

"A True Child of God" - 1 Timothy 1:1-2

This morning, we begin a journey through the books that have been called the "Pastoral Epistles". First Timothy, Second Timothy and Titus are personal letters from the Apostle Paul to younger and less experienced pastors. They have been preserved for us in the canon of scripture by the Holy Spirit, and as with the rest of scripture, they contain much valuable information, a great deal of important doctrine for every true believer.

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

Timothy is an interesting fellow. We first encounter him in the book of Acts.

Then he came to Derbe and Lystra. And behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a certain Jewish woman who believed, but his father was Greek. He was well spoken of by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium. Paul wanted to have him go on with him. And he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in that region, for they all knew that his father was Greek. (Acts 16:1-3)

From this passage, we learn that Timothy was a half-breed. (That's a little disrespectful, isn't it? It's not at all politically correct.) His father was a Greek who married a Jewish woman and Timothy, obviously wasn't raised according to Jewish Law, because he had not been circumcised. Paul circumcised him, not because it was necessary for his salvation. Far from it. (Paul wrote the entire letter to the Galatians to counter that particular argument.) But Paul and Timothy didn't want to do anything to offend the Jews, to put any artificial stumbling block in the way of their salvation. So, Timothy was willing to subject himself to circumcision. That says something about his heart, doesn't it?

Timothy was a valuable assistant to Paul. And Paul trusted him enough to leave him in Ephesus to serve as their pastor. Paul had gone on to Macedonia, probably around AD 63, after he had been released from his first Roman imprisonment and he wrote this letter of exhortation, possibly from Philippi.

Ministry in Ephesus was a challenge. False teachers and false doctrine had to be corrected. Timothy's youth, and humble, timid character could have been a liability. Paul challenges him to faithfully fulfill the task to which he is called. He must teach sound doctrine, develop qualified leaders, and guard the church against those who would push it off track. This letter has a lot to say about how we should structure, protect, and conduct our church body. And that's why I feel led to begin this series.

Lord willing, I'm going to get all the way through verse 2 this morning. I know that's a huge chunk of Scripture for me, but I'm confident we'll make it. And really, all we're going to cover is the letter's salutation. But there is some great doctrine here.

Paul's letters followed the format that was customary for all Greek and Roman letters of the day. While we sign our letters at the bottom, they signed their letters at the top. It begins by identifying the author, and then it follows by identifying the recipient.

Let's look at it now:

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the commandment of God our Savior and the Lord Jesus Christ, our hope, To Timothy, a true son in the faith:

*Grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.
(1 Timothy 1:1-2)*

Let's take a few minutes to look at how Paul identifies himself, because I believe it is significant. Paul identifies himself as an apostle of Jesus Christ. Now, the word apostle comes from the Greek *apostolos* (ἀπόστολος) It identifies one who is sent on a mission as an emissary, a delegate, or an ambassador. From the Gospels, we learn that Jesus specifically chose 12 men from his wider circle of disciples to be His Apostles.

And when it was day, He called His disciples to Himself; and from them He chose twelve whom He also named apostles: (Luke 6:13)

Now, to be an Apostle of the Lamb, a man had to fulfill certain conditions: He had to be specifically commissioned by Jesus. He had to be personally instructed by Jesus. He had to be an eye-witness to Jesus' resurrection. And he had to be confirmed by signs (miracles) performed through his ministry.

Of the original 12, one was a traitor. Judas betrayed Jesus. Although he eventually repented of his crime, he did not return to the Lord. Instead, he hung himself, and his body fell on the rocks and burst open. (I know it's a bit graphic, but that's what scripture says.) In His high-priestly prayer in John 17, Jesus said:

While I was with them in the world, I kept them (the Apostles) in Your name. Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. (John 17:12)

So, Judas was lost and there were only 11 remaining Apostles. Peter figured that was a problem. So, in typical fashion, he came up with a solution. They had a primary election and selected two guys and then gave God a choice.

And they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles. (Acts 1:26)

But was Matthias really Jesus' choice? By casting lots, one of them was going to be chosen. They did this, despite the fact that Jesus specifically told them to wait in Jerusalem until they were baptized by the Holy Spirit. (Acts 1:4)

I'm sure Matthias was a fine fellow, but he was not directly commissioned by Jesus.

Paul, on the other hand, while he was known as Saul, the chief persecutor of the early Church, had a direct encounter with the risen Lord on the road to Damascus and then he was sent to a guy named Ananias. To Ananias, Jesus said this about Saul of Tarsus:

"... he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. (Acts 9:15)

While there is some disagreement among Biblical scholars, I strongly believe Paul is Judas' replacement. He is one of the 12 Apostles of the Lamb. When Paul identifies himself as "*an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the commandment of God our Savior and the Lord Jesus Christ*", he is claiming Apostolic authority.

Now, as I said before, there is some disagreement about this. So, if you don't buy my argument, that's okay. This is not a doctrine that should divide us. But, I'd love to talk to you about it. Let me know, maybe we could discuss it over lunch.

But I want to go on to verse 2, and see what Paul says about Timothy. "To Timothy, a true son in the faith": What exactly does that mean? And more importantly, what are the implications for us? How do you know if you are a true child in the faith?

“The faith”, of course means faith in Jesus Christ.

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

Faith in Jesus Christ is the only vehicle by which you can be saved. You cannot earn your way into the kingdom of God because you are by nature a sinner. And because you are a sinner, you sin.

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, (Romans 3:23)

But we can be ...

... justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. (Romans 3:24-26)

So, if faith in Jesus is absolutely essential, how do we get it? And how do we know we have saving faith? Faith is the Greek *pistis* (πίστις). It is to be persuaded, to have a strong moral conviction that what God says is true. If you have saving faith, you will act according to your conviction. It will inform the way you react to the Gospel.

Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent." (John 6:29)

The word “believe” in the Greek is a form of *pistis* - *pisteuō* (πιστεύω) – which means you must put your trust completely in Jesus, not in your religion, not in any of your own works of righteousness, not in your piety, but only in the finished work of Jesus Christ.

For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. (Romans 5:6)

Jesus paid the death penalty for your sin on the cross at Calvary. All you have to do is believe He died for you, and was subsequently raised from the dead, and you will be saved from Hell. It’s that easy. All it takes is faith. But you can’t even generate that faith on your own. You need to be born again and only God the Holy Spirit can do that.

So, ask Jesus for the faith to believe. Admit the obvious fact that you are a sinner. And then ask Jesus to help you believe that He paid your penalty.

Do not be unbelieving, but believing." (John 20:27)

Cry out to Jesus, as did Thomas,

“My Lord and my God!” (John 20:28)

Paul calls Timothy a true son of the faith. That means that Timothy’s faith was proven to be authentic by the way he acted. Timothy was a man who strove to be obedient to the Lord and you need to strive for obedience too, not so you can be saved, but because Jesus is now your Lord and you want to do the things He tells you to do. You want to please Him because you are so thankful for what He went through to secure your salvation. Your lifestyle must demonstrate your commitment to your Lord. Timothy walked the walk and that is why he is a true child of the faith. You must seek to walk in obedience as well.

Paul finishes this letter’s salutation with an Apostolic greeting.

*Grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.
(1 Timothy 1:2)*

That sentence is absolutely pregnant with doctrine. Grace and mercy are two sides of the same coin. Mercy is when God doesn't give you what you deserve. You deserve eternity in Hell because, *the wages of sin is death, (Romans 6:23)* But by faith in Christ, God transfers your guilt to Jesus *for He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, (2 Corinthians 5:21a)* Grace is when God gives you what you don't deserve. It is unmerited favor. God imputes Jesus' righteousness to you so, when God looks at you, He no longer sees your sin; Instead, He sees the righteousness of His one and only Son. It's like putting Jesus' sinlessness as if you were putting on a cloak.

... that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Corinthians 5:21b)

So, God's grace and God's mercy are the drivers are the drivers of our salvation. Peace is the result of authentic salvation. Peace with God, for sure. Without Jesus, you are God's enemy. You are a rebel without a cause and you are going down. But when you accept Jesus as your Lord, you make peace with God.

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, (Romans 5:1)

If you are a Christian, you are no longer at war and instead of Hell, you can look forward to an eternity of glory in the New Heaven and the New Earth where righteousness dwells. You are joint heirs with Jesus, co-owners of a restored universe! Oh, what a promise!

But not only can you have peace with God, you can also have peace with yourself. Everyone wants to feel at peace. Everyone wants to have inner peace. The whole world is looking for it. Most folks are looking in all the wrong places, because you can't have peace without the Prince of Peace!

Are you a true child of the faith? If you are, lift your voice in joyous gratitude to God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord. If you aren't, it's high time you become one. Today, the door of salvation is open, but there is no guarantee it will be open tomorrow. Your life might be required of you tonight. Jesus might return before the morning. Then it will be too late.

Ask Jesus to be your Lord and Savior today. He won't turn you down, And then you, like Timothy, will be a true child of the faith.