

The Charge to Timothy – Part 5

Introduction

a. objectives

1. subject – Paul's greeting and charge to Timothy: confront those who teach false doctrine in the church
2. aim – to cause us to understand the importance of sound doctrine as central to godliness
3. passage – 1 Timothy 1:1-20

b. outline

1. The Greeting into the Charge (1 Timothy 1:1-2)
2. The Substance of the Charge (1 Timothy 1:3-6)
3. The Target of the Charge (1 Timothy 1:7-11)
4. The Basis of the Charge (1 Timothy 1:12-20)

c. opening

1. the **core** of the letter
 - a. **principle: the church of Jesus Christ is defined by the boundaries of its doctrinal truth**
 1. the church ceases to be the church when it embraces as its central priority something “other” than apostolic truth – this letter is a charge to Timothy in this regard ...
2. the **substance** of the charge
 - a. the nature of the charge = challenge the **heterodoxy** that has invaded the church; restore sound doctrine to its core, and lead people away from the “*endless speculations*” that have detracted from the main goal of being a follower of Jesus (**i.e. what:** to confront error)
 - b. the aim of the charge = to speak and fellowship in love (**i.e. why:** because its loving to do so)
 - c. the origin of the charge = a pure heart, a clean conscience, and a *sincere* faith (**i.e. from:** the very character of Christ himself: *Christlikeness*)
 - d. the target of the charge (**i.e. against who:** those who wish to control others)
 1. “*teachers*” = those who desire to be authorities, governing the beliefs and actions of others, twisting what is good into something else to hold others under their **power**
 2. “*of the law*” = using an informal “*law*” against believers, forcing upon them new ways of “*thinking*”, designed to a) conform behavior to their standards, and b) hold the church under their power, control, and direction – ultimately, as a diversion from what really matters
 - a. **although the law has the good purpose of revealing the depths of sin in the nature of unregenerate men, ultimately it is the gospel that saves – new forms of “law-keeping” should never substitute for the grace of God revealed in the gospel**
 - e. (**now**) the personal nature of the charge (**i.e. the basis:** from *what* does this charge emanate?)
 1. Paul now turns *personal* in order to convince Timothy of the importance of this matter – to convince him that this charge is *utterly personal* in nature and importance
 - a. **note:** the gospel was “*entrusted*” to Paul (**v. 11**) – it was a message given *specifically* to him
 2. **principle: Paul considers the gospel so critical that he takes it very personal indeed when someone messes with its substance**
 - a. **note:** it is the “*entrusted*” nature of the gospel message that causes Paul to “go personal”
 - b. Paul will speak about the *central message* of the gospel as to *himself* (**vv. 12-17**), and then speak directly to Timothy about the importance of this message *to him* (**vv. 18-20**)

IV. The Basis of the Charge (1 Timothy 1:12-20)

Content

a. the personal nature of the gospel to Paul (vv. 12-17)

1. Paul's regard for his calling in Christ (**v. 12**)
 - a. he is thankful for “*strength*” = what it takes to proclaim the gospel in the face of opposition
 1. **remember:** Paul is writing this *after* having been imprisoned for >4 years, and after all of the various kinds of opposition recorded in Acts during his missionary endeavors
 - b. he is thankful that Christ “*appointed me to his service*” = set apart by Christ to the gospel mission
 1. **note:** this was *never* a “libertarian” choice on the part of Paul; Christ *intervened* in Paul's life to radically alter his **destiny** (see below)

- c. he is thankful that Christ “*judged me faithful*” = *determined* that Paul would execute this task well
 - 1. **question:** is Paul suggesting that the *reason* Christ called him was because he “*judged*” (perceived) that Paul could be (or would be) a faithful gospel witness?
 - 2. **answer #1: no** – Christ *purposed* for Paul to be his ambassador to the Gentiles, even though his nature was rebellious (see v. 13a) – Jesus did not “offer” Paul an opportunity because he “*judged*” that Paul would “take it”; he *intervened* in the course of Paul’s rebellious existence
 - 3. **answer #2: yes** – Christ *purposed* for Paul to be *faithful* as this ambassador – Jesus not only *intervened* to draw Paul out of sin, he also *purposed* for Paul to be a faithful witness of the gospel – Christ “*judged*” that Paul would be effective because *he* would make it so
 - a. **i.e.** “*I thank him who has given me strength*” – the only reason Paul has been effective
- 2. Paul’s recognition of his own rebel nature (v. 13a)
 - a. he recognizes who he *really was*, prior to his conversion and calling
 - 1. “*blasphemer*” = slanderer or reviler; someone who speaks against the *name* of God
 - a. direct or indirect violations of the Fourth Commandment (i.e. “*in vain*”, worthlessly)
 - b. Jesus was accused of blasphemy because he dared to take the name of God (Mark 14:64)
 - c. by speaking against Jesus, Paul sees himself as having committed blasphemy
 - 2. “*persecutor*” = attacker; hater; someone who attacks the *works* of God, esp. the church
 - a. Paul knows his own zeal in the persecution of the young church, starting at the martyrdom of Stephen (Acts 8:1 cf. Phil. 3:6)
 - 3. “*insolent opponent*” = insulter; violent aggressor; someone who cannot be turned
 - a. **e.g.** an insolent child is one that will not accept correction; cannot be disciplined enough
 - b. he implies that this is the *normal state* of the unregenerate:
 - 1. they have a **nature of blasphemy** as they take the name of God upon themselves
 - 2. they have a **nature of persecution** as they attack anything given by God that reveals their sin
 - 3. they have a **nature of insolence** as they steadfastly refuse the discipline of God over them
 - 4. Paul knows that without the *intervention* of Jesus, he would have remained locked in this state
- 3. Paul’s reception of mercy in the grace of faith and love (vv. 13b-14)
 - a. “*mercy*” = the act of God whereby he *bypasses* the outcome of his justice upon the sinner
 - 1. whereas grace is the *radical choice of God* to act *contrary* to what his own nature demands,
 - 2. mercy is the *specific act* whereby God *bypasses* what we deserve in his justice
 - 3. **i.e.** mercy is the *opposite* of justice – justice demands punishment, mercy bypasses it
 - 4. **principle: mercy is the one thing most needed by human beings from their Creator**
 - a. **point:** there is a great deal of discussion today (in the church) about *justice*: social justice, **i.e.** economic, racial, gender, sexual identity, etc. – everyone is *clamoring* for justice
 - b. but, all of these forms of “justice” are hollow, impossible for sinful men to accomplish, and only focused on the “horizontal” aspect of human existence
 - c. **fact: all human beings will receive justice, but that justice will be as God balances the scales of sin and rebellion against himself – thus, what we really need is mercy**
 - b. he knows that the intervention of Christ was an act of mercy (v. 14)
 - 1. “*acted ignorantly in unbelief*” = he didn’t even know how deeply rebellious he really was
 - a. even as a Pharisee and religious zealot, he was still an utter rebel against God
 - 2. “*grace ... overflowed ... faith and love*” = the *concrete* gifts given to him by God in his mercy
 - a. the gift of faith – the ability to trust in this Jesus as his Savior and Lord (Eph. 2:8-9)
 - b. the gift of love – the ability to love God and his ways, particularly in this calling (Eph. 5:1ff)
 - c. he understands that the **heart of the gospel** (his entrusted message) is the mercy of God which is extended over the rebellious through the power of faith in Jesus Christ (see next)
- 4. Paul’s recounting of the central truth of the gospel (v. 15) – the point of this pericope
 - a. he establishes a principle at the heart of his own *personal experience* and his *mission*:
 - 1. “*the saying ...*” = the principle that he is about to lay down; a *core concept* in his mission
 - 2. “*is trustworthy ...*” = it is a principle that must be *believed*, even as a matter of life and death
 - 3. “*deserving of full acceptance*” = it is a principle that *governs* every aspect of human existence
 - 4. namely, that “*Christ Jesus came into the world*” = God the Son entered into his own creation
 - 5. “*to save sinners*” = to rescue sinners from the danger lurking over them
 - b. he knows this is the **heart of the gospel**, although it is *rejected* by many claiming to be Christians
 - 1. for liberals and (now) many evangelicals, “*to save*” = to be rescued from the various forms of oppression in this world (e.g. poverty, sickness, racism, “homophobia”, etc.) – they see the coming of Jesus as the “beginning” of an overthrow of these in the human experience
 - a. **however:** Jesus never solved anyone’s poverty, he healed only a few, he raised only a few

- b. like the “*false teachers*” at Ephesus, those who push this agenda in the church do so as a *diversion* from what really matters – turning this into a new “*law*” for believers
- 2. for Paul, “*to save*” = to be rescued from the *justice* of God, to be saved from God’s *righteous wrath* over sin, to be given *mercy* rather than eternal judgment (**Matt. 10:28**)
“And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.”
 - a. his own testimony (**see above**) bears this out – **Paul was saved from God by God**
- c. he knows that this is the central message of Christianity, *and the central message of the church*
 - 1. Paul takes it **very personally** when people in the church begin to “twist” this message
 - 2. because it was the **very thing** that Paul had been saved by Christ to preach
 - 3. therefore, it is essential that the church **get this right**
- d. **“warmth” or “success” or “size” or “programs” or “relevance” or “worship style” or a “celebrity pastor” or (even) a “social justice agenda” are all focuses other than the central message of Christianity; foci which “enslaves” believers to a form of “church” that isn’t a true church of Christ at all – we preach *mercy*, not false forms of *justice*!**