

Stay There & Stand Firm

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Preacher: Rev. Murdo M Campbell

[0 : 01] Well, we're going to, with the Lord's help this evening, we're going to turn back to that portion of Scripture that we read in 1 Timothy, 1 Timothy chapter 1, 1 Timothy chapter 1, and we'll read again from the beginning.

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, by command of God our Savior, and of Christ Jesus our hope, to Timothy, my true child in the faith, grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

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.

As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus. Last Wednesday evening, we, as you know, we began a study in 1 Timothy, Paul's first letter to Timothy, and as we discovered, this letter is a very personal and a very pastoral letter.

It's one of the three pastoral letters which Paul wrote to Timothy and also to Titus, who were young ministers who were serving the Lord in the early church.

[1 : 25] Titus, as you know, he was serving in a rural charge on the Greek island of Crete, while Timothy here, he was pastoring a congregation in the urban setting of the city of Ephesus.

But regardless of their location, both pastors needed pastoring. Both pastors needed to be encouraged and exhorted to be faithful leaders in the church of Jesus Christ.

Therefore, as a pastor, Paul pastored these pastors. Paul sought to pass on his pastoral wisdom and experience to these two young men.

Now, as we said before, just because 1 Timothy is a pastoral letter addressed primarily to a pastor. We shouldn't think that it's just therefore applicable to pastors, because this letter, although it's addressed to a pastor, it's very applicable to every area of congregational life.

And as we said before, Paul is going to confront and even challenge many areas within congregational life, within the church of Jesus Christ. And as we mentioned last Wednesday, throughout this letter, Paul draws attention to, we'll say, five particular areas, five Ps.

[2 : 43] He draws attention to problems in the church, the importance of prayer, positions of leadership, passion for truth, and pastoring patiently.

Five Ps. Problems, prayer, positions, pastoring, and passion. Five Ps. And we're looking at the first P in many ways this evening, because we're looking at problems. Problems that Paul addresses in the church. Problems that Paul addresses in the church. But the thing is, Paul isn't shy to talk about problems in the church.

He's not someone who just looks the other way, or tries and sweeps it under the carpet, or pretends that the problem isn't there at all. No, Paul actually is someone who addresses problems head-on.

And he's telling Timothy to do the same. He wants Timothy to address the problems in the church and address them head-on. And that's why Paul tells Timothy right from the outset of this letter. He tells him two things. Stay there and stand firm. Stay there and stand firm. That's the two headings this evening, where Paul tells Timothy, stay there and stand firm. So first of all, Paul tells Timothy, stay there. He says, stay there. Verse 3, as I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus. Stay there so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine.

Now, Paul first wrote his first letter to Timothy around the year 64 AD, which was just prior to his final imprisonment, which was in Rome, and also his subsequent execution. Paul had been released from prison about two years earlier, so it was about 62 AD, and had left him free to travel within the

Roman Empire, where he could go around exhorting and encouraging congregations to keep growing in their Christian faithfulness and maturity. But when Paul got word that there was a group

of leaders in Ephesus who were infecting, we'll say, they were infiltrating and even influencing the church, and because of this, Paul decided to send Timothy to Ephesus in order to confront and even challenge the false teachers about what was being preached and promoted by them. Now, the city of Ephesus was a place that was very familiar to Paul. Paul had been there many times. He first visited Ephesus during his second missionary journey, which was about 10 years earlier from this point. It was around 52 AD, and it's recorded for us in Acts chapter 18 that Paul planted the church in Ephesus with the help of a few people. There was Priscilla, there was Aquila, and there was Apollos, who was the minister of the congregation. So that was his first time in Ephesus. Then later, while on his third missionary journey,

Paul stayed in Ephesus for about three years. And he stayed there, and he preached the, as he says himself, he preached the whole counsel of God to them. Because just before Paul moves on from Ephesus, after three years, he says to the Ephesians, he says that he declared the whole counsel of God to them.

[6 : 14] He explained all the doctrines of the gospel to them. But Paul, at that point, he also exhorted the Ephesian elders to take heed. Take heed, he says, as to how you shepherd the flock. In fact, you could say that Paul even prophesied back then. He was prophesying to the elders in Ephesus to beware of false teaching, because it's going to come. False teaching is going to come in. And we see that in Acts chapter 20, where Paul says to them, I know that after my departure, savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves, men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore, he says, watch. Therefore, watch and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears. He says, watch and remember. And then a few years later, in 60 AD, Paul sends this very loving letter to the church at Ephesus. And he sends, as we know it as Paul's letter to the Ephesians, he sends this letter to the church to strengthen them in their faith and to also secure their commitment to Christ. And at that time, there seems to be no indication. So, when Paul sent his letter to the Ephesians, there seems to be no indication of infiltration with false teaching in the church. There seems to be no problems going on.

Everything seems to be fine. But that doesn't mean that the church in Ephesus could relax or even rest upon their laurels. No, because false teaching, as Paul warns, wasn't far away. Because within a couple of years from AD 60 to AD 62, Paul has now heard that the wolves have appeared. The wolves have appeared and they're now infecting the church. They're infiltrating the church. They're influencing the people within the church. And so, Paul sends Timothy. He sends Timothy to Ephesus in order to confront and challenge these false teachers that were preaching and promoting a false gospel.

But that was no easy task for this relatively young minister who felt completely inexperienced and immature to deal with the heavy burden that was being placed upon his shoulders by Paul. And as we saw last week, Timothy was, we'll call him very timid. He was someone who was shy. He was naturally reserved. He was more of an introvert. But the thing about Timothy was, he was aware of his weaknesses. And he wanted to serve the Lord. And Paul was someone who had pastored Timothy.

He had pushed Timothy. He had prompted Timothy to come out of his comfort zone in order to serve the Lord. But becoming minister in Ephesus was going to be the test of Timothy's life.

[9 : 34] Because as we said, there were problems in the church in Ephesus. In fact, there were so many problems in the church at Ephesus that they were weighing young Timothy down. And they were weighing Timothy down so much that he wanted to leave. Timothy wanted to throw in the towel. He wanted to just give up completely and walk away from the congregation at Ephesus. And that's why after about a year into his pastoral charge in Ephesus, Paul sends this pastoral letter to young Timothy. And right from the outset, Paul addresses the problems in the church. He doesn't have this long introduction. He doesn't give all these greetings. The first thing Paul does is get right to what he wants to talk about. He gets right to business and speaks to this young pastor. And he tells him at the very beginning, stay there.

Just stay there. And you know, when Paul's letter was actually delivered to the manse in Ephesus, you know, Timothy would have known it was from Paul. And Timothy would have probably just opened it with eagerness and excitement. Timothy probably hoped in his heart that Paul was going to say to him, you're going on somewhere else. Timothy probably hoped that Paul was sending him to another congregation, far away from this congregation here in Ephesus, where all the problems

are.

But of course, that's not what Paul did. Because Paul knew that Timothy was needed, and Timothy was necessary for the ministry of the gospel to continue in Ephesus.

But you know, it's so true, isn't it? Ministers often move on when they encounter and experience obstacles or opposition in their ministry. They want to throw in the towel. They want to walk away. They want to give up completely. Members are the same. Members in congregations, they often move on to another congregation, usually because of other people or other problems or sometimes when they don't like the preacher. We often want to throw in the towel or give up completely or walk away from the problem, leave it all behind. But you'll always remember what Billy Graham, the evangelist, said, if you ever find the perfect church, don't join it because you'll only spoil it. You know, that's not to say we should never leave a church or a congregation.

[12 : 20] But if you are going to leave, leave quickly and leave quietly. But for Timothy here, he had his instructions. And his instructions were probably what he didn't want to hear at all. Stay there.

Remain at Ephesus. Stay there, he was told. And as Paul explains to Timothy, he was to remain at Ephesus so that the church leaders will teach no other doctrine to the congregation apart from what is godly and edifying to their faith. And Paul describes some of the dangerous doctrines that have been infecting and infiltrating and influencing the church in Ephesus because he says there that there are fables and endless genealogies which cause disputes. And they're these fables and endless genealogies, they're being told and taught by these, we'll call them erroneous elders. Now, it's not clear exactly what these erroneous elders were telling and teaching the congregation in Ephesus. But whatever it was, it wasn't a blessing and it wasn't a benefit to the people of God. Whatever they were teaching, whatever they were telling them, it wasn't a blessing and it wasn't a benefit to the people of God.

And you know, sadly sometimes, I'm sure we've all been in these situations where we're in a fellowship and it's something like that, where people are speaking about doctrines that they don't really understand, or they're asking questions that nobody knows the answer to and we'll never know the answer and it wouldn't matter how long we're discussing it for, we'll never get there. And what happens often is that the focus moves away from Christ and it ends up being a worthless and wasteful discussion, even a debate that goes on and round and round and round in circles all night, covering the same ground, getting absolutely nowhere. I'm sure you've been in these situations before. I have anyway.

And the fellowship, it ends up not being a blessing or even a benefit to the people of God. Why? Because it has taken the focus of the life-changing message of the gospel. And that's what Paul is reminding Timothy here. These elders, these erroneous elders, they're teaching different doctrine. They're devoting themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship that is from God and that is by faith.

[14 : 58] And so what we read here is that Paul, he exhorts and he encourages Timothy to ensure that these erroneous elders are teaching no other doctrine in their congregation apart from what is godly and what is edifying to their faith. And with that, Paul, he reminds and he actually reaffirms to Timothy that the role of an office bearer and the responsibility of an office bearer in the church is love. He writes in verse 5, the aim of our charge is love. The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. The aim of our charge is love.

And as you know, the greatest commandment is to love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength, and your neighbor as yourself. Love is the mark of the Christian because as Jesus said, by this all people will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another. As John says in his letter, we know that we have passed from death to life because we love the brethren. But for Paul, love not only affects our character and our conduct, he also says it affects our conversation. And we see that even when Paul wrote to the church in Corinth who were struggling with similar issues. And Paul says to them in 1 Corinthians 13, a well-known chapter, he says, if I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers and understand all the mysteries and knowledge, which these guys proclaimed, if I understand all the mysteries and knowledge, but have not love, I am nothing. Because he says love is patient and kind. Love does not envy or boast. Love is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way. It is not irritable or resentful. Love does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. And Paul says love never ends. The aim of our charge, says Paul, is

love.

And Paul says here that that kind of love, it flows from three sources, a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith. But for these erroneous elders, they had an impure heart. They had what Paul was referring to as a guilty conscience. They had in many ways a false faith. Because these erroneous elders were more interested in their position of status within the church, rather than their priority of service within the church. They were more interested in the position rather than the priority, the priority which was to serve in the church. And you know, with all these problems facing the church in Ephesus, you know, it's no wonder Paul writes this personal and very pastoral letter to Timothy. And it's no wonder the first thing Paul says to Timothy is, don't go anywhere. Stay there. Stay there. Remain in Ephesus.

But then secondly, we say that Paul exhorts and encourages Timothy to stand firm. So stay there and stand firm. Stand firm. Look at verse 8. He says, Now we know that the law is good. If one uses it lawfully, understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, the sexually immoral men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine, in accordance with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted.

[19:20] Now as a city, Ephesus was a wealthy place to visit. And it had made much of its wealth as a seaport city along the southwest coast of Asia Minor, which today is modern-day Turkey. And that was because Ephesus was part of this key trade route, not only along the Mediterranean Sea, but it was also a key trade route inland towards other cities and towns like Antioch, which was inland. In fact, along with Rome and also Corinth, Ephesus was one of these major cities that were useful within the Roman Empire. Ephesus was, you could say, a leading business center in the ancient world. It was a leading place for commerce, for religion, and even for politics. What's more is that Ephesus played host to the temple of the Greek goddess Diana, or Artemis, as it is called in the book of Acts. It's the goddess

Diana. And the temple became known as one of the ancient, the ancient wonders of the world. And of course, the Ephesians, well, they saw this as a money-making opportunity. They've got this great temple in their city. And so they started manufacturing replicas of the goddess Diana and sending them all over the world for people to worship Diana. But when you read the book of Acts, you see that there were riots riots in Ephesus. And there were riots not only in Ephesus, but throughout Asia Minor because Paul began preaching and proclaiming that this goddess Diana was nothing but a dumb idol that had been made by human hands. And the message of the gospel throughout the area began destroying the livelihood of the Ephesians.

And we read in Acts chapter 19 and 20 that there was this particular man called Demetrius. He was a silversmith. He made lots of silver shrines to this goddess Diana. And he was enraged that Paul was despising this Greek goddess. And Paul was destroying her magnificence. He was making her out to be as what she was, just a bit of silver. And Paul was just preaching the gospel, emphasizing that these are just dumb idols, that you need to worship the living and through God. And undoubtedly, Paul's preaching was affecting their prophets. It was causing confusion among the people because when they heard the gospel, when all these different cities heard the gospel, it made them question. It made them question their willingness to worship this goddess Diana. But there's more because what commonly accompanied idolatry was immorality. And the immorality of Ephesus came in the form of temple prostitutes. So they had the temple to Diana. They had Diana, the statue, but they also had the temple prostitutes. And so before the gospel even arrives in Ephesus, Ephesus was nothing but a sin city. Ephesus was a sin city. It was a place of idolatry and immorality. And yet the Lord led Paul to plant a church in Ephesus. That's the amazing thing. The Lord led Paul to plant a church in sin city. And wonderfully, the gospel had a massive impact upon their idolatry and also their immorality. And for many years, we see that the church in Ephesus, they stood firm. They stood firm upon the doctrines of grace because they were encouraged by them. They were educated in the doctrines of grace. And we see that in Paul's letter to the Ephesians, where Paul reminds them that they're saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. And in many ways, when you look at the church in Ephesus, they were a thriving city church. They were educated in the doctrines of grace. They were knowledgeable in the truths of the Bible. They were active in their pursuit of faithfulness and obedience. You could even go as far as to say that the Ephesians were a model church in the early church. They were a model church in the early

church. But you know, when Paul writes this letter to Timothy, as we can read here, the church in Ephesus is no longer the model it once was. Things have changed. Maybe it was just like as Jesus described in his letter, in the book of Revelation, his letter to the church in Ephesus. They had lost their first love.

They'd lost sight of the doctrines of grace. They'd lost sight of the fact that they're saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. This model church is not what it once was.

And it's all because, as Paul says, there are erroneous elders who are infecting and infiltrating and influencing the church in Ephesus. And as we said, they had this desire. We read that there. They had a desire to be teachers of the law, teachers of the Torah. But these erroneous elders, they had an impure heart. They had a guilty conscience. They had a false faith because they were more interested in their position rather than the priority of service. They were more interested in the position of status rather than the priority of service to the church. They desired to be teachers of the Torah, but instead they distorted and they diluted the teaching of the Torah by their ignorance and even their arrogance. They were making, as Paul says, they were making assertions. They were making assumptions. They were making affirmations about the Torah without actually any knowledge or any wisdom of the Torah. They weren't taught themselves. And the outcome was, as erroneous elders, they were drawing and directing the church backwards. They were directing the church back to idolatry, back to immorality.

[25 : 48] But, you know, if anyone had knowledge or wisdom about the Torah, it was Paul.

Because Paul had been brought up, as you know, to read and to recite the Torah, which is why he says in verse 8, now we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully. Paul says that the purpose of the law is to expose our sin rather than let us enjoy our sin. The purpose of the law is to conform us to Christ rather than make us comfortable with the world. The purpose of the law, says Paul, is to promote holiness and to protect us from harm. And in these verses here, Paul gives relevant examples of what it means to break God's law and undermine the Ten Commandments. And Paul highlights, he highlights the ignorance in Ephesus, the idolatry and the immorality that these Ephesian elders are directing the church back into. He says in verse 8, now we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully.

Understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, that's the fifth commandment, for murderers, the sixth commandment, for the sexually immoral, the seventh commandment. Men who practice homosexuality, still the seventh commandment.

Enslavers, that would be the eighth commandment, not stealing. Liars, that's the ninth commandment. Perjurers, be the tenth commandment. And whatever else, he says, whatever else, if I haven't covered it in this, whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine. Paul says, in accordance with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted. You know, Paul emphasizes and he explains that the ten commandments, they're not suggestions. They're not just recommendations.

They're not advice for your life. No, they're commandments. They're law. But Paul says, we need the law and we need the gospel. We need both. It's not either or, it's both and. Because the law, as Paul says to the Galatians, the law is the schoolmaster to lead us to Christ. But for these erroneous elders who were infecting and infiltrating and influencing the church, they were twisting the teaching of the Torah. And in many ways, they were just glossing over the gospel. They were twisting the teaching of the Torah and glossing over the gospel. We don't know the exact extent to which they were doing it.

But we can see here that Paul is very direct in what he's saying. You know, as Paul emphasizes and explains here, he's saying to us, we need the law and we need the gospel. It's not either or, it's both and. And as someone once said, law and gospel go together. For the law without gospel is like a diagnosis without a remedy. The law without the gospel is like a diagnosis without a remedy. The law has not been substituted with the gospel. The law has been given to show us our sin and the gospel to show us our Savior. The law is to show us our sin. The gospel is to show us our Savior. It's not either or. It's both and. And what we'll see as we come to the next section, God willing, next week, is that Paul will explain to us from his own experience. He will talk about how the law and the gospel worked for good in his own experience and in our own experience of how the law of God and the gospel of grace worked together in order to bring him, this Paul, from being a blasphemer to a believer, from being a persecutor of the church to a preacher of faith in Jesus Christ, a preacher of

the gospel. And we'll see that, God willing, next week. But at this point, in these verses, Paul is asserting and affirming to young Timothy in Ephesus. He's saying to him, stay there and stand firm. And you know, it's a great message for us, very simply. Stay there.

[30 : 26] Stand firm. Stay where you are. Do what you're doing and stand firm in it. Stand firm in the gospel of grace. Well, may the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray together.

O Lord, our gracious God, we give thanks to Thee for the exhortations and even the encouragements that Thy Word gives to us. And help us, we pray, to learn from the experience of those who have gone before us, to learn, Lord, how to live lives that bring glory to Thy name and seek to live lives that are godly in character, conduct, and even conversation. We confess, O Lord, that there is a lot of work to be done. But we give thanks that Thou art the God who promises to begin that good work and bring it on to completion at the day of Christ Jesus. We thank Thee, O Lord, that Thou art one who is willing and able to conform us more and more into the image of Thy dear Son. Lord, conform us, then we pray.

Conform us in all things to be more like Jesus, to be more like Him every day, to walk in His ways, to hear His Word, to be attentive to His will. O Lord, guide us, then we pray. Lead us and watch over us, we ask, and do us good. Take away our iniquity. Receive us graciously, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

We're going to sing again, this time in Psalm 100, again in Psalm 115, actually. Psalm 115, we're just picking up where we left off. Page 395.

Psalm 115, singing from verse 10 down to the verse marked 18. O Aaron's house, trust in the Lord. He is their help and shield is he. Ye that fear God, trust in the Lord. Their help and shield he'll be. The Lord of us hath mindful been, and he will bless us still. He will the house of Israel bless. Bless Aaron's house. He will.

[32 : 51] We'll sing down to the end of the Psalm of Psalm 115. To God's praise. O Aaron's house, trust in the Lord. He'll be. The Lord of us hath must be. The Lord of us hath must be. He that fear God, The Lord, their help but shieldeth me.

He not fear God, who are lost in the Lord, their help but shield will be.

The Lord of us unmindfully, and He will bless us still.

He will the hands of Israel bless, bless Aaron's heart He will.

O small and great and near the Lord, He will ensure me bless.

[34 : 29] The Lord will lure you and your seed, aim more and more with grace.

O blessed are ye all the Lord, who made the earth and heaven.

The heavenly heavens are lost but He, hurt to miss us again.

The dead nor good to silence go, God's grace do not report, but pass forth we forever will.

Bless God, praise Him the Lord. The time for him Michael.

[36 : 24] Join us from camera on the river, beats him through to receive a rose WWE. If you know the word can't do that, follow up and upon his glasses, give us help with the ■■■ insNScap..