

# The Charge to Timothy – Part 3

## 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. **illustration**: the new blog series by John MacArthur confronting the “social justice” agenda

“When I was studying doctrine and apologetics in seminary, I thought I was equipping myself to defend biblical truth against an onslaught of attacks from the world. I envisioned answering atheism and confronting threats to the gospel that would arise out of secular culture, the entertainment industry, the academic world, and other places outside the church. Sometime after I entered full-time ministry, it dawned on me (to my profound shock) that the greatest threats to biblical truth typically arise from within the fellowship of professing believers—and it is a relentless parade of attacks. Looking back through church history, I realized that’s how it has always been. There has never been a time when false doctrines, harmful methodologies, unwholesome practices, bizarre beliefs, poisonous ideologies, and false teachers weren’t troubling the church of God—often with seriously divisive and otherwise spiritually destructive results ... *From the earliest days of the apostolic era, faithful Christians have been called upon to contend earnestly for the truth of the gospel. The hardest battles have taken place within the visible church, among those who claim fidelity to Christ. That’s because the greatest threats to gospel truth have not come from atheists and other overt adversaries, but always from influential voices that arise within the church who speak twisted things (Acts 20:30) ...*” (*The Long Struggle to Preserve the Gospel – Part 1*, John MacArthur, [www.gty.org/library/blog/B180820](http://www.gty.org/library/blog/B180820), Aug 20, 2018)

1. Dr. MacArthur **alludes** to the history of the Ephesian church, as **evidence** of this trend (the blog continues as a **list** of the twisted teachings he’s encountered during his tenure [**see below**]):

- a. Paul had originally spent 3 years **teaching** in Ephesus (**Acts 18-19**)
- b. Paul had warned the Ephesian elders re: men arising from “**among your own selves**” speaking “**twisted things**” (**Acts 20:29-30**)
- c. Paul had written to the Ephesians a letter outlining the divine nature of the church, in the hope they would grasp these truths at the **core** of who they were and hold fast to them
- d. Paul now writes to the Ephesian church (through Timothy) to confront the issues he had warned them about from Miletus (**Acts 20**)
- e. Christ himself will confront the church for its embrace of “**false apostles**” and losing its “**first love**” (**i.e.** its passion for the original truths of Christ in the gospel; **Rev. 2:2, 4**)

#### b. **principle: the church of Jesus Christ is defined by the boundaries of its doctrinal truth**

1. not by its “warmth” or its “success” or its “size” or its “programs” or its “relevance” **or** its “worship style” or its “celebrity pastor” or its “cutting edge nature” or (most importantly) its “doctrinal looseness” (**e.g.** “you’ll fit right in ... you won’t find rules and rituals here”; recent church ad)
2. the church **ceases** to be the church when it embraces something “other” than apostolic truth

#### c. 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*)

3. the **target** of the charge

- c. (**now**) the **target** of the charge = **who**, **specifically**, is leading the crusade of “**different doctrine?**”
  1. and, what is the **method** they are using to bring this false doctrine into the church?

### III. The Target of the Charge (1 Timothy 1:6-11)

#### Content

##### a. the persons to be targeted (v. 6)

1. “*certain persons*” = Paul lays this issue at the feet of *specific people*; it is not a “generic” problem that can be addressed by just hoping it will “go away”
  - a. **note:** Paul will *name* some of these people (Hymenaeus and Alexander; **1:20**)
  - b. the target of Timothy’s charge is *specific people* – Timothy will need to address *actual people* with his authority (**i.e.** having to *confront* literal people and contend with them)
  - c. **note:** one of the most difficult *yet necessary* aspects of being an elder is having to address *specific people issues* in the church – this is formally called **church discipline**
    1. the **marks** of a biblical church: the preached Word, the ordinances, discipline
    2. sometimes, discipline may involve **excommunicating** those who fail to live up to their covenant
2. “*swerving away from these*” = to deviate; to abandon; to depart; to stray away from (swerve; KJV)
  - a. the false teachers have swerved away from “*these*” – a pure heart, good conscience, sincere faith
    1. given that a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith are all *Christlike* attributes, these false teachers have abandoned teaching *towards* these in the lives of their students
    2. **principle: heterodoxy never has godliness as its goal – it is (most often) designed to lead people away from the pursuit of holiness toward the pursuit of “ourselves”**
      - a. **e.g.** in his blog post from Monday (**see above**), MacArthur goes on to list a number of specific issues that he has faced – all of them are *self-focused* rather than *Christ-focused*
        1. charismaticism – the inordinate focus on spiritual gifts on what we can do with them
        2. psychotherapy – the focus on *understanding ourselves* using worldly methods
        3. pragmatism – the focus on the “seeker” using worldly methods to draw crowds
3. “*wandered away*” = deflected; turned away; lit. put out of joint; to sprain
  - a. **i.e.** having “turned their ankle” they are now “hobbling” away from the original track
4. “*into vain discussion*” = fruitless talk; meaningless talk; babble
  - a. stuff that doesn’t matter in the *eternal scope of things* – a focus on stuff that is *inconsequential*
    1. **e.g.** have you ever noticed how easy it is for attendees of the church to talk about anything and everything *other than* theology (in the *larger* sense) on Sunday mornings?
    2. (**maybe**) one reason why the Church is so divided along racial, social, or economic lines is because its focus is on *temporal things* rather than *eternal things* – or, what would happen if the people of the church spent more time talking about Christ than about themselves?
5. **a word picture:** the **who** – those who have *swerved* to miss an obstacle in the road (**i.e.** discipline in following Christ), have *abandoned* their vehicle (**i.e.** the apostolic gospel), and are now *wandering* around in the woods (**i.e.** their vain discussions), oblivious of their *original destination* (**i.e.** godliness)

##### b. the issue to be targeted (vv. 7-11)

1. **note:** in **v. 7**, Paul will *transition* from the “who” to the “how” – the verse “mixes” the two concepts together, and then it turns *hard* to the “how” in **vv. 8-11**
2. “*desiring to be teachers of the law*” = they desire to be authorities over others, governing the beliefs and actions of others, twisting what is good into something other than its original intent, in order to hold others under their power (a common trait of the most **divisive** people in a church)
  - a. *nomodidaskaloi* = a single word describing religious authorities, applied in **Luke 5:17** and **Acts 5:34** to Pharisees and other teaching officials (like Gamaliel, Paul’s own mentor!)
    1. the Pharisees were *notorious* for controlling people through their application of religion (law)
  - b. but ... they are “*without understanding*” and they “*make confident assertions*” of things they don’t fully know or are able to define and apply
    1. **e.g.** Jesus often questioned the *understanding* of these teachers (**John 3:10; Mark 12:24**)  
“Jesus answered [Nicodemus], ‘Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things?’ ... Jesus said to [the Sadducees], ‘Is this not the reason you are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God?’”
    2. they claimed to be “experts” but they were ignorant of the true ways of God, thus they taught the people what was wrong and controlled them under this false teaching
  - c. **issue:** one of the common arguments *against* preaching as central to the life of the believer is derived from this: why do we need preaching when we are perfectly capable of discovering what the Bible says to us – why do we need to *submit* ourselves to this form with its inherent dangers?
    1. given that preaching *requires* a certain sense of authority and assertiveness?
    2. **true:** heterodoxy is almost *always* spread by those in positions of power and authority – virtually all of the early heresies are *named* to the individual who promoted them (**e.g.** Arianism, Pelagianism, Nestorianism, etc.), and most *modern* heterodoxies are associated with a *primary*

individual (e.g. revivalism – Charles Finney, Pentecostalism – Charles Parham, prosperity gospel – Oral Roberts, seeker-sensitive movement – Bill Hybels, etc.)

3. **but: there has always been a significant difference between “preach the Word” (2 Tim. 4:2) as a method of leading people to Christ over against “preaching” which is designed to build up the preacher and lead people to him and his ways**
  - a. **IOW:** the focus of the *true preacher* is to lead the people to godliness and a Christ-focus – false teaching *invariably* leads to a self-focus and away from godliness – the **fruit** of the preaching **in the lives of hearers** is the test of its validity
3. **application: it is the responsibility of the people of God to assure that they are being regularly taught by people committed to *sola Scriptura* and to a focus on *Christ alone***
  - a. **truth #1:** every Christian should be sitting *consistently* under solid, expository preaching
  - b. **truth #2:** every Christian should be analyzing what they are hearing as to its biblical *conformity*