

PAUL'S^a FIRST LETTER TO TIMOTHY

Greeting

1 From Paul, an apostle^b of Christ Jesus by the command of God our Savior, and by the command of Christ Jesus, our hope. ²To Timothy, my true child in the faith. Grace, peace, and mercy to you, from God the Father, and from Christ Jesus our Lord.

Warning Against False Teachers

³Remember how I asked you to stay on in Ephesus^c when I was going to Macedonia?^d You were to tell certain people not to teach other doctrines, ⁴and to stop paying attention to myths and endless genealogies of semi-divine beings.^e Those things put forward *theories*—rather than God's plan, which is about faith. ⁵Well, the aim of my instruction is love from a clean heart, a good conscience, and real^f faith. ⁶Some people have gotten way off in relation to these things, and have turned their attention to nonsense. ⁷They want to be teachers of the Law^g—without understanding the things they're saying *or* the things they're talking about so confidently.

⁸Now, we know that the Law is good if a person uses it properly—⁹that is, if they know that the law is not set up for the just person. It's for those who are lawless and rebellious; it's for the ungodly people and the sinners. It's for the irreligious

^a Many—but not all—Bible scholars think that this letter is pseudonymous—that is, they think it shows signs of having been written by someone else using Paul's name. Pseudonymous writings were common in the ancient world.

^b See "Bible Words."

^c Prn. *ef-fa-siss*.

^d Prn. *mass-a-doe-nee-a*.

^e See "genealogies" in "Bible Words."

^f Lit. "unfeigned."

^g I.e. they want to be Bible teachers. When this letter was written, the Jewish Bible was often called "the Law." See Acts 5:34.

and the blasphemous; it's for people who kill their fathers and mothers; it's for murderers. ¹⁰It's for people who are sexually immoral, for pederasts, and slave traders;^a it's for liars and people who break their word.^b And it's for anything else that's ¹¹contrary to sound teaching and against the good news I've been entrusted with—the good news of the glory of God, who deserves to be blessed.^c

Paul's Gratitude for God's Mercy

¹²I'm thankful to Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened^d me—because he considered me trustworthy to appoint for his service. ¹³Before, I'd been a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man. But I was given mercy, because without realizing it, I acted in unbelief. ¹⁴But our Lord's grace has been more than plenty for me, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵This statement is trustworthy, and deserves complete acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, and I'm the worst.^e ¹⁶But I've been shown mercy for that very reason: so that Christ Jesus could demonstrate all his patience with me, the worst^f one. I'd serve as an example of those who were going to believe in him and receive eternal life.^g ¹⁷And may the Ruler of all eternity, the incorruptible, invisible, one and only God, receive honor and glory forever and ever. Amen!^h

¹⁸I'm entrusting this instruction to you, Timothy my son. It's in line with the prophecies that have already been made about you, so you could use them as a soldier in the good battle, ¹⁹with faith and a good conscience.ⁱ Some people have ignored their consciences, and have experienced a shipwreck in their faith. ²⁰Hymenaeus^j and Alexander belong to that group. I've turned them over to Satan, to be taught not to blaspheme.

Christians Should Pray for All People

2 So first of all, I want to ask that intercessions, prayers, requests, and thanks should be made for all people. ²They should be made for rulers and for all

^a Or “kidnappers.”

^b Or “perjurers”; lit. “oath breakers.”

^c Lit. “the glory of the blessed God.”

^d Some mss have, “strengthens.”

^e Lit. “...sinners, of whom I'm first.”

^f Lit. “first.”

^g Lit. “believe in him for eternal life.”

^h More literally: “And to the king of the ages, to the incorruptible, invisible, only God, honor and glory to/for the ages of the ages, amen.”

ⁱ Lit. “so you could serve as a soldier with them in the good campaign, having faith and a good conscience.”

^j Prn. *hye-ma-nee-us*.

people in high positions, so that we can lead a quiet and peaceful life, in complete reverence for God and dignity. ³That's what's good and acceptable to^a God our Savior. ⁴He wants all people to be saved, and for them all to come to the knowledge^b of the truth.

⁵Because there's one God,
And there's one mediator between God and humanity:
The human being Christ Jesus.
⁶He gave himself as the price that buys everyone out of captivity.^c
This is his testimony,
At the right moment in history.

⁷I've been appointed as a preacher and apostle^d of this testimony. I'm telling the truth; I'm not lying. I've been appointed as a teacher of faith and truth to the Gentiles.^e

⁸So I want the men everywhere to pray. They should lift up holy hands, without anger and arguments. ⁹And I want the women to do the same. They should dress decently, with modesty and good sense. They shouldn't wear^f fancy braided hair^g or gold or pearls, or expensive clothes. ¹⁰Instead, let it be what's appropriate for women who are dedicated to serving God through their good endeavors.^h ¹¹A woman should quietly learn the faith in complete openness.ⁱ ¹²But I don't allow a woman to teach the faith or to be in authority over a man.^j She should be quiet. ¹³After all, Adam was made first, then Eve.^k ¹⁴And Adam wasn't deceived, but the woman got led astray and ended up in disobedience.^l ¹⁵But womankind^m will be saved by bearing children, if they liveⁿ in faith, love and holiness, along with good sense.

^a Lit. "in front of."

^b Or "recognition."

^c Traditionally: "as a ransom for all." But the same word applies equally to the purchasing of a slave (to set them free) and to the payment of a ransom.

^d See "Bible Words."

^e Lit. "a teacher/instructor of the Gentiles in faith and truth."

^f Lit. "...sense, not with."

^g He's giving one example of an expensive professional hairstyle. I don't think he has an issue with braiding/plaiting hair as such.

^h Lit. "...clothes, but what is fitting for women dedicated to reverence for God through good works."

ⁱ Lit. "submissiveness."

^j Or "over her husband."

^k Gen. 2:2:7, 22 (but see Gen. 1:27).

^l Lit. "in breach of the command." See Gen. 2:16-17; 3:6, 13.

^m Or "woman," or "Eve"; lit. "she." This is a greatly disputed and difficult to understand statement.

ⁿ Lit. "if they stay."

Pastors and Deacons

3 Here's a trustworthy statement: if somebody aspires to be a pastor,^a they're setting their heart on a worthy endeavor. ²So—a pastor has to have an impeccable reputation.^b They have to be the husband of one wife. They have to be sober,^c self-controlled, decent, hospitable, and good at teaching. ³They should not be a drinker or violent. Just the opposite: they should be tolerant and peaceable, and free from the love of money. ⁴They should manage their own household well. They should keep their children obedient, with complete dignity.^d ⁵After all,^e if somebody can't manage their own household, how are they going to care for the community of God? ⁶They should not be a new convert, so that they won't get puffed up and fall into condemnation by the devil. ⁷And they have to have a good reputation with outsiders, so that they won't be subjected to^f ridicule and fall into the devil's trap.

⁸Deacons^g should be equally^h honorable—not dishonest, addicted to drinking a lot,ⁱ or greedy for money. ⁹They should be holding the secret of our faith with a clear conscience. ¹⁰And deacons should also be tested before being given responsibility. Then let them serve if there's nothing against them.^j ¹¹Women^k should be equally^l honorable. They shouldn't spread vicious rumors;^m they should be sober,ⁿ trustworthy in every way. ¹²Deacons should be the husband of one wife. They should manage their children and their own households well. ¹³People who serve well as deacons are getting themselves a good foundation.^o And they're getting a lot of self-confidence in their faith in Christ Jesus.

^a Or "overseer"; traditionally: "bishop."

^b Lit. "a pastor/bishop must be beyond reproach."

^c Lit. "free from wine." It's probably not talking about being a teetotaler, but about being free from addiction to alcohol.

^d Lit. "holding children in obedience with all dignity." It's possible that it's the children who are supposed to be dignified.

^e Lit. "But."

^f Lit. "fall into."

^g A deacon, or "server," is a person entrusted with arranging provision for the practical needs of the spiritual community and its members.

^h Lit. "likewise."

ⁱ Lit. "not indulging in much wine."

^j Lit. "Then let them serve, being completely without fault."

^k Or "Their wives."

^l Lit. "likewise."

^m Lit. "not slanderers."

ⁿ Or "self-controlled."

^o Lit. "step." Many translations have, "a good standing." I think it implies they've reached a level from which they can advance to further responsibility.

The Great Secret

¹⁴I'm hoping to come to you soon.^a ¹⁵But I'm writing all this to you so that if I'm delayed,^b you'll know how people should behave in God's household. This is the community of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth. ¹⁶And it's undeniable that the secret of our religion is a great one:^c

He appeared in a human body,^d
 Was vindicated^e by the Spirit,^f
 Was seen by angels,
 Was proclaimed to^g the nations,
 Was believed in here in the world,
 Was taken up to heaven in glory.

False Teachers

4 Now, the Spirit explicitly says that, in later times, some people are going to turn away from the faith. They'll pay attention to deceptive spirits and demonic teachings.^h ²These things are going to be put forward by lying fakesⁱ whose own conscience has been burnt.^j ³They'll forbid people to get married. They'll tell people to avoid certain foods—foods that God created to be received with thanks. They're not forbidden to those who believe and know the truth.^k ⁴Because everything created by God is good. And nothing's to be rejected that's received with thanks—⁵after all, it's made holy by God's word and by prayer.

Be a Good Servant of Christ Jesus

⁶As you teach the brothers and sisters all this, you'll be being a good servant of Christ Jesus. You'll show that you're competent in matters of faith and of the good teaching that you've followed. ⁷And say no to disgusting religious myths that are old wives' tales. Instead, train yourself in reverence for God. ⁸Because training your body is useful to a small extent, but reverence for God is valuable for everything. It holds promise for this life^l and for the life that's to come.

^a Lit. "quickly."

^b Lit. "slow."

^c Or "And the secret of reverence for God is undeniably great."

^d Lit. "in flesh."

^e Or "was proven innocent."

^f Or "in the spirit."

^g Or "preached among."

^h Lit. "and the teachings of demons."

ⁱ Lit. "by liars in fakery/hypocrisy."

^j Lit. "cauterized" or "seared" or "branded."

^k Lit. "They'll forbid to marry, [saying] to keep away from foods that God created to be received with thanks by those who believe and know the truth."

^l Lit. "for the now life."

9Here's a trustworthy statement, that deserves complete acceptance: 10"This is why we work^a and struggle: because we've put our hope in the Living God. He is the Savior of all people—especially those who believe."

11Give these instructions, and teach them. 12No one should look down on you because you're young.^b Far from it: be an example to the believers—in your speech, your behavior, your love, your faith, and your purity.^c 13Until I come, be attentive to the reading of the scriptures, to encouraging people, and to teaching. 14Don't ignore the spiritual gift that's in you—which was given to you through prophecy, with the group of elders laying hands on you.^d 15Work on your gifts.^e Be devoted to them, so that your progress will be obvious to everyone. 16Take care of yourself and of your teaching. Keep on with it. Because in doing that, you'll save both yourself and your hearers.

Advice to Timothy as a Spiritual Community Leader

5 Don't harshly criticize an elder. Instead, appeal to him as you would to your father. Treat younger men as brothers, 2elder women as mothers, and younger women as sisters—with total purity. 3Honor widows that are truly widows. 4But if a widow has children or grandchildren, they^f should learn to practice their religion first at home—let them give something back to those who were born before them, because that's acceptable to^g God. 5But the true widow has found herself alone,^h and has put her hope in God. And she's steadfast in her requests and prayers, night and day. 6But the one who overindulges herself is dead while she's alive. 7And say these things strongly, so they'll be above criticism. 8But if somebody doesn't take care of their own—especially those in their household—they've denied the faith, and they're worse than an unbeliever. 9A widow should be put on the list if she's at least sixty years old, and has had one husband.ⁱ 10She should be recommended by the good things she's done:^j for example,

- if she's brought up children
- if she's shown hospitality
- if she's washed the feet of the holy ones

^a Some mss have "This is what we are insulted for."

^b Lit. "look down on your youth."

^c This word might be talking about having impeccable sexual ethics.

^d "Laying on of hands" is a ritual for transferring power, healing, or authority on someone.

^e Lit. "practice these things."

^f That is, the children or grandchildren. The assumption in vv. 3-16 is that the community should provide for the needs of elderly women who don't have anybody else. But if they have family, it's the family's duty.

^g Lit. "in front of."

^h Lit. "But the one who is really a widow and has found herself alone."

ⁱ Lit. "is a wife of one husband."

^j Lit. "testified to by her good works."

- if she's helped people in trouble
- if she's dedicated herself to all kinds of charitable work.^a

¹¹But refuse the younger widows. Because sometimes^b they get drawn away from Christ by their physical desires, and they want to get married. ¹²And then they're accountable^c for breaking their original pledge. ¹³They also get in the habit of being^d lazy. They go around people's houses not only being lazy, but also gossipy and nosy, talking about things that shouldn't be discussed. ¹⁴So I want the younger ones to get married, have children, and manage a household. That way, they won't give the enemy any opportunity to insult us. ¹⁵After all, some people have already turned back to Satan. ¹⁶If one of the believing women has widows in her family, she should take care of them: she shouldn't burden the community. That way, the community can take care of the ones who are truly widows.

¹⁷The elders who have led well should be regarded as worthy of double honor—particularly those who work hard at preaching and teaching. ¹⁸Because the scripture says, “Don't muzzle the ox that's threshing,”^e and “The laborers deserve their pay.”^f ¹⁹Don't accept an accusation against an elder except “on the testimony of two or three witnesses.”^g ²⁰Confront those who've sinned, in front of everyone. That way, everybody else will be afraid to do the same. ²¹I challenge you, in front of God, and Christ Jesus, and God's chosen angels: follow these instructions without prejudging anything. Don't do anything out of partiality.^h ²²Don't give anyone spiritual responsibility right awayⁱ—don't^j get involved in other people's sins. Keep yourself pure.^k ²³Don't just drink water anymore—use a little wine because of your stomach, and the illnesses you keep getting.^l

²⁴Some people's sins are obvious, and go ahead of them to judgment, and other people's follow behind them. ²⁵The good things people do are also just as obvious—and the things that aren't good can't be kept hidden.

^a Lit. “to every good work.”

^b Lit. “whenever.”

^c Or “And then they're guilty”; lit. “they have judgment.”

^d Lit. “learn to be.”

^e Deut. 25:4.

^f See Deut. 24:14-15. I've put this in the plural to make it gender-inclusive in English.

^g Deut. 17:6; 19:15.

^h Or “favoritism.”

ⁱ Lit. “Don't lay hands on anybody quickly.” Laying on of hands was a ritual that was often used to confer on the recipient the power of the Spirit for ministry.

^j Lit. “and don't.”

^k He's saying that if you give someone spiritual responsibility, and you haven't been careful to prove their ethical integrity first, then you share responsibility for what they do.

^l Lit. “and your frequent illnesses.” Drinking wine was known to aid digestion and to help avoid water-borne parasites, which were common among ancient people—particularly those who traveled a lot, as Timothy did.

Advice about Slaves and Masters

6 Those who are under the yoke of slavery should consider their masters worthy of total respect. That way, God's name and our teaching won't get insulted. 2 And those who have believing masters shouldn't despise them for being Christians.^a Just the opposite: they should serve them more, because the recipients of their good work are believers, and are dear to them.^b

Beware of Argumentative, Greedy People

Teach and encourage^c these things. 3 Suppose^d somebody teaches something different: suppose they don't pay attention to the wholesome words of our Lord Jesus Christ and to reverent teaching.^e 4 They've become puffed up with pride, and they don't understand anything at all. They have a sick obsession with arguments and battles over words. Those things result in^f hatred, petty fights, insults, and vicious rumors.^g 5 Such things are constant irritations among^h people whose minds are ruined, and who've lost the truth. They think that reverence for God is a way of getting rich. 6 Well, reverence for God—with contentment—makes you very rich. 7 Because we didn't bring anything into the world—and because we can't take anything out of it either. 8 But if we have food and clothing, we're going to be content with that. 9 But people who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap, and into lots of mindless and harmful desires. Those desires sink people into ruin and destruction. 10 Because love of money is a root of all the evils there are. Through yearning for money, some people have fallen away from the faith, and have stabbed themselves right through with lots of sufferings.

Struggle in the Good Contest of Faith

11 But you, man of God, stay well away from all this.ⁱ Strive for integrity,^j reverence for God, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness. 12 Struggle in the good contest of faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called—and which you publicly professed, making the good profession in front of lots of

^a Lit. "shouldn't despise them because/that they are brothers." This is traditionally understood to mean that Christian slaves should not fail to give their masters full respect as masters because they are fellow Christians. But it may also be taken to mean that slaves shouldn't despise their masters for the inconsistency of being a Christian slave owner.

^b Lit. "and are beloved."

^c Or "urge."

^d Lit. "if."

^e Or "the teaching that's in line with reverence for God."

^f Lit. "... words, out of which things come."

^g Lit. "evil suspicions."

^h Lit. "of."

ⁱ Lit. "flee these things."

^j Traditionally: "righteousness."

witnesses. ¹³I challenge you—in front of God, who gives life to all things, and in front of Christ Jesus, who testified to the good profession in front of Pontius Pilate:^a ¹⁴Be flawless and impeccable in keeping this^b command, until the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ!

¹⁵ God, the Blessed One, is going to reveal him at the right moment^c—
 The Only Sovereign,
 The Ruler of rulers,
 The Master of masters,^d
¹⁶The Only Immortal One,
 The One who lives in unapproachable light,
 The One no human being has seen or can see!
 To God be honor and eternal power! Amen.

Rich People Should Do Charitable Work and Give Generously

¹⁷Challenge people who are rich in this age not to think they're superior^e—and not to put their hope in wealth, which is undependable.^f Instead, they should put their hope in God. God is the One who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. ¹⁸They should do charitable work and be wealthy in good deeds. They should be generous givers, people who share. ¹⁹They'll be storing away a good foundation for themselves for the coming age. That way they'll take hold of what's *really* life.

Final Challenge and Greeting

²⁰Timothy, protect what I'm leaving in your care!^g Turn your back on the unholy babblings and contradictions^h of what's falsely labeled as "knowledge." ²¹Some people have claimed to be experts in that stuff,ⁱ and have gotten way off in terms of the faith.

Grace be with you.^j

^a Prn. *pon-shuss pye-it*.

^b Lit. "the."

^c Or "in God's own time."

^d Or "The King of Kings, the Lord of Lords."

^e Or "to be haughty."

^f Lit. "not to hope in the uncertainty of wealth."

^g Lit. "guard the trust," i.e. he must protect that which has been entrusted to him.

^h Or "Reject the irreligious empty noises, and arguments back and forth."

ⁱ Or "...knowledge," which some have professed."

^j This "you" is plural.