

1 Timothy 1:1-5

Instructions to Timothy

Fight, Keep Fighting, Finish!

Love vs. Controversy



At 25, I became the pastor of my first church! I had arrived, and I was ready to enjoy the ride. I expected it to be a smooth sailing. It was not long before I figured out that I had the wrong idea about church ministry. Looking back, I know that I had never been so miserable and frustrated than I became in that first church! It was just hard going! Many people there were unsupportive, unappreciative, and critical - at least, that is what I heard and observed from them. For the most part, I felt unprepared, ineffective, and alone. I left that church after only 2 ½ years in what felt like bitter defeat. My second church ended up being similar. What began wonderfully ended tragically! But I have to say that I was learning. I am a slow learner, so after 6 years there, it took another resignation and about a half year of contemplating what had actually happened, for me to learn the most important lesson about ministry. The lesson I learned, (the hard way), is that ministry is **warfare!**



[Eph. 6:12]

With my perspective appropriately adjusted, and with what I had learned, about three years after my resignation I took on what appeared to be a difficult position in Clintonville. In fact, the church had once been described to Karen and I as a **very** bad church! But I felt the call of God to be a pastor once more – **especially** with what was being classified as a difficult church. I wanted to try to use what I had learned **at** difficult churches to help a difficult church! It ended up being a pretty good fit. I found it was not really a troubled church, because it had good leadership by that point, so I actually found it to be a good church. ! At any rate, I sure have been here a long time, and my experience of this church has not been anything like my former churches. I think it is probably because, with experience, I had begun to figure out the hard way what I was actually supposed to do as a pastor – what was important and what wasn't! So, God has been good to give us to each other! I have loved being here and serving Jesus among you. You have also ministered to me and restored my confidence that Jesus is involved in the fight and we are **never** alone! This is HIS church and He does the most amazing things among us! I've said it before, that to have a front row seat to view what God is doing among us, excites and energizes me as nothing else can!

Paul was trying to encourage this young pastor named Timothy to lead his congregation! It is hard for a young pastor to truly know what to do in the role of leadership. A young pastor can be full of self-doubt, and the people that criticize and talk behind his back only bring this out of him. This leads to an even shakier start in the ministry. Perhaps this was a case of an older pastor helping a younger and inexperienced pastor stay on track. To the inexperienced and unpracticed person working in the church, there seems to be so many distractions and rabbit trails – so many things that are like knocking your head against a wall! So Timothy needed the experience of a man to help him stay on task! Paul was instructing him in what he had to do at that particular church – the church in Ephesus. Paul had been there in Ephesus, and had seen the church’s peculiarities and potential problems, (every church has them) and he was telling Timothy how to lead them through – what battles to fight – for there are ALWAYS battles that we need to engage in – and not necessarily in what you would think, and how you would think to fight them!



We have three main enemies that we always struggle against. I’ve already pointed out that **we fight against Satan**, that old serpent, and his hordes of demons! They are engaged in a war against God and His purposes. Anything that they can do to exploit the weaknesses of Christ-followers will certainly result in keeping us out of the game, so that when God wants to use us, and calls us to do His will – to accomplish something within His purposes - we are incapable or unwilling!! They bring in people that will cause trouble in a church - to hurt and mislead - anything, or anyone that will ferment and perpetuate discord!

~The **2nd enemy** we battle against is the world! The world is controlled by its surly prince – Satan, with all his minions. It is culture, conventional wisdom, tradition, the way things are done! The world system is represented by what everyone believes is best. It is the discussions in coffee shops, or cafeterias, where people agree. It is the values promoted and re-enforced in in the universities, in the entertainment industry, in TV and internet commercials. It saturates the way people think, and the way they relate to each other and the way they do business. It is the **lying and deceit** – disproved of publicly, but approved of behind the scenes – because it is practiced everywhere! It is the **cruelty**, the hard **one-upmanship**, the **pride**, and the continual **lust for more**! It is far more powerful of a pull upon our thinking, our attitude, our emotions, and our choices than we suspect! To go against it is like rowing against a strong river current!

~The **3rd enemy** we fight against is ourselves. We are heavily inclined to do virtually **everything** wrong! We excel in self-destructive behaviors that run in predictable patterns - stupidly excessive ones! We are **easily** pulled into addictions and obsessions! We eat too much and make the unhealthy choices all the time! Many tend to prefer sex as a thing of **lust of conquest** and/or **power**, rather than love! We act and speak in blind **anger** and **rage**! We slink into green-eyed jealousy when someone else succeeds before we do! We exalt in winning, but to win we have to make someone experience the humiliation of losing - and we don’t care! We are also quite easily drawn into a lie, (amazingly) preferring preposterous/fantastic/poisonous fabrications in place of the truth! Everywhere in the world people are deceived - by their own choice they are deceived – and are suffering terribly for it!

The point is that every pastor has to combat these three powerful enemies *in himself* **AND** in his congregation! Paul points out that Timothy's first priority is to deal with a burgeoning problem in his congregation. *Burgeoning* means growing - a mushrooming outward, a flourishing of something! What was going on was not an uncommon problem in the early church. The Jews that had grown up in Judaism were rising up in many congregations. They couldn't handle the apostle's teaching that salvation was by grace and grace through Jesus alone - that the works of the Mosaic Law could not supplement it. They had grown up on the Law. They loved the Law! They felt strongly that it was their mission in life to keep the old ways alive - to reinstitute the basic elements of the Law in the church! But contrary to what these people thought, the Holy Spirit had led the apostles to teach that Jesus had *fulfilled* the Law. The person of the risen Jesus was needed for salvation. The cross of Christ fully dealt with the human sin problem - not the inadequate animal sacrifices and the requirements of Jewish holy days, priestly vestments and ritual, circumcision, food laws - none of that mattered any longer! But there were Jews that were unconvinced! How could God change the formula of salvation just like that! But, of course, it was never changed! Many of the Jews did not know enough yet to know that the law was created and instituted by God to point the way to Jesus and verify Him! Everything about the temple worship, the holy days, the sacrificial system was a picture of the completed plan of salvation that was fully and completely fulfilled upon the cross of Jesus Christ! There, at Calvary, God had taken care of salvation! He demanded to do it, and was insisting that humans keep their grubby little hands out of it! But these people were trying to re-introduce the works of the Law to supplement the cross. Keep the sabbath; observe Passover, be circumcised, don't eat pork (*including **bacon***), etc.! Then you will be saved! But it was all wrong! The apostles were in agreement on this! They remembered clearly that Jesus had taught that **He** was the fulfillment - the goal - the end game of the Mosaic Law! After the cross the Holy Spirit was free to take up residence within sin-tainted people - a thing not possible before the cross. He was tasked with empowering Christ-followers to have clean hearts and pure motives. He was tasked with giving Christ-followers the courage and power to go out and spread the good news of the gospel! And He was tasked with transforming the human spirit by first and foremost giving us love for people! Not a superficial love, but a tough, enduring love running deep and active!



So, first, Timothy was tasked to stop this infection in the congregation! He was told by Paul to stand firm against the Judaizers. Their idea of Christianity was a false one. Even if their motives were good, the outcome would have been disastrous – something God would not have approved of! It would have been a regression, not a progression - a going backward, not a growing forward! But people also were arguing about the genealogy of Jesus. There were evidently a number of genealogies floating around, and some were heatedly arguing over it. It was senseless and unprovable, but still they argued! I am not sure what “myths” Paul is referring to, but obviously stories had grown up that strayed from the apostles teachings. The Gnostics were good for making things up about Jesus and writing things that tried to add to the gospel record things that were not approved of by the apostles because they knew them not to be true! So they were myths – stories about Jesus made up from someone’s imagination! It took a special cynicism to make things up about Jesus. Only a wolf among the sheep would be capable of doing such a thing, but it got people arguing over stupid and useless appendages to the gospel! Paul tells Timothy to stand guard and to stand tall against these myths and to silence the people who were promoting them!



The goal of the gospel was to spread the love of God to a world that needed Him desperately, not to divide over stupid theological rabbit trails. As long as Satan could keep the church embroiled in controversy and disputations, or any other unproductive doctrine or practice, they were paralyzed from doing what they were supposed to do! Now – some disputes are necessary because they must be confronted and stopped. Timothy was to employ his role in leadership to do that! But the goal is to get beyond them and for the church to rejoin the purposes of God!

Paul refers to “**this command**” in vs 5, referring back to his “**command**” in vs. 3 to confront those in the congregation spreading falsehoods! The goal of this command to confront and stop the threat to the congregation, is so that love and it’s attributes could have a social environment in the church where agape love, God’s love, could flourish once again! This is an important reminder, folks! If the church is not healthy because the leadership is halting, fearful, and flimsy, and there is no discipline, and leaders are not doing the right thing – then the church loses its way! People become untrustful of each other – making little or no effort to right wrongs, or to resolve disputes – because someone might leave the church - then we become a mirror of the world and its system, rather than a portrait of Christ! That is NOT the church – not the beloved bride of Christ – not those with their lamps trimmed and ready for their beloved bridegroom!

Jesus had reduced the 10 commands to only one again. That command was to love each other – to love people. And Jesus explained that in fulfilling just that one law, a person would fulfill the whole of the 10 commands! That is because, of course, when you love people, you don't ever do them wrong! You always do right by them! Jesus wanted to develop a spiritual kingdom on earth – a subculture flourishing in and among every culture on earth through the churches – a kingdom/subculture where the rule of God prevailed - and where the unusual and standout love of the Kingdom's citizens for each other **and** for those outside of that Kingdom was its primary feature! The Creator/God was introducing a piece of heaven into a world that had completely lost touch with its Creator, and through this means of people loving people - drawing more souls into His loving embrace! In a sea of humanity whose primary features were insincerity, selfish motives, impurity from unclean hearts – it was the transformed lives of Christ-followers that made the True God stand out! The transformed life – the life God created within a person who gave themselves to Him, was characterized by a **pure (clean) heart** from choosing to **stay** clean, a **good conscience** from always doing the right thing, and a **sincere and real faith** – not a fake faith, and not a faith that was for appearances, or was mere talk! No, it was the real deal – consistent and steady! It was, and is, a Kingdom of people who are primarily who they present themselves to be, or are truly in transit - carried along by the Holy Spirit - to being those people – people who live the life of God from the inside out! These are people who the Devil has a hard time influencing, who the world cannot pressure, and who are willing and eager to listen to the Holy Spirit in what they will do and will not do! They are people of the new self, of God, who cannot, will not, go back to the old!

