Paul's First Epistle to Timothy / Introduction

First Timothy 1:1
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~ Our Spiritual Safari says good-bye to the prophet Jeremiah after twenty-three doleful, dark, depressing, despondent, despairing, discouraging, disconsolate, downcasting, dispirited, disenfranchising, demoralizing, doubtful, disappointing, dejecting, distressing, discontenting, disconnecting, downhearted, destructive – and some would even say disgusting – reports from his prophecy and subsequent lamentations. Frankly, it is refreshing to rejoin Paul the apostle and peek over his shoulder as he writes a letter to a young preacher named Timothy. The two letters to Timothy, and one to Titus, comprise what are known as the *''Pastoral Epistles''* in Scripture. The contents of the letters reveal the obvious reason for this. They were written by Paul to two young converts who had followed him on most of his three missionary journeys; and whom he had established as pastors of churches at the time in which we are studying.

They are labeled *''Pastoral Epistles''* because they instruct local and visible churches on procedure, soundness in the faith, discipline of church members, clear revelation for the guidance of the church, how to behave in the house of God, rebuke for taking away from, or adding to, the divine order of churches, rebuke of Judaism, legality, and unsound doctrine, prayer, the divine order of elders, deacons, pastors and the position of authority for each of those offices, sexes, and the proper, correct and complete walk of the child of God. So, we have a little bit to learn; and, I promise you, the modern conception of who's who, and what's what in the church, is so far from being Scripturally accurate or Biblically correct today, that some of you will think you are reading a foreign language in these next twenty reports.

We are going to see a *strong* contrast between this letter to Timothy and the epistle to the Ephesians and Colossians; and, if you were with us on this safari in Colossians, you will remember I entitled each of those reports *''An Open Letter to Pastors I, II, III….''* and so on. In Ephesians and Colossians, Paul spoke of the church as the invisible body of believers in Christ. Well,

that body of Christ must manifest itself today down here on planet earth as local assemblies. Simply adding the word *''church''* to some catchy organizations' name, and tacking a cross on the wall *IN NO WAY* qualifies it as a church of God in the New Testament sense of the word. In the early church, a local congregation of Christ-minded believers organized for a very definite purpose – to glorify the resurrected Christ and further the Gospel.

A proper church will have certain identifying characteristics that meet all New Testament qualifications as defined by Paul. These instructions detail how a genuine church of Christ Jesus is to function. Governmental process and rule of order in a local church is non-negotiable. A creed and code of conduct are the first spiritual building materials to be set on our Foundation of the Lord Jesus Christ. The mode of worship concerning doctrine simply *MUST* be precise and accurate; in Spirit and in truth. When those elements are present, the church will come forth in a community with good works; the first and foremost of which is taking the entire Word of God to the entire world in sound doctrine. Creed is on the inside; conduct is on the outside. Worship inside; works outside. That is very, very important to understand.

Paul was likely released from prison in Rome between A.D. 64 and 67. If this is accurate, it was during this interval that he wrote this first letter to Timothy. He wrote to Titus at this time, also. Some Bible authorities believe Paul wrote from Macedonia. Apparently, Paul had left Timothy in Ephesus; and he wrote this letter to encourage and motivate towards the cause of Christ. The word *''doctrine''* occurs eight times. The word ''Godliness'' occurs eight times. The word *''teach''* or *''teacher''* occurs seven times; and the word *''good''* occurs a whopping twenty-two times! The entire first chapter of this epistle is not so much a doctrinal statement, but a warning against false teachers. Even so, the Gospel of the grace of God is the over-arching central theme. Everything that is done, thought about, prayed for, sung about, taught, or spoken of in a church, *MUST* – MUST – *MUST* concern the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Period. Full stop.

Today, when a church forms, the first thing they typically do is select a committee to construct a building - or they rent one. In Paul's day, they didn't need a building committee, because they didn't build churches. The

early church met in private homes; or, perhaps they would assemble in the auditorium of a local university – or some other sort of classroom. Remember, Paul rented a room during siesta each day at the school of Tyrannus in Ephesus, and people came from far away to hear him preach and teach sound doctrine. Paul will say, in verse three of chapter one of this epistle, *''…. as I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine.''* Establishing, building, and naming a church doesn't make it a church of God by any means. Then, in chapter three, verse fifteen of this same epistle, Paul says to Timothy, ''*…. but if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth*.''

So, in order for a church to function, after all of those things are properly in place, they must have someone else to sweep the sidewalk, vacuum the carpet, arrange the chairs, clean the toilets, dust off the tables, clean the kitchen, and generally set the place in order for the Sunday school and worship services. It's also nice to have someone make coffee and bring breakfast, too, by the way. Not everyone is the pastor. Not everyone is the Sunday school teacher. Not everyone is an officer. Not everyone is a deacon or elder. Not everyone can sing. Not everyone can play the piano or guitar or drums. There are certain requirements for these positions; and each are critical. Everyone has a function; and for every function, it is absolutely essential they be performed to the best of one's ability.

Now, at the risk of being tedious or overly-technical, which we do not intend to do in this safari, I feel led to point out that there are three different structural forms of church government today. Most of the great denominations agreed on almost all doctrine as recently as seventy years ago, or so; but, they have always strongly disagreed on the matter of church government. Interestingly, each of the three forms of church government derives its legislation from these three Pastoral Epistles. Frankly, I'm not exactly sure how they came up with three forms of government; because, in the final analysis, none of them make sense – but – they concocted these three variances. When I say I don't know – I'm being facetious – I do know – but each rests on nonsensical premises; so, I refuse to acknowledge comprehension on any scale. Anyways, I am going to

point out almost all that I know about these governmental forms and origins thereof; in pursuit of a proper, correct, and complete Bible study. Sound doctrine is found in the interpretation and definition of certain words spoken by the man of God who is Personally ordained by God, and is Spirit-filled and Spirit-led. In this case, Paul the apostle.

First, there is the *Episcopal* form of church government. An Episcopalian governance is one man – or several men – at the top of a chart who are designated as having authority. That man or group of men are usually not participants in the church or churches they run. They govern from afar. One example of that is the Roman Catholic Church in relation to their Pope, Cardinals, and descending order of priests. In other Episcopal churches, there will be Bishops and Arch-Bishops. The Church of England uses the Episcopal system – as do many other denominations today.

Second, there is the *Presbyterian* form of church government. This is a representative form of government. In the Presbyterian Church, certain men are elected to be officers, elders, and deacons. The day-to-day church-body of governmental affairs are in those men's hands in practical terms. This makes an unfortunate situation, as there is a higher authority that has ultimate control of the local church with veto capacity over major decisions.

Third, there is the extreme form of church government known as the *Congregational* church government. That would be the Baptist Church, and other denominations, where members vote, make decisions, and yield power of control democratically. They vote on everything from accepting additional members to what's being served for lunch.

For decades – and even centuries – those three forms of church government seemed to work well enough. Today, however, all three have deteriorated into a dark declension of apostasy. They mysteriously don't operate as they once did – as recently as fifty years ago. Each of them is currently experiencing frightening internal strife and disorder. There is constant dissention, and many are closing their doors. The community served by a local church is no longer changed or affected. The church has no influence, and is ineffective at reaching the lost world. Now, you may think it is the system that is wrong, explaining why God is not blessing it –

but you would be wrong. See, the important thing is not the *form* of government; but having a form of government is critically important. Any system of government – either secular or spiritual – will work fine IF – *IF* – IF the character and the hearts of the men running the system are right with God. When the character and the heart are wrong – the system is wrong – every time; and, when the character and hearts are wrong, God will not bless it. It's really that simple.

Paul is going to lay out what is acceptable and what is not acceptable; such as, a man of one wife – and that he be sober – among other personal demands. These characteristics are argued and ignored in the local church, which causes strife and division. The modern church has failed. I'm not saying revival isn't possible, but my estimation is that the church has fallen stricken to a malignant spiritual cancer; and it will require a miracle to be healed.

Look, friends, don't blame me – I'm just teaching you what the Word of God says is right and wrong. God said there is a difference between clean and unclean. God has declared a difference between what is right and what is wrong; and that difference is what He says it is – as it is written. Christ is the head of the church. If Christ is not the head of the church, it is going to cease to exist. The pathetic shell of a social club may continue, but it won't be used by God for the furtherance of the Gospel. It will become a burden to its patrons. Remember, Jesus said, *''you call Me Lord, Lord, but you do not that which I command.''* Well, we have a lot of people calling Jesus *''Lord''* and *''King''* today, but they are far from obeying Him, and are not following Him. They refuse to subject themselves to His authority. The average church member wouldn't know how to trust and obey Christ if they wanted to – but they don't want to. How tragic.

Now, my dear safari readers, if you think I am wrong, I suggest you take it up with the Lord in prayer – not me. Church officers, deacons, elders and pastors simply *MUST* be spiritual men of faith, with a high degree of spiritual discernment, and who are motivated by love and carry through the commandments of Christ; men who are led every step of the way by the Holy Spirit. That's what we are woefully missing today. That's why the lost and dying world doesn't really see *ANY* evidence of Christ Jesus in the

modern church. To be led by the Holy Spirit, one must know what the will of God is. To be led by the Spirit of God in faith, by the knowledge of the direct will of our Father in Heaven, it is going to take a *WHOLE LOT* of Bible study and prayer – it simply cannot be otherwise – I assure you of that ~

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