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Introduction. We were first introduced to *Timothy* in Acts 16:1-3. The Apostle Paul was on his second missionary journey, traveling through Asia Minor, the cities of Derbe and Lystra specifically. We know that Timothy was the son of a messianic Jewish woman (identified later as *Eunice*, 2 Timothy 1:5) who had taught him the word of God, and that he had a good reputation among the churches of at least two towns. Paul was able (with the Holy Spirit's help, undoubtedly) to identify great potential in Timothy and wanted him to join his work. Timothy was uncircumcised; his father was Greek. Paul circumcised him, not out of any religious obligation but so as not to cause any offense among the many Jews in that area.

Timothy became among the closest of Paul's companions for the rest of the Apostle's life. The two letters which bear his name were written *after* the Apostle's Roman imprisonment of Acts 28; now Paul was in an imprisonment that was markedly different (the conditions of the two can be contrasted readily by comparing the relative leniency of the Acts account with the suffering, abandonment and certainty of death described throughout 2 Timothy; also see note on v.3a). Timothy here is leading the church at Ephesus (1:3) which had been of great importance in Paul's ministry in Western Asia Minor (Acts 19). This first letter is written to instruct Timothy in organizing and conducting meetings for the church (3:15). As such, it, along with the similarly-themed Titus and 2 Timothy, are known as the "pastoral epistles." Timothy had been mentored by Paul for years, and now he was leading one of the Apostle's most important churches. This letter provides crucial instruction for all churches in many areas, particularly in leadership structure and order of meetings.

1. Verses 1-7a - Warning about false doctrine, and the real aim of true Christian doctrine.

- vv.1-2 - ***Jesus Christ*** is ***God our Savior***. It is critical to know who Jesus really is!

- v.3a - A bit of post-Acts-28 itinerary emerges: Paul traveled some, including a stop in ***Ephesus***, where he needed to confront false teachers *Hymenaeus* and *Alexander* (1:20). Perhaps the church was left shaken, so Paul left trusted Timothy in charge before continuing to ***Macedonia***. Also, this may explain why the qualifications for church leadership are so specific and so heavy on *character* (3:1-13). The false teachers had caused much harm to what had been a solid and fruitful church for a long time. Timothy was to exercise great care in appointing leaders to try to avoid letting loose *future* Hymenaeuses and Alexanders on the flock.

- vv.3b-4 - ***no other doctrine*** Sound doctrine is most clearly defined by Paul in his next letter to Timothy (2 Timothy 3:16-17, "All Scripture"). False doctrine is characterized by ***fables, genealogies***, idle talk and legalism (vv.6-7). Sound doctrine, though not always sensually appealing or tantalizing, builds faith and love. False doctrine is usually outwardly pleasing and entertaining, but it yields ***disputes***, envy, doubt and pride.

- v.5 - Why is Paul giving Timothy this instruction? To stir up **love**. True love, love that emanates **from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from a sincere faith**. It is axiomatic: True teaching, when received in humble faith, stirs up true love.

- vv.6-7a - **having strayed** This is the flip-side of sound doctrine. Sound doctrine is a safe harbor. It is dangerous to stray. The true love is attacked. Sound doctrine is not always pleasing to the ear, much like the best food or drink for your health is not always the best-tasting. Sound doctrine is not sensual. Sound doctrine is true, sound doctrine is biblical (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Sound doctrine bears the fruits of love, peace and service. Note what straying from sound doctrine produces: **idle talk** (*idleness and talking are a deadly combination!*) and **legalism** (a desire to teach and impose **the law**; the *desire* may be indicative of *pride* as well).

2. Verses 7b-11 - False teachers and **legalism** (or *Judaizing, or Phariseism*).

- v.7b - False teachers are confident. False teachers are eloquent. False teachers have knowledge. All of these things (and more) enable them to rise to positions of prominence and influence of others. Is the law biblical? Of course it is. But is legalism applicable to a participant in the New Covenant? It is not. See Hebrews 8:7-13. But that does not stop the false teacher, for he lacks true **understanding** and is instead driven by *pride*.

- vv.8-11 - **...for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners**, etc. The only lawful use of the law is to confront a sinner in his sin. For *that*, the law is **absolutely necessary** (see Romans 3:20). The Christian derives his strength to walk worthy of the **gospel** from the *Holy Spirit*, not from the *imposition of law*. **...sound doctrine** promotes love, fellowship, orderly living, a worthy walk, peace, good works, etc. The *use* of the law condemns the sinner. The *misuse* of the law (i.e., its imposition on the redeemed) is a destroyer.