

7,9,26 1 Tim. 1:1-17, A Life Built on the Foundation of Grace and Mercy

I'll start by reading the first 7 verses, but one thing I need to do right after that is make sure we have 21st. century meanings for the 1st. century words and phrases Paul uses. For example, when we see a word like "fables" we don't want our minds to picture something like "Aesop's fables". That's not what Paul is talking about. So, we'll start with just the verses as they are;

(1 Tim. 1:1-7) Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the commandment of God our Savior and the Lord Jesus Christ, our hope. To Timothy, a true son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord. As I urged you when I went into Macedonia—remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach *no other doctrine*, nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith. Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith, from which some, having strayed, have turned aside to idle talk, desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say nor the things which they affirm.

In the first verse Paul reinforces something he wrote about to the Colossians – that Christ is our only hope- Col. 1:27; “. . . the glory of this mystery. . . which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

As we've seen before, "glory" refers to the outward, visible manifestation of an invisible, inward reality. The only way the glory, the character, of Christ can be manifested through us to others is if Christ Himself is making it happen.

Fortunately, 1 Thess. 5:24 tells us; "Faithful is He Who called you Who will also do it. . . ." Our part is to grow in our knowledge and trust of Him, so He is increasingly free to shape us into His image – and then express that image outwardly to those around us.

Paul says that he was responding to the "commandment of God" by making this known to those he ministered to; and in this case, to Timothy who Paul calls his

“son in the faith”. Paul led Timothy to Christ and wants Timothy to keep this work moving forward (ultimately, for 2000 years);

(2 Tim. 2:2) What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.

This is the ultimate “pass it forward” principle of taking Paul’s 1st. century revelation of what life in Christ is all about and making sure that that knowledge will continue to be available to all of God’s people for the centuries to come. That responsibility rests firmly on the shoulders of those within the Body of Christ whom the Lord gifted with the ability to teach, to communicate, the truths of the Church Age to Christians in every generation.

Ideally, every pulpit in the world would be teaching exactly what the Holy Spirit gave Paul to give to all of us.

(2 Tim. 1:13) Hold fast to the pattern of sound teaching you have heard from me . . .

And, of course, as we’ll see, the enemy’s plan is to make sure that doesn’t happen. He’s OK with the “form” of teacher/student interaction continuing as long as the *content* of what’s taught is either less or other than what Paul taught.

“Grace, mercy and peace” was a common greeting that Paul gave in many of his letters; partly because it was encouraging, but also because, even in the deepest meaning of each word, there is a world of spiritual reality Paul wanted Timothy (and us) to become aware of.

Christ has made this happen through His sacrifice, and the indwelling Spirit can make it experiential through our spiritual growth. The better we know Christ, the more we can experience and pass on the results of the victory He accomplished in His death and resurrection. Christ is our hope of entering into peace with God; and grace and mercy are what has made this possible for us.

The Age of Grace overshadows every other designation that could be given to the Church Age. In 2 Cor. 3:4-9 we saw Paul expound on this;

Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God, who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter (the Law) kills, but the Spirit gives life. But if the ministry of death, written and engraved on stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, which glory was passing away, how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious? For if the ministry of condemnation had glory, the ministry of righteousness exceeds much more in glory.

We can only imagine the incredible inner relief and joy that was experienced by the early Jewish Christians when they realized that our relationship with God is no longer based on Law, on religious duties and obligations, but on pure, simple grace through faith.

The sacrifice, the substitutionary death of Christ, has done so much more than provide the forgiveness of sins; it has brought us into a Father/child relationship with God that sets us free from all condemnation and replaces “Thou Shalt” and “Thou Shalt Not” with “Grace, mercy and peace” as the atmosphere of our spiritual lives.

Besides being an excellent greeting, I’m sure Paul also wanted it to be a never-ending reminder to Timothy (and all of us) of the massive shift that had taken place in the relationship between God and Man, which is also why Paul was so dogmatic and insistent about making sure these truths were held onto.

(vs. 3) I urged you when I went into Macedonia—remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine.

Teachers had already come in and they were either eliminating or distorting doctrines related to the grace of God. Paul knew that if we lose grace, we lose the only ground possible to experience true spiritual life.

And this is where Paul added his statement about avoiding “fables” and “endless genealogies”. The word translated “fables” is “muthos” and refers to;

. . . a speech, a story or an account delivered by word of mouth. Every NT use of muthos is in a negative sense and refers to legend or fiction (in contrast to historical truth/accounts). Thayer notes that "the fictions of the Jewish theosophists and Gnostics, are called mythoi (muthos plural)." Muthos refers to a story that is usually an imaginative narrative of an event that often contains exaggerated elements) or it can refer to a short fictitious story which teaches a moral lesson, but in the NT muthos is used only in a negative sense as something to be avoided because it is false and unreal; it is fabricated by the mind in contrast to reality. Muthos therefore refers to fictional tales in contrast to true accounts and represents manufactured stories that have no basis in fact. The Greek and Roman world abounded in stories about so-called "gods" which were nothing more than human speculations that in vain (and in error) tried to explain the world's origin and life's purpose.

I know that was kind of an extended definition, but if you're familiar with Kittleson's works on the Greek language, he has 34 pages discussing this one word alone.

I'm not going to do that. However, the reason there's such an emphasis on this is because of what we saw when we studied 1 Jn. The enemy's entrance into the Church began with teachings that were based in Gnosticism and Theosophy as well as intellectual debates on "endless genealogies".

The genealogy issues came from 1st. century obsessions with tracing ancestry because of a commonly held belief that many of us can trace our lineage to various gods that were popular at that time; as if that would give us some kind of an intellectual advantage over people who weren't born in a line of gods.

So, both John and Paul had to address those deceptions specifically. For us, 2000 years later, those aren't really an issue; instead, we have our own "muthos" = our own stories and alternate doctrines of who we are, what we are, and why we're here.

We've spent a lot of time over the last few months looking at some of the contemporary doctrines that are having a similar effect in turning believers away

from what matters most. After 2000 years of examining us very carefully, the enemy has come up with a large variety of false teachings for our generation that are way more effective in deceiving God's people than endless genealogies could ever do.

They range from the more obvious ones like Mormonism and Catholicism to Calvinism, Reformed Theology, and the Seeker-Sensitive and Charismatic movements. So, without going back over all those options, suffice it to say that the final apostasy of the Church (at least in the Western civilization) can be easily summed up by simply saying that we are now seeing what Paul prophetically warned about in 2 Tim. 3:5-7 & 2 Tim. 4:3-4;

Having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away . . . the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to "muthos" (to fables).

In the first century, there was only one Church per city. But that is super inconvenient for people with 'itching ears' who have their own unique desires on what they want the pastor to be teaching them. The only way to address that situation is to have a large number of different kinds of churches that will draw in different kinds of people, who in turn make sure they hire a pastor who will teach them what they want to learn.

So, a couple things happen in that scenario; one is that unity is out, there's no common vision or doctrine that can trace to the apostles to keep everyone unified and moving in the same direction, and second, when people put their own desires and priorities over genuine teachability and a willingness to hear the truth, whatever *is* taught never moves beyond milk to solid food. And that means that spiritual maturity is impossible to reach because as we've seen in Heb. 5 & 6, it's only those who have transitioned from milk to solid food who have their spiritual senses trained to discern truth from error.

The outcome of this is what Paul prophesied in his letters to Timothy – “. . . always learning but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” combined with the unwillingness to “endure sound doctrine”. As simple as that global deception is in concept, it’s effectiveness in removing the Christ-life from Christ’s people has been immense.

And, as with Paul, if that “system”, that “contemporary Christian culture” is challenged, those challenging it will be seen as the enemy. And at some point, what happened to Paul will happen to them;

(1 Tim. 1:14-15) Guard the treasured (doctrine) entrusted to you, with the help of the Holy Spirit who dwells in us. You know that everyone in the Province of Asia has deserted me. . .

I remember reading in one of Spark’s later books where he said that the one thing which stood out above all others in his experience in ministry was that the more he grew and understood what this Life is meant to be from God’s perspective, the more alone and isolated he felt among God’s people.

He was extremely grateful for the remnant scattered throughout the world that hungered for Truth, but saddened that the majority of Christians he encountered had no intention of “enduring sound doctrine”; just as Paul had predicted.

In the last few verses of our first section in 1 Tim. Paul shows us two things: One is what he calls “the purpose of God’s commandment” and the other is the fact that the greatest resistance to that purpose was coming from those in positions of authority in the churches.

(vs’s 5-7) The purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith, from which some, having strayed, have turned aside to idle talk, desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say nor the things which they affirm.

God’s ultimate purpose for this Age has nothing to do with buildings, movements, and organizations. In the Age of Israel, building something massive and impressive on earth was exactly what God was doing, and during the reigns of men like David and Solomon, Israel was able to get the attention of the whole world. If anyone

wanted to know what the true God was like, they could do what the queen of Sheba did and visit Jerusalem, meet the king, and be amazed at what she saw.

But in this Age, the goal is “pure hearts”, “good consciences” and “sincere faith”. This is an Age in which God is calling people *out* of the world, not advancing them in it. In other words, when God moved from Israel to the Church, from Mt. Sinai to Mt. Zion, He moved from the outside of the cup to the inside; from Soulical to Spiritual; from vast armies and gold-plated palaces to Christ formed in the hearts of His disciples.

(Heb. 12:18-24) For you have not come to the mountain that may be touched and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words, so that those who heard it begged that the word should not be spoken to them anymore. (For they could not endure what was commanded: “And if so much as a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned or shot with an arrow.” And so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, “I am exceedingly afraid and trembling.”)

But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the *heavenly* Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the *new* covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.

Due to a lack of understanding the implications of this great transition from one humanity to a new humanity, contemporary Christianity has become an attempt at mixing earthly and heavenly; mixing culture, morality and politics with spiritual life.

That’s why Paul says that those who are teaching God’s people don’t understand either the Law or Grace, even though they are very dogmatic about the accuracy of their doctrine. They’ve never, by revelation of the Spirit, seen what the Church is, and what it isn’t, so they go on quoting Old and New Testament passages,

scratching itching ears, without being able to actually clarify the meaning or purpose of either the Old or the New Covenant.

The content of their messages is made up basically of inspirational, self-help instructions using the Bible as a springboard; that's what most people want to hear.

As one recent example, last month Boise hosted a major event at the "Extra Mile Arena" called "Life Surge" which has been going to cities all around the country. The banner said, "Life Surge – Surge Your Life God's Way!" Here's their promo;

Life Surge is a one-day, live and in-person experience where thousands of local Christians gather to be inspired, trained, and equipped to leave an impact on God's Kingdom. At Life Surge, you'll learn why and how to create and multiply financial resources for Kingdom impact. Our purpose is to know God and make Him Known and we have a vision to see God's Kingdom Surge worldwide. We're not only passionate about this vision, but we're also committed to making it a reality through live events, ongoing education, and hands-on training. . . this is a movement, not a concept; a transformation, not a trend.

The speakers included Willie Robertson from Duck Dynasty, Tim Tebow, John C. Maxwell, and other 'famous' people. Tickets to attend the event ranged from \$21 per seat to \$247 per seat, and if you got the \$247 seats you also got to take a personal picture with some of the celebrities.

One of the quotes in their promotion for Tebow's 'SDIRA WEALTH Foundation' is "For more than 25 years, we've helped thousands of investors build long-term wealth . . ."

Now, see if you can picture the man who in 1 Cor 2:2-4 said;

I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with persuasive words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power. . .

Paul wouldn't have had enough money to attend Life Surge, let alone be invited on stage. And his mission in this life would have nothing to do with "building long-term personal wealth".

I realize that this event is not much of a deception for some Christians, but apparently many thousands of believers around the country have not only attended, but would be very indignant of anyone who had a problem with all this.

Anyway, let's move into the next section of Paul's letter; 1 Tim. 1:8-11;

We know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully, knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust.

In numerous places in Paul's letters, he makes statements like "You are not under Law, but under Grace" (Rom. 6:14) and also throughout Galatians. If that's the case, what would be the "lawful" use of the Law?

Before I explain what I believe Paul meant by that, I want to read something I shared when we were studying Romans. The author of this is giving examples of how different people come to the Lord for different reasons;

One comes with purpose and vision for a lifetime of serving Christ.

Another comes with the bare thought, "Just don't let me burn in hell."

Another loiters around outside for years, and finally steps across the line, not entirely sure she made the best decision.

Still another starts for the gate, turns back, changes his mind, starts for the gate again, and repeats this process numerous times before realizing he needs help getting through the gate. "Lord, help me decide," he prays. A compassionate, tender hand reaches through the gate and helps him through.

A mother won't go in without her children. She gets them ready and as they pray to receive Christ together; they enter the faith-gate to eternal life.

Another stands restlessly outside the gate. "He doesn't want me like He wants the others," she bemoans. "Maybe if I stand here, he'll notice me." "Come," Jesus cries out to her. "It was for you I died." With awe she passes through the gate.

Still another, hurt by the years, stands at the gate, angry with the Master for the way his life has gone. "I don't want you," he thinks, "but I have no other place to go; so, I must go through the gate."

Jesus takes them all, because that's how we come- as needy, blind, hungering, angry, frightened, confused, lost human beings. Jesus is the only One who can save us. "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28)

So even though people have come to Christ for a variety of reasons and motivations, a large number have come to Him because of their awareness of their own sinfulness which created a desire to find a way to be forgiven – like the guy who said, "Just don't let me burn in hell".

The Law, in whatever way it's presented, can have an immense impact on the conscience of someone, exposing them as a sinner in need of a Savior. Paul made it clear in Rom. 3:20 that this is primarily what the Law accomplishes. The Roman's passage says, "By the Law is the knowledge of sin". God's Law acts like a mirror revealing and exposing the sinfulness of the human heart.

Here's Ironside's take on this;

Paul says that we know the law is good. We do not ignore the importance of law; we do not set aside the authority of the Ten Commandments. Preachers of grace are often asked if the Ten Commandments were ever abrogated. No, the law remains with all its stern demands. But the believer has died to the law in the Person of Christ, who is the end of the law to everyone that believes.

But to the unsaved the law speaks as loudly as ever: “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.” By the term righteous here we are to understand those who have been made righteous in Christ. The law is for the lawless and disobedient. It is not designed to show spiritually-minded believers how to behave.

For example, if you are a Christian, you do not refrain from taking the name of God in vain because you learn it is contrary to law. You love your Father in heaven, and because you love Him you would not think of using His name carelessly. Every Christian knows the sense of shock, of displeasure, that comes whenever he hears the name of God the Father or of the Lord Jesus Christ used profanely. Why is it that it stirs us when many of us were not concerned about such language as this before we were saved? It is because we have now a new nature, a new love for the Lord Jesus Christ and for God who, in His mercy, has allowed us to know Him. And so, I repeat, it is not the law which teaches us how to behave. If we refrain from stealing it is not because the law says “Thou shalt not steal,” but because we have no desire to steal, even if we were ever addicted to such wickedness as this before we were saved. Now our desire is to be a blessing to others and not to wrong them in any way. Thus, we see that the law is just and good, and has value if used properly, but it is not for righteous men and women.

To remind us of something we saw in another study, I personally believe we shouldn't rely on a mechanized way in which we give the offer of salvation to the lost. Jesus' approach to the variety of people He came into contact with (like the woman at the well or Nicodemus) was always adapted to what the Lord knew they needed to hear. For some, it might be the Law; for others it might be the offer of living water, but the main point is that, like everything else we do in service to the Lord and to others, we need to give them no more and no less than what the Lord wants us to give them.

He is the only One Who knows exactly what they need to hear, and if we are led by His Spirit, instead of by an Evangelism program developed by men, our approach

will be exactly what's needed even though it may be radically different from gospel discussions we've had with *other* people. It will be personalized by the wisdom and insight of God regarding the person's heart and needs rather than being a "one-size-fits-all" offer that may or may not touch on what's needed most.

So, again, chapter 1 vs. 8, "We know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully, knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless . . ." And the Lord will know whether the person we are talking to is going to respond to something that impacts their conscience and provides the kind of help and forgiveness they have been seeking.

Everything about the Christian life, including evangelism, is meant to be relational, personal, and guided by the Holy Spirit. It's the tendency of believers to depend on either themselves or on so-called professionals instead of developing a relationship with the Lord that allows *them* to hear His voice.

No matter how much advice He received from others, Jesus never made a move or spoke a word apart from His Father.

(John 5:19) Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing of himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.

And we should prayerfully pursue the same kind of fully-dependent relationship with our Lord that *He* had with the Father.

Now, in verses 12-17 Paul opens his heart to Timothy (and to us), and shows us his deepest feelings and motivations for all he has done and has become, as a disciple of Christ;

I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that

in me first, Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life. Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

I've always found it fascinating that Paul used all the worst things possible about himself as the ground of his proclamation that he is God's pattern of what a Christian should be. Listen again to the wording in vs. 16;

For *this* reason, I obtained mercy, that in me first, Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life.

Paul obtained mercy for "this reason" – what reason? That Paul considered himself the worst sinner who had ever lived. I doubt anyone would advise us to take that approach to building a convincing resume, hoping others will put their trust in us as the best choice they could make ("You should trust me because when it comes to trustworthiness, I am by far the least trustworthy person you could find").

The only qualifier he gives is that he (quote) "did it ignorantly in unbelief".

But what's really happening here is that Paul is making an extremely important point that he wants Timothy to never forget; qualification for service to the Lord is based on a grateful response to mercy, not on impressive criteria of past accomplishments.

Contemporary Christianity wants to see your seminary degree, your past, *successful* experience as a pastor, and it wouldn't hurt to have some reference letters from people who think you walk on water.

There's a place for some of that when it comes to deciding who should be an elder – we'll see that in another part of the letter to Timothy, but Paul's emphasis in this part is to make sure Timothy realizes that it is God, not man, that builds spiritual men and women for service, and *He* chooses based on honesty and humility, not on accomplishments and the opinions of enthusiastic supporters.

In order to make this appeal to Timothy concerning Paul's worthiness to the claim of being God's pattern, Paul structures his whole argument on the character and ways of God, not on *any* contribution man might make.

When you read that passage as a unit, what you walk away with isn't a feeling of how awesome Paul is, but a greater understanding of how gracious and merciful God is. And just to make sure Timothy is getting Paul's point, he closes with "Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God *who alone* is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever."

God did not give Paul what he deserved; instead, God in His grace gave Paul what he did *not* deserve. In a way, there may be no better explanation for both our salvation and our lives as disciples as that. It's when, like Paul, we fully realize the grace and mercy of God as the *only* explanation for our calling and destiny that we can find the place of rest in His arms.

Martin Luther once wrote this;

Just as the sun is not darkened by the whole world enjoying its light, and could, indeed, light up ten worlds; just as 100,000 lights might be lit from one light and not detract from it; just as a learned man is able to make a thousand others learned, and the more he gives, the more he has—so is Christ, our Lord, an infinite source of all grace, so that if the whole world would draw enough grace and truth from it to make the world full of angels, yet it would not lose a drop; the fountain always runs over, full of grace. The abundance of God's grace never runs dry.

Remember, as we saw in the beginning of our study of Timothy, these are some of Paul's last words, and they are written to someone Paul loved more than anyone with the intent of giving Timothy the firmest possible foundation on which to build his life and service to God. So, of all that Paul could have chosen to characterize that foundation, he chose grace and mercy. If Timothy could fully internalize that, then whatever was built on top of that would be the closest thing anyone could express of Who God is.

At one time, God's people were under a system of legal obligations. If they met those obligations, their God blessed them; if they didn't, they were punished. And once-a-year brutal sacrifices were mandated to ensure the people understood the seriousness of sin and the consequences of disobedience. It was a dispensation of Law, and according to Paul in Rom. 3:20, by the Law comes the *knowledge* of sin. The Law did nothing to help those under it *overcome* sin; it could only expose sin and make it crystal clear what sin is. If God's blessing was to remain on His people, who sinned consistently, as we all do, then sacrifices had to be made to sustain God's blessing and protection.

Then with the coming of Christ, everything changed. Instead of Law being that which is to govern us, provide blessing and protection, now it's grace – complete unmerited, undeserved favor. I'm going to close with an excellent explanation of the significance of this change by L.S. Chafer;

There are two fundamental facts concerning the life under grace, the first being that, under grace, a separate, complete, and wholly independent rule of life is purposed for the child of God.

The second truth is that of the new manner of life which is first wrought as a purpose in the heart by the Spirit and is then lived out in the power of the same Spirit, accompanied by that heavenly joy which always attends the realization of heavenly desires. Everything in the walk under grace contemplates an overflowing, Spirit-filled life, and there is no provision for any other. The carnal Christian is not urged to try to live a spiritual life; he is rather besought to yield himself to God, apart from which there can be no Spirit-filling with its realization of power.

The divine provision and plan for a life under grace is a perfect system in itself and rightfully cannot be combined or even compared with any other.

Is this grace system a success? Is it really practical? Does the impelling love of a mother's heart provide a better care for her child than would be provided by a heartless obedience to a statute of the state requiring such care? The true answer is obvious. If it is practical and if it be true that the

power of inwrought grace is the one and only divine program for the life of the children of God in this age, how incredibly important is this body of truth! Under this relationship all human responsibility centers in that adjustment of heart by which alone the divine power may be realized.

If this great theme is new, its careful and prayerful study with an open mind may lead to the discovery of the only way by which the divine glory may be realized through a human life.