

# The Charge to Timothy – Part 6

## 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 **personal nature** of the letter
  - a. **note:** the gospel was “entrusted” to Paul (**v. 11**) – it was a message given *specifically* to him
  - b. **principle: Paul considers the gospel so critical that he takes it very personal indeed when someone messes with its substance**
    1. it's personal because it is the substance of his *calling* by Jesus
    2. it's personal because it is the *rescue* of his life from his own rebelliousness
    3. it's personal because it is the essence of the *mercy* of God
    4. it's personal because it is the message of being *saved* by God from God
2. 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 ...
3. the **substance** of the charge
  - a. the nature of the charge = challenge the **heterodoxy** that has invaded the church (**i.e. what**)
  - b. the aim of the charge = to speak and fellowship in love (**i.e. why**)
  - c. the origin of the charge = a pure heart, a clean conscience, and a *sincere* faith (**i.e. from**)
  - d. the target of the charge = those using law to control others with false power (**i.e. against who**)
  - e. 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
    2. (**now**) it's personal because the gospel proclaimed *in him* and *by him* is a message of the **patience of God in dealing with sinners**, like himself and all who believe for eternal life
      - a. **IOW:** it's *not* about the “instant results” of the law, but about the patience of God in regards to sinners being saved

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

### Content

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

5. Paul's reason for this gospel to be displayed in him (**v. 16**)
  - a. the summation of **vv. 11-15** in **v. 16** in order to make a singular point
    1. key terms like “*mercy*” and “*the foremost*” are repeated here (**cf. v. 13b, 15b**)
    2. **IOW:** Paul comes to his point about the message of the gospel entrusted to him (**v. 11**)
  - b. “*received mercy for this reason, that*” = why was Paul saved by the coming of Christ Jesus?
    1. **i.e.** for what reason did Christ intervene in Paul's life to save him from God's wrath?
    2. **question:** why are we saved – why are *any of us* saved from God's wrath?
      - a. a question *rarely* asked by most due to the fact that the semi-Pelagian “soteriology” that dominates the church *doesn't require such a question* – the assumption is that salvation is something that “we” choose from God's “storefront”; thus the “why” is: we wanted it
        1. **principle: such a question should be at the heart of what it means to be reformed**
          - a. **considering it (and an answer) leads to a proper perspective of the Christian life**

- b. **common answer:** so that we can go to heaven when we die (**i.e.** to avoid hell)
  - 1. correct, insofar as it goes – but Paul rarely (ever?) alludes to heaven as the reason
- c. **neo-reformed answer:** so that God is *glorified* as he accomplishes his decree
  - 1. (**again**) correct, insofar as it goes – but that answer is (sometimes) too *vague* – God’s decree certainly is to glorify himself, but *how* is that glory achieved in us *specifically*?
    - a. **remember:** the divine decree is not a *passive* declaration by God – it is an *active* fulfillment by God of all that he intends this creation to accomplish
- d. **Pauline answer:** so that God might demonstrate something in and through us that fulfills *in much greater specificity* what he has decreed in redemption
- 3. **principle: Paul received mercy not just to go to heaven or to glorify God, but to actually demonstrate something regarding the character of God within his decree**
- c. “*in me, as the foremost*” = this was a *specific* act of God *in Paul* and *through Paul*
  - 1. “*foremost*” (*protos*)= the first; before all others; the prominent or important; the **prototype**
    - a. **question:** was Paul the greatest, most prominent, or most obvious sinner of his time?
      - 1. **e.g.** in comparison to Nero (54-68AD), the wicked emperor of Rome under which Paul wrote this letter (c. 63-64AD) – who killed his mother and burned Christians alive
      - 2. clearly, Paul’s sinfulness *pales* to many others, so why is Paul “*the foremost*?”
    - b. **answer:** the prominence of Paul’s sin is not so much *quantitative* as it is *qualitative*
      - 1. Paul is not suggesting that he has committed every sin of Nero *and more*, rather
      - 2. Paul is suggesting that the *kinds* he has committed are consistent with the worst sinners
      - 3. **IOW:** Paul understands the principle that *any transgression against God’s law* is cause for joining the ranks of the worst sinners on the planet (**i.e. James 2:10; all humanity**)
  - 2. **principle: Paul needed mercy (as do we all!) because he belonged to the ranks of the rebellious and sinful (as do all of us!) – qualitatively, he was of the foremost**
    - a. **IOW:** salvation (mercy) is not some “theoretical” idea that we can intellectually entertain – it is an act of a merciful God *directly* and *concretely* in and through us
- d. “*Jesus Christ might*” = this was a specific act of Jesus Christ
  - 1. **i.e.** that this mercy of God was *specifically* a **Christocentric** act – accomplished through *Christ*
    - a. the Bible is *fundamentally* Christocentric in its outworking of the divine decree
    - b. the eternal Son of God (who created all things; **Col. 1:15f**), enters his creation (to become Jesus), accomplishes a perfect redemption (in life and death, to become the Christ), and sends his Spirit to complete that work (the Spirit of Christ; **Romans 8:9; 1 Peter 1:11**)
  - 2. **principle: the act of mercy upon Paul is orchestrated and accomplished specifically by Jesus the Christ – Paul’s allegiance is to him alone**
- e. “*display his perfect patience*” = to display something of the character of God through Paul
  - 1. note the similarity of this verse to **Romans 9:22-24a** (common words: “*patience*”, “*mercy*”)
 

*“What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory—even us whom he has called ...?”*

    - a. the decree of God was to make known his power, to show his *full nature* in all things
      - 1. **remember:** to the heavenly audience created for this display (**Eph. 3:8-10**)
    - b. although the decree of God *demands* justice for rebellion, God chooses to be *patient* with the sinful human race as a *part of this decree* (**i.e.** Adam did not drop dead when he ate)
    - c. this *patience* on the part of God is so that he can demonstrate the *fullness* of his glory by exercising *mercy* to some in that rebellious race while exercising *justice* upon the rest
  - 2. **principle: Paul understood that God had been very patient with him in his rebellion, until the day decreed for him to receive mercy by this Christ**
    - a. **e.g.** for those of us who came to faith “later” (in adulthood), we surely *must* appreciate that God was patient with us in our rebellion until the day he had decreed his mercy to fall
- f. “*as an example to those who were to believe ...*” = the **point** of the verse ...
  - 1. **why** has God shown mercy to Paul through Jesus as an act of patience?
    - 2. because this mercy upon Paul (as a gift of patience) becomes an **example** through him to everyone who belongs to the elect
      - a. **note:** Paul uses a *specific Greek word* (*mello*) in “*were to*” = those who must be; are about to be; certainly will be; intended to be – not “might believe”, but “certainly will believe”
  - 3. **principle: the patience of God demonstrated through Paul becomes, for all of the elect, a matter of where their true focus should be – in contrast to a focus on “instant results”**
    - a. **i.e.** human beings are fundamentally *impatient* – the “self” demands instant gratification
      - 1. the prayer of the impatient: “give me patience, and give it to me now!!”

- b. in the same vein, the imposition of “law” upon believers (to modify and hold behavior) is an example of *impatience* – rather than wait for believers to move towards “maturity” through the ordinary means of grace, the imposition of “legalisms” jumps instantly to the result
  - 1. **e.g.** the long-term goal of true number growth over against using entertainments to lure
  - 2. **e.g.** the long-term effect of true preaching over against the demand for instant “results”
  - 3. **e.g.** the long-term work of true spiritual growth over against the latest “church fads”
- 4. **application: the elect are to be keenly aware of the patience of God over them, and be patiently and steadfastly doing the real, long-term work of the gospel, rather than leaping for “results” and destroying the message of mercy in the gospel**
  - a. the heterodoxy at Ephesus appears to be an attempt by the “*teachers of the law*” to “shortcut” the hard work of the gospel, thus destroying the message itself – the “*vain discussion*” was about “new ways” of doing things that would be easier and quicker
- 5. **“warmth” or “success” or “size” or “programs” or “relevance” or “worship style” or a “celebrity pastor” or a “social justice agenda” or “the latest fads” are all *shortcuts* around the message of patience *inherent* in the gospel; shortcuts which “enslave” believers to a form of “church” that isn’t a true church of Christ at all – we preach *patience*, not *results*!**