

1) LESSONS FROM 1. EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY

Chapter 1:1-7

I.

Introduction

Timothy is a remarkable character in NT Scriptures. We can find him there, where there was a special need for the cause of Christ. We find him with Paul going through the regions of Asia Minor as well as in Europe, teaching gospel and converting the lost to Christ. We find him away from Paul on missions to fix some problems that existed among Christians in different places. One of these missions was in Ephesus. I would like to consider challenges he was facing as well as instructions how to deal with them written to him by Paul who left him in Ephesus. These things are recorded in 1. Epistle to Timothy. First, let's consider Timothy. What do we know about him?

II.

What do we know about Timothy?

From what we can tell from the Scriptures Timothy was a young man (1. Timothy 4:12) at the time when Paul wrote this letter. His mother and grandmother were Christians (2. Timothy 1:5, Acts 16:1). They taught him the Holy Scriptures. From childhood he knew the Holy Scriptures, which were able to make him wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus (2. Timothy 3:15). Young Christian Timothy is mentioned when Paul on his 2nd missionary journey got to Derbe and Lystra. Timothy had a good testimony of brethren (Acts 16:2). Timothy became Paul's companion and fellow-worker in preaching gospel (Romans 16:21, 2. Corinthians 1:1). Timothy was with Paul during his 2nd and 3rd missionary journeys (Acts 16:2, 17:14-15, 18:5, 20:4, 19:). He was with Paul when Paul taught gospel in Ephesus (Acts 19:10-11, 17, 21-22) and established Christian church in this center of pagan worship of goddess Artemis. In case of special need, Paul sent Timothy to work with Christians in a different city (1. Corinthians 4:17). In case of special need Paul left Timothy behind in a city he himself passed through. This was the case of Ephesus. Paul left Timothy here to fix some problems. This was a difficult job to do considering Timothy's youth. He had to deal with teachers of different doctrines (1. Timothy 1:3) that local Christians themselves did not seem to be able to deal with effectively. He had to deal with, instruct and correct Christians who were much older than him (1. Timothy 5:1-10) as well as Christians of young age (1. Timothy 5:11-16). This was a very responsible job, that required a wise man with knowledge of Scriptures, who was able not only to teach the truth, but to teach it in such a way that it would build Christians and church in Ephesus instead of tearing them down. We can learn from this letter how to conduct ourselves in dealing with other Christians, especially when trying to fix eventual problems if they arise in our church in future.

Let me add that Paul loved Timothy as his dearly beloved son and Timothy had likewise a close relationship with Paul (2. Timothy 1:2-4). Now, let us turn our attention to chapter 1.

III.

Chapter 1:1-2

Is Jesus person different from God?

1Ti 1:1 ¶ Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope, 2 To Timothy, my true child in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

This is the introduction of the letter. We are introduced to the writer and the addressee of the letter - Paul and Timothy. Here we also learn of Paul's credentials: **an apostle of Christ Jesus by command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope**. Obviously these credentials are not directed to Timothy, but rather to those who opposed Paul's apostleship and his teachings.

Apostle means messenger. Paul was a messenger and messenger is someone who carries a message of someone else. It is not his own message, but message of the one who sent him. The content of the message does not rest on authority of the messenger, but on the authority of the one who sent him.

The One who sent Paul was Christ Jesus. As we have read this appointment did not rest solely on Jesus' authority, but was backed by command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope. The highest existing authority, the authority of God was behind Paul's commission to be the messenger of Christ Jesus. Thus the message he carries is not only message of Christ Jesus, but also of God. As a man who was seeking to do God's will, Paul decided to obey God's command.

In the past I was puzzled with Paul's statements like the one in 1. Timothy 1:1 where he seems to differentiate between Jesus Christ and God as if Jesus Christ was person different from God. Some people interpret such verses in such a way that Jesus is not God. This creates problem: Is Jesus God or not?

This problem can be solved based on the principle of harmony of the Scriptures. Scriptures were inspired by God, therefore they cannot teach two conflicting things – on one hand that Jesus is God and on the other hand that Jesus is not God. Only one of these two alternatives can be the truth. Now how are we going to determine what is the truth? To determine the truth we must interpret pertinent NT passages in such a way that they do not contradict each other, but are in mutual harmony.

Let's answer the following questions:

1) ***Is there an explicit testimony in the Scriptures that Jesus is God? Yes.:***

Joh 1:1 ¶ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

2 The same was in the beginning with God.

3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

Joh 1:14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

Joh 20:26 ¶ And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, "Peace to you!"

27 Then He said to Thomas, "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing."

28 And Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!"

29 Jesus said to him, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

2) ***Is there an explicit testimony in the Scriptures that Jesus is not an angel – created spiritual being. Yes.:***

Heb 1:1 ¶ God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the

prophets,

2 has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;

3 who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

4 ¶ having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

5 For to which of the angels did He ever say: "You are My Son, Today I have begotten You"? And again: "I will be to Him a Father, And He shall be to Me a Son"?

6 But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says: "Let all the angels of God worship Him."

7 And of the angels He says: "Who makes His angels spirits And His ministers a flame of fire."

8 But to the Son He says: "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your Kingdom.

9 You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You With the oil of gladness more than Your companions."

10 And: "You, LORD, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, And the heavens are the work of Your hands.

11 They will perish, but You remain; And they will all grow old like a garment;

12 Like a cloak You will fold them up, And they will be changed. But You are the same, And Your years will not fail."

13 But to which of the angels has He ever said: "Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool"?

14 Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?

Php 2:10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth,

11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Heb 2:5 ¶ For it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we are speaking.

3) Is there an explicit testimony in the Scriptures that Jesus is only a man? No.

In fact there is an explicit testimony that Jesus who is God, emptied Himself and came to this world in human flesh to die for our sins:

Php 2:5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,

6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,

7 but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.

8 And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.

9 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name,

10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Thus all the above testimonies are in harmony that Jesus is God.

Now, what about passages like 1. Timothy 1:1 that seem to differentiate between Jesus Christ and God as if Jesus Christ was a different person from God. Their interpretations in such a way that Jesus is not God clearly go against explicit testimonies of Jesus' deity and therefore are not in harmony with the rest of the Scriptures.

In the light of the above arguments, the only alternative that can be the truth is that Jesus is God. Because of the principle of harmony of the Scriptures, interpretation of none of the verses of the NT can compromise the established truth that Jesus is God.

The above said means that in verses like 1. Timothy 1:1 Paul does not deal with nature of Jesus and he does not say here that Jesus is different from God, because the truth about His divine nature is clearly established in other parts of the Scriptures. (Likewise is established divine nature of Holy Spirit in the Scriptures.) Therefore Paul must be dealing with something else here. What is it? Paul was the messenger of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ literally sent him. So this is the true statement. Nevertheless, Jesus Christ, does not do anything just on His own authority. Father, Son and the Holy Spirit work in perfect harmony. Their will is in harmony. That united will in imperative form expressed toward Paul by any of the persons of God is the command of God, so even this statement is the truth. Now, only God is the Savior, whether in OT or in NT. All three persons of God had to do with the salvation of men:

1Pe 1:2 Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.

1Co 6:11 And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

Joh 3:5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

Father made the plan of salvation. Jesus died for our sins so that we can be saved. Spirit delivered God's will to men and confirmed its truthfulness by His power. By obedience to God's will we are saved. Is God the Savior? Yes! This is also the true statement.

Now, how is Christ Jesus our hope? He took the punishment of death for our sins upon His flesh. By raising from the dead to life, Jesus overcame death and gave us the hope in the same victory. All what Paul wrote in 1. Timothy 1:1 is the truth and one does not need to compromise the truth that Jesus is God. He is not God in the sense that only He himself is this highest Being. He is God, because He has divine nature.

In other words, Paul in 1. Timothy 1:1 does not deal with nature of Jesus, but with Jesus' role in God's plan of salvation. Thanks to Jesus' sacrifice, He is our hope for eternal life.

In v. 2 Paul expresses his close relationship to Timothy in faith (they were very close spiritual family) and wishes him greatest spiritual blessings - Grace (undeserved gift of salvation), mercy (forgiveness of sins - salvation), and peace (reconciliation - salvation) from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. Here Paul clearly differentiates between two persons of God – God the Father and Lord Jesus Christ. The distinction has to do again with their roles in the plan of salvation, not with their nature. Paul does not say here that only Father is God, while Jesus is not. They both share the same divine nature as it is clearly established in other Scriptures. Once again harmony of the Scriptures

applies. By the way if you miss Holy Spirit in this verse, He is not missing, because He inspired Paul to write this verse.

IV.
Chapter 1:3-7

How to deal with other Christians and what to do when solving problems in church?

3 As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine,

4 nor to occupy themselves with myths and endless genealogies which promote speculations rather than the divine training that is in faith;

5 ¶ whereas the aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and sincere faith.

6 Certain persons by swerving from these have wandered away into vain discussion,

7 desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make assertions.

After the introduction, Paul focused his attention to the major problem that had to be fixed in the church in Ephesus. Let's notice here an indication of urgency on the part of Paul. He urged Timothy to remain at Ephesus while he was going to Macedonia that he may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, nor to occupy themselves with myths and endless genealogies which promote speculations rather than the divine training that is in faith. These persons swerved from the true aim of Christian charge which is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and sincere faith and engaged into vain discussion. They desired to be teachers of the law, but did not have understanding either what they were saying or the things about which they made assertions.

Who were these people? Paul did not write. Paul worked over 2 years in Ephesus and he taught gospel to Jews on the first place and when they rejected Christ he departed from them and separated his disciples. Then he taught everyone who was interested, whether Jews or gentiles:

Ac 19:8 ¶ And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God.

9 But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus.

Ac 19:10 And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.

The description of these people as the ones who occupied themselves with myths and endless genealogies which promote speculations and who desired to be teachers of the law, but did not have understanding either what they were saying or the things about which they made assertions, fits well to the Christians of Jewish origin.

Describing those persons as "certain persons" indicates disapprobation but also discretion on the part of Paul in contrast with other persons who Paul delivered to Satan because of their blasphemy:

1Ti 1:19 holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting conscience, certain persons have made shipwreck of their faith,

20 among them Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.

2Ti 2:16 Avoid such godless chatter, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness,
17 and their talk will eat its way like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus,
18 who have swerved from the truth by holding that the resurrection is past already. They are upsetting the faith of some.

Paul was not partial to people. Therefore, it seems to me that his discretion had to do with lesser offence of the certain persons compare to the very grave offence of Hymenaeus and Alexander.

These certain persons taught some different – that is not sound – doctrines. They wasted their time with myths and useless genealogies that promoted speculations instead of divine training in faith (spiritual growth). They did not follow fully the true aim of Christian charge which is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and sincere faith, but swerved from it into vain discussion. They desired to be teachers of the law, but did not have understanding either what they were saying or the things about which they made assertions. This was a problem for the church that could grow into a greater problem if not tackled. However, it does not seem to compare with blasphemy of Hymenaeus and Alexander. There was still a good chance that the certain people could be brought back to the truth without having to be called by names.

Now, how was Timothy to deal with those teachers of different doctrines? Paul admonished him to charge these people not to teach any different doctrines, etc. What did Paul had on mind by that? Timothy go and command these people not to teach some false things, etc.? Would not be better if Paul, the man of authority of apostle given by Jesus Christ commanded such to these people had they departed from the truth? That's what Paul did in case of erring Thessalonian Christians:

2Th 3:11 For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies.

2Th 3:12 Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.

We do not know under what circumstances Paul gave these instructions to Timothy. All we know, Paul had some reason to leave for Macedonia and before he departed he urged Timothy to take care of this problem and prevent certain persons from doing certain things.

Paul wrote Timothy: “charge” certain persons... The Greek word is *paraggello*, *par-ang-gel'-lo* and it means to transmit a message, i.e. (by implication) to enjoin:--(give in) charge, (give) command (-ment), declare. In KJV it is mostly translated as command or commandment.

Paul also wrote to Timothy, that he needed to deal with other fellow Christians as with family members:

1Ti 5:1 ¶ Do not rebuke an older man but exhort him as you would a father; treat younger men like brothers,

2 older women like mothers, younger women like sisters, in all purity.

This is how we need to deal with one another even in case of solving problems because we are members of the same spiritual family in Christ, the children of God. No one ever solved any problem in family by showing lack of proper respect to other family members.

Therefore, I do not think that one should get an idea that Timothy based on Paul's letter on nearest occasion publicly called certain persons' names in the church and commanded them to quit teaching false things or else they would be expelled from the church. This would not help the spiritual growth either of these people or church.

What Paul seems to have on mind was for Timothy to counter these people continuously with instructions of sound teaching and thus exposing their errors to them as well as to other Christians in Ephesus. All that needed to be done in love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and sincere faith. This was the way how Timothy could reclaim them for truth and help to build the church instead of tearing it apart.

This is a good lesson for us how to deal with those who teach different doctrines in the church, should we encounter such problem in future.

Prague, September 11, 2010
Last revision November 14, 2010

Robert Hodanko