

Promoting the Plan of God

1 Timothy 1:1-4

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¹ Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope,

² To Timothy, my true child in the faith:

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

³ As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, ⁴ nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith.

Have you tried to learn swimming without ever getting into a pool?

You looked at others swimming, you watched videos, you are familiar with different styles of swimming but you never actually stepped into the pool.

Just as you cannot learn swimming without being in the pool, your life as a Christian is never intended to be lived outside of the church.

Learning, growing and maturing as a Christian believer happens being inside the household of God – the church.

Today, we are beginning a new series called “Conducting ourselves in the household of God”.

Jesus has founded, established and instituted his household for you and I to be in his household – the church.

Jesus Christ the Head of the church paid an enormous price to secure his church his people. What was that price?

Paul tells us in Acts 20:28 “the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood”

More than that, the church is also the only God ordained institution where your spiritual life, your godliness, your holiness, your spiritual character, your Gospel witness is formed shaped and matured. Not para church organizations, not fellowships that are culturally similar or dissimilar, not special groups that have very little to do with the local church. A couple of us just returned from a pastors conference and the recurring theme at least for me as a pastor is how to equip the local church.

Jesus himself said, “I will build my church” (Matthew 16:18).

You see, Jesus is not only the founder of his church but also the builder of his church.

Paul writes to Ephesians that “we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ”.

Ephesians 4:15

The author of Hebrews tells us that “Christ is faithful over God's house as a son. And we are his house..”
Hebrews 3:6

The apostle Peter tells us in 1 Peter 2:4 to “you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house”.

And for building his church (meaning his people - you whom Jesus ransomed with his own precious blood), primarily the local church, Jesus has delegated this task of building, equipping and maturing to certain people. Who are those?

Ephesians 4:11-12 “And he (Jesus) gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers,¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ”

Paul tells us in Ephesians 2:19-20 that “you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone”.

Now, the prophets are gone, the apostles are long dead but the prophetic writing and the apostolic teaching is still with us. We abide by and follow the teaching of the apostles.

Today, God appoints evangelists, shepherds and teachers who must follow the apostolic teaching.

1 and 2 Timothy and Titus are called pastoral letters from the apostolic authority of Paul. We'll see what that means in a minute. Timothy was like a pastoral intern who was mentored by the apostle Paul. And at the time of this letter young Timothy is serving as a pastor in Ephesus.

And Paul is writing to Timothy to give him “swimming” lessons. Paul knows that Timothy is no longer swimming in the backyard pool but out in the ocean where dangerous sharks are looking to devour his people.

Paul knows that Timothy has to be fore-warned about the dangers ahead. Paul was in Ephesus was three years when he planted a church there. And before he left for Jerusalem, he called the elders there and gives them a few instructions. In his instruction Paul tells the elders to look out for wolves. To give you some context let's look at Acts 20:28-32

28 Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. 29 I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; 30 and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. 31 Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears. 32 And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

So a few years later, what Paul had feared would happen in Ephesus has now come true. False teachers have sprung up in Ephesus. And Timothy is now the pastor in Ephesus. Paul cannot go there in person to correct the situation. So, he writes to his disciple Timothy.

And you could say that this letter to Timothy has a dual purpose – to warn Timothy about false teaching AND while Paul is at it, he also gives specific instructions as to how we ought to conduct ourselves in the church. You see Paul's purpose statement in 1 Timothy 3:14

"I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, ¹⁵ if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth".

And when Paul says the church, he does not mean a building or a Sunday service or even a Bible study. It is your life as a disciple of Jesus Christ whether you are in a worship service, in the home, in the workplace, in the grocery store where ever you are – you are part of the household of God and you are representing Christ.

And here are a few questions Paul answers in his pastoral letters.

What is the household of God? Who leads the church? What are the qualifications? Who is responsible for the teaching of God's Word? What are the roles of men and women in the church? Can women teach? In what context? To whom? How are children to conduct themselves? How are widows to conduct themselves? How should older men and women be treated?

For our time this morning, we will look at two key questions.

What should be avoided and what must be promoted?

Let's look with the first two verses of 1 Timothy chapter one.

¹ Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope,

² To Timothy, my true child in the faith:

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

Notice what Paul says in his opening remarks of his letter? Paul is an apostle not by men's choice or popular vote or any other method. First of all, Paul is an apostle of Jesus Christ. Apostle simply means messenger or sent one. Paul is an apostle by the command, the directive, the order, the injunction of God Himself and of Jesus Christ. In Galatians 1:1,11-12, Paul says it very clearly that he is an apostle "...not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father..that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel."¹² For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ".

Also notice Paul uses two titles here. Paul says God is our Savior and Christ Jesus our hope. Meaning God is the One who Saves and sinners and but also our future. Our hope.

In verse two, he then addresses Timothy with a very tender, affectionate and warm greeting. Timothy is Paul's genuine child in the faith. Why does Paul Timothy this way? First of all, Timothy is a young man probably in his mid-thirties. And Timothy is unlike Paul. So Timothy needs all the encouragement he can get. Also, Timothy was born out of a mixed marriage Jewish mother and a pagan Greek man. Some Jews thought Timothy was not a full Jew. But in Christ, Paul those barriers are removed. Its like a high caste man in India adopting someone from the lowest caste and making it public.

And in Paul's greeting to Timothy, he uses a three part blessing. Paul says grace, mercy and peace. Paul's reasons to use this greeting is very intentional. Paul knows Timothy will need continued grace in the situation he is in. He also needs God's mercy when he is by himself. And finally Timothy will need to be at peace when dealing with the volatile situation at hand.

And so with the greeting, Paul fires his first round.

³ As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, ⁴ nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith.

Paul pleads and urges Timothy to remain at Ephesus. For what?

You can only imagine the reaction of Timothy when he began reading this letter. Paul is urging Timothy to do something about what has been happening in Ephesus. Paul is urging Timothy to take charge by commanding giving orders to certain people. Paul doesn't name these people but presumably Timothy knows who they are. And what were they doing?

Two things:

1. They were teaching a different doctrine.
2. They were devoting themselves to myths and endless genealogies.

This false teaching and myths and genealogies were resulting in promoting speculations rather than the plan of God.

Before we look at each of these issues that Paul wants Timothy to address, the way that Paul wants Timothy to address this is like that of military commander. How do we know this? It is the word "to charge certain people". Timothy needs to put on his military clothes on and act like a commander himself not like a negotiator. Timothy needs to make an announcement to these people that they need to stop what they are doing.

False Teaching:

The first thing they were doing is these people were teaching differently. A different doctrine. False teaching. Meaning something that was not in accordance with the Gospel itself.

Now, Paul does not explicitly write a paragraph in chapter one about all the false teaching that has been going on but he gives enough by telling us in his letters to Timothy and Titus. Here are a few places Paul talks about false teaching.

1 Timothy 4:1-3 Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons,² through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared,³ who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth

When Paul says “later times”, he doesn’t mean times in the future, he means we are living in the later times and this is what’s going on in the church.

Timothy 6:20-21 Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called “knowledge,”²¹ for by professing it some have swerved from the faith.

2 Timothy 2:16-18 But avoid irreverent babble, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness,¹⁷ and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus,¹⁸ who have swerved from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already happened. They are upsetting the faith of some.

2 Timothy 4:3 For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions.

Titus 1:10-11 For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party.¹¹ They must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach.

And what we realize in verse 11 is that not only are they teaching false things but they’re getting money for doing so. People are paying them. Do you see a pattern with the some of the teaching that happens today on tv? Some of the prosperity and tv preachers who fly in private jets and live in mansions and guilt trip you into demanding your money. The same kind of thing happened in Paul’s day. Stop giving them money.

Myths and genealogies:

Again, Paul doesn’t gives us content of these myths and endless genealogies. Paul tells Timothy and Titus to stop this kind of thing.

Titus 1:14 “not devoting themselves to Jewish myths and the commands of people who turn away from the truth.”

Titus 3:9 “But avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless.”

2 Timothy 4:3-4 “will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths”

An ancient Greek historian, Diodorus Siculus says,

Those who compile the narratives of ancient mythology labor under many disadvantages in their composition...the variety and the multitude of the heroes, demi-gods, and men in general whose genealogies must be set down make their recital a difficult thing to achieve; but the greatest and most disconcerting obstacle of all consists in the fact that those who have recorded the deeds and myths of the earliest times are in disagreement among themselves.

These myths are speculative details from prehistoric times about gods and their origins. About ancient peoples and their relationship to the founding of the peoples. Genealogies are related to that but on the other hand have to do with the history that is focused on persons as opposed to history that is focused on places, dates, and events. The Greco-Roman world appears engrossed in myths, legends, stories of heroes and their genealogies and the like. These myths had a real significance for people who were worried about offending this god or that god, anxious about fate, enquiring into the future through oracles, dabbling in magic and so forth. Paul is making a distinction between this understanding of the faith and the gospel that Titus and Timothy are to proclaim.

Our parallels today would be when Christians get overly speculative about the origins of the world. Yes, God created it but there are people who want to slice and dice all kinds of data that ends in speculation. Not profitable for God's people.

Another subject is the end times.

Years ago, I know a Christian man who was in my Bible study group who was speculating that God would use nano technology to rapture us into heaven. This man also gave me a CD asking me to listen to a so-called prophecy that so and so would one day become the president of America. Entirely speculative and unprofitable.

1 Timothy 4:7 “Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness”.

So here you see Paul urging Timothy to command some people to stop their false teaching, spreading myths and talking about genealogies that result in speculations.

Now, it is not enough to say stop the bad teaching, stop the incorrect way of these people. What is the right way? Paul tells Timothy in verse 4.

³ As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, ⁴ nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith.

The focus is on the Gospel. The Christian life and thought. The stewardship of God by faith.

The stewardship of God is the plan of God for the household of God. It is to be done by faith.

“For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles—² assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you³ how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly.⁴ When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ,⁵ which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.⁶ This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.”

Ephesians 3:2-6

“of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known²⁶ the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints.²⁷ To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.²⁸ Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ.²⁹ For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.” Colossians 1:25-29

Paul tells Timothy and Titus that their response to false teaching comes through their proclaiming the truth and also by appointing elders and deacons.

So far we saw two things – what to avoid and what to promote. Avoid false teaching, myths and genealogies. Avoid anything that results in speculation.

On the positive side, we must promote the plan of God. In the following weeks, Lord willing we will see the plan of God being unfolded in these pastoral letters to Timothy and Titus. And I believe this will be a solid foundation for years to come and see many men and women raised up for the promotion of the Gospel.

----- Discipleship Questions-----

MESSAGE SUMMARY: **Promoting the Plan of God.** 1 Timothy 1:1-4

HEAD: These questions help you examine the truth of God's Word.

1. What is the purpose of Paul writing this letter to Timothy? In this passage, what does Paul want Timothy specifically to stop and what does he want to promote? Go around and share.

HEART: These questions help you wrestle with what you believe.

2. What kinds of false teaching are you aware of? In what way does false teaching cause spiritual damage to your soul and the church?
3. What is God convicting you of and to believe in light of this message?

HANDS/HABITS: These questions help you bring the truth into your everyday life and develop behaviors that change your habits.

4. For personal reflection: What are some ways you could protect yourself from false teaching?
Sound doctrine/bible study/personal devotionals/note taking etc