

Intro:

Who remembers the general theme in our study of 1 Timothy chapter 1?

- Confronting false or erring teachers

As I began this series, I was a little amazed at this aspect of the book. If you were writing a letter of instruction to a younger pastor, do you think this topic would be first on your mind?

What does the placing of this topic in the primary position reveal to us about the Apostle's thinking (and about God's thinking) about the ministry?

- Among other things, the first duty of ministers, of pastors, is the safe-keeping of the flock.

The word 'pastor' is simply the word 'shepherd'. The duty of the shepherd is *primarily* the safe-keeping of the sheep. He leads them to good food and still water, to be sure, but he is always on the lookout for animals that will destroy the sheep.

That is the way for the pastor of men also, we are finding.

Now, let's look at the words Paul has used in teaching Timothy about this duty of preserving the flock of God and the apostolic teaching:

- He is to *charge* certain men [pass on orders] not to teach other-doctrine (3)
- He is to *charge* men not to give heed to fables and endless genealogies (4)
- He is to use the law lawfully [legitimately] to bring sinners to conviction (6-11)
- His goal is love from a pure heart (5)

Now, I want to read the whole chapter and have you get a sense of this theme again as we read it. Our text is vv. 12-17, and I want you to consider how this fits in to the theme of the whole chapter.

Read 1 Tim 1

Do you see how the chapter begins and ends with dealing with false teachers and people in error? Did you notice how Paul even ends by naming some men he dealt with severely?

What had he done to these men?

- Had them disciplined out of the church (see 1 Cor 5 for instructions to the church concerning this)

How well does it go over when the pastor of a church has to confront someone who is in the church because they are in error in some way?

How well does it go over when the pastor has to do this *publicly*?

You have heard of church splits, I am sure. Splits happen for all kinds of reasons, but here is a biblically mandated action that *can* lead to church splits.

- How enthusiastic do you think a pastor might be about taking an action that might split a church?
- How likely is it that such action can bring about change in the life of the ones being corrected?

Well, that is what our text today is all about.

When you read it, you might think Paul has gone off his theme, that he is taking a detour. But you see, he comes right back to dealing with the ‘charge’ in v. 18. He is talking about the charge he gave Timothy in v. 3, it’s exactly the same word.

So Paul is not off topic, he is on topic. He hasn’t missed a beat. Let’s see how Paul’s personal testimony fits in with dealing with false teachers and erring brethren.

I have a proposition for this message, but I’d like to save it until the end.

I. The character of the Christless Saul

A. Three words that characterize Saul’s former life (13)

1. Blasphemer

a. In secular Gk

- 1) Essentially ‘abusive speech’ at heart of meaning
- 2) Strongest form of personal mockery
- 3) And finally, blasphemy of the deity by “mistaking ’its true nature or violating or doubting its power”¹

b. In OT:

- 1) Derision of God’s power and majesty
- 2) Human arrogance that depreciates God

¹ *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vols. 5-9 edited by Gerhard Friedrich. Vol. 10 compiled by Ronald Pitkin., ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey William Bromiley and Gerhard Friedrich, electronic ed., 1:621 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-c1976).

3) “The decisive thing in the concept of blasphemy is ... violation of the majesty of God.”²

c. In NT:

- 1) A violation of the majesty and power of God
- 2) A mockery of the person and power of Christ
- 3) A denial of the Christian faith after professing it

All but this last item would be considered true of Saul before he came to Christ.

Paul testifies that in his blasphemy, he compelled professing Christians to blaspheme (Ac 26.11)

- That was Saul of Tarsus...

2. Persecutor

a. Basic meaning³ of verb form: to make to run or flee

b. Secondary meanings

- 1) To run swiftly in order to catch some person or thing (pursue)
- 2) Hence, to harass, to trouble, to molest; to persecute

c. When used as ‘persecute’, Louw-Nida gives this:

*To systematically organize a program to oppress and harass people - 'to persecute, to harass, persecution.'*⁴

This is exactly what Paul was doing – he plotted and planned the capture, imprisonment, torture, and even death of men and women who believed in Jesus Christ.

We don't live with very much in the way of persecution. I was talking with someone about conditions in Saudi Arabia. It is very dangerous for a Christian to live in Saudi. Morality police roam the streets, Bibles are confiscated, you are subject to arrest if you bring one in.

² TDNT, 1:622.

³ Thayer's *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*. (Basic and Secondary Meanings)

⁴ Louw-Nida *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, 2nd Edition, Edited by J. P. Louw and E. A. Nida. Copyright © 1988 by the United Bible Societies, New York, NY 10023.

- That was Saul of Tarsus...

3. Injurious

- a. A word related to the sin of pride – a sense of superiority pervades
- b. It conveys the idea of a man who in his arrogance and pride is quite willing to injure and think himself righteous for doing it

“The word ... indicates a kind of arrogant sadism; it describes someone who is out to inflict pain for the sheer joy of inflicting it.”⁵

“The word *injurious* does not quite express its force. It does not mean merely doing *injury*, but refers rather to the manner or spirit in which it is done. It is a word of intenser signification than either the word ‘blasphemer,’ or ‘persecutor,’ and means that what he did was done with a proud, haughty, insolent spirit. There was wicked and malicious violence, and arrogance and spirit of tyranny in what he did, which greatly aggravated the wrong that was done.”⁶

- That was Saul of Tarsus...

B. One word that contrasts Saul’s state in comparison to Christ (15)

1. Christ Jesus came to save sinners
2. Paul sees himself in his sinful state as the ‘first of all sinners’

Top of class
 Head of the line
 ‘Mother of all sinners’ (to paraphrase Saddam)

- That was Saul of Tarsus...

How would you like to be the preacher to correct a man like that?

⁵ William Barclay, *The Letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, p. 50.

⁶ Albert Barnes, *Notes on First Timothy*, p. 121.

II. The transformation of the ‘mercied’ Paul

A. Paul obtained mercy

1. Note v. 13: “I obtained mercy”
2. Note v. 16: “I obtained mercy”
3. Lit. “I was mercied” – “I had mercy given unto me”

Mercy = not receiving what you really deserve

B. Paul received grace (14)

1. Grace is a gift
2. Grace is receiving something you don’t deserve

C. Paul was transformed (12)

Let’s work our way through vv. 11-12 backwards concerning Paul

1. Put Paul in the ministry – in the *Christian ministry!*
2. Counted Paul *faithful!* – who had been a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious
3. Committed *to Paul* the gospel! (11)

Wrote almost all the inspired epistles:

- Romans
- 1 & 2 Corinthians
- Galatians
- Ephesians
- Philippians
- Colossians
- 1 & 2 Thessalonians
- 1 & 2 Timothy
- Titus
- Philemon

The man behind the scenes for

- Luke
- Acts
- probably Hebrews

Consider this kind of transformation! What a change!

III. The magnification of the mighty Christ

A. In making Paul the example for the rest (16)

1. The word is 'upotuposis' – the prototype
2. The pattern, the sketch, the example, the template

If God can change Paul, do you think he can change stubborn sinners who trouble a local area or a local church?

B. Now to the King eternal... (17)

This verse is the conclusion of the whole matter – all glory to the King!

Conclusion:

Proposition: Take courage to deal with error because God can change anyone, even Saul of Tarsus.

Confronting error, especially in a local church, can be full of danger:

- People get angry and upset
- People don't want to change
- People can be very difficult – many problems arise

Now unto the King eternal!

Our confidence is in Him who can change hard hearts.

All glory goes to Him who does change hard hearts, even yours!