

The Recipient of 1 Timothy

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[0:00] Well, in our first lesson, we focused on the author of the book of 1 Timothy, a man by the name of the Apostle Paul.

! And we did get through the first verse, and tonight we're going to look at the recipient of the letter. And it probably wouldn't be hard to figure out who 1 Timothy was written to.

It was a young man by the name of Timothy, and Paul actually starts out to Timothy, my true child, in the faith. And now we've covered half of verse 2 already, and I'm just barely into this.

The name Timothy, by the way, means one who honors God. A nice name. He derived his name from his mother and his grandmother, working in concert together, no doubt.

Those ladies were Eunice and Lois. They were devout Jews who became followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. And they were chiefly responsible for teaching the scriptures to Timothy when he was a child.

[1:31] Thank goodness for mothers and grandmothers. The first person I remember ever telling me about Jesus was my departed mother, my dear mother.

And that would serve him as a father. And that would serve him as a great foundation. According to the book of Acts, his father was a pagan Greek. He may in fact have died early.

We're not sure. So here's Timothy. He is the son of a Jewish woman and has a Greek father. And that would give Timothy some special access to both cultures.

Sort of like Paul, you know, he was a Jew, but he was a Roman citizen. And it gave him access.

Actually preserved his life a few times with the Roman centurions and Roman soldiers.

Timothy is identified as Paul's disciple. He's referred to as Paul's friend, his co-worker, and his spiritual son.

[2:36] Now, by the time this book was written, most theologians and Bible scholars believe that Timothy had been with Paul maybe as much as 15 years. He stayed in Berea with Silas after the persecution forced Paul to travel to Athens.

He later joined Paul there. He journeyed with Paul to Corinth and was sent by Paul to Macedonia. He was with Paul when they returned to Jerusalem.

So he was well-traveled. For further insight into Timothy, it is instructive that he was with Paul when that great apostle wrote Romans, 2 Corinthians, Philipians, Colossians, both letters to the Thessalonians and Philemon.

How did you like that as a treasure trove? You know, to be able to sit at the feet while Paul's writing those through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. He was also used by Paul to calm frayed nerves when disputes arose in various churches.

Timothy was sort of the peacemaker. And some of those churches were the one at Corinth, Thessalonica, Philippi, and Ephesus. The word true here, true son, is instructive.

[4:03] It is a Greek word. I'm not even going to worry about it. And it refers to one born legitimately to a married couple.

There is another Greek word that would refer to one born as illegitimately, out of wedlock. Paul declares that Timothy was a genuine son in the faith.

And we are speaking here spiritually speaking. He was not his physical birth son. Timothy was a genuine child of the faith as opposed to Demas.

We'll be hearing about that guy. He was an evil unbeliever. He was an illegitimate son. A few of us in here are knowledgeable of the Greek language.

The only persons I can think of, of course, is Brother Don. Jonathan, I'm sure. Shane, I'm sure. Anthony is our man. I'm not knowledgeable.

[5:12] Everything I learned about Greek, I learned from Mike. And I took it all from him. I wondered where it went. I took every bit of it from him. If we were versed in Greek, we would be impressed of Paul's use of the word *technon*, child.

Technon speaks of Paul giving birth to Timothy spiritually. He is his son in the sphere of faith. Very, very, very close relationship.

I don't know that Paul had a close relationship with anyone. Paphroditus, you know, he helped him. But this is a special relationship. Now, we know this of Timothy.

He is an example of a true follower of Christ. That means he's an example for all of us in here. He is an example of a true believer.

Paul, and obviously by the inerrant power of the indwelling spirit, is telling the church at Ephesus that Timothy is authentic.

[6:20] Therefore, his example should be followed. That's quite a seal of approval on the great apostle Paul coming from him. And really the same rings true in our ears today as we study this great pastor, Timothy, and Paul's counsel to him.

That hasn't been voided. It's good counsel today. Okay. Dr. MacArthur lists five characteristics in this opening portion of the letter that marked Timothy out as a true child that was in the faith.

And we're going to examine each of these tonight because we're looking at the recipient of the letter. One is saving faith, continuing obedience, humble service, sound doctrine, and courageous conviction.

And by the way, those are the same spiritual characteristics that each of us should possess and display in our daily walk with the Lord Jesus Christ.

The first one we'll look at is saving faith. And of course, that's very basic. Very basic. You cannot be a true child in the faith unless the Lord Jesus Christ has saved you.

[7:42] You can't be a true child of the faith if you're not in the faith. Pretty basic. And this is so vitally important that the apostle Paul testifies to the right standing of Timothy throughout the letter.

By right standing, and I think it bleeds over into 2 Timothy, that he had right standing. By that I mean that Timothy was one with Christ, having been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb.

Clearly, he is a genuine child of the faith. Paul goes on to refer to Timothy as, Again, qualities we should all display and have.

Those qualities, by the way, serve as a powerful witness to the fact that Timothy was obviously a saved man, and the fact is that you cannot be a true child of faith without those, without salvation. It just doesn't work. As to the particular circumstances of Timothy's salvation, the scriptures are silent. I used to have a rule that said if the scriptures are silent, we should be, but I'm going to break that.

[9:12] It may have been due to the ministry of Paul and Barnabas when they visited Timothy's hometown at Lystra, but I've got to tell you, he had a foundation with his mom and grandmother.

You know, I don't know how far they took him. He may well, the Lord may well have saved him under their tutoring him in the home. But if it occurred with Paul and Barnabas, it most likely would have been the first missionary journey.

And we learn about that in the 14th chapter of Acts, which will be coming in in this room on Sunday morning in a few weeks. We learn there that Paul healed, or actually God healed through Paul, a lame man.

On seeing this healing, the people descended upon Paul and Barnabas, declared them to be gods, and tried to sacrifice to them.

Paul and Barnabas were appalled. They tore their clothes, screaming that they were men just like those in the crowd. I've told you before, Abraham Lincoln, when he went to Richmond, the former slaves were bowing down to him.

[10:26] He got out of his, you know, buggy, was picking them up and said, don't bow to a man, never do that, you know. I had a kid bow to me in Nigeria because he wanted money, and we were in a car moving, or I would have done the same thing.

I would have stopped and picked him up and said, don't bow to me. Just shortly after they declared Paul and Barnabas gods, the Jews became infuriated with Paul.

They dragged him outside the city gates where they stoned him and left him for dead. And I've often wondered whether he may have died.

I mean, they really put a licking on him. And did he resurrect, or was he just injured? It is very possible that Timothy, his mother Eunice, and his grandmother, Lois, were aware of these events. Perhaps they came to know the Lord through them. And we do know that Paul returned to Lystra on his second missionary journey, and that's where he chose Timothy to minister alongside him.

[11:38] Timothy was placed in the church of Ephesus where he ministered to the congregation. Now, the congregation of Ephesus was just like any other congregation in the world.

It was made up of saved and unsaved, wheat and tares. Timothy was placed in the church. We do know that many in the church had fallen back into the world, giving evidence that their faith was not genuine.

They were described as those who had gone astray from the faith. They had not been saved by Christ. They were separated from him, and they went back into the world.

Timothy's genuine faith, though, stood out when compared to the false faith of many in Ephesus. Timothy stood out.

So to be a true child of the faith, you must possess genuine saving faith. Well, that's just a start.

[12:43] Secondly, another characteristic, continuing obedience. Continuum obedience.

Obedience has been for more than a few generations the missing ingredient within the church.

And it is certainly a missing ingredient in the church's plan of salvation or men's plan of salvation. And please note that I said the church's plan of salvation.

I didn't say the Lord's plan. In actuality, the New Testament very clearly teaches that the very centerpiece of genuine salvation is a life pattern of obedience.

I didn't say perfection. It's direction. If it's perfection, I'm in deep trouble. Deep trouble. But it is a direction of our life, a life pattern.

Consider some of these verses. If you love me, you will keep my commandments. If you abide in my word, then you are true disciples of mine. We are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

[14:01] And these are just a sampling, but it should be abundantly clear that obedience follows true salvation.

We're obedient. We strive to be obedient. Well, what happens if we fail? What happens if we sin? Well, we confess. We confess. That's part of obedience.

We're obedient to confess our sins. He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us of all our unrighteousness. Look at 1 John, 1 chapter. Timothy's life mirrored obedience.

And I can't imagine you'd be around the Apostle Paul very long if he didn't, quite frankly. When Paul returned from his second missionary journey, he found some very good news in Lystra.

He found that Timothy, according to Acts 16, 2, was well spoken of by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium. So his reputation was going out as a genuine man of faith, a true follower of the Lord Jesus Christ and one obedient to the commands of the Bible and of Christ.

[15:25] Well, there were others at Ephesus that did not enjoy such a favorable comment. But these were the ones that did not have a pattern of continual obedience.

And Paul wrote of those. He wrote of people who rejected a life of faith, who did not enjoy a good conscience.

He made comments about them like they had suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith. Paul knew about shipwreck. He'd been in some. And he equated the unbelievers who walked away as having suffered shipwreck.

We'll see if that will stay. They had started on course. Things looked good. Somehow they got diverted.

They never reached safe harbor. And I dare say everybody in this room has known someone like that. We've had them in this church at least since 1980 that I know of.

[16:38] And Mike, you were here before I was. They've come and gone. Remember, salvation belongs to those who continue to the end.

He who continues to the end shall be saved. That can be a disturbing verse, quite frankly, if you're not careful. And I always have to be careful on this point because invariably I get it wrong and I have to back up and correct it.

But salvation is not a reward for continuance. Continuance is the evidence that salvation was genuine.

And, you know, I'm working through a thing right now. You know, how do you have assurance of salvation? By the way, I'm not going to charge for this part. This is just free. How do you have evidence of salvation?

Well, over here, the true believer, I'll abbreviate, is justified. That's a moment of salvation. A legal declaration by God, you're without sin.

[17:55] You may not feel it. You may not experience it. But positionally in God's mind, sinless. And that puts the genuine believer on a road of sanctification.

It will ultimately end in glorification when we get to glory. How many people have you ever met, though, they don't want anything to do with the Bible, prayer, church.

I've got to meet my own family, folks. And their assurance is based right here. Well, I did the following. They always use the personal pronoun I or me.

I did this. I did that. I know that that happened because I did it, and I was there, and I was justified. You want assurance? Then examine yourself as to where you're at on that road.

Amen. Because whom he justifies, he sanctifies. So I want to ask, okay, where are you at now? Let's remember something.

[19:00] We all travel at different speeds. Don't criticize somebody because they're lagging behind. And if you're lagging behind, don't criticize somebody that's way ahead.

We go at different speeds, but the operative word there is we're going. We're being sanctified. We're being recreated in the image of Christ. But I've known too many people that this is the end and not the beginning, and there's a real question as to whether it was legitimate.

I say the best way to know that is where are you at in the sanctification process? I fully believe that. So how do we deal with those?

They attend church. I mean, I remember a time you joined our church. If you came three Sundays, we'd put you in charge of bus ministry, you know. You'd be teaching a class after four weeks. I mean, you know, how do you deal with those who attend church, come forward, take the pastor by the right hand, give assurance that they are one with Christ, stir the waters of baptism, and then fall away.

Now, admittedly, there can be people, you know, through sin and life's pressures and death and the love of it, but I'm talking about these people that just say, that's not for me. That's not for me.

[20:26] And that term fall away, by the way, means they abandon the faith. As one person told me, I'm looking for something more. There's got to be something more than just Jesus.

Well, you look long and hard. As another, as a woman told me one time, I got into line dancing. It was more fun than church. Okay, well, at the great white throne, I'm sure the Lord will be very receptive to that, you know.

Fall away. They abandon the faith. We deal with those who abandon the faith by applying Scripture. And, you know, I've got a lady at the police department.

Devout, saved, loves the Lord. Husband walked out on her and moved in with some woman.

I mean, it's just absolutely horrid. And she says, and you know, he's saved. He's a Christian. I said, how do you know that? And she said, because I was there when he did something here.

[21:39] And I tell her, it didn't work. It didn't catch on. It didn't catch on. I'm not his judge. But, you know, it didn't work. So how do we deal with him?

Well, let's appeal to John. 1 John 2:19. You know it by heart, I'm sure. They went out from us, but they were not really of us.

For if they had been of us, they would have remained with us. But they went out so that it would be shown that they all are not of us.

They left. They abandoned the faith. And they went out. And I'll tell you that John is very clear. They did not have continuing obedience to the Lord.

Timothy had an unwavering commitment to obedience. He's our example.

[22:45] He stands for all time as example to all who believe when it comes to the matter of obedience. He was part of a church that was riddled with unbelieving deserters.

But he himself was a persevering believer. And he persevered in the face of great challenge. Great, great challenge. Another thing that designated Timothy's service to the Lord that we should also have is he had a humble service.

He was a humble man. A true child in the faith has a servant heart. Has a servant heart.

I remember being in a meeting with some high executives at Phil's Trump Company when I was the head of security there. They were talking about leadership. And who do we look for in leadership? And we need leaders. I said, well, you know, the greatest man that ever lived, Jesus Christ, said that let him who's going to be your leader be your servant. The greatest leaders are those who are willing to serve.

[23 : 54] They looked at me like I was from Mars. Man, I don't think I ever made another meeting. That was the end of it. I love, though, I was going to actually write a book on the leadership style of Jesus, and it got written.

Often happens to me. I've written a lot of books in my head, Shane. But a guy wrote it, and he pointed out that Jesus turned the corporate world upside down when you think about it. He turned the Roman Empire upside down, too, but he turned the corporate world upside down. We need a servant's heart. Paul said of the Thessalonians that they turned from idols to serve the living and true God.

Now, I know none of us have any idols, right, like television and football. I'm not hitched to football, as long as OU's not playing.

We need to be like the Thessalonians, turn from idols, serve the living and true God. As Christians, we are to serve, we are to live lives of service to our sovereign God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

[25 : 10] True salvation is marked by a servant's heart. How many of y'all remember ten shekels in a shirt? The pastor hadn't heard it yet.

You remember that line in there? And he said, when you can tell Jesus I'm going to serve you for the rest of my life, even at the end if I go to hell, because you're worthy.

You're worthy of my service. And I thought, wow. I've never heard it put that way. Never. Timothy was a humble servant.

And he remained at this very difficult post at Ephesus. He may have been no more than, you know, 19, 20, 23, when he began serving the Lord with Paul, probably a late teenager.

And he's now serving with the great apostle Paul with Barnabas. Their reputations were growing. They weren't that well known. Although they wanted to kill him in Israel.

[26 : 13] He went through the rite of circumcision to be accepted along with Paul. After serving many years, Paul gave him a magnificent title.

He called Timothy my fellow worker. Can you imagine? This is Paul, my fellow worker, Timothy. What a title.

I mean, you'd have to be really careful that your heart didn't burst with pride, you know, in something like that. There were a lot of people, though, in Ephesus that had no desire to enter into humble service.

Some in the congregation sought leadership roles, though they were recent converts, if saved at all. If saved at all.

I always think back to my dear father-in-law. We witnessed to them for years, and at age 65, they came to know the Lord. And he was in a small country church, Baptist church, just a little old bitty thing on Lake Whitney.

[27 : 20] About two years later, three years later, he calls me. About a year later, he calls me and says, I'm a deacon. I'm going, oh, my gosh. He just came to know the Lord. And two years later, he calls me and says, I'm chairman of deacons.

What do I do? I'm going, oh, my goodness. But they had nobody else. You know, they didn't have, they had four guys in there that were able to serve.

But there were a lot in Ephesus who didn't want to enter into humble service, yet they were seeking leadership roles. Ephesus, like I guess every church in Asia Minor, were also plagued with false teachers.

And I'll tell you, if you ever go, just go through the New Testament thinking in terms of false teachers. Paul warns about it. Peter warns about it. John warns about it. Jude warns about it. It's everywhere. And they had false teachers in Ephesus, and those false teachers had to be dealt with. But there were also elders there, and they were serving with a willing and humble heart.

[28 : 25] So Timothy was not without some support. Now, Timothy was well received because of his humility, because of his willingness to serve, even in these difficult circumstances.

The true believers knew this is a hard post. This is a hard church, a hard congregation. Timothy was unselfish, and he was sacrificial.

He was a sacrificial apostle himself. Well, there's another trait he had, one that we should have, and that is that he was strong in sound doctrine.

Or he was sound in strong doctrine. He can go either way, I guess. But he had sound doctrine. We live in a time, guys, when there are many who discount the necessity of sound doctrine.

I remember very well a pastor in our town telling our pastor, not Don, Mike, because Mike asked him, he said, what about your doctrine?

[29 : 33] He said, we don't preach doctrine. We don't talk about doctrine in my church. Doctrine is divisive, and it never comes up. I want you to remember something.

Sound doctrine is the glue that holds the church together. What we believe about the Lord, granted in the Word of God, is what holds us together. It's what links us all.

It's what links us all. Doctrine is what we believe about God, Christ, the Spirit, and the Word. That's what doctrine is. A true child of the faith will practice and adhere to sound doctrine.

Apostle John, again, captures this idea. He who is of God hears the words of God for this reason. You don't hear them because you are not of God.

I was like John. He didn't miss words. John 8, 47. He who hears God hears the word of God. A true child hears. A false child does not hear.

[30 : 40] But it is, of course, more than hearing. As James said, it's doing. That's really where the rubber meets the road. It is doing. Hearing and doing nothing is sin.

And it doesn't get you anywhere. It doesn't get you anywhere. But the true child of God devotes himself to the teachings of the apostles.

True child. Timothy was both a student and a teacher of sound doctrine. And I don't think you can be a teacher of sound doctrine if you're not a student of sound doctrine.

You've got to be grounded. Paul described Timothy as a man who was nourished on the words of faith and of sound doctrine. And because of this, Paul came along.

And we'll see this in the second book. He came along and encouraged Timothy and said, Timothy, preach the word. Teach the word.

[31 : 45] That's the pastor's calling. Preach the word. But again, Ephesus was plagued with false teachers. Some had already turned aside.

Others, unfortunately, remained in the church. They were the cancer within. They infected the church with false doctrine. Paul actually singled out and disciplined two of them, Hymenaeus and Alexander.

Diane loved this. Paul said that false teaching of men such as these was fit only for old women. Of course, I read that to her to get her. I thought her pulse rate had gotten a little low.

Paul didn't say that. He did. There was nothing false about Timothy. He was sound. And Paul trusted him, in the words of 1 Timothy chapter 6, to give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, and to teaching.

To teaching of what we do here, by the way. Something else that Timothy had that we need, he had a very courageous conviction. We live in a day when Christianity is mocked and attacked at nearly every level.

[33 : 13] The question we need to ask ourselves inwardly is, do I have the courage of my convictions? Strong convictions are not a given.

They are developed over time with spiritual maturity and increasing knowledge of the Word of God. We've got to be in the Word.

These gifts are essential to carrying on an effective ministry. And here again, I'll plug in. Let me remind you, if you're having thoughts that, well, I'm not in ministry, banish those.

Every follower of Christ is a minister at some level. You may be ministering to coworkers, family members, your own children, your grandchildren, but you are a minister if you are in Christ.

And Timothy may not have voiced it quite this way, but Timothy was a warrior. He knew he was in a war. He knew he was in a battle. And he was a warrior.

[34 : 17] Paul had told him to go after the men who were preaching strange doctrine. And that's essential today. When is it? Dr. MacArthur, it's pretty quick coming up if it's not already on us, but strange fire.

He's preaching. It's like the shepherd's conference. And he's doing strange fire. A look at the charismatic theology of our day.

And it sold out in a week. 4,000 seats sold out in a week. And Timothy was a warrior. He was instructed by Paul to fight the good fight. He was told to guard what was entrusted in him. And all of those instructions are related to combat. Those are the tools of spiritual warfare.

And spiritual warfare is all around us. You remember the prophet in the Old Testament? He prayed that the servant could see what was really going on. He opened his eyes to what the spiritual reality was.

[35 : 22] Can you imagine if we knew spiritually what was really going on? I mean, good angels, bad angels, demons. I mean, it's all there. The church has always had those who compromise.

John Piper has said on more than one occasion that the church is full of wimps. In fact, he was in a meeting with John MacArthur and Mark Dever and R.C. Sproul.

And he used that word. And he said, you all know what that means. And John MacArthur said, did he spend 45 minutes telling us what we already knew? But John Piper said, the church is full of wimps.

Timothy was a courageous man of deep convictions. And unfortunately, many in his flock were not. As compromising men, they would have been disqualified from serving as elders, deacons, and teachers.

That would be grounds for disqualification. Some of the young widows were in danger of turning their backs on Christ because when they'd lost a husband, they were willing to become unevenly yoked to an unbeliever.

[36 : 36] And how many times do we see that in the church today? Through divorce or death. And a woman, all of a sudden, you know, she's married an unbeliever. And I've never had one tell me that, but I'm going to win him.

I'm going to win him. And I've never known one to do it. You know? Some people in the church had money problems. That all sounds very contemporary. This was the church at Ephesus.

In spite of all this, Timothy maintained his convictions even when the cost was high.

Those convictions, in fact, probably cost him his life. Now, the scriptures don't tell us that, but tradition tells us that Timothy was martyred in Ephesus about 30 years after Paul's letter.

And that could well be true. Tradition says he was executed for opposing the worship of the false goddess Diana.

[37 : 43] And her temple was there. Finally, Paul gives us the salutation. We made it to the chapter 1, verse 2b.

Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

We could go several weeks on that. We won't, but we could. Grace and peace appear in every one of Paul's 13 epistles.

In his two letters to Timothy, he adds mercy. So here we have mercy, and we'll have it in 2 Timothy. Being the pastor in Ephesus, Timothy was in dire need of all three of those blessings.

When he was pastoring in Ephesus, you need grace, mercy, and peace. Grace is God's undeserved favor bestowed upon whom those he chooses to do so.

[38 : 49] He grants grace. By grace, we receive love and forgiveness that frees us from the consequences of our sins. Those the Father placed upon his dear Son.

Those sins were not just, oh yeah, it's okay. He puts them on Jesus. Mercy frees us from the misery that accompanies our sin.

And even as Christians, you ever sinning, you feel as, you could sit on the edge of a dime and dangle your legs off of it. By the way, that's Charlie Graves that told me that.

And, you know, we need mercy. But let me tell you this. Peace is the result of grace and mercy. When you have grace and when you have mercy, you can have peace. And I would suggest only then can you have peace.

[39 : 51] Peace is both harmony with God and tranquility of the soul. Someone asked me at work, you know, you don't seem like, do you hold stress in? Because you just kind of, and I always give them the same answer.

You know, I've read the end of the book. I know how it's going to come out. What book are you talking about? You know, I've read the end of the book. Paul links the names of the Father and the Son, stressing their connection and their deity.

The Son, of course, is co-equal and co-eternal with both Father and Spirit. Part of the struggle in Ephesus was their rejection of the deity of Christ.

And that was going to become a common theme as the Gnostics arose and others, that they challenged the deity of Christ. And Timothy had to fight that fight.

Timothy had to fight that fight. And I'm sure there are many today, I know there are many today, who reject the deity of Christ. I've had people tell me, oh, he's a great man, man of love, good philosopher. God in human flesh?

[40:57] I don't think so. He was. He was. He's divine. So, 41 minutes and 59 seconds in, we finished our introduction to the letter that Paul wrote to his dear son in the faith, Timothy.

Thank you.