

# CHURCH OF GOD PUBLICATIONS

## #DiscipleshipTuesday



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# Living the Grace Life

1 Timothy 1:1-20

## Unit Theme:

Pastoral Epistles

## Central Truth:

Sound doctrine is the foundation for living a balanced Christian life.

## Focus:

Examine the purposes of law and grace, and embrace their provision.

## Context:

Paul's first letter to Timothy was written from Macedonia around AD 63.

## Golden Text:

"The grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 1:14).

## Study Outline:

- I. Live by Sound Doctrine (1 Tim. 1:3-7, 19-20)
- II. Use the Law Lawfully (1 Tim. 1:8-11)
- III. Live in God's Grace (1 Tim. 1:12-18)

## INTRODUCTION

What is the key to living the Christian life? It seems that every year or two, we hear a new answer to that question. Some teachers have insisted that the key is constant praise, or our ability to claim God's promises by faith, while others have told us we must simply love one another. Still others say prayer is the vital factor in Christian living. We have been told at various times that the key is a return to fasting, or to Jewish traditions, or to Saturday worship.

While no one would deny the essential value of faith, love, prayer, fasting, or the Lord's Supper, none of these elements alone provide the key to the Christian life. Overemphasis on one single aspect of our walk with God leads to an imbalance. In his letters to Timothy, Paul is concerned to correct the errors and imbalances in the church at Ephesus.

Timothy, whose mother was a Jew but whose father was a Greek, was converted in his hometown of Lystra as a result of Paul's first missionary journey (Acts 14:6-20), and he accompanied Paul on his second missionary journey (16:1-3). He helped Paul in the writing of several of his letters (2 Cor. 1:1), and he preached in Thessalonica and Corinth on behalf of Paul (Acts 17:13-14; 18:5; 19:22).

Apparently, Timothy was uneasy or fearful about taking on the responsibilities of leading the church at Ephesus (see 2 Tim. 1:6-13). Paul writes to encourage him and to give pastoral advice regarding vital issues of doctrine, leadership, and Christian living. First and 2 Timothy and Titus are often called the "Pastoral Epistles" because they address issues of pastoral leadership. These three letters of Paul are addressed to individuals, whereas Paul's other letters (except for Philemon) are addressed to church congregations.

In his first letter to Timothy, Paul warns him about the dangers of false teachers and provides direction for various aspects of church life, including proper behavior during worship, issues in caring for people in need, and qualifications for church leaders.

In this lesson, Paul lays a foundation for sound doctrine and for the Christian life based on a proper understanding of the relationship between law and grace. Our relationship with God is founded not upon what *we can do* but upon what *God does* through His grace!

## I. LIVE BY SOUND DOCTRINE (1 Tim. 1:3-7, 19-20)

Paul begins his letter by stating the basis on which he writes to Timothy. First, Paul writes as one who has authority—he is an “apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God” (v. 1). His ministry was not his own choosing; rather, his calling came by commandment of God. Second, he writes to Timothy as one who has a relationship—Timothy is his “own son in the faith” (v. 2). Paul was instrumental both in the conversion of Timothy and in his discipleship and training in the ministry (Phil. 2:22). In light of Paul’s introduction, Timothy would likely receive his words as authoritative instructions and guidance. But he would also receive the letter as the loving admonitions of a spiritual father.

### A. Stay on Course (vv. 3-4)

**3. As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine,**

**4. Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do.**

Paul had a reason for leaving Timothy at Ephesus. Although Timothy wanted to continue with Paul on his journeys, it was necessary that someone remain in Ephesus to oversee the work of the church, and Paul “besought” Timothy to take that responsibility. Timothy’s appointment, therefore, was not by order of Paul but by his request.

Timothy’s primary responsibility was to pass along the apostles’ doctrine and keep the church on course. Paul undoubtedly had certain false teachers in mind, but he did not name them here. On the day he left Ephesus, the apostle Paul warned the elders of the church that false teachers would enter in and draw away disciples after them (Acts 20:28-30). Timothy should ensure that church leaders taught only what had been handed down to them by the apostles. They should not add to it nor take away from it. Christian doctrine cannot be improved upon; therefore, it should be presented in its pure form, uncorrupted by human opinion.

These false teachers were apparently Jews who were engaged in unprofitable discussions of fables, myths, and genealogies. They may have been taking stories and characters from the Old Testament and adding new elements to create a fictional religion with false teachings. Preaching and teaching should be for the edification of the believers, thus, teachers who continually generate disputes and arguments are taking the church off its course and should be rejected.

#### **Talk About It:**

1. Why did Paul want Timothy to stay in Ephesus (v. 3)?
2. What happens “in faith” (v. 4)?

“Our first loyalty must be to God and His Word, not to the words of men.”  
— **Shirley Guthrie**

**Talk About It:**

What is the “purpose” (NKJV) of Christian teaching, and how does it occur?

“If you have a Bible creed, it is well; but is it filled out and inspired by Christian love?”  
—J. F. Brodie

**Talk About It:**

1. What is “vain jangling” (v. 6)?
2. What should disqualify a person from teaching (v. 7)?

B. Keep Your Eyes on the Goal (v. 5)

**5. Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned.**

The commandment of God has a goal, an end, a purpose. That goal is not to create questions but to produce love. Jesus declares that all of God’s commandments can be summarized in the command to love God and to love our neighbor (Matt. 22:37-40). Paul tells Timothy that love is able to flourish under three conditions. First, love proceeds out of a “pure heart.” God’s commandment was not intended to produce only outward behavior but to produce the inward transformation of the heart.

Second, love is able to grow only when we have “a good conscience”—one that is free from guilt. The opposite of a good conscience is hypocrisy. To have a good conscience means we live both publicly and privately in accord with our stated beliefs and values. Without a good conscience we are continually violating our own morals, only pretending to love.

Third, genuine love operates in conjunction with “faith unfeigned” (sincere faith). This means genuine love is based on our confidence in God. We cannot love God if we have no confidence in Him. In all of our teaching and our other church activities, the goal should be to produce genuine love toward God and toward our neighbor. Teachings that generate strife and division among believers should be examined closely to determine if they are true to Scripture.

C. Beware of Shipwreck (vv. 6-7)

**6. From which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling;**

**7. Desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm.**

Paul now sharply criticizes these false teachers to whom he had previously alluded. Instead of pursuing the goal of love, they had turned aside and were in pursuit of other goals. The word “swerved” (v. 6) means to miss the mark or to err (see also 1 Tim. 6:21; 2 Tim. 2:18). Instead of aiming at the goal of love, and instead of pursuing the goals of a pure heart, a clean conscience, and genuine faith, they had aimed their teachings toward “vain jangling” (1 Tim. 1:6). This phrase means “empty talk,” and refers to their false teachings about God’s law, myths, and genealogies of angels.

To be a teacher was a great honor among the Jews. These troublemakers desired to be teachers, but they had strayed from pursuing the goal of love. Perhaps in the past they had taught the true gospel and sound doctrine, but now they were

no longer faithful to the teaching that had been handed down to them.

These false teachers were unable to remain on course because they had no “understanding” (v. 7) of the true nature and purpose of the law which they were attempting to explain to others. “Affirm” (v. 7) means to speak confidently. These teachers spoke with confidence, and their confidence attracted listeners. In spite of this, the content of their teaching strayed from the truth and led people into error.

D. Hold Fast to Faith (vv. 19-20)

**19. Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck:**

**20. Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme.**

The apostle Paul admonishes Timothy to hold fast to his faith and to his good conscience (v. 19). That is, Timothy must remain faithful to the calling and to the ministry to which God has called him and to the responsibilities God has placed in his hands. Timothy must continue to pursue the goal which God has set before him. The false teachers, by straying from the goal of love, have made shipwreck of their faith. They have not followed their conscience; instead they have followed their own desires and passions, and in doing so they have become unfaithful to the gospel. To say they “have made shipwreck” apparently means that their faith has been totally destroyed.

Paul mentions two men in particular who have strayed from the truth of the gospel—Hymenaeus and Alexander. The identity of Alexander is unknown, though perhaps he is the copersmith who had done the apostle “much evil” (2 Tim. 4:14). Hymenaeus is mentioned again in 2:17-18, where we learn that he taught the false doctrine that the “resurrection [was] past already.”

These two men Paul “delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme” (1 Tim. 1:20). Apparently, this means the apostle excommunicated them from the church so they might cause no more harm to the believers by their false teachings. Paul hopes and prays that, by being forced to live outside the community of faith, these two men will come to their senses and repent of their evil so they might be brought back into the church and be saved.

II. USE THE LAW LAWFULLY (1 Tim. 1:8-11)

A. The Goodness of the Law (v. 8)

**8. But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully.**

The problem was not with the law. The problem was the way in which these teachers were using the law. Paul is by no

**Talk About It:**

1. What causes spiritual “shipwreck” (v. 19)?
2. Describe the act of discipline Paul carried out (v. 20).

“Faith is kept alive in us, and gathers strength, more from practice than from speculations.”

—Joseph Addison

**Talk About It:**

Restate this verse in your own words.

means an enemy of the law, because it is a good gift of God. But the law must be used for the purposes for which God intended it. Jesus himself declared that He did not abolish the law, rather He fulfilled it. In the new covenant, through the Holy Spirit, God writes His law upon our hearts. The law of God continues to occupy an important place, but it must not be perverted. Paul is insisting that the law be used properly, and he proceeds to state what that use is.

B. The Purpose of the Law (vv. 9-11)

**9. Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers,**

**10. For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine;**

**11. According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.**

Based on the teaching of the New Testament, Protestants have traditionally recognized three purposes for the law: (1) The law states God's righteous requirements, and because we are unable to keep those requirements, we are made aware of our own sins. (2) By its warnings and judgments, the law was given as a means of curbing the unrighteous behavior of people who are immoral. (3) The law guides Christians in their pursuit of righteousness and holiness.

Paul is concerned here with the second use of the law. He insists that the law is not intended to perplex believers and place them in servitude. Rather, the law exists to bind and restrain the wicked. Most of the terms Paul uses here are easily understood, but two deserve explanation. "Them that defile themselves with mankind" refers to homosexuals, and "men-stealers" refers to slave traders (v. 10). Unfortunately, these sins, along with all the others listed, continue to be common in our day.

The gospel declares that although Christians may learn from the law and may observe God's righteousness in the law, they are not subject to it. Instead, Christians are covered by grace just as the glory of God covered Israel in the wilderness. In the following verses, Paul explains that Christians must live in God's grace.

III. LIVE IN GOD'S GRACE (1 Tim. 1:12-18)

A. The Power of God's Grace (vv. 12-15)

**12. And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry;**

**Talk About It:**

1. What is the purpose of God's law (vv. 9-10)?
2. Describe the trust Paul had been given (v. 11).

"Law is a sort of medicine, only to be applied where the moral nature is diseased."

—E. F. Scott

**13. Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.**

**14. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.**

**15. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.**

Paul's mention of the gospel brings to mind all that Jesus Christ had done in His life. As a Jew, Paul had served the law, but the law had brought to him only condemnation, guilt, and shame. The grace of the gospel, however, had brought to him mercy, faith, and love in Christ Jesus. God had called Paul when he was a blasphemer and a persecutor of the church. And God had "enabled" Paul to do the work of the ministry (v. 12).

It is the power of grace that takes a sinner like Paul and makes him into an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord "counted" (v. 12) him to be faithful, which means God put His confidence in Paul. For all this, Paul is thankful.

Before his conversion, Paul was "a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious" (v. 13). In admitting that he was a blasphemer, Paul is not saying that he knowingly spoke lightly of the things of God or profaned sacred things. In fact, Paul's life had been the opposite of a blasphemer. He was dedicated to the law of God and to obeying its precepts. He was extremely zealous to protect the honor of God against any and all opponents. His blasphemy consisted in his resistance to Jesus as the Messiah. Looking back on his life, Paul realized his opposition to Jesus was in error, and in speaking against Jesus he had blasphemed God.

As a persecutor, Paul lashed out against the Church (see Acts 9:1ff). It had not been enough for Paul to speak against Jesus and the Church; he put his words into action by arresting Christians and consigning them to prison. In some cases, his persecutions led to death, as in the case of Stephen.

The word "injurious" (1 Tim. 1:13) means an insulter, one who has an arrogant contempt of others, a reviler. Paul held in contempt Jesus and all those who believed in Him. While believing he was doing the will of God, Paul had blasphemed God, persecuted the church of God, and reviled God and His people.

In spite of his active opposition to the gospel, Paul "obtained mercy" because his offenses were done "ignorantly in unbelief." Ignorance is not by itself a cause for forgiveness, but ignorance opens the door for mercy and allows the offender space to repent. Remember the words of Jesus on the cross: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

**Talk About It:**

1. For what was Paul thankful (v. 12)?
2. Describe Paul's transformation (v. 13).
3. How was Paul changed (v. 14)?
4. What did Paul call himself in verse 15, and why?

**Empowering Grace**

Missionary  
Ludwig  
Nommensen  
studied the laws of  
the Batak people.



After two years the chief asked him how the Christian religion differed from the traditions of the Batak. "We, too, have laws that say we must not steal, nor commit adultery, nor bear false witness," the chief said. The missionary answered, "My Master enables us to keep His laws." The chief was startled. "Can you teach my people that?" he asked. "No, I cannot, but God can give them that power if they ask for it and hear His Word." There are now about 450,000 Batak Christians.

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**Talk About It:**

1. How was Paul a "pattern" (v. 16)?
2. Explain the four titles ascribed to God the King (v. 17).

Before his conversion, Paul had not realized that his opposition to Jesus was in opposition to the work of God.

Paul declares that the depth of his sin was matched by the depth of God's grace; in fact, the grace of God "was exceeding abundant" (v. 14). As he said in Romans 5:20, "But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." This abundant grace produced in Paul "faith and love" (1 Tim. 1:14). Paul was not only forgiven of his sins; he was given the fullness of life in Christ.

Paul's reflection on his conversion experience leads him to state what he calls a "faithful saying" (v. 15), a phrase that is used throughout the pastoral letters (see 1 Tim. 3:1; 4:9; 2 Tim. 2:11; Titus 3:8). A faithful saying is something that is trustworthy and deserves acceptance among all believers. This faithful saying consists of two main points: first, "Jesus Christ came into the world"; and second, He came "to save sinners." The first speaks of the birth of Jesus, His incarnation. The second speaks of the death of Jesus, His crucifixion. Both His birth into the world and His death on behalf of the world demonstrate the power of God's grace. It was God's grace that sent Jesus into the sinful world, and it was God's grace that sent Jesus to the cross to die for the sins of the world.

Paul adds a third point which applies to him alone. Of all the sinners in the world, Paul claims to be "chief," which means first or foremost. If there was enough power in the grace of God to bestow mercy upon Saul of Tarsus, who persecuted and killed Christians, there is now enough power in God's grace to bestow mercy upon all of us.

**B. The Purpose of God's Grace (vv. 16-17)**

**16. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.**

**17. Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.**

Paul states that God had a "cause," a reason, for showing mercy to him. Just as Paul had been the first among sinners, God intended that he now be first among sufferers. At the time of his conversion, Paul was warned of all the things he "must suffer" for Christ (Acts 9:16), and these sufferings are well documented (see 2 Cor. 4:7-18; 6:3-10; 11:22-33). It was God's intention that Paul's life would be a "pattern" (1 Tim. 1:16) to all who would later believe upon the Lord. This intention has proven true throughout history and until today, for when we study the life of Paul through the Book of Acts and the Pauline writings, he stands as an example to all of us who believe. If



the power of God's grace could keep and protect Paul through his times of suffering, it can keep and protect us today.

As Paul contemplates God's grace, he is compelled to break forth in praise (v. 17). The grace of God is the favor of our King—our "eternal, immortal, invisible" King. But He is more than king; He is the "only wise God." As such, Christ has no equal, and He is worthy to be praised. He is worthy of honor, glory, and praise throughout all eternity.

C. Grace for the Battle (v. 18)

**18. This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare.**

The grace of God that sent Jesus into the world to save sinners, and which brought abundant mercy to Paul, is powerful enough to give Timothy victory through his battles. Paul knows that Timothy's assignment will not be easy. Obstacles stand in the way, and opposition is certain. But the Holy Spirit had prophesied and confirmed Timothy's calling. Timothy must stand fast in the grace of God and trust in God's calling and anointing. No doubt, Timothy was greatly encouraged by Paul's letter, but Paul himself would not be present to stand by Timothy's side. Timothy must now learn to trust in the power of God's grace.

### CONCLUSION

Never before have Christians been faced with so many teachers that claim to impart the secrets of Christian living. We are bombarded with messages from radio, television, the Internet, books, and magazines. The secret to Christian living is that there is no secret. Paul explains to Timothy that the Christian life is founded upon the power of God's grace. Not one of us has earned the grace of God, and not one of us can live without the grace of God. The battle is not ours, but it is God's. Therefore, let us "stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord" (Ex. 14:13).

### GOLDEN TEXT CHALLENGE

"THE GRACE OF OUR LORD WAS EXCEEDING ABUNDANT WITH FAITH AND LOVE WHICH IS IN CHRIST JESUS" (1 Tim. 1:14).

C. A. Trentham wrote: "The good servant of Christ must have a dual concern: (1) He must be concerned for his own spiritual well-being, since he is the channel through which the gospel must pass to others. The channel must, therefore, be straight. (2) He must be equally concerned with the spiritual well-being of those whom God has given him to love."

It is by "the grace of our Lord" that we receive the faith by which we are made spiritually healthy and the love which reaches out to bring others spiritual wellness.

"We are locked in a battle. This is not a friendly, gentleman's discussion. It is a life and death conflict between the spiritual hosts of wickedness and those who claim the name of Christ."

—Francis A. Schaeffer

### Daily Devotions:

- M. Grace in God's Presence  
Exodus 33:8-17
- T. God Is Merciful and Gracious  
Psalm 103:8-14
- W. Grace That Moves Mountains  
Zechariah 4:1-7
- T. Abundance of God's Grace  
Romans 5:17-21
- F. We Are Saved by Grace  
Ephesians 2:4-9
- S. Humility Precedes Grace  
1 Peter 5:5-10