

Timothy 1 Timothy 1:1-2; 18-20

First and Second Timothy and the Book of Titus are referred to as the pastoral epistles. An epistle as you might know is a letter. The Apostle Paul wrote these three books for the purpose of guiding and inspiring potential church leaders.

Experience proves that children often follow the life styles of their parents, repeating their successes and mistakes. Have you heard any of these expressions:

Like father, like son

The apple doesn't fall far from the tree

You plant corn, you get corn!

Do you often think about the influence your parents have had on you and the influence you have or have had on your children?

I have asked you in the past, who were your role models when it comes to your spiritual life.....who influenced you spiritually? Who are you influencing spiritually?

Timothy's mother and grandmother were Jewish believers who undoubtedly shaped his spiritual life and growth. Paul saw great potential in Timothy and soon became his mentor and spiritual guide. Timothy loved and admired Paul. He tried to imitate what he saw in Paul as a church leader.

The Book of 1st Timothy opens with Paul's introduction of himself: "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, by the command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope." Right off the top, we know who wrote this letter and under who's authority he lives. Paul describes himself as an apostle of Christ Jesus. He says that he was commanded by God and by Jesus. His credentials are unquestionable. Remember that Paul had a traumatic conversion to Christianity. Paul was a preacher of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The second sentence in chapter 1 says that the letter, or the epistle is 'to Timothy, my loyal child in the faith'. Paul is not claiming to be Timothy's father in a biological way, but rather in a spiritual way. Paul had great affection for Timothy. He saw that Timothy studied hard, he wanted to succeed, and he had a determined faith. Paul saw great potential in Timothy.

'Grace, mercy and peace', says Paul. This was a familiar greeting which Paul often used. It was intended for congregations, but also individuals.

Timothy had been shadowing Paul and felt very comfortable as his second in command. But this was different. Paul was urging Timothy to stay in Ephesus to take charge and to sort some things out that were going off the tracks in the Christian church! Paul had begun the sorting process, corrective teaching and preaching, but he needed to move on and to leave Timothy in charge.....a daunting task for Timothy! Timothy did not want to stay in Ephesus without Paul.

Timothy wanted to be with his mentor.

He was likely intimidated by following Paul's strong ministry.

He might have been timid and reserved by nature.

He was intimidated by the challenge.

He might have been frustrated and even overwhelmed by the distracting and competing doctrines swirling around the Christians in Ephesus. The people in the church in Ephesus were distorting the doctrine of Christ. They were deviating from His teachings. It would be Timothy's job to finish Paul's work in sorting them out. Timothy's role would be to correct their theology.

At the time of Paul's writing, the people of Ephesus were all over the map theologically, doctrinally, and liturgically.

The Jews loved their rituals and symbolism. Paganism found its way into the church. There were liberals and conservatives and everything in between and all of them felt they were right!

It was on Timothy's shoulders to sort all of this out and to get the church in Ephesus back on track.

Paul then goes on to say in the letter, how grateful he was for God's mercy and grace, and peace in his own life. He felt that through these things, God had strengthened him in his ministry. He confesses that there was a time in his own life when he had been a blasphemer against Christ. He had persecuted those who had followed Christ. He had been a man of violence against the Gospel. He had acted out of ignorance and unbelief. The grace, peace and mercy of God, changed his life forever. The love of God overflowed in his life.

In verses 18-20 Paul says to Timothy that he is giving him all of these instructions so that in and through the storms of life, he might cling tightly to the faith. 'Fight the good fight', Paul writes to him. 'Have faith'. Keep a clear conscience.

Then Paul identifies two who have not done so. They have not kept the faith. They had not lived with grace, peace, and mercy. Hymenaeus and

Alexander have blasphemed against God, and so they suffered shipwreck in their lives.

To blaspheme means to speak ill of God, to speak irreverently about God or sacred things. Cursing using God's name is blasphemy. In Paul's day, it was not to be taken lightly!

In his letter to Timothy, Paul talks about how worship should and should not be conducted in the church, standards which church leaders must keep. Paul gives guidelines for teaching, guidelines for pastoral care, and finally how to get along with one another.

For us as Presbyterians, the role of Paul, to some extent has been taken over by the self governing courts of the church. Learning is ongoing for the members of the courts - learning from Biblical Scholars, distinguished preachers, church developers, and subject matter experts in a variety of ministries. But the maintenance of a clear, narrow, rigid doctrine seems impossible to maintain. Within this congregation we have significant theological diversity. There are some here who believe

that the words in the Bible came directly from the mouth of God to the printed page. Some of you take a literal interpretation of Scripture.

Others believe that the point of the story is to illustrate a principal of God and that it is not essential that the story is true.

Have you heard the name Rev. Gretta Vosper? Rev. Vosper is a declared, unabashed atheist. Amid protest and controversy, she remains as a minister, in a congregation in Scarborough.

There were influences which threatened the integrity of the early church. There continue to be such threatening influences.

There are only 6 chapters in the Book of 1 Timothy. I want you to take the time and read the Book of 1 Timothy this week. I want to encourage you to read it with these words in mind....grace, peace, mercy. I encourage you to consider the relationship between Timothy and Paul and to consider how each of them would have felt, knowing that their time together was coming to an end. And finally I want you

to consider diversity within the church.....what strength that brings,
what threat, what opportunity.

I hope that sometime during this week you will read the 6 chapters
which comprise the Book of 1 Timothy. Through this, what is God
saying to you? Amen