

# A Sweet Salutation

An Introduction to Paul's First Epistle to Timothy

**Scripture:** 1 Timothy 1:1-2

**Sermon Series:** *Timothy's Charge*

**Topic:** Timothy, Paul, Apostle

## Introduction

As you're finding your place in Scripture, I would like to take a moment to thank the dozens of deacons and volunteers who worked very hard last week to enable us to celebrate Easter worship service in Town Hall. We offer sincere thanks to all of you carried our sound system across the street, and set up chairs, and put out beautiful flowers, and cooked and served a lovely breakfast, and watched over us while we were worshipping and helped children across the street and made coffee and.... To all of you, Thank you. We praise the Lord for you.

## A New Sermon Series

Today we begin a new sermon series through the apostle Paul's first epistle to Timothy. Three weeks ago we finished 11 weeks in the Old Testament (OT) narrative and in keeping with our desire to balance our spiritual diet between the Old and New Testaments (NT), it seemed good to us to next turn to a NT epistle. The epistle that we landed on is 1 Timothy.



## Why Preach 1 Timothy?

Why preach through 1 Timothy? There are at least three reasons.

### 1. Practical Guidance

First, this epistle is filled with very practical and relevant guidance for how Christ's church ought to order herself and its leaders. In this letter, Paul...

1. Describes who qualifies to lead the church and how they ought to live.
2. Addresses a context of abundant false teaching.
3. Emphasizes the necessity of sound doctrine.

4. Calls the church to holy living both inside and outside the church community (i.e. among themselves and out in the world).
5. Calls elders/pastors to care for their own soul as well as the souls within church.
6. Balances orthodoxy and orthopraxy (i.e. emphasizes right belief and right practice).
7. Warns against materialism and calls for contentment in Christ.

## **2. Raises Relevant Questions**

Along the way the letter raises many relevant theological questions, such as,

1. Can a true believer lose his or her salvation?
2. What is the purpose of excommunication?
3. What are the qualifications of elders and deacons?
4. Can women serve as the elders/pastors of a church?
5. Does living an ascetic life earn you greater favor with God?
6. Can you be a Christian in belief only without outward manifestation of faith in Christ?
7. How should Christians think about alcohol?
8. How should Christians think about false teachers?
9. How should Christians think about wealth?
10. Will greed really keep a person out of heaven?

## **3. Good Prep if we Plant**

Second, if we do end up planting a new church, then this epistle would be excellent preparation. We are presently in day 21 of 40 Days of Prayer. The question we are asking is, *Lord, are you at this time calling Hope to plant a new church?* I hope you are praying this with us. It seems appropriate that we pray now for two reasons.

1. Let us pray in order to dedicate this new sermon series to the Lord and ask him to bless us through it.
2. Let us pray to ask the question we've been asking.

Diane Zickell will pray for our question.

Mark Ashpole will pray for this sermon series.

## A Sweet Salutation

The opening words of Paul's first epistle to Timothy could be easily overlooked. However, with a moment's reflection, we can see how worshipful, theologically rich, and surprisingly doctrinal they actually are. Pondering this *sweet salutation* will also allow us to be reminded of the main characters in this letter and will serve as an introduction. As we read these words, we could easily see nothing more than an opening greeting to a letter.

<sup>1</sup> Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope, <sup>2</sup> To Timothy, my true child in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. 1 Timothy 1:1-2 (ESV)

Paul is following the culturally typical form of written communication in his time and historical setting. He follows the conventional Hellenistic style of prescription by first stating the author and then naming the addressee. However, Paul baptizes this style by immersing this form in wonderful words of theological worship. If we rearrange his words, we'll see a poignant parallelism appears.

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

In this structure, you can see then parallel between verse one and verse two. We can see this more plainly if we align the verses side by side.

1 Timothy 1:1-2

<sup>1</sup> Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope,	<sup>2</sup> To Timothy, my true child in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.
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To see this even more clearly, perhaps coloring the corresponding verses will better highlight this parallel.

- "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus" in v.1 is parallel to "Timothy, my true child in "faith" in v.2.
- "By command" in v.1 is parallel to "grace, mercy, and peace" in v.2.
- "Of God our Savior" in v.1 is parallel to "God the Father" in v.2.

1 Timothy 1:1-2

<sup>1</sup> Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope,	<sup>2</sup> To Timothy, my true child in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.
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- “Christ Jesus our hope” is parallel with “Christ Jesus our Lord” in v.2.

The importance of God and the presence of Christ Jesus in these opening words is shocking. Three times in this one sentence, Paul refers to Jesus as, “Christ Jesus.” And three times God is described as the *Commander*, *Savior*, and *Father* of Paul. Paul takes a normal introduction to a letter and transforms it into a sweet salutation of worshipful words.

This salutations raises questions. Who is Paul? What is an apostle? Who is Timothy? Why is God called Savior and not Jesus? How is Jesus our hope? What does Paul mean in saying that Timothy was his “true child in the faith?”

## Who is Paul?

The first question is, *Who is Paul?* Paul is the author of this letter, but who is he? Most of us in the room likely know who Paul is, but those who are new to faith in Jesus may not know. For us both, it may be helpful to be reminded.

Paul, also called Saul<sup>1</sup>, was a young Jew, of the tribe of Benjamin, who was born (c. A.D. 5) in the city of Tarsus, in the province of Cilicia, thus inheriting Roman citizenship.<sup>2</sup>

He was trained in Jerusalem by the famous Pharisee Gamaliel and he became a very strict and zealous Pharisee. He knew the Mosaic law inside and out. Religiously he rose to the top of his class<sup>3</sup> and vocationally he was a tentmaker<sup>4</sup> (which he likely learned from his father<sup>5</sup>). Paul had a least one sister and a nephew (Acts 23:16).

Paul would have been in his late 20’s when Jesus was crucified and resurrected. After the resurrection of Jesus, when increasing numbers of Jews began proclaiming Jesus as the Christ, Paul began to violently oppose the spread of Christianity. He soon led the anti-Christian charge by physically persecuting and threatening Christians.

Within about a year after Christ’s resurrection, his misguided zeal stemming from a misunderstood Mosaic law led him to pursue the fleeing and persecuted Christians from



<sup>1</sup> Acts 13:9.

<sup>2</sup> Acts 22:3, 28; Romans 11:1; Philippians 3:5.

<sup>3</sup> Galatians 1:14.

<sup>4</sup> Acts 18:3.

<sup>5</sup> Allen C. Myers, “PAUL,” in *The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 801.

Jerusalem to Damascus (about 175 miles and would have taken about two weeks). On this trip, he had a personal encounter with the resurrected Jesus, who *called* and *sent* him out to carry his name to his own people first and then to the Gentiles, while warning him that he would suffer greatly for doing so (Acts 9:15; 26:14-18). And as we follow his life through the book of Acts, we learn that this is exactly what he did and indeed he suffered greatly for the sake of the name of Jesus.

There's much more that could be said about Paul's life, but for the purposes of understanding this letter, it is simply helpful to summarize Paul's Christian life. He was a theologian, a Scriptural exegete, a missionary, a teacher, a mentor, a church planter, a pastor and pastoral overseer, and ultimately a martyr.<sup>6</sup>

This salutation also includes the fact that Paul is an *apostle*, which leads us to the next question.

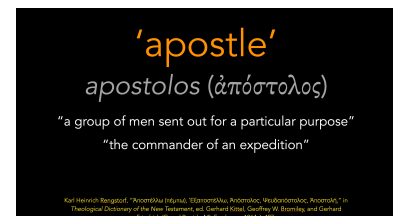
## What is an Apostle?

Paul describes himself as an "*apostle*."

*"...an apostle of Christ Jesus by command of God... and of Christ Jesus..."*  
1 Timothy 1:1 (ESV)

### Secular Greek Usage of the Word

The word 'apostle' (ἀπόστολος *apostolos*) in secular Greek usage (i.e. in non-religious contexts) carried two primary meanings, first referring to "a group of men sent out for a particular purpose," and second, to "the commander of an expedition."<sup>7</sup> In secular Greek, then, the essential meaning of the word refers to "the quality of being sent."<sup>8</sup>



### New Testament Greek Usage of the Word

In NT there is a refinement of the word. There are three examples where the word carries the original but very general notion of "being sent" and in those three instances the word is translated '*messenger*.'<sup>9</sup> However, the overwhelming majority of times the word is used in the NT, we find that it has a very specific and technical meaning. In about 70 of 79 times, it refers

<sup>6</sup> Robert W. Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, ed. D. A. Carson, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; London: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Apollos, 2018), 56–57.

<sup>7</sup> Karl Heinrich Rengstorff, "Ἀποπέλλω (πέμπω), Ἐξαποπέλλω, Ἀπόστολος, Ψευδαπόστολος, Ἀποστολή," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 407.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> John 13:16; 2 Corinthians 8:3; Philippians 2:25.

to a very specific group of men who were personally chosen and sent out by Jesus. We see this first when Jesus chose a specific group of 12 men from among all his disciples.

<sup>13</sup> And when day came, he called his disciples and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles: Luke 6:13 (ESV)

### Chosen and Sent Out By Jesus

There were many disciples (i.e. followers) of Jesus, but there were only 12 apostles. These 12 were unique among all the other followers of Jesus. "*These twelve Jesus sent out*"<sup>10</sup> in his name and with his authority to teach, heal, and cast out demons. The idea of being "*sent out*" by Jesus himself then becomes the first defining qualification to be an apostle. On the Damascus road, Jesus personally chose Paul and sent him out to spread the gospel primarily among the Gentiles (Acts 9:15; 22:21).

### Eyewitness of Resurrected Jesus

The second qualification to be an apostle is that you had to be *an eyewitness of the resurrected Jesus*. This could only be fulfilled by those who were alive at the time of Jesus' resurrection. When Peter recommended replacing Judas after his death, he stated that only those could be considered who had been an "*eyewitness to the resurrection*" of Jesus (Acts 1:21-22). Paul himself affirms this qualification saying,

"Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?"  
1 Corinthians 9:1 (ESV)

Paul agrees with Peter that one must have personally seen the resurrected Jesus in order to qualify as an apostle. In addition to Paul the NT also refers to James<sup>11</sup> the brother of Jesus as an apostle, as well as Barnabas.

<sup>6</sup> Then [Jesus] appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. <sup>7</sup> Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. <sup>8</sup> Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. <sup>9</sup> For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. 1 Corinthians 15:6-9 (ESV)

James is specifically here listed along with "*all the apostles*." Barnabas is called an apostle by Luke<sup>12</sup> which most likely means that he was among the 500 to whom Jesus appeared, though this not explicitly stated. We are not told when or how Jesus personally sent out James and Barnabas, however they were both accepted and affirmed by the other apostles, thus we too should trust that this actually happened even if we are not told of it. Thus, the apostles are

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<sup>10</sup> Matthew 10:1, 5.

<sup>11</sup> See Galatians 1:9; 2:9; cf. Acts 15:13-21.

<sup>12</sup> Acts 14:14.

those who were eyewitnesses of Jesus' bodily resurrection, were sent out by him to teach the gospel and became those who authoritatively write Scripture concerning Jesus and his ministry or affirmed the writings of those close to them who also wrote, such as Luke and Mark.

**Summary.** In a minority of uses of the word apostle, the meaning is simply "messenger." However, in the vast majority of NT uses of the word, it very specifically refers only to those who meet the two requirements of 1) personally seeing the resurrected Jesus and 2) being chosen and sent out by him for a particular purpose.

Finally, note here in 1 Cor 15:8 that Paul views himself as "*the last of all*" the apostles. Paul does not expect that any more apostles would arise after him. There are many people today who take the title of apostle. However, given the foundational role of the apostles, the two requirements of being an apostle, and the fact that Paul viewed himself as the "last of all" apostles, it seems taking the title of apostle is out of step with the overall teaching of NT.

**What is an apostle?** An apostle is one who has personally seen the resurrected Jesus and been chosen and sent out by him for a specific purpose.

## Who is Timothy?

Our third question is, *Who is Timothy?*

Timothy was born in the city of Lystra, which is located today in central Turkey). Lystra was also the city in which Paul was stoned and left for dead (Acts 14:19). It appears that Paul personally led Timothy to faith in Jesus as a child (1 Cor 4:15, 17; 1 Tim 1:2). He most likely became a believer as the result of Paul's first missionary journey, where both his mother, Eunice, and his grandmother Lois also became believers. These two faithful ladies, "from childhood," then taught him the Scriptures (2 Tim 1:5; 3:14-15). Timothy's mother was a Jew, but his father was a Greek (Acts 16:1).



On Paul's second missionary journey, he became acquainted with Timothy, whose spiritual maturity and Christian devotion had made him well known in the two towns of Lystra and Iconium, and so Paul invited him to join him and Silas, which he did (Acts 16:2). Paul entrusted him to share the teaching in some of the Gentile churches. Timothy helped Paul plant a church in Philippi. He was with Paul when he was chased out of several towns, however he escaped arrest when Paul and Silas were imprisoned in Philippi. When Paul's life was endangered at Berea and he was sent away to Athens, Timothy remained in Berea apparently overseeing and edifying the new church.

Timothy's time traveling with Paul lasted nearly a decade. He was with Paul at Philippi, Corinth, Thessalonica, Rome, and Colossae. Paul mentions Timothy in 8 of his letters. In his letter to the Corinthians Paul writes of "*Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord*" (1 Cor 4:17). Timothy held a special place in Paul's heart and appears to have worked alongside him unlike any other person in the early church.

## Paul, An Apostle

Lets consider the implication of the first verse.

<sup>1</sup> Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus  
by command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope,  
1 Timothy 1:1 (ESV)

Paul is an apostle "*of Christ Jesus.*" This means that it is Christ Jesus whom Paul represents, not himself or anyone else. The purpose of his apostleship is to go out into the world on behalf "*of Christ Jesus.*" The message that Paul carries comes from Christ Jesus, not from his own mind. Paul was sent out into the world in the name *of Christ Jesus* and to continue the mission and teaching "*of Christ.*" Paul is not his own man. He is Christ's man.

*By command of God... and Christ Jesus...* Paul was not an apostle by his own choosing or his own decision. He was an apostle according to *divine command!* That command came from both *God* and *Jesus*. You'll recall that Paul personally met Jesus who commanded him to go preach the gospel to Gentiles (Acts 9:15). Though, in that vision it was Jesus who was speaking, Paul understood the words of Jesus to be the same as "*the command of God.*" In Paul's mind there was complete agreement between God the Father and God the Son. The two are One. They both issued the same command. Thus, for Paul to obey the command of Jesus was the same as obeying the command of God.

## God Our Savior

However, note that Paul does not think of God as God merely a "Commander," but rather as "*God our Savior.*" Paul most often refers to Christ as Savior, but here he refers to God as Savior. He sees *God as the ultimate source of salvation.*

Remember that it was God who sent Jesus into the world, a fact the apostle John mentions more than 30 times. Perhaps this phrase originated with Mary for she praises "*God our Savior*" (Lk 1:47). This title reminds us that there is something from which we need to be saved. In my daily reading this week I read this verse,

<sup>36</sup> Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.  
John 3:36 (ESV)

God wrath on this world describes the default disposition of all humanity. Why? Because of our sin. God hates sin. All who live under the domino of sin, live under God's curse, under his wrath. The only way to escape that wrath is to be covered by the blood of the Son of God, who God sent into the world to save the world. This is why Jesus is our hope!

## Jesus Our Hope

Jesus is *our hope* because God our Savior sent him to atone for sin. Without the perfect righteousness of Christ Jesus, we would have no hope. Yet, Jesus is our hope, not in the sense of wishful thinking or positive attitude, but in the sense of *certain accomplishment that is yet future*. The hope of Christ is not, "I hope to be saved," as if I'm uncertain that I will be saved, but I really want that to be the outcome. Rather when a Christian says, "I hope to be saved," it means I know my salvation is secure, I simply am waiting for the full acquisition of it. The full and complete payment for all my sins has already been made, but I'm just waiting until I stand before the Lord God and he fully applies that grace to me!

## My True Child in the Faith

Paul writes of Timothy that he is "*my true child in the faith*." This almost certainly means that Paul was the one who helped Timothy understand and embrace Jesus by faith. It was through Paul's teaching or preaching or explaining that Timothy through faith come into a relationship with Jesus. Thus, Paul became his spiritual father. Paul had no biological children, but he had Timothy as a spiritual son and he delighted in him.

## Grace, Mercy, and Peace

Finally, Paul prays upon Timothy "*grace, mercy, and peace*" from God and Jesus. Again we see that Paul understands all three of these things flowing from one source, that is both "God and Jesus." *Grace* is receiving a gift that one does not deserve to receive. *Mercy* is receiving relief through the compassionate and kind intervention of someone who enters into your suffering though he or she is not obligated to do so. *Peace* is the state of tranquility that results from the reception of grace and mercy. There is almost nothing great that Paul could request for Timothy!

## Conclusion: What is Sweet in This Salutation?

It is sweet that *God is our Savior*. God saves evil, violent zealots and transforms them into good apostles.

It is sweet that *Jesus is our hope*. We who have no confidence in our own righteousness can have a sure and certain confidence in the righteousness of Jesus. Through him we have a living hope because he today is living. *He is risen!*

It is sweet that through the gospel of Jesus those who have no biological children can have spiritual children. Younger men need mentoring by older men. Younger women need mentoring by older women. Andy. Dan. Merri.

It is sweet that those in need of *grace, mercy, and peace* can find them through Jesus Christ our Lord.

## Discussion Questions

1. Who is Paul?
2. What is an apostle? What are the two qualifications to be an apostle?
3. How should we think about people today who call themselves apostles?
4. Did Paul expect more apostles to arise after him? Why or why not?
5. Who is Timothy?
6. Why was this sermon entitled "A Sweet Salutation?" What about this salutation makes it sweet?
7. Why does Paul refer to God as Savior?
8. What does Paul mean by saying Jesus is our hope? What is the difference between a worldly conception of hope and the Christian conception of hope?
9. What if anything do you find spiritually helpful from these two verses?