

## By the Commandment of God

*First Timothy 1:1 – 2*

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~ Our Spiritual Safari provided a comprehensive introduction of Paul the apostle's epistle to his spiritual son Timothy in our last report. If you have not read that report, I suggest you go back and do so now. This Pastoral Epistle leg of our expedition through the entire Word of God is going to deal with the nitty-gritty of the local church; in a way that most self-professing believers will flatly reject. We're covering topics from sweeping the sidewalk, to arranging chairs, to cleaning floors, to gathering up songbooks, to counseling hurting people, to proper conduct – right on down to teaching the Bible properly, correctly and completely – and taking the entire Word of God out to the entire world in sound doctrine. As we saw in our last report, it is the character and conduct of the men and women in the church that make the distinction between being a body of believers who glorify Christ Jesus, or a carnal social-club that glorifies self. The creed and conduct of any church is absolutely critical....

***1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, Who is our hope;***

***2 Unto Timothy, my own son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.***

~ This introduction is remarkable; but, the question is: why would Paul need to introduce himself to Timothy? Why didn't Paul just open this letter by saying, "Hey Tim, What's up" – ? Well, if you have been with us in this safari from Romans through Thessalonians, it might appear that all of Paul's writings have the same greeting and introduction – but you would be wrong. Paul always asserts his apostleship in a slightly different manner. In Galatians, he said he was an apostle by the *WILL* of God. Here, it is by the *COMMANDMENT* of God. The difference is: Timothy was a friend, and this is personal; whereas the previous letters to the churches have all been to a congregation, and are formal addresses. Even though the "will" of God and the "commandment" of God are synonymous – they aren't the same.

I recognize we are splitting theological hairs now, but, think of it like this: all of the commandments we find in the Bible reveal the will of God. That reaches out *much* farther than the Ten Commandments. However, we were told in the fifth chapter of first Thessalonians that the will of God is for us to pray without ceasing, for example. Twenty-two additional instructions are given in that chapter. They're not commandments, in and of themselves, but they are guiding principles that reveal the will of God. Many things are the will of God, but not commandments. However, the will of God *IS* expressed in the commandments. Again, I understand this seems tedious and technical – because it is – but, my friends, sound doctrine just happens to be highly detail-oriented and technical. It is extremely important to get our thinking, words, and manner of communication exactly right – and I do mean precisely proper, correct, and complete.

Further, we do not discover the *totality* of the will of God in the commandments. What we can realize is enough truth to reveal that no man is saved by observing commandments. I reiterate that, and emphasize it so heavily because there are many people who insist the law is essential to our salvation. See, the law is good – but only if man uses it lawfully. I think we all know that any law can be abused and misused. The law is holy, and the commandments are holy, just and good; but the goodness of the law demands absolute perfection from man, in whom there is no good thing. Paul said, “... *I know that in me dwelleth no good thing.*” Because the law is just and holy, no man can fully obey it. So, the law reveals the will of God; which is for us to be saved by grace through faith, and that not of ourselves, but as a gift from God. These axioms of truth are so simple, yet extraordinarily difficult to internalize and accept. Well, if we do not, cannot or will not accept this fundamental tenet of Scriptural truth then, my friends, we cannot have a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ; because that would be impossible.

In order for mankind to be saved, it was necessary that there be a way made to pardon us from our disobedience to God's perfect law. Well, God had that way established since before the foundation of the world; and it allows God to remain just – and be the Justifier of – him who does no more than believe on the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and trust that His

Son died for our sins, being raised from the dead for our justification according to Scripture. Through Christ's death, burial, and resurrection we have forgiveness of sins preached unto us. All who believe are justified from *ALL* things from which the law of Moses could never justify. The Mosaic Law is a ministration of death, my beloved. The Mosaic Law condemns – it never saved anyone at any time; no, the children of Israel had to bring a temple sacrifice to have their sins covered – temporarily – when they transgressed the law.

See, you and I are unholy creatures subject to a holy God. The only path to holiness for us is in Christ – and it commences by the way of the cross. Jesus said, *"I am the way...."* The law is *not* the way to God. Saith also Jesus, *"no man comes to the Father but by ME."* It has nothing to do with the law. So, this introduction is not the same broad statement Paul gave to the Galatians. In Galatians, Paul was an apostle by the will of God. Here, Paul is an apostle by the commandment of God. The Lord Jesus Christ made Paul an apostle on the road to Damascus – but it wasn't because Paul was in the will of God – because he was far from that. I bear down on this point until the pencil lead may break because this is the bedrock of sound doctrine.

My personal feeling is that Paul was reluctant to become an apostle. He likely offered the Lord many of the same excuses Moses had made in Egypt. Paul wasn't with the other apostles during those three years. He never knew Jesus in the days of His earthly ministry. Paul knew he wasn't worthy of this high-calling – and we know that because Paul is the one who tells us. That's when Jesus said, *"I command you...."* That, my friends, is what gave Paul the authority to go into the local synagogue, before a gainsaying audience of devout Jews in Athens, and say, *".... I declare unto you the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ."* He used the same approach with corrupt Gentile sinners. Paul was a soldier acting under orders – moving under a command – not by commission. No one laid their hands on Paul and made him an apostle, friends. I cannot over-emphasize all of these remarkable truths.

Remember, when our safari examined the life of the prophet Jeremiah, we saw the same authority given to him. Jeremiah was a shrinking violet;

constantly offering his resignation to the Lord, and ceaselessly questioning that which didn't need to be questioned. Jeremiah was a man with a broken heart. Paul said, "... *I die all the day long.*" But even in a wilted condition, Jeremiah and Paul both stepped out and gave the harshest, ugliest messages from God that had ever proceeded forth from a man's lips. Jeremiah was, likewise, under orders. That's what it means to be a soldier of Christ today, friends. To erroneously think we are to run around fighting everyone, including the devil, is small-minded stupidity. Any man who deigns speak for the Lord **MUST – MUST – MUST** speak with authority; or he needs to remain silent and, in order to speak with authority, we had better actually know what we're talking about.

The Lord Jesus Christ is our hope. That's something we don't hear taught properly today. The expression, "... *Christ is our hope*" is found here in verse one; but only one other time in the entirety of Holy Writ – in Colossians. When the Lord Jesus Christ calls us to meet Him in the air, *THEN* He will consummate our salvation. Today, we have the earnest of the Spirit – the down payment – whereby we are sealed unto the day of redemption. When we look around us today, we can see the love of God; but when we look ahead – we see our hope in Christ – and the only hope any of us have is anchored in the Person of The Lord Jesus Christ – the Son of God – our Blessed Hope and Holy High Priest.

Timothy – Timotheus – means "*a man dear to God.*" Timothy was dear to the apostle Paul; and to the local churches, too. Both Timothy and Titus were led to the Lord Jesus Christ as a result of Paul's ministry. We have crossed paths with Timothy before in the Spiritual Safari, in the Book of Acts, and in Ephesians. Timothy's father was a Greek; and his grandmother Lois and grandfather were Christians, also. Timothy lived in Lystra – where Paul had been stoned – and, I believe Paul being raised from the dead that day had a whole lot to do with the conversion of young Timothy. Like any young man, he would have been skeptical – but Paul being raised from the dead would have convinced any reasonable, thinking person. I'm almost certain it happened that way; because he became an avowed follower of Paul after that.

Paul had utmost confidence and trust in Timothy and Titus; but there were many “*brethren*” who deceived and betrayed Paul along the way. Frankly, that’s the tragedy every pastor, missionary, evangelist, preacher, or Bible teacher experiences at some point. So, our Spiritual Safari ends this leg of our expedition through the entire Word of God not having gotten very far. “*Mercy,*” in verse two, is another particularly peculiar word – only used in the greetings to Timothy and Titus. Mercy is an Old Testament word that is the equivalent of grace. The tabernacle had a Mercy Seat. That’s where the offering provided grace – and mercy – to the nation Israel. Only because God is merciful does He extend His grace to save us – which brings us hope. We should all understand we need a whole lot of mercy. I don’t want justice from God – because that would be a disaster for me. I need mercy. As you dear readers know, I don’t label myself an apostle or evangelist or pastor – or anything other than a poor Bible teacher – and, because of that: I need a *WHOLE LOT* of God’s mercy that endureth forever ~

