

THE FIRST EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY:

An Expanded Paraphrase

I. SALUTATION (Ch. 1: 1-2)

To Timothy, my true-born son in the faith, this letter comes from Paul, apostle of Christ Jesus by command of God our Saviour and Christ Jesus our hope. Grace, mercy and peace be yours from God our Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

II. PAUL'S CHARGE TO TIMOTHY (Ch. 1: 3-20)

(a) *Disquieting trends at Ephesus* (Ch. 1: 3-11)

You know how I encouraged you to stay on in Ephesus when I was setting out for Macedonia. My intention was that you should charge certain people not to teach things at variance with the truth and not to be taken up with myths and interminable genealogies: for things like these give rise to disputes instead of serving the stewardship of God which belongs to faith. The purpose of this "charge" is to call forth heavenly love out of a pure heart, a good conscience and faith which is free from insincerity. Some have failed to attain this purpose, and have turned aside to indulge in empty debate. Their aim is to be teachers of the law, but they have no idea what they are talking and dogmatizing about.

As regards the law, it is good, we know, if it is properly used. Law, indeed, is not laid down for righteous people, but for those who are lawless and insubordinate, for impious sinners, unholy and profane, parricides and matricides, murderers, fornicators, pederasts, slave-dealers, liars, oath-breakers, and those who practise whatever else is contrary to that wholesome teaching which is imparted by the gospel of the glory of the blessed God—the gospel with which I have been entrusted.

(b) *Paul's commission* (Ch. 1: 12-17)

Yes, I thank my Enabler, Christ Jesus our Lord, that He counted me worthy of His trust and appointed me to His service, although I once blasphemed His name, violent persecutor that I was. Yet he showed me mercy, for I acted thus through ignorance in my unbelief; indeed, our Lord's grace overflowed the more abundantly to me together with His own faithfulness and love.

Here is a trustworthy saying; it deserves to be accepted by all men: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners"—sinners, among whom I claim the first place! But He showed me mercy for this reason, that I should have the first place as an object-lesson of the unlimited forbearance of Jesus Christ, and that thus I

might serve as an encouragement and an example for all who would hereafter have faith in Him and so gain eternal life. Now to the King of the ages, the immortal and invisible One who alone is God, be honour and glory for ever and ever! Amen.

(c) *Timothy's commission* (Ch. 1: 18-20)

This, then, is the charge which I am laying upon you, Timothy my son, in line with the prophecies which were once uttered over you. Let the memory of those utterances encourage you to wage a noble warfare; hold fast your faith and keep your conscience clear. Some have rejected the voice of conscience and have wrecked their faith. I think, for instance, of Hymenaeus and Alexander; I have handed that pair over to Satan, to teach them not to blaspheme.

III. CHURCH ORDER (Ch. 2: 1-5: 25)

(a) *Public Prayer* (Ch. 2: 1-15)

First of all, then, make sure that you offer up supplications, prayers, entreaties, and thanksgivings on behalf of all men—not forgetting reigning monarchs and all in high places. So shall we live quiet and peaceful lives, pious and honest lives withal. This is a good and acceptable thing in the sight of God our Saviour. His desire, you see, is for all mankind to receive His salvation and come to know the truth. There is one God, as we all know; there is likewise one Mediator between God and man, and He is Himself man—Christ Jesus. He gave Himself as a ransom for all men; this is the testimony which was due to be borne when the proper time came. This is the testimony, too, of which I have been appointed herald and apostle (it is the truth and no falsehood that I speak)—to instruct Gentiles in faith and truth.

So then, my desire is that the men pray in every place,¹ and the hands which they hold up in prayer must be clean and holy; they must be free from anger and quarrelling. Similarly women should deck themselves in seemly clothes, and their deportment should be reverent and chaste. Their adornment should not consist in elaborately braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive dress, but rather in works of charity. This is what is fitting for women who profess true religion. Let a woman receive instruction in a quiet and completely submissive spirit. I do not permit a woman to give instruction or assert authority over men; she should remain quiet. It was Adam who was fashioned first; Eve came second. Besides, it was not Adam who was beguiled; it was the woman who was beguiled and caught in transgression. But women will be brought safely through childbirth if they remain

¹ I.e., place of worship, meeting place.

steadfast in faith and love, in holiness and chastity.

(b) *Elders and other ministers* (Ch. 3: 1-13)

Here is a trustworthy saying: "Any one whose ambition is to care for the people of God desires a good work". The man who exercises pastoral leadership must have an unspotted reputation; he must have only one wife; he must be sober and orderly in his way of life, hospitable and capable of giving instruction. He should not be given to drink or subject to a violent temper; he should rather be peaceable and ready to give way, and free from love of money. He must control his own household properly; his children should be obedient and well-behaved. If a man cannot control his own family, how is he going to govern God's household? He must not be a novice; a novice might give himself airs and so fall into the sin which was the undoing of the devil. Besides, and especially, he must have a good reputation in the world outside; otherwise he will become a public reproach, ensnared in the trap the devil has set for him.

Those who perform any ministry in the church must similarly be decent in their behaviour. They must not be deceitful or over-addicted to wine, nor should they be impelled by the base motive of material gain. They must preserve the faith as God revealed it, with a conscience free from all stain. They should be tested first; then let them engage in their ministry without fear of reproach. Similarly ministering women should be dignified in their conduct, free from any tendency to spread scandal, sober in their habits and marked by thorough fidelity. Men who minister in the church should have only one wife and must control their children and households properly. Those who have discharged their ministry will win a good standing for themselves and great liberty of speech in the Christian faith.

(c) *The Church's Confession* (Ch. 3: 14-16)

As I write this, I hope to come soon in person; but I write as I do so that, if I am hindered, you may know how people should behave themselves in God's house, for it is the church of the living God, the pillar and mainstay of the truth. And without dispute it is a mighty mystery that our religion unfolds, the mystery which was:

Manifested in flesh,
 Vindicated in spirit;
 Witnessed by angels,
 Proclaimed among the nations;
 Believed in the world,
 Received up in glory.

[To be continued