

The sermon

Intro

The story of 1 Timothy is the story of a local church in really bad shape. Paul's sent Timothy in to clean up the mess.

Kind of like a show we've watched called Restaurant Impossible. Someone spends their inheritance of \$250,000 on a restaurant. They're losing \$3,000 a month and they've depleted all their savings. And they're racking up credit card debt to pay the bills.

Their chef doesn't know how to cook, let alone how to do inventory, pricing, etc. The staff gets in fights in front of the customers.

The place is unsanitary. Hasn't been cleaned in years. Smells because of dead rats in the ceiling and under the floor. Using expired food. Complete disorder.

So they send in Robert Irvine to clean up the mess. To teach them finances, how to cook, how to train a staff, how to keep a cleaning schedule.

1 Timothy is a bit like that.

READ PASSAGE

Body

Passage Focus

We'll introduce the book. The characters. The reason for the letter. Then we'll look at love, which is the aim of God's instruction. For those disappointed in my lack of discussion about myths and genealogies, we'll cover the nature of the false teaching next week.

Paul (1:1)

"an apostle" = one of a select group of men at the church's founding. The 12 appointed by Jesus plus a few others. At least Barnabas, James, Matthias, and Paul (Acts 1:26; 14:14; Gal 1:19). Apostles personally saw the risen Christ (1 Cor 9:1), they were personally appointed by Jesus to that office (Mark 1:14-15; Acts 26:15-19), they were gifted to perform signs and wonders (2 Cor 12:12), and they were tasked with proclaiming the gospel in Israel and beyond (Matt 28:18-20; Acts 1:8 (see 1:2-3); 9:15-16). Paul's practice was to proclaim the gospel, establish local churches from those who believed, to appoint elders in those churches (Acts 14:23), and to leave the ongoing work to those elders.

Evidently Paul had God-given authority over those churches he founded.

Paul's situation

Paul isn't with Timothy in Ephesus. Perhaps he's in Macedonia (1:3)? This is likely after the book of Acts. Paul arrives in Rome approximately 60 AD for two year house arrest (Acts 28:11-31). Paul's released in 62 AD. For approximately a three year period, not recorded in Acts, Paul traveled to places like Macedonia (1:3) and perhaps Spain (Rom 15:24, 28). Around 65/66 AD, Paul is imprisoned once again and executed. In 2 Timothy 4:6-8, Paul expects to be executed. Paul's free and between imprisonments.

Timothy

Paul's writing to Timothy who's stationed in Ephesus (1:3). The New Testament says a lot about Timothy.

Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. A disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek. ² He was well spoken of by the brothers at Lystra and Iconium. ³ Paul wanted

Timothy to accompany him, and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek. – Acts 16:1-3

Timothy was a disciple with a good reputation in the local church. His mother was a Jewish Christian. His father was a Greek and apparently a non-Christian. Paul saw something in Timothy. So Timothy joined him on missionary travels.

Paul frequently sent Timothy to local churches.

And having sent into Macedonia two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, he himself [Paul] stayed in Asia for a while. – Acts 19:22

That is why I sent you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church. – 1 Corinthians 4:17

I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be cheered by news of you. – Philippians 2:19

Therefore when we could bear it no longer, we were willing to be left behind at Athens alone, ² and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's coworker in the gospel of Christ, to establish and exhort you in your faith, ³ that no one be moved by these afflictions. For you yourselves know that we are destined for this. – 1 Thessalonians 3:1-3

Timothy visited local churches to give Paul updates. To make sure the church was in order. To encourage the church to endure persecution.

Timothy is functioning like the Senior Pastor of Ephesus. But that's not really what Timothy is. He wasn't voted in by the congregation. Timothy is more like an apostolic delegate. He's not an apostle himself. But he's sent by the apostle Paul to take care of apostle business.

Timothy's like someone sent in by corporate to fix a failing restaurant.

Purpose

Why was 1 Timothy written?

- 1) To put an end to false teaching.

As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, – 1:3

- 2) To get the local church in line with God's design.

I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, ¹⁵ if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of truth. – 1 Timothy 3:14-15

How Timothy should lead. How they should do church.

Situation

Interestingly, Paul predicted Timothy's situation. In Acts 20, Paul previously addressed the Ephesian elders (20:17). Here's a bit of what he said.

Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. ²⁹ I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; ³⁰ and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. ³¹ Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish everyone with tears. – Acts 20:28-31

From the outside, fierce wolves (false teachers) will enter the church. From the inside, “*men speaking twisted things*” will arise. Likely the elders themselves. In 1 Timothy 5, sinning elders are discussed.

False teachers corrupting the church. The church distracted from its purpose.

grace = generically unmerited favor; specifically probably God’s empowering grace for the task at hand.

mercy = because God is affected by our pitiful condition, he acts for us to help us in that condition.

peace = peace with God, inner peace in his soul, and God will work peace in the local church body as Timothy follows Paul’s direction.

Timothy’s not alone. God’s with Timothy. God’s working in Timothy. God’s working for Timothy.

This is who God is for us. He compassionately sees what we’re going through. He empowers us for the task at hand. He works peace in and around us.

Point 1: Learning is for loving (1:5)

The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. – 1:5

The idea is the purpose of Bible instruction (charge) is love. Timothy instructs God’s people with God’s word so that love will result. Why the sermon? Why Sunday school? To provoke love. We teach for love. We learn for love. Learning isn’t for learning’s sake.

Whose love are we talking about?

The love produced in believers.

Love for who?

*And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, "Which commandment is the most important of all?"²⁹ Jesus answered, "The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.'³⁰ And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.'³¹ The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." – **Mark 12:28-31***

Love for God. Love for God’s being, attributes. His knowledge, mercy, power, etc. Love for God’s actions. Creation, exodus, cross, resurrection, etc. Love for God’s promises. Forgiveness of sins, eternal life, indwelling Holy Spirit. Love for God’s word. We learn about God so that we’ll love him. Learning who God is enlarges our love for him!

We learn God’s word to increase our love for God.

And love for people. Why do I love people? Because I first love God. I love God so I love his word so I love what he says about loving my neighbor.

Who is my neighbor?

1) My biological family.

Or the family you were adopted into if that’s you.

2) My church family.

3) My actual neighbors.

4) My co-workers.

- 5) My classmates.
- 6) My teachers.
- 7) My basketball team.
- 8) My ballet class.
- 9) My home school group.

We learn God's word so that we'll love these people.

There's another group of people Jesus commands us to love. Our enemies.

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'⁴⁴ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, – Matthew 5:43-44

Yes, we learn God's word so that we'll love those who mistreat us.

One of the songs in the hymnal that we sing frequently is 429: **"They'll Know We Are Christians."** How? By our love. This is based on John 13:35.

By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." – John 13:35

That song's about love in the local church. We learn God's word so we'll thrive together in loving community.

What exactly is this love we sing about?

In our culture love is feelings and lust. Falling in and out of love. Love involves feelings. But love is more than feelings.

I'm going to attempt to spell out love as clearly as possible. The application is, as you're hearing love described, you should be asking yourself, is this me? Do I have blind spots? Am I a loving person? Specific people should be coming to mind. Am I loving this person well? What does love look like in this relationship?

Do some self-examination as I state what love is.

- 1) Love is commitment.

In 1 Corinthians 13, *"love is patient...it is not irritable or resentful...Love bears all things...endures all things."*

Bearing with one another means putting up with each other's faults. Giving people time to learn and repent. Being merciful. Forgiving. Isn't this how God's dealt with us sinners?

Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. – Ephesians 4:32

Love is an ongoing commitment to the one loved. This is God's love for us: *"I will never leave you nor forsake you"* (Heb 13:5).

- 2) Love is action.

In 1 Corinthians 13, *"love is...kind."*

But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?¹⁸ Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth. – 1 John 3:17-18

God's love for us resulted in action.

In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. – 1 John 4:10

Jesus died in our place so that we could have forgiveness of sins and eternal life. That's love.

3) Love is affection.

Love is treasuring something in our heart. The Bible states this one negatively.

And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil. – John 3:19

Love for sin prevents belief in Jesus. Our affections can be misplaced.

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. – 1 John 2:15

Love involves the heart. Loving God “with all your heart” means treasuring him with all our being.

God wants us to treasure our brothers and sisters too.

4) Love is submission to God’s word.

In 1 Corinthians 13, love “does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth.”

Love never affirms sin. Love always stands with God’s word. It’s never loving to condone sin. It’s loving to encourage faith and repentance and obedience.

How does love thrive?

So the aim of our teaching is love. The goal of learning is love.

Paul gives us three characteristics that make love thrive. Lacking these characteristics we hinder love.

As we consider the three ways love thrives, do a little more self-examination. Is there something that’s restricting the flow of love in my life?

1) “a pure heart”

“pure” = literally clean, free from dirt and filth. Cleaning your hands after doing an oil change before you pass the rolls at dinner. Spiritually innocent of wrong, not defiled by sin.

Meaning a heart (thinking, attitudes, desires = heart) unstained by sin. Love is impaired when our thought life is corrupted with the lies of culture and Satan. Love is impaired when our desires are motivated by selfish gain, revenge, etc.

Love flourishes when we think like God and when we want the things God says we should want.

2) “a good conscience”

Good meaning morally good, agreeing with God’s word. Conscience meaning our moral sensitivity, our ability to distinguish between right and wrong. We’re born into the world with a conscience whereby we know right from wrong. When we sin, we feel bad about it. Intuitively we know something’s wrong. Lying to a parent. Stealing something. Punching a sibling.

Through sin, the heart can be hardened and the conscience seared. Our moral sensitivity can decay through increasing acceptance of sin and Satan’s lies. A seared conscience is one explanation for the ills of our nation like school shootings.

Love flourishes when our moral sensitivity agrees with God’s word.

3) “a sincere faith”

Faith meaning trust in God’s promises. Sincere meaning not fake, not pretend, not an actor on a stage, genuine. Sincere meaning I truly believe everything God says is right and good. If I truly believe what Jesus says about loving my enemy is

true, I will be inclined to love my enemy. If I truly believe what Paul says about love in 1 Corinthians 13, I will be inclined to bear with people.

Love flourishes when we actually believe God's promises are true.

Non-Christian

What have you learned today? God wants local churches. God wants organized religion. God wants local churches shaped by his word, the Bible. God cares when local churches deviate from God's instructions. God is against manmade spirituality.

God saves people to love. To love him. To love those in their church. To love their neighbor. To love their enemy. We learn God's word to become loving people.

Love flows from faith. That's confidence in God's promises. Faith begins with trusting in Jesus for the forgiveness of sins. That I'm a sinner and Jesus died to take away my sins so I could be forgiven. If you trust Jesus, you can have confidence he'll never abandon you.

Conclusion

God bears with his people. He calls us to bear with each other. God does us good. He calls us to do good to each other.