

1 TIMOTHY VERSE BY VERSE  
SESSION 2 | 1 TIMOTHY 1:4-8

1 TIMOTHY 1:3-10 | PAUL'S CHARGE, AND HIS INSIGHT INTO MINISTRY

- Verse 3 – see session 1
- Verse 4 –
  - These words continue the instruction for Timothy in verse 3. In addition to instructing others to **teach no other doctrine** (v. 3), Timothy was to instruct them not to spend time and mental energy on **fables and endless genealogies**.
  - Paul mentions **fables** three times in his two letters to Timothy and once to Titus.
    - Twice it is simply **fables** (here and [2 Tim. 4:4](#)), once it is **old wives' fables** ([1 Tim. 4:7](#)) and once it is **Jewish fables** ([Titus 1:14](#)).
    - The word is μῦθος [muthos], which came into the English language as *myth*, but the Greek carried a more broad meaning of *story* or *fable*.
  - Paul is likewise the only author to speak of **genealogies** (here and [Titus 3:9](#)), which comes directly from the Greek γενεαλογία [genealogia].
    - It is literally “a word on the beginnings.”
    - Some contend that **fables and endless genealogies** is a reference to the “emanations of AEONS according to the gnostics” (Bullinger, *The Companion Bible*), while others seem to use it as simply a means of referring to semi-factual or totally mythological stories about the founding of civilizations.
    - Polybius, the Greco-Roman historian, refers to “genealogies, myths, the planting of colonies, the foundations of cities and their ties of kinship have been recounted by many writers and in many different styles...” (Polybius, Vol. 4.2.1).
  - Whichever it is, the problem with these things is that the **minister questions**.
    - Some issues (whether they be of history, spirituality, etc.) can stir more questions than they will ever answer.
    - The endless pursuit of unanswerable questions is never fruitful. In the end, it leads to confusion and despair.
  - What is fruitful is **godly edifying which is in faith**?
    - The word **edifying** is οἰκοδομία [oikodomia], a combination of *oikos* (house) and *domos* (roof), and used to mean “building the house all the way up to the roof.”
    - The Greek is a noun, so could be translated, “...rather than the fully built building of God, which is in faith.”
  - There is a textual variant here in which the *Textus Receptus* is different than both the *Majority Text* (a rare occurrence) and the *Critical Text* (a fairly common occurrence).
    - Both the Majority and the Critical texts use the word *oikonomia*, from which we get *dispensation*.
    - This makes an interesting thought in which Paul is instructing Timothy to dwell on the *dispensation* **which is in faith** rather than **fables and endless genealogies**.
    - Concerning the textual question: Normally the Majority Text aligns with the *Textus Receptus*. It is unusual that it does not here. However, there is no doubt the KJV translators had access to the other manuscripts which contained *oikonomia*. It would be interesting to have heard the argument that caused them to settle on *oikodomia*, but

we do not have records (of which I am aware). In the end, it is probably best to trust that the translators had very good reason for rejecting the majority. It is also possible to end up with the same basic conclusion: spend your time in God's finished building (the dispensation of grace) rather than "wild goose chases."

- Verse 5 –
  - Presumably, **the commandment** in consideration is the instruction to **charge some** in verses 3-4. Cross references seem to lead astray and skip the simple context.
  - Paul wants Timothy to do a tough job, but to do it with good motives, not a spiteful attitude.
- Verse 6 –
  - The word "**which**" is plural, a fact that cannot be fully discerned in English nor by context but comes from the Greek alone.
    - This stands as a great example of why students of the Word should have a working knowledge of tools of Biblical language.
    - Without this knowledge one must speculate whether some **swerved** from **faith unfeigned** (v. 5) alone or from the trio of **charity, conscience, and faith** (v. 5).
  - When one gets away from this trio, they can easily turn to **vain jangling**, that is, "To talk excessively or noisily; to chatter...often applied contemptuously" (Oxford English Dictionary).
  - We should take care that Christian correction (which is in view in verses 3-6) are done in the right spirit, otherwise we easily swerve into noisy and excessive chatter, applied contemptuously.
- Verse 7 –
  - The last thing you want is a *vain jangler* to be a *teacher of the law*!
  - Paul speaks of **teachers of the law**, and then will speak positively of the law in the following verses. This is most odd if the law has been totally put aside. However, if Paul is writing during a period of transition, then **teachers of the law** are still necessary.
- Verse 8 –
  - What is the *lawful* use of the law?
    - For those living *free from the law*, there is no lawful use.
  - We only have two interpretive choices, it seems.
    - We can assume that by **law** Paul refers to *law in general* rather than *Torah Law*. However, no normal reading of the text would bring this conclusion. Furthermore, this would force the interpretation that the **teachers of the law** of verse 7 are simply some kind of police officer giving education on local ordinances.
    - We can assume that, at the time of the writing, the law could be used **lawfully**. Note the verbs (both the assumed verb **is** and the stated verb **use**) are in the present tense.
  - Number 2 above seems the only logical conclusion, thus we understand 1 Timothy to be written during an age in which some were living under the law for Kingdom purposes (not for salvation purposes).