Life can never be dull again
When once we've thrown our windows open wide
And see the mighty world that lies outside,
And whisper to ourselves this wondrous thing,
"We're wanted for the business of the King!"
Rita Snowden

Prayer Study #491

1ST TIMOTHY 1

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Background: Paul, the experienced Apostle, is writing to and mentoring and serving as a spiritual father (1st Corinthians 4:15: **15** For even if you were to have ten thousand teachers [to guide you] in Christ, yet you would not have many fathers [who led you to Christ and assumed responsibility for you], for I became your father in Christ Jesus through the good news [of salvation]) to Timothy or Timotheus (in the Greek). His name means *"honoring God"* or *"honored by God,"* and was probably given to him by his Christian mother, Eunice.

In these letters Paul is instructing Timothy in some church issues: erasing false doctrine, safeguarding public worship, and developing mature leadership in the church. He also deals with pastoral issues: avoid false teachers and greedy motives; pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance, and gentleness; and finally, don't let your youth be an obstacle.

I, along with all the early Church fathers, take the conservative view that Paul wrote these letters to Timothy. In the early 19th Century, some scholars began to dispute Paul's authorship of 1st and 2nd Timothy and believed they were forgeries, but they gave no real evidence of this. The doctrinal teaching and autobiographical details and personal facts and names in these epistles all point to Paul as the author.

Because we have no book like Acts to fill in the details, we cannot definitely give the history of Paul's final years. Scholars believe he was released from his first Roman

imprisonment (see Philippians 1 and 2), probably because his Jewish accusers decided not to go to Rome to appear at his trial before Caesar. At the time of his release he sent Timothy to Philippi to relay the good news that he had been set free.

Paul goes to Ephesus and to Colosse (Philemon 22). Timothy rejoins him in Ephesus. Paul asks Timothy to remain there in Ephesus while he goes to Crete. Paul then leaves Crete and the Church there in the hands of Titus. Later he asks Titus to rejoin him in Nicopolis when Titus' replacement arrives. Nicipolis was a Greek city in or near Macedonia. (The replacement was most likely either Artemis or Tychicus-Titus 3:12). Perhaps, but this cannot be proven, Paul and Titus journeyed to Spain, after they "wintered" in Nicoplis. We do believe that Paul wrote 1st Timothy from Macedonia in AD 62 or 63 while Timothy was serving as his representative in Ephesus, and that Paul may have been in Spain from 64 to 66 AD.

In 64 AD something happened that would total change circumstances for Paul. Rome burned. The fire destroyed half of the city. Nero, who most probably started or had someone start the fire and who was Emperor from 54 to 68 AD, used the Christians as scapegoats, blaming them for burning Rome. Christianity became illegal in the Roman Empire, and Paul's enemies were able to successful access him as a leader of the Christians. Paul was then re-arrested in Troas, a city in present day Turkey. Paul wrote 2nd Timothy from his Roman jail cell. He, knowing he was going to be executed, writes to urge his son Timothy to come before he lost his life. Paul was beheaded west of Rome on the Ostian Way.

Paul's life during his 2nd Roman imprisonment was so different from his 1st. During his 1st Roman imprisonment, he was under house arrest. He could have as many visitors as would come to see him, and he expected to be exonerated. The Christians in Rome gave him much moral support, and people visited from Rome and throughout Asia Minor.

During Paul's second imprisonment, he was put in a dark, cold Roman jail cell. He had no hopes of being released and

was abandoned by almost everyone (2nd Timothy 4:10-11). Persecution of Christians had become severe. Fearing for their own lives, the Christians in Asia Minor failed to support Paul anymore after his arrest. During this time (AD 67), Paul wrote 2nd Timothy, hoping that Timothy would come from Ephesus and visit him before the approaching winter. Tychicus probably carried this letter.

1 Timothy 1Amplified Bible (AMP)

Greeting

1 *Paul, an apostle (special messenger, personally chosen representative) of Christ Jesus by the commandment of God our Savior, and of Christ Jesus (the Messiah, the Anointed) our Hope [the fulfillment of our salvation],*
2 *to Timothy, my true son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace [inner calm and spiritual well-being] from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.*

These two verses of greeting are pregnant with meaning. Paul refers to himself as an apostle of Jesus Christ. The Greek word *apostolos* means one who was sent out, as an envoy or ambassador, to represent his country or his leader. Paul is saying here that he has been sent out to represent King Jesus, forming a connecting link between the Lord and the people.

Bill Hamon has written extensively about the five fold ministry of Ephesians 4:11. His teaching on the ministry of the Apostle is excellent:

How Apostles Equip the Believers: *Apostles specialize in supernatural signs and wonders. They give building strategy and lay foundations, along with the prophet, in the lives of people and the local church. The prophet receives the blueprint for the building of the Church, but the apostle is the master builder. Biblical examples of apostles' ministry to the Believers reveal that they help found and ground the Believers in foundations of the faith and present day truth. Apostles' miraculous signs and wonders enable Believers to be delivered from evil spirits, disease, and strongholds in their lives. Some apostles not only demonstrate the supernatural but are able to activate the Believers in their power gifts of the Holy Spirit.*

As part of the foundation of the Church, apostles are often sent to establish new works and then to support those works. Apostle Paul founded many of the local churches in the New Testament. Apostles in the marketplace may be those who launch a business or who form a network to accomplish certain purposes. As initiators and those who help provide structure and leadership, apostles make a place for the Believers. They provide platforms where others can serve God through their unique giftings. The apostles have a special ability to be master builders of the Believers in their callings and ministry. Apostles will be key in helping transform Saints from pew-sitters to active participants in the Day of the Saints. (Pp. 183-184)

Bishop Bill Hamon

Not only was Paul an apostle, he was an apostle by the royal command of God. We as Christians must remember

that Christians are on the business of the King, by royal command.

Paul refers to God as *Savior.* At this time this title had been used to honor a great Roman General Scipio. The Greeks also used the title to describe the God of Healing. The Roman Emperor Nero had taken the title for himself. Of course, we know that this title only belongs to Jesus, who was a love gift from Father God to the world.

Paul also refers to Jesus as *our hope.* He had written to the Colossians in Colossians 1:27: *Christ in you, the hope of glory.* To the early Church, often under intense persecution, hope was one of the most precious titles of Jesus. Ignatius, the first century Bishop of Antioch where followers of Jesus were first called Christians, wrote to the Church in Ephesus: "Be of good cheer in God the Father and in Jesus Christ our common hope." At the time he wrote this, Ignatius was on his way to be executed. To these early Christians, Jesus was the hope of moral victory, of victory over circumstances, and victory over death.

Paul loved Timothy as a son. Timothy was from Lystra in Galatia. It was a Roman colony, a little town on the edge of civilization. It is thought that Paul and Barnabas, on their first missionary journey, found lodging with Timothy's mother Eunice and his grandmother Lois, both Christians. Timothy was very young at the time, but must have idolized these heroes of the Christian faith.

On the 2nd missionary journey, Paul visits Lystra and Timothy's house again (Acts 16:1-3) and found a young man there whom all spoke well of. Perhaps, even then, he saw Timothy as the one who would take his mantle and take over Paul's ministry when the time came.

Timothy's mother was a Jewish Christian, and his father was a Greek (Acts 16:1). I suspect that Timothy's father had died before Paul's first visit to this home. Paul circumcised Timothy, and Timothy became Paul's constant companion. Paul wrote to the Philippines, *"I have no one like him…like a son with a father he has served with me in the work of the gospel* (Philippines 2:20, 22). Paul completely trusted Timothy, knowing he could send him anywhere, and Timothy would faithfully get the job done.

Paul ends this introductory or greeting section of his letter with the words *grace, mercy and peace.* Grace is something unearned and undeserved, making it the opposite of debt and works. Peace was and is the normal Jewish word of greeting. Mercy is loving kindness, again unearned and undeserved. It is by God's abundant mercy that He has given the living hope of the resurrection to the Body of Christ, and it is because of mercy that God helps the helpless.

Fables, Endless Genealogies, and Gnosticism

3 *As I urged you when I was on my way to Macedonia, stay on at Ephesus so that you may instruct certain individuals not to teach any different doctrines,* ***4*** *nor to pay attention to legends (fables, myths) and endless genealogies, which give rise to useless speculation and meaningless arguments rather than advancing God's program of instruction which is grounded in faith [and requires surrendering the entire self to God in absolute*

*trust and confidence]. **5** But the goal of our instruction is love [which springs] from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. **6** Some individuals have wandered away from these things into empty arguments and useless discussions, **7** wanting to be teachers of the Law [of Moses], even though they do not understand the terms they use or the subjects about which they make [such] confident declarations.*

Paul had asked Timothy to stay in Ephesus to refute some false doctrine, including fables being taught as truth and endless genealogies. In the ancient world it was a common practice for poets and historians to make up and teach as fact fictitious tales about how cities came into existence and how famous families were started. The mythical tales often involved a god coming to earth and impregnating a mortal woman. The child of this union thus started a family on earth.

The ancient world also had a passion for genealogies. Sometimes these genealogies were fabricated so that a person could claim as ancestors famous people. The Jews were not immune from this and spent hours tracing their lineage and often fabricating fake biographies of these people. Paul found this dishonesty appalling but also thought this was a waste of time. To him Christians should be about the

Father's business and working at living the Christian life to the best of their ability.

As a background to all of this was the Greek thought known as Gnosticism, a false doctrine that had invaded the Church. The basic principle of the Gnostics was that God could not have created sin or suffering and that all matter was not created by God but had existed before the world began and was imperfect and evil. Because God could not touch evil matter, he emanated a lesser divine power that emanated another lesser divine power that emanated an lesser divine power, and so forth. The further from the true God that these divine powers were, the less they knew the true God. The creator god was way down the line from the true God and was ignorant and even hostile to the true God. To Gnostics the God of the Old Testament was this creating god, but the God of the New Testament was the true God.

Furthermore, the Gnostics spent a great deal of time in developing genealogies for these mythological divine powers. In addition, they said that the body was evil and should be despised. The Gnostics forbid marriage and demanded abstinence from certain foods.

Since the body is evil anyway, it does not matter what is done with it. The Gnostics were, therefore, allowed to be promiscuous and immoral. The body would be destroyed,

according to the Gnostics, but the soul would be saved.

Scripture can easily refute all of the Gnostic heresy. We know there is only one God, but one God in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Everything God created is good and is to be received with thanksgiving (1st Timothy 4:4). The way we live morally is of great importance to God, and obedience to Biblical morality shows out love for Jesus (*They profess that they know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate*-Titus 1:1:16). After death, there will be salvation of the whole being and resurrection of the spirit, soul, and body.

Sins Prevalent in the Ancient World

8 *Now we know [without any doubt] that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully and appropriately,* ***9*** *understanding the fact that law is not enacted for the righteous person [the one in right standing with God], but for lawless and rebellious people, for the ungodly and sinful, for the irreverent and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers,* ***10*** *for sexually immoral persons, for homosexuals, for kidnappers and slave traders, for liars, for perjurers—and for whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine,* ***11*** *according to the*

glorious gospel of the blessed God, with which I have been entrusted.

The ancient world believed that, if everyone were good, there would be no need for the law. Unfortunately, none of us truly are good. The only goodness we have is the Holy Spirit operating in our lives or Christ in you, the hope of glory, a precious gift from God because of the sacrifice of the Son of God on the cross. True goodness springs from the human heart and is not dependent on rewards or punishment. The Christian looks forward to the day when the knowledge of the glory of the Lord will fill the earth as the waters cover the sea (Habakkuk 2:14).

This passage gives us insight into what was prevalent in the society where the early Church lived. This was an evil day where there were: lawless people who knew the law but paid no attention to it; insubordinates who rebelled against authority; ungodly and irreverent people who defied God; immoral sinners; and unholy and profane men and women who disregarded what society considered as sacred. (For example, Egyptians allowed brothers to marry sisters, and the Persians allowed sons to marry mothers.

Also, there were those who murdered their fathers and mothers and manslayers. There were fornicators who had sex outside of the

marriage relationship and homosexuals or sodomites. (It is said that the one new virtue Christianity brought was chastity.) There were slave traders and kidnappers. Slavery was well accepted in this society. While against and not endorsing slavery, here Paul is focusing on those who kidnapped beautiful and talented slaves from other slave owners in order to sell these slaves for a huge profit. Finally, Paul speaks of liars and perjurers who did not hesitate to twist or distort the truth for personal gain or pure meanness.

Against this backdrop comes the glorious Gospel message of Christianity, the forgiveness of sins in the past and the power to overcome sins in the future, a message that comes and is shared through men and women of God.

Grace and Mercy towards Sinners

12 *I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has granted me [the needed] strength and made me able for this, because He considered me faithful and trustworthy, putting me into service [for this ministry],* ***13*** *even though I was formerly a blasphemer [of our Lord] and a persecutor [of His church] and a shameful and outrageous and violent aggressor [toward believers]. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted out of ignorance in unbelief.* ***14*** *The grace of our Lord [His amazing, unmerited favor and*

blessing] flowed out in superabundance [for me, together] with the faith and love which are [realized] in Christ Jesus. ***15*** *This is a faithful and trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance and approval, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost.* ***16*** *Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost [of sinners], Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example or pattern for those who would believe in Him for eternal life.* ***17*** *Now to the King of the ages [eternal], immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.*

Paul thanks Jesus for choosing him, for trusting him even though he had formerly been a chief enemy of the Gospel, for appointing him to serve, and for empowering him. Paul knew that it was for service and not honor that he was chosen, and he knew that he could not serve in his own strength but only in the strength of Jesus Christ.

We know that the Jews sinned and then made sacrifices to atone for their sins. Barclay, however, tells us that, in the strictest Jewish teaching on the subject of sin, the atonement for sin could only be made with a sacrifice if that sin was either committed in a moment of passion and not premeditated or committed in ignorance. Many of these strict Jews believe

that there also must be genuine, heartfelt sorrow for the sin, if the sacrifice was to be accept by God.

In verse 14 Paul is saying that God's grace is greater than his sin. Biblical scholar E.F. Brown believes that this verse indicates that Paul came to realize this grace as he experienced the faith and love he found in the Christian Church.

In verse 15 we see the growth of Paul's character:

THE APOSTLE PAUL'S ESTIMATION OF HIMSELF

24 years after his conversion-

"I am the least of all apostles."

(1st Corinthians 15:9)

30 years after his conversion-

"Who am less than the least of the saints"

(Ephesians 3:8)

39 years after his conversion-

"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am chief."

(1st Timothy 1:15)

Verse 16 tells us that Jesus showed longsuffering or patience with Paul, a sinful man, so that this would be a pattern to encourage future believers to come to Jesus. In other words, if He would forgive Paul for what he had done, He would forgive anyone.

In verse 17 Paul gives a benediction, giving the characteristics of King Jesus: eternal, immortal, invisible, and wise.

Charge to Timothy

18 *This command I entrust to you, Timothy, my son, in accordance with the prophecies previously made concerning you, so that [inspired and aided] by them you may fight the good fight [in contending with false teachers],* ***19*** *keeping your faith [leaning completely on God with absolute trust and confidence in His guidance] and having a good conscience; for some [people] have rejected [their moral compass] and have made a shipwreck of their faith.* ***20*** *Among these are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan, so that they will be disciplined and taught not to blaspheme.*

Apparently, some of the prophets of the early Church met to consider what to do about the issues threatening the new Church. They came to the conclusion that they should raise up Timothy to deal with these issues. Paul charges his son in the faith with this responsibility and encourages him to walk in faith and a good conscience. This responsibility would not involve just one battle but a campaign or, as we say today, not a sprint but a marathon. Timothy is not to respond as a draftee conscripted to serve, but a servant who volunteers to serve the Lord.

Even when things are the darkest in his life, he must walk by faith and believe both in the rightness of his cause and in the ultimate triumph of God. He must have a good conscience, endeavoring to always try to live what he preaches.

Alexander and Hymenaeus did not keep their faith and walk in a good conscience. First, they allowed their own desires to be more persuasive than the voice of God. Secondly, they had slipped some ungodly practices in their ministries. Thirdly, they had fallen into false doctrine.

Barclay gives three possible meanings to the phrase *"handed them over to Satan"*:

1. Paul might be referring to the Jewish practice of excommunication. If a man was judged an evildoer, he was first publically rebuked. If this did not turn him around, he was next banished from the synagogue for thirty days. If he still did not repent, he was put out of the synagogue permanently and barred from any fellowship or social gatherings with other Jews and with God.
2. Paul might simply be saying that he has barred them from the Church and turned them over to the world, which is Satan's domain.
3. Finally, the most likely explanation is that

Paul is praying that these two men be subjected to some painful condition as a warning to others and a punishment to discipline them so that they would be brought back to their senses. Satan was thought to be responsible for human suffering and pain. Thus, turning them over to Satan would result in their suffering and pain (see 1st Corinthians 5:5).