main content or result of their ideas...it is a focus on the letter of the law as containing what we need. They shift from a message of teaching faith to a message of teaching the Mosaic law (or all the OT commandments of God such as the 10 commandments). And tragically, they do not understand the nature or the very purpose of the law...By nature the law is spiritual and internal, not physical and external. (Rom 2:28-29, Sermon mount)

(Romans 2:28–29, ESV) “28 For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. 29 But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.”

Now purpose- The law is for the cause or end of absolute or perfect righteousness. It is for Christ-likeness. But how does it take us here, when we are only guilty under this law? As attested to by Gal 3:10 and Rom 4:15. Answer- The law is to be fulfilled through union with the God-man who has kept the law in our place and condemned sin in his flesh.

(Romans 7:4–6, ESV) “4 Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God. 5 For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. 6 But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.”

(Romans 8:1–4, ESV) “1 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. 3 For God

has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, 4 in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.”

Therefore, the righteousness in sight here is to be pursued by trust in Christ for righteousness, not by trust in my law-keeping for righteousness. In Romans 9 we see the error plainly.

(Romans 9:30–33, ESV) “30 What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith; 31 but that Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law. 32 Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone, 33 as it is written, “Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.””

In his letter to the Galatians Paul explains that the purpose of the law was to protect those trusting in God’s promise and to lead them to the genuine object of their faith (which was the promised offspring from Gen 3 and even Gen 15) who was eventually revealed by God to be his very Son in human flesh.

(Galatians 3:19–26, ESV) “19 Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made, and it was put in place through angels by an intermediary. 20 Now an intermediary implies more than one, but God is one. 21 Is the law then contrary to the promises of God? Certainly not! For if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law. 22 But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. 23 Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. 24 So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. 25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, 26 for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.”

So understanding the spiritual and internal nature of the law and the true purpose of the law we see in verses 8-11 that the law is good and indeed Paul attests to this in various letters, but it must be used (or applied) according to the intent of the law giver or else it’s application is not lawful and becomes blasphemous as a false depiction of his message and a stealing, or denial, of his glory.

Now it must be understood that the law is about mercy from beginning to end. To help us see this, let's hear the introduction of the law from the law-giver himself. Be sure to spot the message of the law...He precedes Israel's first hearing of his 10 commandments with a call to remember...

(Exodus 20:1–2, ESV) And God spoke all these words, saying² “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

Then he gives the 10 commandments...So what is it about this exodus that he is calling attention to How does it relate to the giving of the law? Lets go back further and see Exodus 3:4-8.

(Exodus 3:4–8, ESV) “4 When the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, “Moses, Moses!” And he said, “Here I am.” 5 Then he said, “Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.” 6 And he said, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God. 7 Then the Lord said, “I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings, 8 and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites.”

You see, The LORD delivers a law to his people under the banner of his mercy and his faithfulness to his promises...He reminds them of his covenant with Abraham that led him to deliver them from Egypt. This is the setting in which the law-giver lays down his holy and righteous and good law. It is as if he says..."Listen carefully, don't misunderstand what I am about to tell you. Don't try to turn my mercy into your merit. Understand that this law is a message of your inability and need to surrender to my glorious mercy as a gift, not a list for you to conquer in order to earn my approval as a wage." Indeed he will constantly call Israel to remember the exodus throughout their history.

Therefore, the misunderstanding Paul is exposing in the rest of our chapter is found in this question...Is the law meant to be used as a means to justify the righteous or as a means to condemn the sinner?

(Romans 3:19–24, ESV) “19 Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. 20 For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. 21 But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— 22 the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,”

So if under the law I meet condemnation in the exposure of my sin rather than justification, what is my response? What is your response? Is it to fight for justice or surrender to mercy? The lingering presence of indwelling sin tends us toward justice and twists our use of the law. As prideful people we all tend to want to stand on our own and be fully autonomous without an utter reliance on another. We have a hard time with God’s kind of justification that is by his declaration and not by our performance. Even believers default back to our performance as the measure quite easily.

By his choice of sins listed here in this section Paul probably means to make it easier for the believer to rightly categorize yourself in the column of the righteous or just, (based on our standing in Christ) rather than in the column of the sinner. But what is Paul doing here? Why is he contrasting the just (or righteous) against this list of sinners? He wants us to understand which group is to make use of the written law as a measuring stick. So what is implied here? Paul is implying that the law’s purpose is for exposing sin and not for demonstrating righteousness. Attempting to demonstrate one’s righteousness before God by use of the law is not only futile but is blasphemous, since your effort would seek to nullify the grace of God and make a mockery of Christ’s sacrifice.

(Galatians 2:21, ESV) “21 I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.”

(Galatians 5:2–6, ESV) “2 Look: I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you. 3 I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law. 4 You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace. 5 For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. 6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.”

So if, in Christ, I have a right standing before God, do I see the law as the means to show myself righteous before God or as a continual sign of my dependence upon the righteousness of his Son to escape condemnation? Do I see law-keeping as something to put God in a position of owing me something (like salvation or a particular blessing or outcome). Or do I see law-keeping as a way to show my gratitude and to worship him in my body for his glorious mercy in Christ?

If I am not a believer, and hopefully by the grace of God, I therefore sense that I lack a right standing before God, do I see this idea of law-keeping as a way to earn God's approval or as a beacon that demonstrates my need for a gracious savior? And specifically my need for mercy in Christ in order to have peace with God? The only right use of the law for us (believer and unbeliever alike) is the exposure of sin and the celebration, indeed the proclamation, of mercy.

Now in verse 11 Paul puts a bow on his argument. Our use of the law should be in accord with the gospel. Paul tells us that this lawful use of the law is the only use that is in accord with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God. So let's consider the glory of God in the context of this wonderful statement in verse 11 and rejoice in the solid hope it puts under the gospel being by grace and through mercy for peace with God. Turn with me to Exodus 33 where we will pick up with Moses interceding for Israel before God after the golden calf incident and before he gets two new tablets of the law. At verse 17 God gives a favorable response to a request of Moses and then in an effort to "know God's ways" (as Moses mentioned a few verses back...). Moses then asks God to show him his glory. Listen to the response he receives and consider its relevance to our question of the gospel of the glory of the blessed God being all of mercy...pure gift.

(Exodus 33:17–19, ESV)¹⁷ And the Lord said to Moses, "This very thing that you have spoken I will do, for you have found favor in my sight, and I know you by name." ¹⁸ Moses said, "Please show me your glory." ¹⁹ And he said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name 'The Lord.' And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.

It is plain that God considers his goodness, his self-existent name "YHWH", and his free grace and mercy to be the representation of his very glory. Accordingly, in verses 12-17 we see the testimony of Paul establishing that the gospel of the glory of the blessed God is all of mercy. I am going to quickly restate the flow of Paul's argument here so follow in the text from v12-17 if you like but I will not be reading it in full. Paul begins by

thanking God for regarding him faithful and putting him to service when there was nothing in Paul to merit this judgment. On the contrary, there was much to hold against Paul (or Saul as he was then known). Though Paul was ignorant and unbelieving (which he uses here not as defense but as more demerit), indeed he declares twice “But I received mercy...” and in verse 16 he explains that God’s reason for having mercy on him, the chief of sinners, was so that in Paul’s justification (which was by trusting in the mercy of God in Christ) Jesus might display the perfect patience of God in forbearing sin as a message to all would-be converts that God does pour his mercy upon the worst of sinners who trust in his Son alone for forgiveness.

In the end Paul offers praise to God as the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God and ascribes to him honor and glory forever because of his amazing mercy in the salvation of sinners. So with an eye to our application we return to the aim of the charge. In the last three verses Paul reminds Timothy that some have shipwrecked their very faith by rejecting this charge to guard the gospel. Some have indeed become blasphemers and Paul has specifically removed two men from the congregation under church discipline. There are more than a billion people in this world who follow a doctrine that adds the merit of their actions (or works of law-keeping) to the sheer mercy of God in Christ for justification. And I mean people who consider themselves to be Christians, but they trust not in the righteousness of Christ alone to justify them. This is tragic of course and a reason for us to guard our doctrine and practice and to be a light in this world or the true message of the gospel.

Well, this brings us to the end of our main text but reminds us to guard against the shipwrecking of our faith. Now let’s look at a biblical illustration and briefly reflect upon how we can apply this exhortation from Paul. We have in Mark 10 a stark contrast between the rich young man and blind Bartimaeus. I made reference to this same episode in Mark 10 in the last sermon I gave but I can’t escape that fact that it is the best illustration to contrast the right and wrong use of the law that I know. One of these men has self justification in mind, the demonstration of his ability, a declaration of his own righteousness and in the end he finds only sorrow over his lack of merit. The other has mercy in mind, a dependence upon the ability of Christ, the declaration of the righteousness of Christ and in the end he is celebrating the glorious mercy of God in Christ. The rich young man asks, “What do I need to do, good teacher...” whereas the blind beggar cries “Have mercy on me Son of David”.

Which one do we tend to be like? Our love should give us the answer. Do we love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith? Remember that those who understand the depth of the mercy they have received

in Christ love God and others well from the inner man. What do I love? What do I pour myself into? Paul says in chapter 6 speaking against the love of money...

(1 Timothy 6:11–12, ESV) “11 But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. 12 Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.”

Conclusion

We come to the conclusion and I would like the band to come on up as we finish...

Sermon Idea: “Declare the true gospel, in doctrine and practice, which is righteousness in Christ alone by the mercy of God and not by any merit of man, which rightly results in love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.”

So I am asking for personal reflection and caution regarding how we understand and how we represent the gospel to others with our voices and with our lives. Know the mercy that you receive each morning you wake with breath in your lungs and respond with humble surrender and love.

If this message of having peace with God, being seen by him as perfectly righteous, through faith in the free mercy of God in Christ...if this is news to you or even if you were already familiar...if you are desiring to respond today in faith and repentance, to leave here celebrating the mercy of God rather than lamenting your demerit, than come let me know as the band leads us in praise.

And for the rest, next week we will look at how the one who rightly understands and responds to the gospel does not stop at merely guarding it in themselves but this person labors to advance the gospel according to their holy calling.

Pray with me...