

A COMMENTARY ON PAUL'S LETTERS TO

TIMOTHY

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PREFACE

This commentary is the result of a year-long study on Paul's letters to Timothy held on Sunday mornings with the Greater Buffalo Church of Christ in Lancaster, NY, spanning from about March of 2007 to March of 2008. These epistles are so rich in spiritual truth and applicable in instruction that they cannot possibly be exhausted: at the end of these studies, I felt like it was time to just go back to I Timothy 1:1 and start all over again! What a shame that these letters, along with most other subjects that demand months and even years of prayerful and thoughtful study, are often jammed into a 13 week quarter in order to adhere to a traditional class schedule!

Unfortunately, this study guide is woefully incomplete: many of my hand-written notes never made it into printed form, and I simply failed to find the time as of yet to revisit those sections that I intend to expand upon. Specifically, a large portion of Paul's discussion of widows in I Timothy 5, and the profound and challenging instructions concerning benevolence, riches and contentment in I Timothy 6 demand completion – God-willing, I will have time for this some day. I am certain that there are many misspellings and other minor errors that need to eventually be sorted out, too.

Please understand that I claim no uniqueness or absolute originality with these notes. I stand on the shoulders of every preacher, teacher, loved one and friend who has patiently instructed and conversed with me about the Scriptures, sharing their own meditations on these truths that are eternal. In terms of reference works, I have most notably consulted the commentaries on these Epistles written by Marshall Patton (Truth Commentaries, 2001) and Gareth Reese (Scripture Exposition Press, 1999), among countless other commentaries, books, articles and websites. Now I share with you what I am still striving to learn, with hopes and prayers that your own study of these timeless letters will be enriched – and that you might in turn share what you learn with others as well.

If you find statements in this work that are less than understandable or even untrue, please do not hesitate to contact me with your questions and comments so that we can work through the confusion together.

Sincerely yours,

Dan

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THE FIRST EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY

OUTLINE

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2. Charge To Stand Against False Teachers/Doctrines
 - a. Danger to sound doctrine in Ephesus (1:3-4)
 - b. Teachers who failed to use God's law properly (1:5-11)
3. Paul – An Example Of The Results Of Sound Doctrine
 - a. Paul's unworthiness due to sin and unbelief (1:12-15)
 - b. Paul's conversion a pattern to encourage future believers (1:16-17)
4. The Evangelist's Responsibility Toward Sound Doctrine
 - a. Wage the good warfare with faith and a good conscience (1:18)
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6. Guard The Purity Of The Gospel (6:20-21)

THE FIRST EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY

INTRODUCTION

Four New Testament epistles penned by the apostle Paul were written to individuals rather than churches: I and II Timothy, Titus and Philemon. Three of these letters were written to young evangelists, Timothy and Titus, who were close companions of Paul as he strived to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, mainly to the Gentiles. Over the course of many years of sacrifice and struggle together, bonds formed between these young men and Paul so close that the apostle would refer to both of these men as his “true [sons] in the faith” (e.g. I Tim. 1:2; Tit. 1:4). However, though written to specific men who lived at specific times and had specific duties to carry out in God’s kingdom, these rich epistles contain guidance and instruction for servants of God of all ages and walks of life – these letters were written, not that Timothy and Titus alone might benefit from Paul’s wisdom and inspiration, but that all Christians of all time might gain instruction in sound doctrine and in how to be examples “in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (I Tim. 4:12). It is to the first of these letters, the *First Epistle To Timothy*, that we turn our studious attention in these next few lessons.

I. Author

As stated in I Timothy 1:1, the apostle Paul. Both internal and external evidence are too overwhelming to seriously dispute Paul’s authorship:

- Paul’s signature, 1:1
- Characteristically of Paul’s letters, the destination is detailed next, 1:2
- Biographical notes point to Paul:
 - vs. 1, 11 – An apostle by the command of God (cf. Acts 22:21)
 - vs. 12-17 – Formerly a blasphemer and persecutor of the church (cf. Acts 9:1)
 - 2:7 – Sent by God to preach the gospel to the Gentiles (cf. Acts 26:17-18)
- Characteristic salutation of the form, “Grace be with you,” 6:21
 - See Rom. 16:24; I Cor. 16:23; II Cor. 13:14; Gal. 6:18; Eph. 6:24; Phil. 4:23; Col. 4:18; I Thes. 5:28; II Thes. 3:18; II Tim. 4:22; Tit. 3:15; Phile. 25; Heb. 13:25 (?)
- Numerous references in the writings of early Christians, as far back as Clement of Rome (96 AD), e.g.:
 - Clement of Alexandria: “In the second epistle to Timothy the noble Paul commands...” (*Stromata* III, AD 190)
 - Origen: “Moreover, Paul, who himself also subsequently became an apostle of Jesus, says in his epistle to Timothy: This is a faithful saying, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief” (*Against Celsus* I.lxiii, AD 210)

For a more detailed examination of internal and external evidences of Pauline authorship, see Reese, *New Testament Epistles: Timothy and Titus*.

II. Time and Place Of Authorship

There is no way to know for certain when this epistle was written, however it can be dated with some certainty by placing it between the letters of Philemon and II Timothy. After Paul’s first imprisonment in Rome, history tells us that the apostle was released and that he traveled extensively, visiting the churches of Asia Minor and Macedonia, perhaps going as far as

Spain (Romans 15:28). Sometime later, Paul was arrested once again, this time to be executed under the vicious tyrant Nero. I Timothy and Titus were probably penned during Paul's travels during the interval between his imprisonments, while II Timothy was probably written from prison just before his execution.

- Acts 28:30-31 – *Acts* concludes with Paul in Rome awaiting his hearing with Caesar
- Phil. 1:19-26, 2:23-24 – While first imprisoned in Rome, Paul penned *Ephesians*, *Philippians*, *Colossians* and *Philemon*, with hopes that he would soon be released
 - Tychichus and Onesimus bore these letters (Eph. 6:21f; Col. 4:7ff; Phile. 10-17)
 - Phile. 22 – Paul expected to be released into Philemon's care shortly
- Rome burned in 64 AD, sparking Nero's intensified efforts to wipe out Christianity, thus it is highly unlikely that Paul's release came after this year
 - History says that Paul appealed to Caesar and was released in 63 AD
- Probably, Paul traveled from Rome to Ephesus by way of Crete, where he left Titus (Tit. 1:5), and then on to Colossae (as he said in Phile. 22)
- Timothy, who was probably in Philippi for some short time preceding, met Paul in Ephesus and remained as Paul departed for Macedonia (Phil. 2:19; I Tim. 1:3f)
- Somewhere in Macedonia, Paul wrote *I Timothy* and *Titus*
- Paul was evidently arrested once again in late 65 AD and executed in spring of 66 AD

Thus, we can conservatively place the date and place of authorship of *I Timothy* at 63-64 AD from somewhere in Macedonia.

III. Timothy The Evangelist

- Acts 14 – Paul's first missionary journey took him to Lystra and Derbe
 - Many disciples were made in this region (vs. 21)
 - Jews from Antioch and Iconium persuaded the people to stone Paul
- Acts 16:1-3 – On his Second Missionary Journey, Paul and Silas return to Derbe and Lystra and meet a young man named Timothy
 - Mother and grandmother, Eunice and Lois, were Jews who became Christians
 - Father was a Gentile, but, if still alive, evidently was not hostile to their religion
 - Timothy's upbringing – II Timothy 3:14-15
 - Timothy's reputation – Acts 16:2
 - *But what made Paul choose Timothy when he wouldn't bring John Mark on this journey? This is a discussion for later...*
- Acts 16:3-5 – Thus began the relationship between Paul and Timothy
 - Second Missionary Journey to Thessalonica, Berea, Athens and Corinth
 - Third Missionary Journey, Timothy was with Paul at Ephesus, but was sent with Erastus on a special mission to Macedonia and Achaia (Acts 19:21f; I Cor. 4:17, 16:10f)
 - Timothy and others joined Paul again on his journey to Jerusalem (Acts 20:3-5)
 - Paul was then imprisoned for two years in Caesarea and two more years in Rome, and Timothy was there at least in Rome (Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:1; Phile. 1:1)

IV. Purpose Of Writing

Paul left Timothy in Ephesus with tremendous responsibility, thus he wrote to give:

1. Charge to stand against false teachers, I Tim. 1:3-11
2. Instructions concerning the church, its members and organization, I Tim. 2-3, 5-6

3. Encouragement with counsel concerning his own spiritual progress, I Tim. 4

THE FIRST EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY

CHAPTER 1

I. Salutation

A. Paul's Apostleship (vs. 1)

1. Apostle – Gr. *apostolos*, lit. “one sent forth” as in Matt 10:2,16; 28:19. In the New Testament, this word is used exclusively in a religious sense:
 - Apostles of Christ – Matt 10:1-4; Acts 1:2,8,13-14
 - Sent as eyewitness of Christ to teach the gospel (cf. II Pet 1:17)
 - Met certain qualifications detailed in Acts 1:21-26
 - Apostles sent by a church – Acts 13:3 with 14:4,14; Rom 16:7; I Thes 2:6 (with Acts 16:25, 17:1, Paul and Silas)
2. Paul did not meet the qualifications of Acts 1:21ff
 - He was chosen and commissioned directly by God in a different way than the rest, “as one born out of due time” (I Cor 15:8)
 - Acts 26:12-18 – “a minister and a witness” sent by Christ
3. Importance of this appellation:
 - Reassure Timothy of Paul's authority (as in I Cor 14:37)
 - Arm Timothy against those who contested Paul's apostleship
 - Paul's apostleship was evidently under attack by some who claimed he was not an apostle with the same authority/power as the rest (I Cor 9:1-3; II Cor 12:11-12; Gal 1:1ff, etc.)
 - Timothy knew well Paul's authority, power and the authenticity of his apostleship – this epistle was intended to be more than a personal letter, but a document to be available to the Ephesian church and all Christians to come

Note: “God our Savior” is used several times in the New Testament (cf. Luke 1:47; 1 Tim 1:1; 1 Tim 2:3; Tit 1:3, 2:10, 3:4; Jude 25). God is our Savior because: 1. God the Father planned, designed and revealed this great salvation (Isa 59:15-16; John 17:4; I Cor 1:21-25, 2:7-10; II Cor 5:18-19; Eph 1:3-14; II Thes 2:13-14; II Tim 1:9-10, etc.); 2. God the Son became the author of salvation by His incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection (Acts 4:12; Eph 5:23; Phil 3:20; II Tim 1:10; Tit 1:4, 2:13, 3:6; Heb 5:9, 9:11-28).

B. Timothy, Paul's “Own Son In The Faith” (vs. 2)

Commentators and scholars agree that the primary meaning of Paul's reference to both Timothy and Titus as his sons in the faith is that Paul converted both of these men. Though there is no information in the New Testament that contradicts this conclusion, the details of the conversions of Timothy and Titus are not revealed and thus not entirely certain. However, the phrase certainly has deeper and more emotional meaning than this, as is confirmed by the inspired writings of Acts and the epistles of Paul.

- Phil 2:19-24 – Timothy was Paul's son in the faith because they developed a strong, enduring, affectionate bond as they labored together in preaching the gospel.

These men endured great hardships and persecutions together and grew in trust and loving friendship so that Paul looked on Timothy as his own son

- Tit 1:4-5 – All of the above statements could evidently be said of Titus as well, though not as much is revealed about his work with Paul as is with Timothy. Titus was Paul’s son in the common faith, a man in whom Paul placed much trust and found much joy and comfort in through his diligent work with certain churches (cf. II Cor 2:13, 7:6f, 8:23)

Note that the discussion in I Corinthians 1 also gives weight to the idea that Timothy being Paul’s “son in the faith” means more than that Paul was responsible for converting Timothy by the gospel. Paul baptized Crispus and Gaius, and converted countless others, and yet none of these people are ever referred to as his children in the faith. In fact, the very point that Paul makes in I Corinthians 1 is that Christians are not to be puffed up or identified by who baptized them – why would the apostle then write to Timothy and Titus exalting the fact that he converted them?

II. Charge To Stand Against False Teachers/Doctrines

Paul urged Timothy to stay in Ephesus while he traveled on to Macedonia, probably at least to fulfill his promise to the Philippians church (Phil. 2:24). The apostle had definite, serious reasons for commanding Timothy to stay in this place:

A. Charge Some That They Teach No Other Doctrine (vs. 3-4)

- *No other doctrine* – Even in this early stage of the church, false teachings were a growing problem (Acts 15:1ff; II Tim 4:3-4; II Pet 2:1-3; I John 4:1)
 - Acts 20:28ff - Paul had already warned the elders of this church to beware of me who speak perverse things and seek to draw disciples away from Christ
 - Gal 1:6-10; II John 9-11 – Any other doctrine besides that which is already revealed in the gospel is accursed before God
- *Nor give heed to fables* – Fables is from the Greek *muthos* from which we derive our word *myth*. This word signifies fictitious speech or conversation, i.e. the rumor-filled talk of men. Here it probably refers to:
 - False religious doctrines of the Jews, cf. Matt 28:15 w/ II Pet 2:16; II Tim 4:4
 - Commandments of men in general, cf. Matt 15:9; Tit 1:14
 - And also somewhat to the:
- *Endless genealogies* – Many of the Jews prided themselves in being able to trace their lineage back to Abraham, and effort without any purpose or object after the death of Christ (Jer 31:31ff; Gal 3:26-28; Col 3:11; I Pet 2:9-10).
 - Eusebius records that Herod (“being an Idumean” and “jealous of the noble origin of the Jews,” Clarke) destroyed the Jewish public registers which had been stored in the archives of the Temple
 - The authentic tables having been destroyed, the Jews who insisted on proving and arguing about their lineage were forced to rely on faulty and incomplete private records – such uncertainties must have factored into the “fables”
- *Which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith*
 - Faith come by hearing the word of God (Rom 10:17) and is certain, unshakeable

- Edification is the promotion of spiritual growth – disputes and vain wranglings over tedious, inconsequential questions cannot produce spiritual maturity that comes only by the word (Eph 4:15; I Pet 2:2; II Pet 3:18)
 - Cf. Rom 14:19; I Cor 8:1; II Cor 10:18; Eph 4:29
 - Note that it is possible to teach even the truth while working toward harm rather than edification of the hearers (see also II Tim 2:24-26)!

B. To Goal Of This Charge (vs. 5)

Beyond just the charge itself, Paul gives the motivation for his command, which was to be the goal and purpose of Timothy's charge, and indeed the objective of all gospel teaching done by all Christians:

1. *Love* – The same *love* as in Matt 22:37; John 3:16; Eph 5:25; Rom 5:8; I John 4:7-11
 - Rather than vain speculation, outward religion, and useless arguments, the Christian is to love God and man wholly, unconditionally, sacrificially
 - This was God's desire for His people in the Old Testament, Deut 6:5-6; Ps 9:1-2, 51:17, 111:1, 119:2,10,34,58,69,145; Joel 2:12-13
 - God's expectations have not change: the purpose of the gospel is that man might see the love of God and seek to reciprocate that love by glorifying Him
2. *From a pure heart* – Heart here represents the inner man, i.e. the mind, thoughts, affections. God desires for man to love Him with a wholly devoted, clean of impurity, selfishness, and unholy motivations
 - Matt 15:7-9 – It's so easy to allow one's religion to become shallow and heartless
 - Note examples in the Sermon on the Mount, esp. Matt 6
 - Matt 5:8 – The pure in heart are those that will dwell with God in His unlimited favor
3. *A good conscience* – The conscience is the mental faculty that God instilled in man at his creation which prompts him to do what he thinks is right and not do what he thinks is wrong (see John 8:9; Acts 24:16; I Cor 10:25-33)
 - One's conscience must be cleansed – Tit 1:15; I Pet 3:20-21 (esp. NASU); Heb 10:22
 - One's conscience must be trained to be good – Ps 119:9-16; Mark 7:20-23; Phil 4:8
 - One's conscience can be seared past the point of feeling – I Tim 4:2 (more later)
4. *And sincere faith* – That is, a faith that is genuine (II Tim 1:5), honest, trusting, unpretentious. See Phil 1:9-11; I Pet 1:22-23.

Note: The word here translated “commandment” (*parangelia*, lit. “a proclamation, or command...received from a superior,” Vine) occurs only once more in the writings of Paul outside the “Preacher Epistles,” i.e. in I Thes 4:2. Here again the word is used to describe the commands handed down by Christ through the apostles in the gospel, given that Christians might live in a way that pleases God, worthy of their sanctification.

C. Those Who Had Turned Aside (vs. 6-7)

Some in Ephesus, evidently even some Christians, had “strayed” from this pure and undefiled love of God and man (vs. 6). As in II Tim 2:18, this word means to deviate, or to miss the mark.

- These would-be teachers did not share in the love Paul mentions in vs. 5, neither within themselves nor as a motivation for teaching
- Rather, they engaged in vain talking, i.e. useless speech serving no real purpose

As the scribes, these teachers took great pride in being looked up to as the teachers of the law, yet they were ignorant and much of their doctrine was erroneous.

- The scribes and Pharisees were not only ignorant of God's law and power, but arrogant to the point that they condemned the innocent and led disciples away from salvation (cf. Matt 12:7, 22:29, 23:13; much of Matt 5, etc.)
- Many taught some truth, yet broke God's law in practice and tradition to the point that God was blasphemed among the Gentiles (cf. Rom 2:17-21, 10:1-3)

Paul condemns the teaching of such unfaithful men, stating that they understand neither the things they teach nor the things "they so confidently affirm" (NIV, vs. 7) – i.e. they were unable to follow their assertions to their necessary conclusions which were as false as the ignorant doctrines themselves.

What did they not understand?

1. Temporary nature of the Old Law – Gal 3:19, 24-25
2. Inability of the Old Law to forgive sins – Rom 3:9-10; Heb 10:1-4
3. Futility of adding traditions to God's word – Matt 15:1-9

What about us today?

Many people seek to be teachers without either knowledge of the Scriptures and/or hearts prepared to not only study but obey (compare Ezra 7:10; Acts 18:24). Thus, before seeking to teach, Christians are warned to:

- First study and gain knowledge in God's word
- Approach the word with a humble heart that is ready to faithfully obey (see Jam 1:21f; II Tim 2:2)
- Examine not only our own doctrine, and the assertions that our doctrine implies, but also our motivation for teaching

Take note of Paul's humble example – is there any room at all for us to be proud/arrogant in our knowledge of Christ?

- Read I Cor 1:5-7,10; Eph 2:8-9; Gal 6:11-15

D. Exposition On The Purpose Of The Law (vs. 8-11)

Almost as if to silence those who would most certainly claim that Paul (and thus Timothy) was trying to destroy the Old Law by teaching the doctrine of Christ (see Acts 21:20f, 26:3, 28:17f), the apostle quickly states the goodness and primary purpose of the Law:

- vs. 8 – The Law is good if one does not miss its objective, misapply it, misunderstand it and misconstrue it
 - Let Christians be warned – we are under such law, too: I Cor 9:21; Gal 6:2
- vs. 9 – How should the law be used? What was its intent?
 - Many interpretations of vs. 9, though one fits best with the context of this verse and with passages like Gal 3:19

- *The primary purpose of the Law was to reveal the knowledge of sin and thus to restrain the wicked*
 - The Law taught Israel how to live in righteousness, not just in external actions, but from the heart
 - The Law of the Lord converts the soul – Psalm 19:7

What does it mean that the Law was not meant for a righteous person? Righteous men and women like Moses and Joshua based their lives on following God’s instructions in the Law and thus found God’s favor (e.g. Josh 1:7-9). The righteous man delights in the law of the Lord and meditates upon it day and night (Ps 1:2). The Law was absolutely necessary for a righteous man to maintain his righteousness for it was the guide to his feet (Ps 37:31, 119:105). Jesus Christ, the most righteous man of all, used the Law and lived His life by it “to fulfill all righteousness” (see Matt 3:15 with Luke 7:30-31; Matt 4:1-11; etc.). The Law helps Christians, God’s children chosen through Christ, to live faithfully to the Lord (Rom 15:4, etc.). So what does this puzzling statement mean?

- As in other passages, the apostle simply emphasizes a truth by a strong negative
- Matt 9:12 – The physically healthy may need a physician to maintain health
- John 6:27 – Man must also labor for physical food (Gen 3:17ff; II Thes 3:10)

What kind of unrighteous persons should have learned restraint from the Old Law?

- *Lawless* – Those who are aware of the Law but pay no attention to it, i.e. transgressors, wicked (Mark 15:28; Luke 22:37; Acts 2:23; II Thes 2:8)
- *Disobedient* – Rebels against authority; those who refuse to submit; translate “unruly” in Titus 1:6
- *Ungodly* – Having no reverence for God, no regard for sacred things
- *Sinners* – It appears that this is to stand in contrast to the *ungodly* – perhaps a distinction between those who choose a life scoffing God and His Law and those who are sinners by honest ignorance
 - Like Paul, Acts 23:1
 - See also I Peter 4:18
- *Unholy* – Just like ungodly: impious, wicked
- *Profane* – This is a word picture: lit. tramples that which is holy
 - Treats sacred things, e.g. the name of God, as common
 - Consider the profanity of Esau, Heb 12:16
- And the list goes on, much the same in content and in order as the Ten Commandments – *did Paul have the Decalogue in mind?*

Finally, in verses 10-11, Paul expands his list of ungodly behavior to “anything that is contrary to sound doctrine, according to the glorious gospel” – two points must be made:

1. *Sound doctrine* – To be sound simply means to be healthy, wholesome, free from defect or damage. Used in Scripture of:
 - Speech, Tit 2:8 – i.e. speech that is beyond reproach (NAS), without impurity or moral defect, just like that of Christ (I Pet 2:22)
 - Faith, Tit 1:13, 2:2 – Unlike insubordinate, idle talkers, deceivers and teachers/followers of the commandments of men
 - Words or instruction, I Tim 6:3 – specifically, the words of Jesus Christ

- Doctrine/teaching, II Tim 4:3; Tit 1:9, 2:1 – See I Tim 6:3 in NAS: “*advocates a different doctrine and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ...*”

2. Sound Doctrine Is In Accordance With The Gospel

Some people claim that Christians may differ over “doctrinal matters” (often manner/method of worship, baptism, work/organization of the church, etc.) yet we should all be united in the gospel. The same might say that a teacher/preacher should teach the gospel, and not worry about doctrinal issues in order to promote unity. Is there such a distinction made between “doctrine” and “gospel” in the Scriptures, as though one’s doctrine is unimportant while the gospel is vital?

a. **Gospel** – good news, good tidings, namely, of salvation in Jesus Christ

- Primarily, the gospel tells of Christ’s life, death and resurrection – I Cor 15:1-3
- The gospel is God’s word, not the word of man – Gal 1:11-12
- The gospel is God’s power unto/for salvation – Rom 1:16-17
- The gospel contains facts to believe – Mark 1:15; Acts 15:7; Rom 10:14-17
- The gospel contains commands to obey – Rom 10:16; II Thes 1:6-10; I Pet 4:17
- The gospel contains such “doctrinal” issues as:
 - Grace of God – Acts 20:24
 - Resurrection and judgment – Rom 2:16; I Cor 15
 - Authority of the apostles – I Cor 9:18
 - Circumcision – Gal 2:3-5
 - Miraculous works of the Holy Spirit – I Thes 1:5
 - Repentance, faith, baptism, laying on of hands, resurrection, judgment – Heb 6:1f

b. **Doctrine** – simply teaching, *lit.* “that which is taught”

- Doctrine either comes from God or comes from man:
 - Matt 15:7-9 – Teaching/following the doctrine of men yields religion vain
 - John 7:16; II John 9 – Following the doctrine of man cannot glorify God; refusing to abide in the doctrine of Christ separates one from God
 - Esp. not the NIV of John 7:17 – “*If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own.*”
 - Consider Matt 21:25 – only two choices, a doctrine is from God or from men!
- The first principles of the gospel are referred to as doctrine – Heb 6:1-2
- Obedience to sound doctrine directly impacts salvation – I Tim 4:16; Rom 6:17f
- Those who teach a doctrine different than sound doctrine must be noted and avoided
 - Romans 16:17; I Tim 6:3-5; II John 10-11

How does one recognize sound doctrine? I Timothy 1:11 teaches that sound doctrine is in accordance with, or conforms to (NIV), the gospel – i.e. sound doctrine agrees with the word of Jesus Christ (I Tim 6:3, NAS). The question for Christians IS NOT “is it doctrine or gospel?” If one teaches ANYTHING, he teaches doctrine. The only question of importance is this: Is the doctrine I’m learning and following sound doctrine in accordance with the gospel, or vain doctrine in accordance with the commandments of men? Is it from heaven or from God? Does it lead to life and salvation, or vain religion and spiritual death? Read again II John 9.

III. Paul – An Example Of The Result Of Sound Doctrine

In the third major section of chapter 1, Paul talks about his own conversion and apostleship – specifically how the grace and mercy shown him by God is a pattern “to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life” (vs. 16). Specifically, in Paul we see the possible result of sound doctrine: even blasphemers and persecutors and people who stand against everything that is sound can gain the mercy and grace of God, with the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus, and become useful in the service of the Lord.

A. Christ’s Trust In Paul (vs. 11b-12)

- The gospel was committed to Paul’s trust, i.e. committed to his responsibility
 - Speaks of Paul’s apostleship, Acts 26:16-18; I Cor 9:16
 - What trust Christ put in such men! See Rom 1:16
- Remembering Christ’s mercy and grace moves Paul to express his gratefulness:
 - That the Lord “enabled” him to be an apostle
 - By giving him the Holy Spirit, Eph 3:6-7; II Cor 12:1-2
 - By giving him strength to stand and persevere, Phil 4:13; II Tim 4:16-17
 - That the Lord counted him faithful, putting great trust in Paul’s character

Note: The word *ministry* simply means service, thus the NIV and NAS read similarly, “putting me into service” or “his service.” There is no hint that ministers spoken of in the New Testament are a select, ordained group, appointed to an official, professional body of ministers. Paul speaks of himself simply as a servant – a minister of the gospel (Eph 3:6-7; Col 1:23), a minister of Christ (Rom 15:16; cf. Col 1:17; I Thes 3:2; I Tim 4:6), and a minister of the church (Col 1:25). In I Peter 4:10-11, the apostles speaks of Christians as having different abilities which we might use to “minister to one another” – thus, in some sense, all faithful Christians are ministers, servants of Christ, the brotherhood (I Pet 2:17), and all people.

B. Paul’s Former Life As A Persecutor Of Christ (vs. 13)

- Blasphemer – one who speaks reproachfully, reviles, slanders
 - Paul’s blasphemy was against Jesus the Son of God, the disciples of Christ, and indirectly through coercing disciples to blaspheme (Acts 26:9-11)
- Persecutor – one who pursues with aggression and harassment
 - Acts 9:1-2, 26:11; I Cor 15:9; Gal 1:13
 - All of this persecution was truly persecuting Christ, Acts 9:4-5, etc.
- Insolent man – this language is too light, but there is no exact word in English to translate the particular Greek
 - NIV = violent man; NASU = violent aggressor; same language used in:
 - I Thes 2:2 of Paul’s treatment at Philippi (see Acts 16:19-24 – cf. Acts 8:3, 22:4)
 - Luke 18:32 of the treatment of the Messiah (NKJV *insulted*; NAS *mistreated*; NIV *insult him...flog him and kill him*)

Paul stood against everything that had to do with the sound doctrine of the gospel! He was just the kind of teacher and leader (Gal 1:14) that those would-be teachers in Ephesus longed to become – yet he could look back and say, “This is not truth; it cannot save!” Though zealous for God (Acts 22:3), Paul was ignorant and filled with unbelief, thus all his devoted, passionate religion actually led him away from God – just like his Jewish contemporaries, Rom 10:1-4.

C. Paul's Conversion In Christ – A Pattern (vs. 13b-16)

- Christ did not treat Paul as his sins deserved, but he obtained mercy
 - Read Ps 103:8-14
 - In total contrast to the way Paul had treated others!
- Paul sinned, not in outright rebellion against God, but ignorantly and in unbelief
 - This did not excuse his sin!
 - Yet God saw Paul's heart (I Sam 16:7) and saw his unwavering, loyal, honest and sincere devotion to what he thought was God's law
 - Paul's integrity was never a question – he acted in *unbelief* (cf. Rom 10; Jam 2:19)
- Paul was saved by God's grace through faith (Rom 10:17) and love (John 14:15; I John 5:1-4)

Note: Neither God's mercy, grace, nor that fact that Paul sinned in ignorance caused him to be forgiven of his sins. Not until he acted in obedience, until he turned his life around and started doing what Christ commanded him, did he receive the remission of sins (Acts 9:18, 22:14-16). Paul heard those commands through a man of the gospel, just like the people on Pentecost (Acts 2:38) and just like you and me. So, is Paul's conversion really that different than any other?

D. Christ's Mercy and Patience With Paul – A Pattern

- Luke 19:1-10 – Jesus Christ came into this world to save sinners – which one of us has not or is not described by this word? See Rom 3:23, 5:12.
- Paul received mercy and patience from Christ as a pattern – we can receive mercy, grace and salvation in the same way, no matter what sins we've committed!
- “going to believe on Him for everlasting life” – *for* is the Greek *eis*, lit. “to obtain”
 - As in Acts 2:38; see NIV, “believe on him and receive everlasting life”

E. All Things For The Glory Of God – vs. 17

- Upon speaking of God's grace, Paul often bursts forth with such praise – e.g. Rom 11:33-36, 16:27; Gal 1:5; Eph 3:20-21; I Tim 6:16, etc.
- “King eternal” is lit. “King of the ages” – see Ps 145:13
- Notice the contrast between Paul's phrases of praise and the false gods of the heathen

IV. The Evangelist's Responsibility Toward Sound Doctrine

A. Wage The Good Warfare Of Faith (vs. 18-19a)

- “good warfare” – Eph 6:10-18; I Cor 9:7; II Cor 10:3-6; I Tim 6:12; II Tim 2:3-4, 4:7
- “holding faith” – I Tim 3:9; II Tim 1:13; Jude 3
 - Not personal faith, but “the faith” meaning sound doctrine, the gospel, etc.
 - There is no victory for the Lord without tenaciously clinging to the truth
- “and a good conscience” – again speaks of the conduct/example of the evangelist
 - I Pet 2:18-23, 3:13-17 – Good conscience to be sure that persecution is not because of one's sins and misconduct
 - Heb 13:19(23) – Even in the face of opposition and adverse circumstances, holding a good conscience
 - Tit 2:6-8 – Don't allow any of the opposition you face, for face it you will, be due to your own conduct, harsh words, or unsound doctrine/speech

B. Examples Of Shipwrecked Faith (vs. 19b-20)

- “concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck” – I Tim 6:21; II Tim 2:18, 3:8
 - The Scriptures are often destroyed by unscrupulous men – Acts 20:29-30; Gal 1:6f; II Tim 2:17f; II Pet 2:1-3, 3:16-17
 - Not a reference to personal faith, but in regard to faith as the revelation of Christ – these men had “wandered away from the truth” (II Tim 2:18, NIV)
 - Hymanaeus – II Tim 2:17-18 (same idea in context, probably same person)
 - Alexander – Perhaps II Tim 4:14-15
- “whom I delivered to Satan” – A difficult passage with many interpretations

One rule of interpretation: find another passage or passages in which the same phrase is used, and examine them each in context.

- I Cor 5:1-5 – a passage which carries with it its own difficulties, but similar language! Clearly, Paul is speaking about a situation where a Christian is in sin, refuses to repent, and thus must be drawn away from (see Matt 18:15-17; II Thes 3:6,14-15)

1. These commands were by Paul’s authority in Christ (see I Cor 14:37)

- He was not present physically, but was with them in spirit (Col 2:5; I Thes 2:17)
- Yet, as an apostle, he cast his judgment along with them
 - Note that this places a qualification on I Cor 4:5 – we are not to judge the thoughts and intentions of a man’s heart, but we are to judge his actions
 - See also Matt 7:16-20
- Thus, if any person sought to charge the Corinthians with misconduct and mistreatment, they could reply that they had Paul’s (and thus the Lord’s) approval (i.e. “with the power

2. This action was to be taken by the church while assembled as a church

- “In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ” goes grammatically goes best with “when you are gathered together”
- Thus, the NIV reads, “When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus”
- This type of meeting is what Paul later defines as the church – see I Cor 11:18
- Why must church discipline be done in the full assembly?
 - That the rest of the congregation may fear – I Tim 5:19-20 (about elders)
 - That the sinner is exposed and all the church knows where he stands – Rom 16:17-18 (speaking to the church)
 - That the whole church may put forth an effort to restore him – Matt 18:17

3. Paul referred to this action as delivering the sinner to Satan

- The church is the kingdom or dominion of God
- God blots sinners out of the church (Rev 3:5)
- This means the sinner is now in the dominion of Satan all over again (John 12:31; Col 1:13; Eph 2:1-2)
- Thus, delivering one to Satan simply means that the act of excommunication by the church is meant to show the sinner that they have no part in God’s kingdom, but now are again slaves of sin

4. *This action is remedial not simply punitive*

- “for the destruction of the flesh” – cannot mean physical death: the sinner is meant to learn from this experience (see I Tim 1:20)
- Rom 1:24-27 – When God “gave up” the Gentiles, they were left to their own devices and thus suffered the consequences of their sinful lifestyle
 - Sins carry consequences, and the way of the sinner is hard
 - Prov 13:15, 20-21 – think of the prodigal son!
- “The person who is given over to Satan has rejected the rebukes of the church. Consequently there are no more barriers for him to resist in his wayward life except to experience the painful consequences of sin. When such a person sees the end result of such a course of life, hopefully he will be moved to repentance” (Willis 138)
- The purpose of church discipline is to make a final effort to save the fallen brother:
 - I Tim 1:20 – learn not to blaspheme
 - II Thes 3:15 – admonish him as a brother
 - I Cor 5:5 – “that his spirit may be saved” – not unconditionally, or just because he has suffered the consequences of sin. This passage implies the sinner’s repentance (see Acts 8:22; Heb 6:4-6; Jam 5:19-20; etc.)

Paul stating that he “delivered” Hymenaeus and Alexander simply alludes to the fact that the church’s action concerning these men was at the command of Paul (cf. I Cor 14:37). The action was taken as discipline in an effort to teach these men to repent and do right. Timothy’s life and example in teaching was to be exactly the opposite of these false teachers, standing firmly for truth in word and in deed.

THE FIRST EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY

CHAPTER 2

I. Instruction In Prayer

Having concluded his salutation and charge to the young evangelist, Paul now turns his attention to what exactly Timothy is supposed to teach. The apostle begins with instructions concerning prayer. Note three things about the introductory comments of chapter 2:

- *Therefore* – The apostle builds upon the words of chapter 1, namely, Timothy’s charge to secure the future of the church by exposing false teachings and standing for sound doctrine
- *Exhort* – i.e. Beseech, with force and authority
 - These are the Lord’s commands (cf. I Cor 14:37): they must be carried out
 - Paul has used this strong language before, always about spiritual truths essential to the Christian’s spiritual well-being
 - See Rom 12:1; I Cor 1:10; II Cor 6:1; Eph 4:1; etc.
 - No matter what we read herein, no matter how much we would rather Paul’s instructions teach some other doctrine or opinion, we must remember that these words are the truth and will of God!
- *First of all* – We must recognize the importance of prayer in Paul’s instructions to Timothy concerning the worship of the local church
 - This is the same phrase Paul used in I Cor 15:3 concerning the primary importance of Jesus’ death and resurrection in the scheme of the gospel – *importance impossible to overstate!*
 - Similar language used by Jesus Christ in Mark 12:29
 - *Prayer must not be treated as a minor, insignificant part of the worship service!*
 - Remember Acts 2:42, 12:5; Col 4:2; I Thes 5:17; etc.

A. Types Of Prayers To Be Offered By The Church (vs. 1)

Since prayers are such an important part of the life of a Christian and the spiritual service of the church, it’s important to know what types of prayers are acceptable and desirable to God. The apostle’s next phrase gives this information:

1. *Supplications* – Vine: prayers which “stress the sense of need”
 - Jesus offered up supplications in the garden of Gethsemane, see Heb 5:7 w/ Luke 22
 - Consider such Psalms as Ps 86:1-7, etc.
2. *Prayers* – involve all the elements of this passage: context determines specific meaning
 - In this case, *prayers* simply means asking God for something
 - Perhaps in contrast to more urgent petitions described by *supplications*
3. *Intercessions* – from the Greek noun *enteuxis* which literally means “to light upon, meeting with”, and the similar Greek verb *entunchano* means “to fall in with, meet in order to converse” (Vine)
 - The picture is that of a person meeting with another in order to converse freely
 - Describes the “freedom of access” that the Christian has God’s ear (Patton 35)

- When the Christian prays, he stands in the very audience/chamber of God the Father
- Same word used in Romans 8:27,34 and Heb 7:25 of the intercession the Holy Spirit and Christ make before the Father on the Christian's behalf
- How does this apply to praying for all men?
 - Pleading with God, without holding back, for the needs (both physical and spiritual) of all people!
 - Consider passages like Rom 10:1

4. *Giving of thanks* – remember Col 4:2; read Phil 4:6-7

- Count your blessings! Don't receive "every good and perfect gift" with ingratitude!
- See Eph 5:3-4; Col 2:6-7, 3:12-17
- Gratefulness should not just be an occasional part of our walk with God but rather should define our character!

B. On Whose Behalf Should We Pray? (vs. 2)

Very simply, Christians are to pray on behalf of "all men" – not males distinguished from females (as the Greek *aner* means males in vs. 8), but rather all human beings (the Greek generic, neuter noun *anthropos*). We are to pray on behalf of all people of all the world!

1. *All men* – God love the whole world (John 3:16); Christ died for every man (Heb 2:9)

- We are to offer supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgiving for all people, not just on behalf of select groups over and above others
- Prayers offered for one nation, race, family, etc. above and/or to the exclusion of others is not God's will for our prayers!
 - To pray for only friends and not foes, or the annihilation of one group of people but the blessing of another, is to fill our prayers with carnal thinking!
- Prayers which focus only on my needs and not the needs of others do not please God!
 - Remember Matt 5:44-45 – God provides the physical needs of all the world
 - Gal 6:10 – Should we pray for opportunities to do good and to share (Heb 13:16)?
- As Christians, our evangelism is for every creature (Mark 16:15; Col 1:28), and our prayers should be filled with genuine concern for every creature as well!

2. *For kings and all those in authority* –

C. What Is The Purpose Of These Prayers? (vs. 3-4)

In accordance with Paul's instructions, we are to offer prayers on behalf of all people – even enemies, the godless, tyrants, and the like. What reason is given for the church to offer such prayers?

1. *Good and acceptable to God*

- God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34; Rom 2:11; Col 3:25; I Pet 1:17)
- God who is the munificent Creator of all the earth (Is 43:5; Mal 2:10; Acts 17:24ff)
- In following the footsteps of Christ, we must always seek to do the will of God (John 8:29; Rom 12:1-2; Eph 5:17, 6:6)

2. *God desires all people to be saved*

- Mark it down and never forget – God has ALWAYS loved all people!
- Matt 1:21; John 3:16 – This love/will existed before the birth of Jesus
- Gen 12:1-3 – God sent Jesus to restore the relationship between Him and His *entire* family – a relationship which evil destroyed
- And yet, God has ALWAYS given man the right to choose – Deut 30:19-20
- And thus, if man is lost, the fault rests solely on his own stubborn will – John 5:40

3. *God desires all to come to the knowledge of the truth*

- i.e. the word (John 17:17); the faith (Jude 3); the gospel (I Thes 2:13; I Pet 1:25)
- Without knowledge of the truth, no man or woman can possibly come to have salvation – John 6:44-45, 8:32, 14:6
- Thus, the gospel is “God’s power unto salvation” – hear, learn, and obey!

D. Christ, the one Mediator between God and men (vs. 5-6)

“For there is one God” – the beginning word of this statement shows that the author links this phrase inextricably from the previous ideas. Whether Paul here presents another reason for diligent prayer on behalf of all men, or for God’s desire that all men be saved holds little importance – each of these ideas connects to the one before; each leads necessarily to the next.

- *One God* – Much in contrast to the many lifeless and powerless gods of the heathen (Acts 17:16ff; Jer 10:1ff) – this fact is the very core of God’s revelation of Himself to man throughout the ages
 - Ex 20:1-6; Deut 6:4; II King 19:15; Neh 9:6; John 17:3
 - If there were salvation in other gods, some people might miss out...
- *One Mediator between God and men* – Through the ages people have exalted all kinds of persons and things as their connection to the divine – magicians, false prophets, oracles, special religious offices – none of these things can possibly mediate between God and men (see **Job 9:32-33**)
 - Jesus Christ is the one Advocate and Mediator – Heb 8:6, 9:15, 12:24; I John 2:2
 - Unlike the prophets of old who simply spoke for God, Jesus is the Mediator who brings man back to God for salvation!
 - If there were another mediator, some people might miss out...
 - Note Jesus’ roles as Mediator:
 - Makes God perfectly known to man – John 1:18; Heb 2:1-4
 - Is the sacrifice which cleanses our sins – Heb 9:24ff; John 3:14-17
 - Is High Priest, interceding on our behalf – Rom 8:34; Heb 4:14ff, 7:25

- *Who gave Himself a ransom for all* – i.e. willingly gave himself: it was Jesus’ choice, and He chose to offer salvation in His own blood
 - Read Matt 20:25-28 and John 10:11,17-18
 - Note that Christ made this great sacrifice for mankind while we were sinners, i.e. while we made ourselves God’s enemies (see Rom 5:6-12).
 - He gave himself:
 - To save us from the present evil age – Gal 1:4
 - For the church, to sanctify/purify her, to provide her every need – Eph 5:25
 - For ME – Gal 2:20
 - The idea of *ransom* is that Christ gave Himself *in our stead*, an idea that will be discussed in more detail in Titus 2:14
- *To be testified in due time* – i.e. the testimony concerning Christ and salvation in Him was to be made known precisely at the time and in the manner God intended
 - Gal 4:4 – God sent Jesus when the time was ripe
 - Eph 3:1-11 – This salvation was hidden in ages past (cf. I Cor 2:7-11)
 - I Pet 1:10-12 – The prophets of old longed to know this salvation, but it was made manifest as God intended by the preaching of the gospel
 - Even in the Old Testament, the great salvation of God was hidden in shadows, types, figures, promises and prophecies (Col 2:17; Heb 8:5, 10:1)
 - Rom 16:25-27 – Now this great salvation is made known in the scriptures, all “in due time” – behold the wisdom of God!

E. Paul: Apostle, Preacher And Teacher Of The Gentiles (vs. 7)

Paul’s commission as an apostle and an evangelist of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles has been discussed already in chapter 1. Note a few distinct points in this verse:

- Apostles, preachers (i.e. evangelists) and teachers are all mentioned in Eph 4:11 as gifts given by Christ to spiritually build up His church. We see in Paul, Peter (e.g. I Pet 5:1) and others some overlap in the distinct functions listed in this passage
- *Ordained*, as reads the KJV, means nothing more than set apart or appointed – there is nothing in this verse to suggest the individual ordination of all preachers by God or by some select group in the church such as the “clergy” (as some denominations hold). Paul is not so much discussing the manner of his appointment as he is discussing the reason for which Jesus designated him thus. Preachers today are “called” in the same manner as all Christians are called – through the gospel (II Thes 2:14).
- *In faith and truth* – Paul indicates both his motivation for teaching and his principle interest in teaching:
 - He preaches with genuine and sincere faith in the gospel as truth (cf. II Tim 1:12)
 - He strives to preach it truthfully, with accurate representation of all its contents (cf. Acts 20:27)

F. To Men: Offer Up Prayers With Holy Hands (vs. 8)

Scholars disagree as to whether this verse should fit most closely with the preceding section or if it should be treated as the beginning of the following section.

- Is Paul concluding his discussion on prayer with an instruction for men to pray in the public assemblies of the church?

- This could be, especially concerning the flow of verses 1-8, the continuity of 2:1 through 3:15, and the definite distinction between *anthropos* in verse 1 and *aner* in vs. 8 (i.e. “never used of the femal sex; it stands in distinction from a woman”)
- Is Paul simply giving a discourse on the way Christians, both male and female, are to behave, especially as their behavior effects their worship?
 - This could be, too – especially since the instructions concerning prayer (i.e. in holiness, without wrath and doubting), modesty and moderation are all commands with much application outside the realm of public worship

Suffice it to say that I Tim 2:8-10 have much application both in and out of the assembly!

- *That men pray everywhere* – does Paul single out men because men are the only persons who should offer up prayers in the assembly?
 - True conclusion, but probably not the best proof text
 - It appears that Paul is simply explaining to Timothy what he should teach men and women concerning lives lived in accordance with godliness
 - Point of the verse is not a doctrinal discussion of which sex should offer prayers
- *Lifting up holy hands* – Neh 8:6; Ps 141:2 (remember Ps 51:17); Lam 2:19, 3:40-41
 - Lifting up of hands was a symbolic posture – a penitent posture that represent pleading with God or offering something up to Him
 - Lifting up of hands meant nothing if the heart was unfaithful (cf. Is 1:15-17)
 - Other postures in prayer are significant as well:
 - Kneeling, Ps 95:6; Dan 6:10; Luke 22:41
 - Prostrating oneself, Matt 26:39; Rev 11:16
 - Standing – can be a sign of sinful arrogance, Luke 18:11
 - The point of this verse IS NOT on posture, though posture is evidently important
 - The point of this verse is on HOLY – this is a metaphor: just as lifting up hands reflects the penitent and humble heart which approaches God, “holy hands” is a metaphor for a spiritually righteous and holy heart, unpolluted by blatant and continual, willful sin (cf. Ps 24:4)
 - Note the following verses: Ps 66:16-17, 34:12-16 (cf. I Pet 3); Prov 28:9; Is 59:1-2; I John 3:21-22
 - If we rebel against God in our hearts and lives, we should next expect for our prayers to come before Him with approval
 - This has application in the public assembly: “Only men whose lives manifest practical righteousness should pray in public. This is objective and can be observed by the church. Persons living openly in sin have no business offering public prayer, and should not be called upon to do so” (Homer Kent, *Pastoral Epistles*, 109).
 - This principle accords with the entirety of the word concerning men in leadership roles of the church: I Tim 1:19 (evangelists, cf. Ezra 7:10); I Tim 3:2,9 (elders and deacons); II Tim 2:2 (teachers)
- *Without wrath* – anger: a man should pray with the proper attitude of heart, harboring no anger toward God or his fellow men
 - Toward all people – think how difficult it must have been for the Christians of the 1st century to pray for people who were trying to destroy the church!

- What about Jesus praying for his killers (Luke 23:34)?
- What about you and me – even for those who seek our harm (Matt 5:44)?
- Toward brethren – John 13:14-15, 15:12-13; Matt 5:21-22 (NASU); I John 2:9-11, 3:10-15, 4:20-21
- Toward God – Job 2:9; II Sam 6:8; Jonah 4:3-4; Jam 1:13

A heart full of anger is absolutely contradictory to the heart of compassion, benevolence, mercy and grace with which we are to pray. When a man approaches God in prayer, he must not do so with a spirit of contention or an attitude of anger toward others. In the words of Jeremy Taylor, as quoted by Barnes:

“Anger sets the house on fire, and all the spirits are busy upon trouble, and intend propulsion, defense, displeasure, or revenge. It is a short madness, and an eternal enemy to discourse and a fair conversation; it intends its own object with all the earnestness of perception or activity of design, and a quicker motion of a too warm and distempered blood; it is a fever in the heart, and a calenture in the head, and a fire in the face, and a sword in the hand, and a fury all over; and therefore can never suffer a man to be in a disposition to pray. For prayer is the peace of our spirit, the stillness of our thoughts, the evenness of recollection, the seat of meditation, the rest of our cares, and the calm of our tempest; prayer is the issue of a quiet mind, of untroubled thoughts; it is the daughter of charity and the sister of meekness; and he that prays to God with an angry, that is, with a troubled and discomposed spirit, is like him that retires into a battle to meditate, and sets up his closet in the out-quarters of an army, and chooses a frontier garrison to be wise in.”

- *And doubting* – two meanings: either a prayer without faith (Jam 1:5-8); or a prayer offered despite an attitude of disputing
 - Most of the newer translations favor “disputing”
 - The word is also used in Matt 15:19; Luke 5:22-23, 24:38; Phil 2:14

II. The Conduct Of Godly Women

Just as verse 8 addresses the lifestyle of men, that their conduct should be holy in congruence with their prayers and professed devotion to God, so Paul addresses the conduct of godly women in verses 9-10. Some believe that the preliminary adverb, *likewise*, directs the reader back to “I will” of verse 8 – i.e. Paul, with apostolic authority, demands these things to be obeyed by women, just as men are to obey the command of lifting up holy hands in prayer. This interpretation has its merit – indeed, all of these commands are given with the authority of God (cf. I Cor 14:37). However, one might also note the correspondence not only in authoritative command but in *theme* – Paul has just given instruction to men on how their lives should complement their spiritual devotion toward the Father, and now he gives the *exact same instruction* to women, though in somewhat different words.

A. Proper attitude and attire for women professing godliness (vs. 9-10)

The apostle begins by describing the adornment of godly women. *Adorn* in this verse is from the Greek *kosmeo*, from which is derived the English word *cosmetic*, and literally means “to arrange, to put in order” (Vine). It is variously used in reference to: tidying a room (Matt 12:44); the extravagant decoration of the temple (Luke 21:5); the adornment of one’s person (I

Tim 2:9; I Pet 3:5; Rev 21:2). In this context it refers to the woman's entire outward appearance, specifically her apparel – thus, the NIV translates it “*to dress.*” How is the woman's apparel to be arranged and put in order? Paul is not giving command about the orderliness of a top with respect to a skirt or a purse with respect to shoes! *A godly woman's apparel is to be in order with, is to be consistent with, what she is inwardly – a child of God, a person who bears the name of Christ.*

- *Modest* (NKJV) or *proper* (NAS) *apparel* – This is almost a synonym of *adorn*, the Greek being *kosmios*, lit. “orderly, well-arranged, decent, modest” (Vine).
 - Used again in I Tim 3:2 of elders – “of good behavior,” or “respectable” (NAS) – of whose modesty Trench comments (as recorded by Vine): “The well-ordering is not of dress and demeanor only, but of the inner life, uttering indeed and expressing itself in the outward conversation.”
 - In I Tim 2:9, this same modest/decent/respectable inner life which must be true of the spiritual leaders of the church (and shown in their conduct) is what is to be true of godly women and reflected in the way they dress
 - Modesty in dress involves avoidance of excess, precluding gaudy, exorbitant, extravagant apparel – not calling excessive attention to oneself, even defining oneself in the eyes of others, with the things you own
 - Compare vs. 9 with I Pet 3:3-4 – Note that the sin is not in braiding the hair or wearing jewelry, for these things can be done with modesty and discretion
 - The sin is in causing one's appearance to be dominated by ornaments, one's identity to be defined by merely flashy, fashionable things
 - A woman's apparel should reflect that there is more to her identity and priorities than the clothes or jewelry she wears, but her inward beauty shines forth in her decent, modest dress and in her good works
 - Modesty also involves avoidance of calling attention to oneself because of lack of apparel – that is, dress which that draws improper sexual attention oneself and so this word is closely related to the next two descriptions:
- *With propriety and moderation* – or “*with decency and propriety*” (NIV) or “*modestly and discreetly*”
 - Propriety: appropriateness, suitability to the purpose or circumstances
 - Decency: conformity to the recognized standard of propriety, good taste, modesty
 - Discreetly: unostentatious, judicious in one's conduct, showing prudence/ circumspection
 - What is the standard? Simply the “recognized standard” of the day? Is the Christian simply to abide by cultural standards alone when choosing what to wear beyond the confines of his/her home each day?

Of course, the standard that transcends all other standards, traditions and norms is God's word – by the word we are taught completely concerning godliness, including dress that reflects godliness (II Pet 1:3). What are God's standards concerning our dress?

1. *Nakedness is more than being totally uncovered* (Gen 3:7 w/ 3:21; Ex 28:42; Is 47:2)
 - Covering one's loins is not enough to cover one's nakedness by God's standards
 - Adam and Eve made themselves “loin covering” or “girdles” (NASU) but:
 - They were still ashamed and hid their nakedness from God (Gen 3:10)
 - God agreed that they were naked and asked how they learned this (Gen 3:11)

- God gave them appropriate coverings, tunics to cover the body (Gen 3:21) – the loin coverings were insufficient in the sight of God!
- The priests who officiated at the altar, who had to climb steps before the people, were forbidden to wear undergarments that didn't cover the loins and the thighs, or else their “nakedness” would be uncovered, according to God's judgment
- In Is 47:1-3, with metaphoric language, God compares a tender (or *refined*, Deut 28:56, meaning pure, free from coarseness or vulgarity), delicate virgin daughter to a immoral woman of harlotry:
 - Part of the attire of a harlot, used to seduce men: uncovering the thigh, which by God's standards is exposing one's nakedness
 - Note that even the Bible acknowledges that how we dress speaks of our character and probably behaviors as perceived by others!

2. *The way we dress (or remain undressed) displays our inner character*

- As we have seen already in I Tim 2 and I Pet 3

3. *The way we dress can cause others to sin*

- Remember that Jesus defined sin as a problem first and foremost of the heart – e.g. a man sins in adultery by gazing upon a woman with intention to lust (Matt 5:27)
- And yet, we see in the Old Testament and in every day life examples of how certain types of dress, on males and females, can sexually attract other inappropriately
- Remember another teaching of Christ – “*Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea*” (Matt 18:6).
- The way we deal with other people and behave around them can cause them to sin – this very much applies to how we dress!

4. *Apparel which is fitting for saints*

In **Eph 5:3**, the apostle states quite clearly that there are some behaviors which are not fitting for saints – i.e. there is certain conduct worthy of the gospel, and certain conduct which is not fitting those who bear the name of Christ (Phil 1:27).

- I Pet 1:22 – Proper conduct accords with the fact that God has purified our souls
- I Pet 3:3-4 – There is a way to dress s.t. this purification is evident, i.e. a way to dress which is fitting for saints! Such proper apparel displays the Christian's:
 - Purity – without spot/blemish, free from even the resemblance of sin (I Pet 1:22)
 - Chastity – pure from every fault, immaculate, modest, free from carnality (3:2)
 - Modestly, professing godliness, displaying an inner attitude of goodness and decency that is only made more evident by the way we dress (I Tim 2:8ff)
 - *Godly dress does not define our virtue of modesty! Such apparel only makes that inner countenance all the more evident to our observers!*

Christians must not fall into the ignorant trap of believing that what we wear does not affect how other people think of us and assess our quality of character. The purpose of understanding the concept of modesty in dress is not to formulate an arbitrary set of rules about what length of shorts or skirts is “just long enough,” or whether or not a man should walk about shirtless in public or wearing sleeveless shirts with arm-holes large enough to expose the entire upper body,

or how much of a woman's neck-line may plunge before exposing too much skin – no man has the authority to bind such rules. Fashion in our society in this day and age emphasizes sex – the paramount concern of most men and women is whether or not they are attractive to the opposite sex. Christians must learn from I Tim 2 and I Pet 3 that those who are purified by God are not to dress in such a way that calls improper sexual attention to our bodies. Our lives are to profess godliness, and our godliness, or lack thereof, is evidenced greatly by what we choose to wear. For one to be convinced that he or she needs to reassess the manner in which they dress because his or her apparel does not display modesty, chastity and purity, the required recipe is *not* an arbitrary set of rules – the formula is to change the heart: if a person's heart and mind are pure, chaste, and undefiled, this should be displayed in his or her choice of apparel.

B. Proper attitude in teaching and learning (vs. 11-15)

Note: For more comments on the role of women in the church, see Special Study 1, *I Corinthians 14:34-35 and the Role of Women in the Church*, beginning on Pg. 28.

Several passages in Scripture teach distinctions between the roles of men and women in various aspects of life. Since creation, God has ascribed certain roles to each gender. In **Eph 5:22-25**, instructions are given concerning roles in the family: husbands are to love their wives and give anything to care for them and seek their best interest as Christ loved and gave Himself for the church; on the other hand, just as any organization needs a leader, wives are to submit to their husbands as the leaders of the household. A similar statement is made in I Cor 11:3 – and the statement made there is not based on societal norms or culture, but is based on what has been true from the beginning, namely, that *woman was made from man and for man*.

No doubt, Bible teaching on distinctive roles between genders can sometimes be controversial. Churches have divided over these issues. Sometimes churches neglect to study and teach these passages at all in order to avoid controversy. However, we must never shun to study the truth just because we're afraid we might find something there that either we or someone else might not agree with. And thus, we come to I Timothy 2 and enter into just such a subject: *when do women have the authority to teach? How much can women speak in the assembly and when?*

Thesis: The apostle here gives instructions which are universal for every church of the Lord's people that women are *not* to continually teach and exercise authority over men, but are to learn in quietness and submission, *not* necessarily total and absolute silence. Women may, without violating this rule, teach other women and children and even men upon occasion.

1. *The universality of these instructions*

- Purpose of the letter: so the evangelist might know how to conduct himself in the church (I Tim 3:15)
 - *Not* just one specific church – Timothy worked with many churches, and the letter is addressed to him, not to one specific congregation
 - What Paul taught one group, he taught all the churches (I Cor 4:17)
- Reasoning of the argument: refers to principles established since the beginning
 - As in I Cor 11:8-9, the apostle appeals to the order of creation: woman was created by God from man and for man (vs. 13)

- Has nothing to do with age, but God’s intention that man be leader of family
- Also, Eve was deceived and thus fell into transgression, then influenced Adam to do what he knew was wrong (II Cor 11:3)
- Is it unfair that women today still must submit to God’s judgments from so long ago? Remember, woman is not the only creature who must fill responsibilities based on gender: man must as well (Gen 3:17ff; I Tim 5:8)!
- No reference here made to culture, society or the fact that women were oppressed in Jewish culture (as they are still in many Middle Eastern societies)

2. *A woman must learn in silence with all submission (vs. 11)*

The word “silence” in the NKJV is perhaps not the best translation – Paul is here speaking of reverent quietness in learning, which as much describes attitude as actual verbal interjections. the Greek word here is closer to “quietness” than how we use silence.

- The Greek here means “quietness” not absolute silence
 - NAS: “A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness.”
 - NIV: “A woman should learn in quietness and full submission.”
 - Vine, under “Silence” states: “For *hesuchia*, KJV, "silence," in Acts 22:2 and 1 Tim 2:11,12, see QUIETNESS.”
 - *Hesuchia* (and corresponding adjective, *hesuchios*):
 - Indicates quietness and tranquility arising from within, causing no disturbance
 - I Tim 2:2 – Descriptive of a life lived to oneself in peace and quietness
 - I Pet 3:4 – Descriptive of a gentle and tranquil spirit
 - II Thes 3:11f – Contrasts a disorderly busybody with a quiet, humble lifestyle
 - Acts 22:2 – The crowd that calmed downed and didn’t yell so much
- Thus the apostles gives a description of the attitude and countenance of a woman as she learns, specifically in the assembly – she is to learn in a quiet, humble, reserved, submissive manner, never in a boisterous, disturbing, dominating way
- Such submission DOES NOT require total silence!
 - This verse (and vs. 12) prohibits women from occupying a leadership role – they are to learn in submission (*subjection*, KJV), thus prohibiting women from being teachers and leaders of assemblies of males and females, offices of authority such as:
 - Teaching, only authorized for faithful men (II Tim 2:2)
 - Preaching, must be done with “all authority” (Tit 2:15)
 - Prayer, only authorized men with lives of holiness (II Tim 2:8)
 - Spiritual leaders, elders and deacons (II Tim 3:1-2, 3:8)
 - However, the condition that a woman remain silent depends not upon the number of heads present, nor the place of meeting, but upon the circumstances of the assembly
 - When is it appropriate for a woman to speak? The answer from I Tim 2 is, “*When she can speak without usurping authority.*”
 - In a Q&A style class, under the direction of a man, a woman may speak without violating this fundamental principle if she doesn’t dominate the class
 - In a lecture-style setting, a woman could not interrupt in any way and still be quiet and in submission

3. *I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man (vs. 12)*

- This command cannot be a prohibition of all teaching done by a woman
 - Col 3:16 – All Christians, women included, are commanded to teach in singing
 - Tit 2:3f – Older women are to be “teachers of good things,” esp. to young women
- This command cannot be meant to prohibit all teaching by women of men
 - Acts 18:26 – Aquila *and* Priscilla privately corrected and instructed Apollos
- Thus, the apostle here prohibits women from teaching in such a role that she is continually and publicly in a position of authority over men, as discussed above

This argument can be made by taking into consideration the tense of the Greek verbs used in this passage for “teach” (*didasko*) and “exercise authority” (*authenteo huperochē*). There are two tenses of these verbs in Greek, the present tense and the aorist tense. *Present tense* describes repeated, ongoing, continual activity. *Aorist tense* refers to an action carried out on a specific occasion that may occur only once. These tenses are totally lost in translation into English, and yet they are tremendously important, as seen by some translations:

a) I John 3:9 – “Whoever has been born of God does not sin...cannot sin”

- Cannot mean that Christians never sin, just consider I John 1:8
- However, the verb *commit* (KJV) is the Greek *prasso*, which is the verb *to do* but in the Greek present tense meaning to practice or continually sin
- NAS: “No one who is born of God practices sin...”
- NIV: “No one who is born of God will continue in sin...”

b) Other examples:

- To serve – aorist: render a service on a particular occasion; present: one who continually serves or is of service
- To sin – aorist: to “miss the mark” on a certain occasion; present: one who continually and regularly keeps on sinning

How does this apply to I Tim 2:12? The Greek verbs for *teach* and *exercise authority* are both in the Greek present tense – Paul is saying that women have no authority to continually teach and exercise authority over men, i.e. they cannot teach a Bible class or preach to an audience of men and women. This passage does not mean that a woman is forbidden to teach or admonish on occasion, for instance, to set a man straight (cf. Acts 18:26). Submission does not require silence, but it requires quietness and reservation.

Now, there are two other topics that must be discussed for a fair dealing of this subject. Firstly, another passage, I Cor 14:34-35, does teach that women are to be silent, meaning without a peep, and is also in present tense meaning *continually* silent. Does this verse contradict I Tim 2:11-14. Also, what role does a woman’s conscience play in this matter? Is it possible that a woman might speak as authorized by the New Testament and yet violate her own conscience and thus sin (cf. Rom 14:23; I Cor 8:7)?

For a consideration of I Cor 14:34-35, see the supplemental lesson.

4. *She will be saved in childbearing if...*

There's no way around it: this is a difficult passage, a passage with many suggested interpretations. Whatever the interpretation we accept, we must be sure that it accords with the context of the passage and does not contradict any other passage.

- *Context:* Proper role of men and women, as prescribed by God, and specifically the subordinate role of women to men
 - Other passages show clearly that Paul had no hidden agenda against women – see Gal 3:26-29
 - Consider that vs. 15 is meant to give balance: women are to be in submission to men, but this absolutely does not make them substandard or inferior to men – they simply have a different role to fill!
 - The role of woman as the bearer of children is a glorious role – women who choose to marry and bear children, raising them in the “teaching and admonition of the Lord,” bring up the future generations of Christians!
 - Men cannot fill this responsibility, thus women are far from useless, unimportant
- *Unacceptable explanation:* Women must bear children in order to be saved
 - Contradicts all other passages which teach that salvation is available to all people alike through faith in Christ – John 1:12; Rom 3:21-24; Gal 3:26-29
 - What about women who don't have husbands or can't bear children?
 - Clearly, the importance of this verse is some principle, applicable specifically to women who bear children, but with larger scope
 - This is not a new concept: both examples and commands in the Bible have language more specific than the actual application
 - Matt 5:22 – Jesus is not simply forbidding the words “Raca” and “fool”
 - Matt 5:27-30 – Principle not limited to a man looking to lust after a woman
 - I Cor 16:1-2 – Authority of the example transcends the specific command
 - What is the principle underlying verse 15?
- *An acceptable explanation:* Women will be saved if they remain in their God-appointed role. These commands are not to be taken lightly, being the commands of the Lord. Women as well as men are to fill the responsibilities and remain within the boundaries given them by God. The pronoun “they” refers to husband and wife fulfilling the roles given them by God, upon which salvation depends!

THE FIRST EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY

SPECIAL STUDY 1

I Corinthians 14:34-35 and the Role of Women in the Church

To accompany the study of I Timothy 2:11-15

Introduction: From I Tim 2:11-14 we learn that women in the church are to occupy a role of quiet submission to men. That is, women are not to continually exercise authority over men by filling responsibilities such as preachers, elders, deacons, etc. This does not mean that women are never to teach and this principle does not require absolute silence, though at times reverent silence might be necessary. Even the word “silent” in the NKJV of I Tim 2:11 does not mean absolute silence but an attitude and manner of quietness (compare the NIV and NASU), just as the Christian is to behave as a citizen (I Tim 2:2) and not as disorderly busybodies (II Thes 3:12).

However, Paul’s instructions in I Cor 14:34-35 seem different – *silent* in this passage is the Greek word *sigao*, and it means silent, not a peep. Furthermore, the verb form of “keep silent” is the Greek present tense, thus the meaning is *continually* remain silent. Do these commands contradict I Tim 2, or do these passages compliment each other?

I. Context: What Type Of Speaking Is Forbidden?

The church in Corinth had problems – from the very beginning of the book, Paul addresses problem after problem that the Christians were having/causing which were prohibiting the spiritual growth of the body: 1. divisions; 2. worldly wisdom; 3. carnality; 4. arrogance; 5. immorality; 6. law suits amongst brethren; 7. marriage/divorce; 8. offending weak Christians; 9. financial support of preachers (and Paul's right to apostleship); 10. liberty in Christ; 11. roles of men/women and instructions concerning the Lord’s Supper. Then, in chapters 12-14, Paul addresses proper/improper use of spiritual gifts because there were prophets and tongue-speakers in Corinth who were conducting themselves in such a way that some members of the body were either harmed or overlooked. Thus, gifts of the spirit which were meant to edify and increase faith were being used without love, causing divisions rather than edification.

- *Prophecy* refers to the miraculous ability to speak from God, for the purpose of edification, exhortation, and giving comfort (14:3)
- *Speaking in tongues* refers to the miraculous ability to speak in real languages never previously studied (see Acts 2:5-11) as a sign to unbelievers (14:22) and in a sense, a sign to the speaker himself (14:28)
- The assembly under consideration in I Cor 14 is an assembly of the whole church gathered together for the express purpose of hearing the revealed word of God through teaching and exhortation
 - 14:23,26 – The purpose of these assemblies was for the whole church to listen to the revelations from God
 - 14:28 – If there was no interpreter, the tongue-speaker was to keep silent: in such a situation, his gift is useless to the body
 - 14:29-31 – Prophets, at most 2 or 3 in a sitting, were to speak one at a time, obviously addressing the whole assembly without confusion
 - 14:40 – For edification of the body, these things had to be done with order

- In the 1st century, there were women who prophesied! See I Cor 11:5 and Acts 21:9
 - However, in an assembly such as that described in I Cor 14, women with spiritual gifts were to remain silent
 - The speech forbidden in I Cor 14 is that of a woman addressing the assembly as a teacher/preacher

II. Reason: Why Is Such Speech Forbidden?

Note that the reason given for women to remain in silence is not the place of meeting, nor how many heads are present, nor just because some may have had spiritual gifts – the reason Paul gives is EXACTLY the same as the reason in I Tim 2: women are to occupy a role of subjection or submission to men.

- In such an assembly, there is no way a woman could interject or interrupt and not overstep the boundaries of quiet submission
- Clearly, for a woman to exercise her gift of prophecy before the assembly would be to take a role of authority forbidden in the presence of men
- Thus, while men spoke the revelation of God to the assembly, women were to remain silent, not making a peep
- Note that tongue-speakers without interpreters are given the exact same command – this was not the time or place for them to speak out

Note that I Cor 14:34-35 cannot possibly be a prohibition of all speaking that women might do in the assembly. Women must sing praise, teaching and admonishing other Christians (Col 3:16). Believing women who wish to be saved must make confession of Christ (Acts 8:37; Rom 10:9-10), even if before witnesses (I Tim 6:12, though *confession* in this verse may refer to something other than the confession of faith in Christ). However, when the church decides that it will meet for the purpose of listening to teaching and exhortation from the word, much as we do during sermon or lecture periods, it is not only inappropriate but forbidden for women to speak out.

III. Let Them Ask Their Husbands At Home

- Could be an out-dated command referring to a time when their husbands had spiritual gifts of prophecy and God's word wasn't readily available to read as today
- More probably, there is an underlying principle here that holds true – Paul is simply speaking of submission of the woman to man
 - Fits the context, regarding the subordinate role of women
 - Remains true even to women who don't have husbands to ask at home: their questions must be raised in a different setting than the assembly

Note that the instructions in I Cor 14 do not forbid women from speaking in assemblies in which the church chooses to have a more interactive format, such as a Bible class or other group discussion. To extend I Cor 14:34-35 to say that women are to remain absolutely silent during any and all meetings in which the whole church is gathered together is to take Paul's words out of context and contradict the liberty of I Tim 2:11-14. **Clearly, the church's decision concerning the purpose of meeting is the deciding factor.** If the church has the authority to decide when an assembly begins and when it ends, it necessarily has the authority to designate some time to lecture (a setting in which women must be silent) and some time to communicate

interactively, for instance, Bible classes or decision making meetings (a setting in which women are at liberty to speak as long as not usurping authority over a man).

THE FIRST EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY

CHAPTER 3

I. Qualifications Of Elders (vs. 1-7)

Thus far in his epistle, the apostle has discussed the roles and responsibilities of men and women in the church. Now, he turns his attention to the leadership of the local congregation: elders and deacons. Note that there is no mention, neither here nor anywhere else in the New Testament, of any higher organization or hierarchy to lead churches of Christ than the leadership roles mentioned here. There are no instructions for churches to be organized together with other churches to form a grand institution; there is no authority a group of elders to rule over the work of many congregations, etc. Each church (with qualified and willing men, as implied by this text) had its own leadership of elders and deacons, and each eldership served only one congregation (see Acts 14:3, Tit 1:5-7 and I Pet 5:2).

- *This is a faithful saying* – Paul uses this phrase no less than five times in I and II Timothy and Titus (cf. I Tim 1:15, 3:1, 4:9; II Tim 2:11; Tit 3:8), and simply emphasizes that the teaching to follow is absolutely true beyond all dispute
- *If a man desires the office of a bishop* – Note three important points from this phrase:
 - a. *Desire*: A man must not only be qualified for such a work, but must also be willing and desirous to fill this leadership role
 - The words translated *desire* in the NKJV mean more than just a whimsical wish, but describe an aim which one prepares for and aspires to achieve
 - The NIV (“sets his heart on being”) and the NASU (“aspires to the office of”) both show that *desire* means to have a deep longing, to seek ambitiously
 - Preparation for this position, as revealed by the demanding qualifications, cannot start too early!
 - b. *The office*: Simply means the position occupied by a bishop, just as the same word is used in Acts 1:20 to refer to the position occupied by an apostle. The term could be translated “oversership” as McGarvey suggests in his work, *The Eldership*. The word *office* means “a position of duty, trust, or authority” (Random House Dictionary), and thus this is a fitting translation of the Greek.
 - c. *Of a bishop*: The term *bishop* means literally *overseer*, as is seen in the NASU, NIV, and footnote to this verse in the NKJV. Under the teaching of Jesus Christ through the apostles, elders in the early church were referred to as both elders and overseers – these terms designate one and the same office:
 - Acts 20:17,28 – The KJV and NKJV indiscriminately uses the terms *bishop* and *overseer* (though translated from the exact same Greek word) or else vs. 28 would read “the Holy Spirit has made you bishops” (see ASV). The NASU and NIV always use the literal translation, *overseer*. Clearly from these verses, *elders* and *overseers* designated the same officers. The same point is seen in Titus 1:5-7.
 - Also, from Acts 20:28, we see that elders or bishops are also to be shepherds. The apostles Peter refers to this fact in I Peter 5:1-5, as well. In Eph 4:11, the apostle mentions *pastors* as one of the offices given the church by

Christ for its edification. A *pastor* is simply a *shepherd*, and no other leaders besides elders are given instructions in the NT to be shepherds of the church. We therefore conclude that elders (or presbyters, I Tim 4:14), overseers (or bishops), and shepherds (or pastors) are used in the NT interchangeably in reference to the same leaders of the church.

- *He desires a good work* – This is the main thrust of the statement: undeniably, to desire the office of an overseer is to aim for a good and honorable work. This work includes:
 - Feeding and shepherding the spiritual flock, Acts 20:28
 - Protecting the flock from the harm of erroneous doctrines, Acts 20:28ff; Tit 1:9ff
 - Watch over and give account for their souls, Heb 13:17
 - Just as implied by their descriptive names: they are to oversee and shepherd with the knowledge and wisdom supplied by many years in God’s service

To meet the needs of the congregation with the ability to shepherd, a man in the office of elder must have certain characteristics and qualifications. If not, a problem will arise which demands the qualification lacking, and the needs of the flock will not be met. Hence, the Holy Spirit gives a list of qualifications which a man must meet *before* he is appointed as an elder, though he may and should continue to grow in some of these qualifications as he walks with God. (Note that this list of qualifications is nearly identical to that in Tit 1:6-11.)

A. *Blameless or Above Reproach* – An elder must have an unspotted reputation: he must be a person who cannot be truthfully spoken against.

- For certain, Jesus Christ was this kind of man – Matt 26:59f
- The preparation of this type of reputation starts in one’s youth – Titus 2:6-8
- Note that this certainly does not mean the man must be perfectly sinless – he will grow in this perfection as he grows in spiritual maturity – however because of Christ as Advocate, he can still be blameless before God

B. *Husband of one wife* – Suffice it to say that this verse demands marriage yet forbids polygamy. By God’s decree (and no one can know or second-guess the mind of God, I Cor 2:6ff), faithfully married men are qualified for the eldership in ways that single men cannot be. The only reason given for this (and a clearly logical one, even to our mortal minds) is found in vs. 5 – if a man is going to be a leader of the church, he must first be able to rule over his own household well.

- Questions arise about this text that give rise to some complications – we will not take the time during this class to examine these questions.

C. *Temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior* – All three of these characteristics overlap somewhat:

- *Temperate* is a quality commanded the wives of deacons (I Tim 3:11) and older Christians in general (Tit 2:2)
 - Strong’s: sober or circumspect
 - Elders are to be men of self-restraint and moderation

- *Sober-minded* is translated *prudent* (NASU) and *self-controlled* (NIV) and literally means “of sound mind” (Vine)
 - Translated *discreet* (NKJV) and *sensible* (NASU) in Tit 2:5
 - Elders are to be moderate of passion and opinion; his words and actions must be evidence of his wisdom at all times
 - *Of good behavior* is translated *respectable* in both the NIV and NASU. Simply put, the elder’s behavior must exemplify his well-balanced character, his soberness and his temperance: he must be a pattern of good works (Tit 2:7)
- D. *Hospitable* – The words here translated *hospitable* literally mean one who finds joy in caring for a stranger, “love of a stranger” (Vine).
- Rom 12:13 – Hospitality should be *practiced* (NASU) by all Christians
 - Matt 25:35 – We will be judged based upon, in part, our hospitality
 - Note also Heb 13:2; I Pet 4:9
- E. *Able to teach* – According to Vine, the original Greek means “skilled in teaching,” i.e. not just willing to teach but *skilled* in doing so, and there is quite a difference! An elder must be able to teach:
- To equip, edify and unify the body of Christ, Eph 4:11-13
 - To exhort and convict those who teach false things, Tit 1:9
- F. *Not given to much wine* – The original language here denotes attachment or addiction to a substance, in this case, alcohol. Thus the NASU has “not addicted to wine.”
- Drunkenness and loss of self-control through addiction should be totally contrary to the character and behavior of all Christians, especially the leaders of the church
 - Eph 5:18 – Drunkenness is dissipation, i.e. “a dissolute way of living” (and dissolute means “indifferent to moral restraints; given to immoral or improper conduct; licentious” – Random House)
 - Rom 13:11-14 – Drunkenness is a work of darkness
 - I Cor 5:11 – Do not even keep company with a brother who refuses to cast off the love of alcohol
 - *Exercise:* Take a minute to read the previous qualifications – are there any that stand in stark contrast to drunkenness? Drunkenness is the polar opposite of:
 - Temperance, i.e sober, discreet behavior
 - Sober-mindedness, i.e. self-controlled, prudent and sensible
 - Good behavior, i.e. respectable, honorable, balanced conduct
 - Prov 23:31-35 – A wise person won’t even look at alcoholic drinks!
 - Looks good to the eye (lust of the eye), but it’s poison!
 - Drunkenness leads one’s heart to utter perverse things, i.e. to do and say wicked, improper things he wouldn’t otherwise do
 - A drunkard is like a person who chooses to nap on the dangerous seas, destined to be dashed to pieces or drowned
 - Drunkenness causes one to be abused, disgraced and filled with pain and sorrow, yet come back for more as soon as the next drink is available!
 - The honest reader will find no excuse for drinking in moderation in these passages! Consumption of alcohol for recreation is destructive, corrupting and damning!

- G. *Not violent but gentle, peaceable* – The negative phrase is translated “not violent” by the NIV and NKJV, but the more peculiar, “not pugnacious,” by the NASU
- Not inclined to fight readily; not quarrelsome, belligerent, combative
 - Leaders of the church are to be temperate, full of gentleness and will to make peace
 - Matt 5:5,9 – Blessed are the gentle, the peacemakers
 - Rom 14:16-19 – Peace must be practiced, pursued, nurtured
- H. *Not covetous* – Literally, “free from the love of money” (cf. NIV, NASU)
- I Tim 5:17-18 – Elders are authorized by Christ to receive financial support for their work as shepherds and teachers
 - I Pet 5:1-2 – Yet, they are to serve out of good will, not for sordid (i.e. immoral) gain
 - Connecting these ideas, the NIV (not very literally) translates this passage, “not greedy for money, but eager to serve”
 - However, an elder who is not being supported for his work (either because the church is too poor, or he is self-sufficient) must meet this qualification too:
 - I Tim 6:6-10
- I. *One who rules his own house well* – Let us examine vs. 4-5 as a whole, the fundamental principle of which is this: elders are to rule over the house of God, i.e. the church (cf. I Tim 3:15 with Heb 13:17), thus they first must prove their ability by ruling over their own households well
- Here we see at least one reason why elders must be married men – they must show, and continue to show, their ability to lead, rule, teach, etc.
 - *Rules...well* – *Rules* is translated *manages* in nearly every translation besides the KJV, NKJV and comes from the Greek *proistemi* and literally means “leads and superintends”
 - In I Tim 5:17, the same word refers to the elders’ rule over the church
 - **Elders are to lead the church with the same care, consideration, patience and propriety with they, as fathers, must lead their own families**
 - “Rules...well” may seem a bit ambiguous or subjective, however, from the sum of the word we note several Scriptural demands of fathers which all elders must fulfill (and vice-versa):
 - I Pet 5:3 – Not as tyrannical, unrestricted, arbitrarily stern dictators, but leading by example
 - Eph 6:1 – Making demands “in the Lord,” i.e. considering God’s word
 - Eph 6:4 – Leading with patience & considerate demands, so as not to provoke
 - Eph 6:4 – Leading, teaching, training, admonishing with God’s word
 - *Having his children in submission with all reverence* – The picture here is of a man who leads his household in a respectable, dignified way such that those under him are submissive and respectful
 - Same type of language is used to describe the master/servant relationship in Eph 6:5-9 and Col 4:1
 - Ruling with justice, fairness and sincerity, realizing that all things will be judged by the Lord, the Master of all!
 - Here is a fundamental principle of leading a family, a church, etc: Submission and respect cannot be demanded; it must be earned!

- Notice that the elder having children in submission is not here to judge the children, but to judge the conduct of the elder: if his children have proper submission and respect, he must be a good, fair, just leader of his family
- Titus 1:6 – “Having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion” (NASU)
 - *Faithful children* or *children who believe* denotes children who are faithful Christians (see Acts 2:44; I Tim 4:12, 5:16, etc.)
 - Elders are spiritual shepherds, leading people to Christ and keeping them safe in Christ, thus they must prove their ability through teaching and guiding their children to Christ (Eph 6:4)
 - Fathers may be converted and become very spiritually mature Christians, but if their children live in dissipation and rebellion against God, they cannot be elders

J. *Not a novice* – i.e. not a recent convert.

- Elders are to be spiritually mature and experienced Christians, and this type of spiritual growth takes time (see Heb 5:12-14)
- Beyond their lack of spiritual growth, a new convert is not to be appointed as an elder because of pride – the power/authority may sway him to draw disciples after himself (see Acts 20:28ff)
- Evidently, this is the same error the devil made in rebelling against God and thus being cast out of heaven (see separate outline on “The Origin Of Satan”)

H. *Good Testimony Among Those Outside* – i.e. a good and honorable reputation amongst unbelievers: another quality which must be cultivated!

- See Luke 2:52 and Acts 2:57 for the examples of Jesus and the first Christians

The general godliness that must characterize all men who desire to serve as elders is exactly the character that all Christians must strive to adopt and cultivate. Elders must display the godly characteristics listed here for they are examples to the rest of the flock (I Pet 5:3) – the very idea that they are examples shows that their godly behavior is what other Christians should aspire to imitate!

II. Qualifications Of Deacons (vs. 8-13)

Note: For more comments on the role of deacons, see Special Study 2, *The Responsibilities and Qualifications of Deacons*, beginning on Pg. 42.

As Paul begins his discussion on the qualifications of deacons, he uses the word “likewise” showing that deacons must be qualified men in the same manner that elders are to be qualified leaders of the church. Furthermore, the themes which permeate the qualifications of elders carries through to this passage – many of the qualifications are the same for both elders and deacons; most of those which differ or are missing from one list have application in the other. However, we must begin this study by looking at the office of the deacon; a position mentioned only a handful of times in the New Testament.

Who is a deacon?

The term here translated “deacon” is a common word in the NT, the Greek “diakonos,” meaning servant or minister. The word is variously used in the NT of (see Vine’s):

- Domestic servants – John 2:5,9
- Civil rulers – Rom 13:4
- Christ – Rom 15:8; Gal 2:17
- Disciples of Christ, serving Him – John 12:26; Col 1:7, 4:7
- Disciples of Christ, serving one another – Matt 20:26
- Preachers and teachers of the gospel – I Cor 3:5; II Cor 6:4, 11:23; Eph 3:7; I Tim 4:6
- Servants of the church – Rom 16:1; Phil 1:1; I Tim 3:8,10,12,13
- Servants of Satan – II Cor 11:15

Thus, “diakonos” is a very generic word used in many senses in the New Testament. Depending on the context it can refer to all Christians or, as in Phil 1:1 and I Tim 3, a specific office of servants of the church. A special class or office evidenced by:

- Specific mention amongst the leaders of the church, as in Phil 1:1
- A leadership group with specific qualifications, just as the elders, as in I Tim 3
- The qualified servants in Acts 6 may refer to deacons, though the noun form of *diakoneo* (i.e. “to serve tables”) is not found in this passage
 - Appointed by the church, at the command of the apostles, to serve in material matters
 - Note that “elders” are not mentioned until Acts 11, though clearly they existed before then
 - It could be that the men in Acts 6 were the first deacons, though not yet designated with this appellation (also like “Christians” in Acts 11)
 - *Whatever the interpretation, the work they did was that of servants, and they were an official, selected group which met certain qualifications*

Furthermore, we conclude that deacons are official servants of the church, possibly with responsibilities more material than spiritual, under the oversight of elders:

- In both contexts, Phil 1 and I Tim 3, deacons are only mentioned along with elders
- In Acts 6, the servants were under the oversight of apostles and, at some point, elders
- Churches are mentioned in Acts as having elders, but not deacons, thus elders must come first
- Necessary inference: a church can’t have deacons without first having elders

What are the qualifications of a deacon?

The qualifications here listed for deacons are very much the same as those listed for elders, with some exceptions and some additions, showing that both elders and deacons are to be spiritual examples to the flock.

- *Reverent* – worthy of respect (NIV), men of dignity (NASU), honorable
- *Not double-tongued* – given to doubled-talk (NASU, footnote), i.e. “double in speech, saying on thing with one person, another with another (with intent to deceive),” as Thayer states
- *Not given to much wine* – emphasis is not on *much*, as if it’s ok to be addicted to wine a little bit, but not too much. Rather, not addicted to wine, not a drunkard

- The Bible nowhere condones casual or social drinking, but in all places warns the spiritually-minded person to stay away from alcohol because of the vices it inevitably leads to
- Even in I Tim 5:23, where Paul advises Timothy to use a little alcoholic drink for medicinal purposes:
 1. He urges caution to only use a little, to settle the stomach
 2. He implies that until this point, Timothy’s godly character led him to refuse all wine: he would only drink water!
- To state that I Tim 3:8 or 5:23 condones moderate drinking perverts the Scriptures
- Prov 20:1, 23:31, 31:4,5 (The point here is that it is not for people of nobility and honor to drink intoxicating drink. With reference to kings, remember Rev 1:6); Gal 5:21; I Pet 4:3; along with those listed above (I.F)
- *Not greedy for money* – Consider again I Tim 6:9-10 (and comments at I.H)
- *Holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience* – See comments at 1:19
 - Just like the evangelist, holding to sound doctrine, purely the truth
 - With a conscience that is pure, living in accordance with the faith he professes
 - *Note:* Mystery does not refer to the mysterious, but spiritual truth/knowledge which cannot be known without revelation, as in Col 1:26-27 and I Cor 2:6-12. Vine give the following statement for *musterion* (I Tim 3:9):

“In the NT it denotes, not the mysterious (as with the Eng. word), but that which, being outside the range of unassisted natural apprehension, can be made known only by divine revelation, and is made known in a manner and at a time appointed by God, and to those only who are illumined by His Spirit. In the ordinary sense a "mystery" implies knowledge withheld; its Scriptural significance is truth revealed.”

Consider also Rom 16:25-26; I Cor 4:1; Eph 3:1-7, 6:19.

- *Let them first be tested* – tested in knowledge, reputation, conduct
 - This is not an office to be handed out lightly!
 - Men should only be chosen as deacons if there is “nothing against them” – i.e. nothing in their lives that contradicts any of the stated qualifications

Qualifications for the wives of deacons

Here we find instructions concerning the qualifications of the wives of deacons which, if lacking, might disqualify an otherwise qualified man from this office. Note that context demands these qualifications be true of elders’ wives, too!

- *Let their wives also be reverent* – just as above
- *Not slanderers* – not malicious talkers (NIV), or malicious gossips (NASU)
 - The NT elsewhere condemns such idle talk: II Tim 3:3; Titus 2:3; Matt 12:36f
 - This is not, as some claim, a sin peculiar to women!
- *Temperate and faithful in all things* – see similar comments on elders

Special note: Two peculiar interpretations of this passage demand consideration.

1. *Is Paul giving instructions to women in general?*

Context dictates that this conclusion is false. Why would Paul be speaking about the qualifications of deacons in verses 8-10 and 12-13, but change horses midstream to talk about women in verse 11 totally unrelated to deacons? Truly *women* can be translated women or wives, depending on context – but this context dictates the women that effect the deacons’ behavior and reputation: clearly the wives of the deacons (NASU footnote).

2. *Is Paul referring to a class of women leaders known as deaconesses?*

The NASU footnote also suggests that these women be referred to as deaconesses, as is also suggested of Phoebe in Rom 16:1. Is there authority here for a special class of women leaders serving the church?

- Nothing in the language suggests anything more than a woman or a wife, no special class of women servants
- Such a position of authority contradicts Paul’s instructions in 2:11-15
- What about Phoebe: was she a deaconess or just a servant?
 - The word here is the generic *diakonos*, which (as seen above) can mean servants in many different capacities, general and specific
 - Older women are exhorted in Titus 2:3-6 to use their special abilities to help the church by teaching younger women
 - To select a person for a certain work does not necessarily make him/her an officer of the church in a leadership capacity
 - Selecting certain women to attend to certain duties does not make them deaconesses in any official sense

More qualifications of deacons

Having briefly discussed the appropriate character of the wives of church officers, the apostle gives two more qualifications concerning the families of deacons:

- *Husband of one wife* – Deacons must also be lawfully married to one woman
- *Ruling their children and their households well* – Same comment as made with elders above, yet notice that there is not extra verse (such as Titus 1:6) dictating that deacons’ children be faithful Christians

E. The Result Of Serving Well In The Office Of Deacon

Elders are promised that with faithful service comes a reward in this life and the next: honor from their fellow Christians (I Tim 5:17) and an eternal crown of glory (I Pet 5:5). Similarly, in I Tim 3:13, deacons who serve well are assured reward as well.

- *A good standing* – or high standing (NASU), evidently among their fellow man
 - Clearly, a man must have a somewhat high reputation (due to his godly character) in the eyes of his fellow Christians to be appointed a deacon
 - This reputation/regard only grows higher and more noble with dutiful service
- *Great confidence in the faith* – or great boldness (NASU). Few things build up the faith better than actively doing good. Faithfully fulfilling the responsibilities of good service builds confidence in one’s abilities to work for God and faith in the reward that awaits in heaven (I Cor 15:58, cf. Matt 16:27; I Cor 3:8; Col 3:24)!

III. The Purpose Of The Epistle (vs. 14-16)

Paul's intentions were clearly to come to Ephesus personally to help Timothy in his responsibilities and training. Perhaps Paul left Ephesus still having work to accomplish (1:3), maybe even under adverse circumstances, and intended to return when the situation was more conducive to his labor. Whatever the case, the apostle wrote to young Timothy to help him in his work while he did the work of an evangelist alone and apart from his inspired mentor.

A. Proper Conduct In God's Household

The intention of the entire epistle was to help the young preacher understand the work and behavior appropriate for him in the house of God.

- *House of God* – This is not a reference to a building, as if Paul was giving instructions concerning proper behavior in the meeting place of the church. As is made clear by the next phrase, the reference here is to the church, the people of God
 - The dwelling place of God – Eph 2:21-22; I Cor 3:16; II Cor 6:16
 - The family of God – Eph 2:19-20; II Cor 6:17-18
 - Other passages to consider: Is 2:3; Heb 3:6; I Pet 2:5, 4:17
- *Pillar and ground of the truth* – The support and foundation of God's word (John 17:17)
 - Note the principle, God-given responsibility of the church: not entertainment, not social welfare, not community service, but to maintain, defend, and constantly uphold the truth against any and all adversaries
 - It is not the responsibility of any group or organization to uphold God's word, and it is not for the church to shrug off that responsibility to others
 - It is also not the church's responsibility to fabricate and interpret the church, simply to uphold that which is already truth in and of itself!
 - Christians must never lose sight of the awesome and somber responsibility given to those called by the Lord!

B. The Mystery Of Godliness

Next, apparently to impress upon Timothy and the rest of the church at Ephesus just how grand that truth is which they are charged to uphold, Paul describes the grandeur of the mystery of the gospel – that is, the knowledge of the gospel of Christ which cannot be known without revelation (I Cor 2:7ff; Col 1:25-26). There is much speculation in the literature as to why the apostle chooses the phrase “mystery of godliness” instead of “mystery of the gospel” (Eph 6:19), or “mystery of Christ” (Eph 3:4. (For example, perhaps Paul simply states the cause before the effect: the gospel of truth teaches and results in godliness, thus “the mystery of godliness.”) However, without doubt, the purpose of the following phrases is clear: behold how great is that spiritual truth which the church is charged to uphold in the world!

- *God was manifest in the flesh*
 - Jesus Christ was God in the flesh, the only begotten God, both God and man
 - John 1:1-3,14; Phil 2:5ff; Heb 2:9, 5:7
- *Justified in the Spirit* – or “vindicated by the Spirit” (NIV, NASU)
 - The idea in *justified* is that Christ was proved right or righteous
 - Was Christ proved righteous by His own spirit, the inner man?

- Absolutely – His character was unquestionable, His reputation untainted
 - Matt 26:59-60; John 8:45-46; Heb 4:15;
- Was Christ proved righteous or vindicated by the Holy Spirit?
 - Absolutely – the Spirit constantly testified to the truth of Christ’s deity
 - Miracles – Acts 2:22; testimony – Matt 3:16-17; resurrection – Rom 1:4
- However the text is read, Jesus Christ was proved and vindicated time and again against the allegations of His enemies
- *Seen by angels* – Even if every human in the world denied Him!
 - I Pet 1:10-12 – As the prophets of old searched for the fulfillment of the prophecies of the Messiah, the angels in heaven waited with anticipation for the revelation of God’s grace in Christ
 - Luke 1:26ff; 2:8-14 – Announcement of Christ’s birth
 - Matt 4:11 – Ministered to Christ upon His grueling temptation
 - Luke 22:43 – Strengthened Him at the hour of His betrayal
 - Matt 28:1-8 – Made ready for and declared His resurrection
 - Acts 1:10-11 – Witnessed His ascension and foretold His second coming
 - In many ways, angels witnessed and heralded in Christ’s glory!
- *Preached among the Gentiles*
 - It was always God’s plan to offer salvation to the whole world – see Gen 22:18 with Gal 3:7-9,16; also Is 2:2-4
 - Eph 3:8-11 – This was God’s eternal purpose in Christ, to unify all nations through faith in Him
 - Finally, this plan was fulfilled with preaching to the Gentiles in Acts 10
- *Believe on in the world*
 - “The greatest story every told” – the gospel is the most told and retold story in the history of the world!
 - Yet, Jesus was born in a stable, to a poor carpenter and his betrothed wife, of a city looked down upon by society, and lived poor/homeless His whole life
 - Great is the mystery of the gospel!
- *Received up in glory*
 - Phil 2:9-11 – And given the name which is above every name!
 - Who would have guessed during those dark events in the Garden of Gethsemane that this poor carpenter from Nazareth would soon be at the right hand of God?
 - Dan 7:13-14 – The prophets knew!
 - John 17:1-5 – Christ knew and anticipated (cf. Heb 12:2)!
 - Acts 2:33-36, 7:56 – This is what the apostles witnessed and preached
 - And we will all stand before Him – II Cor 5:10; Rom 14:10-12

Perhaps the ascension of Christ into heaven could not be fully understood by His disciples at the time. However, the ascension punctuated upon Christ’s resurrection and further marked His absolute victory: He took His place at the right hand of God, a place prepared for Him before time began. And He forever lives as Lord and Christ, as the author of our salvation, as our hope and our stay, continually making intercession for us at the right hand of God (cf. Rom 8:34; Heb 7:25). Great is the mystery of godliness, and great is the message of truth which the church must uphold and defend against all enemies, against all costs. *“All flesh is as grass, and all the glory*

of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, and its flower falls away, but the word of the LORD endures forever” (I Peter 1:24-25).

THE FIRST EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY

SPECIAL STUDY 2

The Responsibilities and Qualifications Of Deacons

The New Testament makes reference to those special servants of the church referred to as deacons only a very few times. However, sufficient information is available to discern the purpose of the office of deacon and the requirements a man must meet to serve in this capacity.

I. Deacons – Servants Of The Church

The term *deacon*, found only in Phil 1:1 and I Tim 3:8-13, is translated from the Greek noun *diakonos*, meaning “one who exercises the commands of another...a servant, attendant, minister” (Thayer, Greek-English Lexicon). This noun is derived from the Greek verb *diakoneo*, meaning to serve, to wait upon, to minister. The verb form is found in I Tim 3:10, “let them serve as deacons,” and in I Tim 3:13, “those who have served well as deacons.”

A. Deacons hold a special office as servants of the church

All Christians are commanded to be servants of one another and the church, and many are chosen, both men and women, to serve in some capacity (e.g. to prepare the Lord’s supper, clean the meeting place, etc.). However, deacons constitute a special class or office of servants of the church.

- In Phil 1:1, deacons are distinguished from amongst “all the saints in Philippi,” as are the bishops (elders)
- In I Tim 3, in the context of instructions concerning the leadership of the church, the Holy Spirit demands that deacons meet very specific requirements, mainly spiritual in nature – i.e. a special, qualified group, much like elders
- Also in I Tim 3, the apostle refers to the “office of a deacon” (KJV) – i.e. a unique office of servitude, not servitude in general

B. Deacons serve the church only under the oversight of elders

From the very definition of *diakonos*, deacons necessarily must serve the church under the oversight or command of another person or group. Looking at the example of the churches in Acts, and those referred to in the epistles, deacons serve under the oversight and command of elders.

- In both contexts, Phil 1 and I Tim 3, deacons are mentioned in context with elders
- We never read of a church having deacons but not having elders, though we read of many churches with elders without mention of deacons
 - Acts 14:23 – First priority was appointing elders in every church
 - Acts 20:17 w. I Tim – Ephesus must have had (or at least been in need of) deacons, given the instructions in I Timothy. By every indication, this church had elders first, just like those churches mentioned in Acts 14.

- **Necessary inference: A church cannot have deacons without first having an eldership.**

C. Deacons serve the church in plurality

Note that in Phil 1:1, the only passage which specifically refers to a congregation as having deacons, they are mentioned in the plural form. Just as is the case with elders, we never read of a church having but one deacon, thus deacons evidently serve the church in a group of two or more.

II. What Qualifications Must Deacons Meet?

As is the case with elders, deacons must be tested or proved to meet certain qualifications (I Tim 3:10). I Tim 3:8-13 presents these qualifications in both the positive and negative sense:

A. Deacons are not to be:

- Double-tongued – hypocritical in speech
- Addicted to wine
- Greedy for money or the pursuit of dishonest (NIV), sordid (NASU) gain

B. Deacons are to be:

- Reverent – worthy of respect (NIV), men of dignity (NASU)
- Keepers of the faith with pure conscience – i.e. hold fast and abide in sound doctrine
- Husbands of one wife
- Good rulers of their children and households

C. Deacons wives (and the wives of elders) are to be:

- Reverent – as above
- Not slanderers or malicious gossips (NASU)
- Temperate
- Faithful in all things

Note: The term *deaconess* found in the footnote of the NIV and NASU at I Tim 3:10 and Rom 16:1 is simply a term used in reference to the wives of deacons, as is clearly seen in the translation and footnotes of both these translations as well as the NKJV. The New Testament clearly teaches that women can be servants of the church in many ways, however there is no indication that women can serve in the official capacity referred to in Phil 1:1 and I Tim 3:8.

III. What Are The Responsibilities Of Deacons?

There are no explicit instructions in the New Testament concerning specific duties that deacons are to hold. Thus, all conclusions concerning the responsibilities of deacons must be drawn from: 1) their title as servants, 2) their qualifications, 3) whatever examples that might be found elsewhere in the New Testament.

A. Deacons are servants, not overseers or rulers

- They serve the church as commanded by and in assistance to the elders
- B. *Deacons evidently fill responsibilities more material and less spiritual in nature*
- “Able to teach” and “having faithful children” are both missing from the list of qualifications for deacons, evidently implying that their service is not specifically in the realm of teaching or in spiritual leading and feeding the flock
 - In Acts 6, seven spiritually qualified men were chosen to “serve tables” under the oversight of the apostles. These men are not referred to with the noun *diakonos*, but their duty is referred to with the verb *diakoneo*:
 - They met qualifications summing up all those listed in I Tim 3:8-9 (Acts 6:3)
 - They served under apostles who were “doubling” as elders at that time (compare Acts 4:37 with Acts 11:29-30)
 - By every indication, these men did the work of deacons of the church
 - Note that the task given these seven servants was a task of authority – they necessarily had to have access to the Lord’s treasury, and had to pass judgment on how to divide it amongst the needy saints
 - However, the more pressing spiritual needs of the group were met by the apostles (Acts 6:4)
 - Thus, the deacon’s main responsibility is to assist the elders in meeting the material needs of the church, allowing elder to devote their efforts to spiritual needs

THE FIRST EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY

CHAPTER 4

I. Certainty of Apostasies To Come (vs. 1-5)

In Acts 20:27-32, the apostle Paul spoke by inspiration of the Holy Spirit to the elders of the church at Ephesus, the very church among which Timothy was left to do the work of an evangelist. With great concern for their future, Paul foretold the inevitable rise of false teachers even from amongst the elder who would draw disciples away from the “whole counsel of God” to deceiving, perverse doctrines. In this letter, Paul again warns this church of false teachers to come, this time through Timothy. As in Acts 20, Paul doesn’t present the danger of false teachers as a possibility, but a danger that these Christians will inevitably face within their lifetimes if not already.

- *The Spirit expressly says* – i.e. the Holy Spirit reveals in nor uncertain terms, in language that is clear, definite and precise
 - Many times the Spirit spoke to man in visions, dreams and metaphorical language which clouded the exact meaning of the revelation to the prophet
 - This particular message was given in no such symbolic language – whether Paul refers to a message he had already receive from the Spirit concerning false teachers, or simply what the Spirit was revealing to him then as he wrote, the absoluteness of the foretold apostasy was plan and clear
- *In later times* – or “in the latter times” (NKJV)
 - The type of false doctrines Paul mentions here were already circulating at the time this letter was penned (cf. Col 2:20-23)
 - Thus, this phrase could be similar to other passage which speak of the “last” or “latter days” meaning to entire period between Christ’s 1st and 2nd coming
 - See Is 2:2, Acts 2:17, Heb 2:2 – “latter/last days” refers to the gospel age
 - As long as God speak to man through Christ, deceivers and false prophets will come persuading men away from the gospel
 - A second possible meaning is that “later times” simply refers to times (or “seasons”) in the near future in which false teachers would specifically endanger the Ephesus church (much like the Acts 20 warning)
 - Clearly, soon enough for Timothy to stand against them
 - “Times” in plural meaning these instances would be recurring
 - This specific warning to the Ephesians certainly does not mean that such dangers would not effect other congregations also
- *Some will depart from the faith* – Note that this falling away (or apostasy) is not a possibility, but something that absolutely will occur!
 - Here again faith is used as a comprehensive term meaning the truth of the gospel (as in I Tim 1:19; Acts 6:7; Jude 3; etc.)
 - Paul’s warning is that in the later times, people will depart from the doctrine of Christ
 - To depart from Christ to a different doctrine is to choose spiritual death (cf. Gal 1:6-8)

- It is also true that this verse, as well as other, teach in no uncertain terms the possibility of departing or falling away from God’s grace in the gospel
 - i.e. That a person can once be saved but then be lost again due to unrighteousness and the evils of false doctrine
 - Gal 1:6-7 – Some Christians in Galatia were falling away from the grace of God to follow a different, false gospel
 - Heb 6:4-8 – Those who have tasted the blessings of the gospel (i.e. salvation) and yet turn away to unrighteousness will face fiery punishment
 - Col 1:21-23 – The apostle describes salvation and reconciliation to God as dependent on the Christians remaining steadfast in the faith and hope of the gospel
- *Giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons* – The false teachers are clearly to blame for their evil deeds since they made the *choice* to give heed to deceiving spirits. However, what are these deceiving spirits?
 - Some claim that these deceiving spirits are the false teachings of people actually possessed by unclean spirits. This explanation seems both outside of the realm of New Testament revelation and unneeded to explain this text.
 - Demons did possess and victimize people during the age of miracles (see Luke 9:37-42; Acts 16:16-18, 19:11-17; etc.)
 - However, nowhere in Scripture are demons blamed for damaging persons spiritually, but only physically
 - Such possessions ended with the age of miracles (Zech 13:1-2; I Cor 13:8-10)
 - Demon possession has ended; false teachings/teachers remain!
 - A better explanation is that these *deceiving spirits* and *doctrines of demons* are simply the perverted doctrines of false teachers
 - I John 4:1-3 – False teachings are spoken of as “spirits” – i.e. doctrines of people who claim to be inspired but are truly false prophets!
 - II Cor 11:13-15 – These doctrines are truly deceiving (or seductive, KJV) because they have the appearance of truth and goodness
 - John 8:44 – These doctrines are truly the *doctrines of demons* since they are evil in every sense of the term, causing souls to be lost and furthering the initiatives of Satan himself (cf. Matt 23:15; John 8:44; Acts 13:8-10; James 3:15)

The Christians in Ephesus, and everywhere in the world, would not be pulled away from the truth by doctrines which were obviously false at first glance, but by teachings which had the appearance of truth and teachers who had the appearance of righteousness – in every way, they would be deceived, and all Christians today must beware the same downfall! “Test all things; hold fast what is good” (I Thes 5:21).

In the following phrases, the apostle describes the form of these false doctrines which would spread amongst the Christians in Ephesus as well as churches everywhere.

- A. *Speaking Lies In Hypocrisy* – i.e. Speaking lies while trying to appear righteous and true – these teachers know full well the destructive nature of their doctrines, and yet intentionally pervert the gospel to be puffed up and self-glorified

- Barclay says the term *hypokrites* refers to the self-righteous hypocrite who play-acts goodness, claiming to glorify God, yet truly just seeking credit from men (see Patton’s quote from *New Testament Wordbook* by Barclay)
 - Remember the words of Acts 20:30, “From among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves”
 - II Pet 2:1-3 – Covetousness fuels their deception and heresy
 - II Cor 11:12-13 – These workers of iniquity simply yearn to be regarded by men
- B. Having their conscience seared with a hot iron* – Having lied and lived in unrighteousness deliberately and against conscience until “past feeling” (Eph 4:19)
- It is important to note that the New Testament presents a distinction between false teachers: those who are genuinely deceived and those who teach destructive doctrines deliberately, with intent to deceive
 - II Tim 3:13 – Some false teachers are simply deceived, genuinely unaware of the whole truth of God which would refute their false words
 - These deceived teachers are still referred to as “evil men” since their doctrines cause the death and destruction of souls
 - These deceived souls may be set free by the truth of God (John 8:32; II Tim 2:25f)
 - However, deliberate false teachers who have suppressed the truth and killed their own consciences are in a much more severe state (read Matt 7:6; Jude 22-23; and II Pet 3:18-22)
- C. Forbidding to marry* – The next two specific false teachings are evidently references to the doctrine of the Essenes, dating back to around 200 B.C. (i.e. *asceticism*)
- Denial of bodily comforts enhances one’s spirituality: Paul specifically refutes this doctrine here, in Col 2:20ff and in I Cor 13:3
 - Basic tenets included banning marriage except under very strict regulations for preserving the race, and abstaining from all wine and all meats
 - Developed into several false doctrines, including the Gnostic doctrines of marriage prohibition, and the doctrine that ministers and other servants of the church must remain celibate (not adopted by the Catholic Church until ~300 AD and ~390 AD at the Synods of Elvira and Carthage, resp.)
- Be not deceived: some marriages are forbidden by the law of Christ (cf. Matt 19:9)
 - However, marriage was created by God to be honorable and beautiful in His sight
 - Gen 2:18; Heb 13:4
 - Elders and deacons are commanded to be husbands in I Tim 3
 - The apostles and ministers of the NT had every right to take “a believing wife” (II Cor 9:5), and some (such as Peter) did so (see also Matt 8:14)
- D. Commanding to abstain from foods* – To make it a religious duty of man to abstain from certain foods, all of which God created for man to receive with thanksgiving, is strongly prohibited in the NT.
- Mark 7:14-23 – “Thus he declared all food clean” (vs. 19, NASU)
 - Neither does eating certain foods make one more spiritual than others (cf. I Cor 8:8)
 - To teach that abstinence from certain foods makes one more holy than others, or that certain foods should be denied on certain days is contrary to the gospel:

- Believers should receive all foods with thanksgiving (Eph 5:20; Phil 4:6)
- Every creature that God made is inherently good (Gen 1:21,25,31)
- All foods are sanctified by:
 1. God’s word – (Mark 7:19; Acts 10:15)

Note that *sanctified* simply means that all foods are clean and pure in the sight of God – He has declared the eating of *any* food is not a violation of His law, if eaten with thanksgiving!
 2. Thankful prayer – (see above and I Sam 9:13; Matt 14:19; Rom 14:6)

II. Diligence Of The Good Minister Of Jesus Christ (vs. 6-16)

Having again warned Timothy of the apostasies and false teachings to come, the apostles turns his attention to give some practical commands and advice to help Timothy in effectively serving Christ. By extension, much of Paul’s teaching here has extensive application in the service of all Christians.

A. Instruct and warn the brethren (vs. 6-7a)

The evangelist’s main responsibility is to teach and warn the brethren (i.e. *lit.* from the same womb; Christians, the family and household of God, cf. I Pet 2:17):

- Holding fast to sound doctrine, nothing but the truth (II Tim 4:2f)
- Warning of false doctrines and apostasies (I Tim 1:3ff; Eph 4:11-15)
- Denying profane fables and old wives’ fables – most probably a reference to the traditions and legends of the Jewish Talmud
 - *Deny* is to refuse, avoid and decline to be bothered (cf. II Tim 2:23; Heb 12:25)
 - *Fable* is the Greek *muthos* from which is derived the English word *myth*, i.e. and invention, a falsehood
 - Paul’s command is to avoid & refuse to be bothered by these fables. They can only cause strife, division & folly: to argue about them would only appear *to give weight to their ignorance and is a fruitless waste of time/effort*

B. Practice Godliness With Self-Discipline (vs. 7b-11)

Note that the command to instruct and warn the brethren is not an excuse of the servant of Christ to only look to the growth of others: even in vs. 6, Timothy is told to constantly (NASU) seek nourishment in the words of faith and sound doctrine. A good servant of the Lord first looks to his own spiritual growth and obedience (cf. Ezra 7:10)! This is something that Paul himself recognized and constantly preached – read I Cor 9:24-27; Phil 3:12-15a; etc.

- *Exercise toward godliness* – So often Paul uses the analogy between physical exercise and spiritual exercise (cf. I Cor 9:24ff; Gal 5:7; Phil 2:16, 3:13-14; Heb 5:14, 12:1-2).
- Physical exercise profits a little bit now, but these benefits pass away with time
- Godliness is profitable in this life – what aspect of life, what worthy endeavor does not benefit from the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22f)? (Cf. Prov 19:23, 22:4; Matt 6:33; Mark 10:28-31, etc.)
- Godliness is profitable for the life that is to come – Matt 5:19-21; I Tim 6:17-19

- This is the only *guaranteed* reward – Matt 10:42; Luke 6:35; Col 3:24; Heb 10:34-38; I Cor 15:58 – nothing we do in God’s service is done in vain!

To emphasize the importance of this point, Paul uses the same phrase he used in I Tim 1:15 – “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance.” Godliness is profitable in all things, especially in the life that is to come – this is why we labor and strive in God’s kingdom. Even *labor* and *strive* (NKJV footnote, NASU, NIV) are athletic terms, continuing the preceding metaphor. To labor is to strenuously toil as an athlete in training and competition (cf. Phil 2:6); to strive is to agonize, to use every ounce of strength (*lit.* to compete for a prize, as in I Cor 9:25). Christians labor and strive in this manner because we trust in God – He is faithful (Deut 7:9; I Cor 1:9, 10:13; I Thess 5:24, etc.) and His word is truth forever (Deut 32:4; Is 42:9; Tit 1:2; I Pet 1:24-25). Thus, we see the tremendous importance for young Timothy to command and teach all these things: so much hinges upon our learning accurately the world of God and practicing godliness!

C. Be an example to all believers no matter your age (vs. 12-13)

D. Grow in knowledge and spiritual maturity (vs. 14-15)

E. Continued diligence unto salvation (vs. 16)

THE FIRST EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY

CHAPTER 5

I. The Evangelist's Job Of Exhortation (vs. 1-2)

Passages like Titus 2:15 and this one show that the evangelist has a responsibility to strive to recognize the needs and failings of Christians around him and to address those problems with authority and all seriousness. No Christian, especially no Christian in a position of spiritual leadership, is to turn his back on the sins of his brethren, ignoring shortcomings or avoiding and shunning the sinner. Much to the contrary, the New Testament, both here and other places, teaches the desperate need to confront spiritual shortcomings quickly:

- Matt 18:1 – When your brother sins, go and tell him, out of concern for his soul and your relationship as brothers in Christ
 - The Christian is not to go around talking to everyone else about his brother's sins
 - The Christian is not to refuse confrontation, but forevermore treat his sinning brother with contempt, slander and hatred
 - Though it may be the most difficult conversation to approach, simply go to him!
- I Cor 5:1-7a – Churches who harbor sinners and malicious deceivers have to be made aware that “a little leaven leavens the whole lump”
 - i.e. Sin left unchecked without confrontation leads to more sin and more nonchalance about sin

To allow sin to fester and multiply in a congregation without rebuke or exhortation would be like ignoring a malicious cancer in one part of the body to the detriment and destruction of the body as a whole! Therefore, the evangelist (and truly, all Christians who are privy to the stumblings of their brethren) is to address these problems promptly. This responsibility is never easy, yet so tremendously important that it cannot be shunned for any discomfort or apprehension that may result.

However, here in I Timothy 5, though the urgent need to promptly confront sin is certainly implied, the apostle's instructions deal mainly with the *attitude* with which the evangelist is to do the confronting. The “authority” spoken of in Titus 2:15 is the authority of the message preacher – i.e. God's authoritative word. But the evangelist is not to haphazardly assault any sinner with a harsh rebuke: **he must approach each individual as a precious family member in Christ, not as one superior in rank and dignity.**

- *Do not sharply rebuke an older man* (NASU) – “*Sharply rebuke*” is here used, as opposed to the NKJV which simply has “rebuke,” because this is a word picture (unique to this passage) which literally means “to strike at” – in this case, metaphorically, to lash out with the tongue in chastisement
 - The young evangelist is not to harshly rebuke older Christians, smiting them with his tongue, for this would bring condemnation on himself
- *But rather appeal to him as a father* – i.e. Speak to him as you would to your own father who had erred into a mistake
 - The Bible frequently speaks of God's expectation that the younger generation respect the older (e.g. Lev 19:32)
 - Old age does not necessarily mean wisdom – some people just get old, not wise

- When an older brother stumbles into sin, be it due to ignorance, lapsed judgment, or otherwise the young preacher is to approach him with son-like respect
- *Younger men as brothers* – i.e. Males of one’s own age or younger, not approaching as a superior, but as a brother (and leading by example!)
- *Older women as mothers* – As a son would humbly, lovingly and tenderly approach his own mother
- *Younger women as sisters, with all purity* – i.e. Being so careful to preserve his reputation and purity, the evangelist must guard his words, thoughts and actions when dealing with the young women of the congregation who need exhortation
- For this reason, among others, it is often more prudent for the older women to teach the younger (Titus 2:3-4)!

“*And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, "Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother"*” (Matt 12:49-50). Christians must strive to remember, in all our dealings with one another, that we have been adopted through Christ into a divine family, each person a member of all others. Sometimes in this family, rebuke is necessary toward a wayward member wandering from the truth, but the apostle reminds us that this rebuke, as much as is possible, must be carried out with humility, compassion, understanding and tenderness of heart.

There are times, of course, when a stern and forceful rebuke is absolutely necessary – think of Paul’s words to Peter in Gal 2:11ff; Paul’s words to the Galatians in Gal 3:1, 5:1ff; etc. Our attitude in exhortation should always take into consideration certain factors such as plain ignorance, doubting or sometimes stubborn rebellion (Jude 22-23). And yet, as much as is possible, the evangelist (as well as all other Christians) are to approach one another in rebuke, when needed, remembering the precious blood which ties us one to another as brothers, sisters, mothers and fathers in the glorious family of God in Christ, and remembering that we ourselves are subject to the same temptations and may have to likewise be rebuked in the future!

II. Responsibilities Toward Widows (vs. 3-16)

As Paul moves on in this section of the letter dealing with Timothy’s instructions to all types of individuals, he turns his attention to the responsibilities of individual Christian’s and whole churches toward widows. From its beginning, the early church showed much concern for the care of those aged women among them who could not care for themselves (see Acts 6). Of course, any member with a true need may receive temporary relief from the church, but we learn in this passage that certain qualifications must be met for a widow to be “taken into the number,” i.e. “enrolled as a permanent charge of the church” (Patton 116).

Note that in this passage, the apostle addresses five groups of Christians:

1. Widows indeed – vs. 3,5,9-10
2. Widows with relatives – vs. 4
3. Widows who live for pleasure, not God – vs. 6
4. The believing relatives of widows – vs. 4,8,16
5. Younger widows – vs. 11-15

Let us examine the instructions given to each of these groups in turn:

- A. *Widows indeed* – These are widows who are truly in need of permanent care who meet certain qualifications:
- *Left alone* – in this context, she has no *believing relatives* who can care for her
 - Note that the instructions for family members to care for their widowed relatives are all spoken to relatives who are Christians (vs. 8 and 16)
 - Paul’s commands who have no effect or authority over those outside the church
 - If a widow’s only living relatives are outside the church and these refuse to care for her, she is “left alone” in the full sense of vs. 5
 - *Trusts in and serves God* – The picture painted for us is of a pious, diligent woman who strived to devote her time to prayer and serving God in any way she can
 - Consider Anna in Luke 2:37; Dorcas in Acts 9:6ff (not sure she was a widow, but his is the lifestyle described in I Tim 5)
 - *Not under 60 years old* – No reason is given for this qualification, but it is implied that a widow indeed is one who can by no means care for herself because of age
 - *Has been the wife of one man* – Meaning that she was faithful when married, leading a blameless married life, not necessarily that she has only had one lawful husband
 - To lawfully remarry after one’s spouse dies is no sin before God (Rom 7:2-3)
 - In fact, Paul encourages the younger widows to remarry (I Tim 5:14)
 - The widows disqualified by this statement are those who have not abided in God’s law for marriage, those who lived in adultery (Matt 19:9; Rom 7:3)
 - Past sins have consequences! Consider those past sins that might disqualify a man from serving as an elder or deacon even many years later!
 - *Well-reported for good works* – A woman with a spotless reputation for doing good, and such good works are then listed one by one:
 - *Having brought up children* – Does this disqualify those widows unable to bring up children? Is this simply a qualification for those women who were able to bear children, that they raised them well (see NIV wording)?
 - The verb *teknotropheo* (“brought up children,” NKJV) is only used here in NT
 - May mean “cared for children physically and spiritually” (Reese 230)
 - May mean cared for *her own* children, whether natural or adopted
 - Note that this is the only qualification in the list oriented within the family: all others are oriented primarily to those outside the woman’s household
 - *Having lodged strangers* – Hospitality is again mentioned, as in I Tim 3:2, as indication of the good fruits of a life lived for Christ
 - *Having washed the saints’ feet* – i.e. She has lived as a servant in whatever mode necessary to accommodate the needs of the Lord’s people
 - *Having relieved the afflicted* – No doubt giving of time, effort, money, food, whatever necessary to help those in need, even outside the body of Christ (Gal 6:10)
 - *Having diligently followed every good work* – A blameless woman who has lived her life cultivating the fruit of the Spirit continually and diligently

Widows who meet all of the above qualifications are those who can be “taken into the number,” i.e. cared for financially by the church as often and as long as is needed.

B. Widows with relatives – This is one of the passages in the New Testament that shows a clear distinction between the benevolent work of the church and the benevolent work commanded to individual Christians – these responsibilities are not always the same!

- If the widow has children or grandchildren (*nephews*, NKJV), these should learn to “put their religion into practice” (NIV) by caring for their relatives in need
- If a Christian refuses to care for his own relatives, be they children, widows or otherwise, he is living in clear contradiction of the gospel
 - Jesus used the illustration of a loving parent caring for his children as an example to teach the world: if the world understands how to treat their relatives, how could a Christians fail to lovingly and carefully provide for his own?
 - See Luke 11:11-13; II Cor 12:14; Eph 6:4 – think how God cares for us!
 - In practice, a Christian who does not care for his own relatives has denied the faith – see Titus 1:16
- Thus, widows with believing relatives should be taken care of by those relatives, and the church should not be burdened with their care

C. Widows who live for pleasure

D. Young widows

III. Compensation Of Elders (vs. 17-18)

After giving specific instructions concerning widows, Paul turns his attention to instructions about another specific group: the elders. Clearly, given the context of honor, leadership and teaching, the apostle is speaking of the shepherds of the church (i.e. bishops or pastors), not simply elderly people. In these verses we find authority for these leaders of the church to be financially compensated for their hard labor in God's kingdom.

A. Authority for a paid eldership

- “Honor” included financial support in vs. 3, so it logically should here as well: the elders of the church are worthy of *double* honor
 - Honor, respect, obedience for their leadership, qualities and grave responsibility (see Heb 13:17)
 - Financial support for their strenuous labor for the Lord
- Testimony of the Scriptures: “*Do not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain*” (Deut 25:4, see description in Reese)
 - Quoted in only one other NT passage, I Cor 9:4-14, where the quotation is clearly in reference to financial compensation of preachers for their work
 - Paul did not receive such support from the Corinth church while he worked with them (vs. 15, II Cor 11:8-9), but he had the right
 - Paul *did* receive support from other churches and perhaps individuals (see Phil 4:15-17 and Gal 6:6)
 - **If Deut 25:4 is referenced to authorize financial support in I Cor 9, it should in I Tim 5 also!**
- Harmonizes with warnings to elders in I Pet 5:2 and Acts 20:33-35
 - To take the position of elder simply to gain an income could be a real temptation
 - Same danger is also described for preachers (cf. I Tim 6:3ff; Tit 1:11; II Pet 2:1ff)

Therefore, we see that it is appropriate and authorized by Christ for the elders of the church to be compensated financially by the church.

B. Further Description Of the Elder's Duties

These verse also directly and implicitly give further description of the elder's work:

- Rule – i.e. lead, shepherd, but not as tyrannical dictators (I Pet 5:1ff)
- Labor in word and doctrine – i.e. preaching and teaching the word (NASU)
 - Some other passages elude to occasional overlap in the offices described in Eph 4:11, e.g. Peter was an apostle and an elder (I Pet 5:1 with Gal 2:8); Paul was an apostle, a preacher and a teacher (I Tim 2:7; II Tim 1:11)
 - Here we see that, though all elders must be *able* to teach, some elders may labor strenuously in preaching and teaching, much like an evangelist
 - These elders might work as the principle evangelists in a congregation or perhaps just in supplementing the teaching of evangelists (e.g. converts have much still to be taught, Matt 28:19f)
 - These elders are “especially” worthy of financial support

- Time, effort and commitment – The picture here painted for us of elders is that of leaders so diligently striving to meet the needs of the church that it is even more than a full-time job
 - As is the case with preachers, elders are given responsibilities requiring such time and flexibility that they very well may not be able to hold a secular job
 - Much like the apostles in Acts 6:2,4, there’s little time for anything but their responsibilities to the Lord!

Note: “Scripture” (vs. 18) refers to that which is revealed by God and written down

- I Tim 5:18 refers to Luke 10:7 as Scripture
- II Pet 3:16 refers to Paul’s writings (the bulk of the NT) as Scripture

By the time I Timothy was written (around 65 AD), the New Testament canon was already being collected. These texts were referred to as Scripture, not because some group of people or churches approved, but because they were inspired by God (II Tim 3:16). God has never given any man the authority to accept or reject His word, as if the inspiration of Scripture depends on the acceptance of mankind. Though some religious groups would have us believe that the NT books are inspired because they were accepted by the church, in truth they were accepted (and in completeness by 100 AD) because they were inspired.

IV. Handling Accusations And Discipline Of Elders (vs. 19-20)

The elders of the church are men with much wisdom and spiritual mindedness, and yet they are still men: they are not infallible, and are susceptible to temptation (thus the warnings in passages like Acts 20:28ff). However, because of their proven godly attributes and abilities, elders are to be neither accused nor reprimanded hastily, so the apostles goes on to give instruction concerning how the church is to handle the accusations and discipline of elders.

A. Accusations against elders

Under the Old Law, accusations of iniquity were not to be received except at the testimony of two or three witnesses (see Deut 17:6; 19:15). Apparently, this same principle holds weight under the New Covenant as well, given Christ’s words in John 8:17, and the words of Paul here and in II Cor 13:1. In particular, the apostle states that accusations against elders should not even be heard unless at the testimony of two or three witnesses. With a bit of thought, this command makes much logical sense. False accusations might be levied against elders by:

- A fellow Christian who is deceived or has malicious motives
 - A well-intentioned but deceived Christian might jump to a false conclusion
 - Elders must rebuke those who are sinning, and some sinning Christian might strike out in defense and revenge to hurt the elder’s reputation
 - False brethren (Gal 2:4) are not unheard of in the New Testament, who sought to infiltrate the church only to damage it

An elder’s reputation and influence is far too precious to allow it to be tainted by unstable and unscrupulous men, thus the utmost care is to be taken in receiving accusations against such spiritual leaders.

Note: The text does not explicitly indicate *who* is to receive these accusations against an elder, but it is nowhere indicated that the responsibility to hear or reject these accusations rests solely upon the evangelist. It is clear that the accusations are not, at least at first, to be heard before the whole church, simply because vs. 20 makes a distinction between the reception of the accusation (described in vs. 19) and those actions which *are* to be taken before the whole assembly. Thus, it is only logical to conclude that accusations against an elder (made by two or three witnesses) be heard by the other elder(s) and whomever else they choose, including the evangelist(s) if deemed necessary.

B. Rebuke of elders who are sinning

If accusations are made against an elder in accordance with the instructions in vs. 19 and found to be truthful, some form of rebuke must necessarily follow. Sin is never to be ignored or condoned, whether committed by an elder or any Christian (see I Cor 5:1-7; Jam 5:19-20; Matt 5:18ff). The reprimand made against an elder found to be living in sin is a rebuke that must be made before the *whole church*: “those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all.”

- Elders are the spiritual leaders and examples for the whole congregation
- Those elders who are sinning must be rebuked before the whole church so the whole church is made absolutely aware that such behavior is unacceptable
 - Compare the purpose of punishments under the Old Law, Deut 13:11, 21:21
 - Much like Paul’s rebuke of Peter, recorded in Gal 2:14ff, was so stern and so public because the apostles’ examples were authoritative (Phil 3:17, 4:9)
- This rebuke is not only punitive in nature, but also preventive: the rest of the elders and the rest of the church must learn to fear the chastening of God (Heb 12:5ff)
- We must also remember that such punitive actions are also for the good of the individual, in hope of repentance again toward godliness (cf. I Cor 5:5; I Tim 1:5)

V. Personal Instructions (vs. 21-23)

A. Carry out Christ’s word without prejudice and partiality

Seldom do we read a stronger charge than that given by Paul in vs. 21: the apostle charges the evangelist “before God, the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels” to carry out these commands without partiality or prejudice.

- *Prejudice* refers to judgment made before hearing all the facts
 - The Greek comes from a word meaning “to judge beforehand” (Vine)
 - Christians are commanded to always judge with righteous judgment (John 7:24)
 - We are to judge as God judges (Rom 1:32, 2:5)
- *Partiality* refers to judgment made showing personal favoritism
 - The Greek is a word picture literally meaning to lean toward
 - Partiality toward some to the neglect of others is sin (Jam 2:9)
 - We are to refrain from showing partiality, just as God shows no partiality (cf. Acts 10:34; Rom 2:11; I Pet 1:17)

Note: Especially consider I Pet 1:17 – God judges man by his works. Though we cannot stand on the same level of knowledge and observation as God, we must also, to the extent that we are able, judge others by their works. This is evident from Christ’s words in Mat 7:15-20 – a good tree doesn’t bear bad fruits. The fruits we bear are our works, and to the best of our ability, men chosen as leaders of the church must be selected (and disciplined) according to their fruits.

B. Care in selecting church leaders

Timothy, though an evangelist and possibly a man with spiritual gifts (II Tim 1:6), was not an apostle, and thus the laying on of hands in vs. 22 cannot possibly refer to the passing on of miraculous works of the Holy Spirit: this was an ability only given by Christ to His apostles (see Acts 8:12-18, 19:6, etc). The reference then must be the only other reason for the laying on of hands mentioned in the New Testament: *the appointment of a certain person or persons to a specific task or mission.*

- Much like the commissioning of Joshua to lead Israel, Num 27:23
- Just as the brethren in Antioch appointed Saul and Barnabas to the first missionary journey, Acts 13:3

The question is: *who* would Timothy be laying his hands on to commission to a specific task or mission? The full answer is, there's no way to be completely sure. Other scriptures suggest:

- Elders – certainly fits the context best, also Tit 1:5
 - This is not to suggest that Timothy or Titus would appoint elders by themselves without the church's consent and approval
 - The evangelists would simply teach the necessary qualifications (I Tim 3, Tit 1), and to voice their judgment as well
 - The laying on of hands then would be a symbolic gesture that:
 1. The man was officially appointed to the eldership
 2. The man meets all qualifications demanded by the Holy Spirit, as taught by Timothy (or Titus) himself
 - Evidently then, the work of the evangelist (much like the work of Paul and Barnabas described in Acts 14:23) was *not* to appoint elders on behalf of the individual churches, but to teach the Lord's commands and expectations concerning the eldership and see that it was done according to all the He commanded
- Preachers and teachers – We know from II Tim 2:2 that the evangelist was to train up other preachers and teachers, committing or entrusting the gospel to faithful men
 - As these preachers were charged with the responsibility to preach the gospel, it would have fit the prescribed purpose for hands to be laid on them
 - Much the same as hands were laid upon Timothy, evidently setting him apart to the work of an evangelist (compare I Tim 4:14)

Whatever the case, as Timothy (along with the church) appointed specific people to specific teaching and leadership tasks, they were to exercise the utmost caution and wisest of judgment, not laying hands on any with hast and lack of consideration, because **appointing a sinful or unfaithful man to any such position would be to share in his sins (vs. 22)!**

C. Paul's concern for Timothy's health

Verse 23 is perhaps one of the greatest testimonies to the authenticity of this book. If the letter had been deceptively composed many years later in time (as some scholars suggest), who would have thought to place such a conspicuous, personal comment in the middle of such a serious passage? Having already discussed this verse in the context of the qualifications of elders and deacons in chapter 3, notice just a few points (some of which are review):

- Wine is suggested by Paul as a *medicine*, not a beverage

- This letter was written in a time when effective medicines were few – alcohol was a substance used to treat many forms of infirmity (see Patton 131)
- To cite this verse as authority for casual or social drinking is a perversion
- However, some circumstances allow consumption of substances (i.e. certain medicines and drugs, like alcohol) which would be improper and sinful to consume casually or socially
- The apostle uses the cautionary adjective “*little*”
 - Even for medicinal purposes, the apostle warns against excessive consumption
- It is *necessarily implied* that Timothy had completely abstained from wine till now
 - Implicitly, Timothy’s spiritual mindedness, exercised senses and concern for godliness moved him to abstain from imbibing intoxicating drink
- The apostle recognized medicinal treatment as effective in treating illness
 - Some claim that visiting doctors or therapists is sinful, thinking that either a person should be healed by faith or succumb to the “judgment of God”
 - Also note that these words were written in a time when some could heal diseases by miraculous powers of the Holy Spirit, yet Timothy suffered “frequent infirmities,” as Paul also faced some chronic “thorn in the flesh” (II Cor 12:7; Gal 4:13). Clearly, such miracles were not meant to alleviate all suffering that Christians faced – they must have had a higher purpose...

VI. All Men’s Works Will Be Full Revealed In Time (vs. 24-25)

All of man’s works will find him out, either in this life or the next. See Prov 10:19; Ecc 12:13-14; Matt 10:24-33; II Cor 5:9-10; Heb 4:11-13; Rev 14:13.

THE FIRST EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY

CHAPTER 6

I. Instructions To Masters And Servants (vs. 1-2)

Jesus Christ did not come to the earth to move His followers to revolt against societal and governmental injustices: He was not a political reformer; He did not seek to change the world through any of the established, revolutionary, and usually violent, methods; He called upon members of all walks of life to live in holiness. To the contrary, the gospel of Christ seeks to change the world by changing *hearts*: men and women learn to live in meekness, gentility, compassion and peace, and their shining lights go on to transform the lives of others.

One of the social institutions which Jesus did not seek to abolish, at least by mankind's methods of victory, was slavery. In the world then as the world today, men and women were owned as servants of masters. The New Testament speaks of slavery as an existing social institution that Christ's disciples had to deal with, thus instructions are given to both believing slaves and believing masters. Slaves were not called on to revolt and overthrow slavery by force. Neither were masters commanded to immediately release all their servants or slaves. Rather, Christians in both of these positions were given commandments to carry out in justice, submission, respect and godliness.

A. Instructions to slaves

There are five great texts in the NT dealing with the responsibilities of masters and servants: Eph 6:5-9; Col 3:22-4:1; I Tim 6:1-2; Tit 2:9-10 and I Pet 2:18-21. Instructions to servants can be summarized:

- Work as to God rather than man, for He is the Master of all
- Work with a sense of duty, sincerity of heart and obedience, not rebellion or thievery
- Work genuinely for the good and the unjust
- Work so as to show the light of Christ and the purity of His teachings

In all of the above passages, the motivation for working with all one's heart is the reward which comes from God. In all circumstances, whether treated justly or unfairly, the servant is to work as to the Lord, not causing blasphemy or reproach to fall upon the church of the name of Christ. One must note that the servant is to obey all commands of the master unless they violate the principles of the gospel (cf. Acts 5:29)

B. Instructions to masters

From the passages listed above, the instructions given to masters can be summarized:

- All of the above ideas – honor, respect, sincerity, justice – carry over to the responsibilities of masters: they are to “treat [their] slaves in the same way” (Eph 6:9, NIV).
- Make demands without threats or partiality, remember that God is the Master of all
- Grant the slaves justice and fairness, including compensation (see Col 4:1, NIV)

Rather than regarding their servants as tools, machinery or merchandise, masters are to *serve* their servants with impartiality, kindness and fairness, being concerned not only for the quality of their work but the quality of their lives. In all circumstances, whether slave or free, the

Christians is to treat others by Christ's fundamental teaching, "Whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them" (Matt 7:12).

From Paul's letter to Philemon, a believing slave owner, it appears that the spiritually minded Christian would come to the realization that forcing another person to serve him, especially another Christian, was not befitting a disciple of Christ (Phile 8). See interesting comments by Reese (262) in quoting Barnes (1798-1870), who spoke openly and forcefully on the issue of slavery and its relationship to the gospel during the abolition movement in the United States, and thus lends an interesting perspective.

II. Further Warning About False Teachers (vs. 3-5)

This passage very much echoes Paul's original charge to Timothy in 1:3-7, his elaboration on such apostasy in 4:1-5, and what will be his final exhortation in 6:20-21. Notice from this passage the:

A. Distinguishing Characteristics Of False Doctrines

- Different – i.e. different than the true gospel, different than the teachings of Jesus Christ and the apostles and holy prophets of the New Testament
 - See I Tim 1:3; Gal 1:6-9,11; Heb 13:8-9; II Pet 2:1-3,3:16
- Not in accordance with sound words – i.e. *healthy* words, conforming to the word of God
 - See I Tim 1:10-11; II Tim 4:3; Tit 1:9,2:1
- Not in accordance with the words of Christ – i.e. the doctrine *authorized* by Christ, not necessarily direct quotations only
 - Christ is the only authoritative source of sound doctrine (Matt 28:18)
 - He authorized the apostles to carry on this revelation (John 16:13, etc.)
- Not conforming to godliness – i.e. truth which respects and reveres all things which pertain to God and His will (cf. Tit 1:1)
 - Phrase can refer to the method of teaching (see NIV) or what is taught (NAS)
 - It is true that sound doctrine must be taught in a godly manner (see I Tim 5:1; II Tim 2:24-25; Tit 2:6-8)
 - However, comparing I Tim 6:3 with Tit 1:1, it appears that Paul is here referring to what is actually taught, not in the case the manner of teaching

Note: Verse 3 gives us a complete definition of *sound doctrine* – it must agree with the gospel taught by the apostles, conform to the words authorized by Christ and conform to godliness.

B. Motivations Of Those Who Knowingly Teach False Doctrines

- Conceited – i.e. puffed up and proud, *lit.* "wrapped in smoke" (Vine)
 - Wuest states: "speaks metaphorically of a beclouded and stupid state of mind as the result of pride," and thus are "unable to do any concentrated or reflective thinking"
- Obsessed with disputes and arguments over words – much like those mentioned in I Tim 1:4; II Tim 2:14. However note that this verse does not condemn:
 - Disputing and contending for the truth – see Acts 15:2 and Jude 3

- Examining every word of God's truth – Ps 119:160, Matt 4:7, and other passages show the whole of God's word must be examined to know truth
- Matt 22:32; Gal 3:16 and other passages show that sometimes God's truth rests on *one* word or even *one* letter!

Note: “Obsessed” literally means “to be sick over” (see NIV, and NASU margin) – Paul here contrasts the sound, healthy doctrine of Jesus with the sick obsessions of those who twist His teachings to deceive and destroy.

- Suppose that godliness is a means of gain – evidently either teaching (falsely) simply for the sake of financial gain, or even exploiting money from those they deceive
 - See Tit 1:11; II Pet 2:3

C. Attributes Of Those Who Knowingly Teach False Doctrines

- Know nothing – see the above comments on “conceited”
- Corrupt minds – i.e. inner man diseased and corroded by various lusts
- Destitute of the truth – i.e. “robbed” (NIV) and “deprived” of the truth
 - “In the passive voice, "bereft," 1 Tim 6:5, RV, with reference to the truth, with the suggestion of being retributively "robbed" of the truth, through the corrupt condition of the mind” (Vine, *defraud*)
 - Thus, these are not honestly deceived hearts, but ungodly persons who knew the truth but allowed their minds and hearts to be corrupted
 - See Peter's comments on those who leave the truth for lies, II Pet 2:18-22

D. The Outcome Of These False Doctrines

- Envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions – compare these ideas to the goal of godly teaching described by Paul in I Tim 1:5
- Useless wranglings – This is a word picture, literally meaning to *rub in pieces* or to *wear away*, was used in the Greek to denote *idle occupations* (see Patton, Barnes)
 - i.e. Employments that simply consume time with no profit or advantage

The purpose of the arguments and contentions of these false teachers **is not** to stand for truth, but much to the contrary they serve no purpose, no edification, but are simply a waste of resources and time. The KJV has an additional warning at the end of verse 5: “from such withdraw yourself.” This phrase is not included in the oldest manuscripts, unavailable at the time the KJV was composed, but certainly the idea is true, even implied (cf. II Thes 3:6).

THE SECOND EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY

INTRODUCTION

We find the apostle Paul in much darker circumstances as he pens the second epistle to Timothy than he was during his first letter. Chronologically, this is the last letter we have from Paul, and, though certainly it is written with the same urgency, it bears a tone of finality absent from his first epistle. Though he hoped that Timothy would see him in the flesh soon, these are the last words of a victorious Christian to his “beloved son” in the faith, and to the church which he loved so dearly but that he knew was in constant danger of being led away from the faith.

I. Author, Date and Place

As stated in II Timothy 1:1, the apostle Paul, imprisoned once again in Rome (1:8,12,16,17). Whereas, in his first imprisonment, Paul fully expected to be released (Phil 1:7, 12-26; 2:19-24; Phile 22), there is no such expectation expressed in II Timothy:

- II Tim 4:9,13,21 – Paul urged Timothy to come to *him* quickly, whereas in his first imprisonment Timothy was with him at first but then sent *away* to Philippi
- II Tim 4:6-9 – In his first imprisonment, Paul knew that there was a chance he might be killed, but expected to be released. In this final letter, he expected no release and was well aware of the fate awaiting him.

A brief timeline of the end of Paul’s life is appropriate here, and this list relies heavily upon Marshall Patton’s commentary on 1-2 Timothy, Titus and Philemon (2001, *Truth Commentaries*).

- Rom 15:23-24,28 – After his first release from prison, historical evidence testifies that Paul did indeed travel all the way westward to Spain, arriving there in 64 AD
- I Tim 3:14-15 – Paul returns to Asia Minor and reunites with Timothy at Ephesus
- II Tim 4:13 – Paul travels to Troas and leaves his books and parchments with Carpus, evidently expecting Timothy to pick them up on his way through at a later date
- II Tim 1:16,17 – Paul then goes to Rome and is arrested, though the circumstances surrounding his arrest are not certain
- II Tim 4:10-11 – Several disciples, including Titus, were with Paul in Rome, but all of them have gone away except Luke
- II Tim 4:21 – From prison, some time after his first defense and fully expecting execution, Paul writes Timothy and urges him to come before winter.

There is no way of knowing whether or not Timothy made it to Rome to see Paul before his death. History testifies that the apostle was imprisoned, under the nefarious emperor Nero, in 65 AD and beheaded (a Roman death) in the spring of 66 AD.

II. Purpose Of Writing

For Christians, the letter of II Timothy provokes very mixed emotions: we are touched deeply by Paul’s concern and love for Timothy (e.g. 1:1-12), but concerned for Timothy in his great distress over Paul’s imprisonment (e.g. 1:4); we are invigorated by the confirmation of our faith in Paul’s bold words (e.g. 1:12,13; 3:16-17; 4:1-2), yet distressed at the warnings of further apostasy, warnings that far too clearly echo in today’s world of religious perversion (e.g. 4:3); and we are so deeply saddened by the loss of Paul, such a bulwark of faith to Christians and

congregations around the world, including us, and yet torn (as he was, Phil 1:21) between this sadness and great joy in his victory over our enemy, the devil (e.g. 4:6-7).

The entirety of Paul's final epistle can be summarized in a few headings:

I. Paul's Concern For Timothy

- Do not be ashamed of the gospel, but remember Paul as an example (1:1-14)
- Stir up the gift that is in you (1:6, 14)
- Endure suffering as a good soldier for Christ (2:3; 3:12)
- Remember the persecutions Paul faced in Antioch, Iconium, Lystra (3:10-11)
- Remember the Scriptures which are able to make you wise unto salvation (3:14-17)

II. Paul's Concern For The Church In Turmoil

- The peril of further apostasy (3:1-8)

III. The Urgent Need For Absolute Adherence To The Gospel

- Hold fast the pattern of sound words and be an example (1:13; 2:1-2,15)
- The completeness of Scripture (3:16-17)
- The need to preach on the word, and to be ready always (4:1-4)
- All Christ's workers should strive to live in purity (2:4-5,19-22)

IV. Paul's Farewell

- Paul's impending death, final victory (4:6-8)
- Paul's loneliness in prison and on trial (4:9-16)
- The strength the apostle gained from Christ's constant faithfulness (4:17-18)
- Paul's urgent desire to see his beloved son in the faith (4:19-22)

THE SECOND EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY

CHAPTER 1

I. Salutation

A. Paul's Apostleship (vs. 1)

The same notes pertaining to Paul's apostleship given at I Tim 1:1 apply here as well. Note three aspects of Paul's apostleship:

- *An apostle of Jesus Christ* – i.e. commissioned and sent by Christ (cf. Acts 26:17)
 - False apostles were in the world, then and now (e.g. II Cor 11:13)
 - Paul's apostleship was genuine, authorized by Christ, and bore all the signs of authenticity (e.g. II Cor 12:11-12)
- *By the will of God* – this office, with all responsibilities and consequences it bore, was not in accordance with the will of Paul but the will of God
 - Even in his imprisonment, Paul refers to himself as a prisoner of the Lord (Eph 3:1, 4:1; II Tim 1:8; Phile 1,9),
 - Paul knew that his fate was ultimately in the hands of God alone, and he fully trusted God's wisdom and faithfulness (cf. I Cor 1:9, 10:13; I Thes 5:23-24; II Thes 3:3; Phil 4:11-13; etc.)
 - Paul further knew that he only suffered because of doing the will of God, thus his trials were not a cause for shame but rejoicing (cf. Acts 5:41; Col 1:21; I Pet 1:6-9; 4:12-16)
- *According to the promise of life in Christ Jesus* – this phrase can mean:
 - “According to,” i.e. in harmony with God's promise of life in Christ
 - “With a view toward,” as in Titus 1:1-3
 - Accepting either meaning, Paul's apostleship was in accordance with the gospel, and was a work done in anticipation of life eternal which awaits all the faithful when this life is over (see II Pet 3:13-14)
 - From the very beginning of his final epistle, Paul meditates on the glorious life that awaits him, a prominent theme throughout this text (cf. 1:10; 2:8-9; 4:6-8,18)

Note: Skeptics of the truthfulness of the New Testament face a challenge when dealing with extent of the persecutions the apostles were willing to face to preach their message. Paul suffered enormously in order to preach the gospel, giving up his former life of distinction in the Jewish community (see Gal 1:14; Phil 3:4-8) and facing all forms of physical persecution (see II Cor 11) simply to teach about Jesus Christ. Even now, we find Paul at the end of his life, alone in a Roman prison cell awaiting execution – yet, with boldness he declares that he is an apostle of the resurrected Christ by the very will of God (see also II Tim 1:10-11).

B. Timothy, Paul's "Beloved Son" (vs. 2)

Paul knew very well that he might die in prison or be executed before he ever saw Timothy again – the tone of the whole letter makes this quite apparent. Thus, this writing to young Timothy is overflowing with words of admiration, love and encouragement, as a proud and concerned father might write his final words to a son or daughter. See comments at I Tim 1:2 along with Phil 2:19-24 and Titus 1:4-5. Paul wishes nothing more for Timothy than:

- Grace – in this context, favor and blessings from God, II Cor 9:8-9
- Mercy – the manifestation of God’s compassion in meeting man’s needs, both physical and especially spiritual (cf. Eph 2:4; Titus 3:5; etc.)
 - God’s mercy belongs to those who keep His word (see Ps 25:10; Lk 1:50)
 - God’s mercy belongs to those who show mercy (see Lk 10:37; Jam 2:13)
 - We are to pray for mercy, both for ourselves and others (Heb 4:16; Gal 6:16)
- Peace – that inner contentment and comfort which only comes through faithfully serving Christ and leaning entirely upon Him for strength, Phil 4:6-7

Hogg and Vine find it significant that when mercy and peace are found together in the epistles, they are always listed in that order, save but one exception:

“Wherever the words mercy and peace are found together they occur in that order, except in Gal 6:16. Mercy is the act of God, peace is the resulting experience in the heart of man. Grace describes God's attitude toward the lawbreaker and the rebel; mercy is His attitude toward those who are in distress.” (Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, *Merciful/Mercy*)

II. Paul’s Thankful Prayer And First Concerns For Timothy

The thrust of verse 3-5 is Paul’s thanksgiving to God at every remembrance of Timothy’s genuine, sincere faith, a faith that was first shared by his grandmother Lois and mother Eunice. There are two basically parenthetical statements, the first in the middle of verse 3 and the second consisting of verse 4 in its entirety, which will be examined separately.

A. Paul’s Thanksgiving For Timothy’s Genuine Faith (vs. 3-5)

The apostle remembered Timothy in his prayers night and day, and was thankful to God for Timothy’s faith, that it was genuine (NKJV) and sincere (NIV, NASU).

- “*Genuine*” is from the Greek *anupokritos*, and means “without partiality” (as in James 3:17, NKJV, NASU), “without pretending”
 - I Pet 1:22, Rom 12:9 – Love, especially for the brethren, but for all people, must be without hypocrisy
 - James 3:17 – True wisdom (from God) is without hypocrisy – characterized by good deeds (vs. 13), humility (vs. 13), devoid of envy and selfish ambition (vs. 14)
 - I Tim 1:5 – Faith should be without hypocrisy, and is one of the goal’s of all instruction from God

It was right for Paul to be thankful for Timothy’s genuine faith. Timothy, with his unwavering devotion to the truth and life bearing good fruits in many places, was the embodiment of everything that Paul preached for: love from a pure heart, a good conscience and sincere faith. Often in his epistles, we find Paul overflowing with words of thanks for the faith of devoted Christians and for the fruit born throughout the world because of their labors in Christ’s kingdom (cf. Rom 1:8; Eph 1:15,16; Phil 1:3ff; Col 1:3-6; I Thes 1:2-4; etc.). Note, especially from I Thes 1:3, that sincere faith *does not* mean simply sincere belief, but a genuine belief in God and His word which motivates working in accordance with God’s will – without these works of faith and love, faith is dead and worthless (James 2:20,26). As the writer of Hebrews noted in Heb 11:8, “By faith Abraham obeyed...”

- “Which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice” – Timothy’s faith was not inherited, but his mother and grandmother before him had faithfully served God and taught young Timothy the Scriptures as well (II Tim 3:14)
 - Prov 22:6 – “Train up a child...”
 - Eph 6:4 – “bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord...”
 - Lois and Eunice lived the majority of their lives under the Old Law, but they served God faithfully and evidently were prepared for the Christ when He came (Acts 16:1)
 - These godly women raised and trained Timothy such that even in his youth he was a good example and his reputation followed him (Acts 16:2)
 - Timothy’s father is conspicuously missing from this verse – he may have been dead, but at least was of no consequence to Timothy’s spiritual upbringing

And in the midst of Paul’s explanation of his prayers of thankfulness for Timothy’s faith, he makes two parenthetical statements, one about his own family and life lived for God (vs. 3), and one elaborating on the close bond he shared with young Timothy (vs. 4).

- “I serve with a pure conscience, as my forefathers did” – As in other places, Paul affirms that his service to God is always with a pure conscience (cf. Acts 23:1, 24:16; II Cor 1:12), and that his faith is a continuation of the faith of his family before him:
 - Phil 3:5-6 – Allusion to the faithfulness of Paul’s parents, evidently both “of the stock of Israel” (i.e. Hebrews by pure lineal descent) since Paul refers to himself as a “Hebrew of the Hebrews” (no mixture of Gentile blood)
 - Paul and Timothy shared a bond in that both of their families served God sincerely under the Old Law
 - With this statement, Paul also denies the accusations of those who accused him of denying God by perverting the Old Law (e.g. Acts 18:13, 25:8)
 - Paul’s preaching and faith was in *fulfillment* of the Old Law which his forefathers followed with a pure conscience (cf. Gal 3:16-18, 24), not in contradiction to it
- “Greatly desiring to see you, remembering your tears” – Once again, Paul’s admiration and love for young Timothy shines through.
 - We can’t know exactly when Paul observed these tears, but he was obviously aware of Timothy’s distress and the great burden he carried, especially in light of his own imprisonment) and the dangers facing the church
 - “That I may be filled with joy” – Paul loved Timothy as a father loves his own son: he desired nothing more than to see him again, especially at this time of loneliness and impending death

B. Stir Up The Gift Of God (vs. 6-7)

The most natural interpretation of this verse is that, in light of the trying times ahead, Timothy should continually “fan into flames” the spiritual gift of God which was given to him by the laying on of an apostle’s hands, namely Paul (cf. Acts 19:6; Rom 1:11).

- Some see I Tim 1:18, 4:14 as indication that Timothy’s gift (Gr. *charisma*) was his mission of evangelism, designated by prophecy and the laying on of hands of the eldership (either at Lystra before he left home, or Ephesus when he was left there by Paul).
 - Paul had a similar experience at Antioch, Acts 13:1-4
 - Paul also often referred to his ministry as a gift given by the grace of God (see Rom 1:5,12:3; Eph 3:2,7-8; Gal 2:9)
 - *Charisma* can refer to spiritual gifts or simply abilities given by God (see Rom 12:6; I Cor 7:7; I Pet 4:10-11)
 - Furthermore, if these prophecies and the laying on of the elders’ hands occurred at Lystra, it would help explain why Paul would reject the impulsive, youthful John Mark and yet so quickly accept a similar youth Timothy for the heavy responsibility of preaching far from home
- Though it is possible that the laying on of hands mentioned in I Tim 4:14 and the laying on of Paul’s hands refer to the same event, we cannot firmly rule out the possibility that Paul gave Timothy a miraculous spiritual gift. We can, however, make two important points:
 1. Paul’s immediate point is to remind Timothy of his past to encourage his perseverance in the future – in the times ahead, Timothy would need to make full use of all the abilities, responsibilities and privileges that God had graciously given him (Reese 437)
 - God has not given us a spirit or attitude of fearfulness and timidity, but His faithfulness, wisdom, mercy and grace affords us a spirit of:
 - *Power* – i.e. the “power of Christ” (II Cor 12:9; Phil 4:13)
 - *Love* – Unconditional love for God and all people (remember I Tim 1:5)
 - *Sound mind* – i.e. self discipline (NIV) and sound judgment (NASU). The idea here is that the grace of God gives us a spirit of stability and strength - not an attitude of timidity and cowardice that shirks in the face of duty and trial
 2. To Christians today, no miraculous spiritual gift is possible, but God still expects us to “fan into flames” the abilities God has given us (Rom 12:6; I Pet 4:10-11). In God’s service, there is no time for indifference or apathy: “the night is coming when no man can work” (John 9:4)

As Christians, armed with the “whole armor of God” (Eph 6:11) and blessed with “every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ” (Eph 1:3), we have no excuse for shrinking away from our duties to God, even in the face of difficulties, blasphemies and persecutions. Especially in face of trials, we have the same great need that Timothy had so many centuries ago: to lean upon the grace of God and stir up the abilities He has given us to stand for the hope of the gospel.

III. Hold Fast The Pattern Of Sound Works

When Paul left Timothy in Ephesus to stand against false teachers and edify the church (Eph 4:11-12), he impressed upon the young evangelist the dire need to stand unwaveringly for the truth. Here again, the apostle urges him again to grasp the pattern of healthy words given by God.

- *Hold fast* – retain (NAS) or keep (NIV), meaning steadfast adherence, such as holding fast the faith (I Tim 1:19, 3:9)
- *The pattern of sounds words* – a form, standard, precedent meant for imitation, such as Christ’s longsuffering shown to Paul as a pattern (I Tim 1:16)
 - Similar to Ex 25:9,40 (Heb 8:5); Deut 12:32 – God gave His law as an immutable pattern: it was not to be altered or changed for any reason by man
 - The standard of God’s word in the gospel is not something to be tampered with by the wisdom or traditions of men: it is an unalterable pattern given to save the sinner and build up the saved (see Rom 6:17)
- *Which you have heard from me* – i.e. Timothy learned the pattern from Paul, but it did not by any means originate with him: the gospel was “once delivered for all the saints” (Jude 3)
 - Paul urged Christians to follow the traditions he handed down, i.e. the traditions revealed to the apostles by the Lord (I Cor 11:2, 23, 15:3; II Thes 2:15, 3:6)
 - These stand in stark contrast to the traditions of men, which are in no form authoritative, and become sinful when they become substitutes for godly obedience (Matt 15:3-9; Col 2:8; Gal 1:6-12)
- *In faith and love* – here Paul states his motivation for teaching Timothy (and all who learned the gospel through him): faith in its truth and power, and love for all people – the same motivations which should move us to teach others!
- *That good thing which was committed to you* – “committed” is the same word Paul used in vs. 12:
 - However in that verse he speaks of the commitment he himself had made, namely his very life and soul (Rom 6:18; Col 3:3; Gal 2:20)
 - Here the apostle speaks of something committed to Timothy that he had to be absolutely sure to retain at all costs – that is, the truth of the gospel and the charge to uphold it, fighting the good fight of faith (read I Tim 6:20-21, and compare with Eph 3:8)
- *Keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us* – as Paul states in Eph 3:17 and Col 3:16, be strengthened or aided to hold fast the faith by the Spirit in the inner man, i.e. the word of God, revealed by the Spirit (John 13; I Cor 2), giving guidance, patience, comfort and hope (

Note: Some passages speak of the Holy Spirit indwelling the Christian which fail to be fully explained by the word being in us (see John 7:39; Acts 2:39; Rom 8:9-11; I Cor 6:19; II Cor 1:22; Gal 4:6; Eph 1:13-14). The plain and simple reading of these Scriptures is that the Spirit dwells in all children of God personally and literally: a fact that is not contradicted by any other passage. However we must not rush to the conclusion that every passage which concerns the Spirit’s indwelling refers to this gift or guarantee given upon conversion: the Spirit also indwells us through the word He revealed, just as God the Father and the Son also dwell in us through the word (see Eph 3:17, etc.).

IV. The Deserted Apostle And The Loyal Onesiphorus

In the apostle’s hour of darkness, imprisoned in Rome and awaiting execution, all his helpers from the region of Asia forsook him, even two mentioned here by name. Well can we thus understand Paul’s entreaty for Timothy not to be ashamed of him in his chains – chains

which clearly did not afford the same comforts and freedoms as in his first imprisonment (Acts 28:30f). Of all his helpers and friends, only Onesiphorus, a Christian evidently from Ephesus, brought him comfort. Patton notes that Paul was imprisoned in Rome during its reconstruction after it had been burned in the days of Nero: a time when it was both difficult and dangerous for Christians to move about and inquire freely. This noble man, who also helped Paul much and often in Ephesus, was not ashamed of Paul, but rather risked much to bring the apostle comfort: and Paul's prayer for him reflects his admiration and gratefulness for this brother in Christ. Onesiphorus' good example reminds all Christians what a blessing it is to have an abundant and loving family in Christ (see Matt 12:49-50; Rom 12:15; Gal 6:2; I Thes 5:11; I Pet 1:22, 3:8ff; I John 4:7).

THE SECOND EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY

CHAPTER 2

I. Be Strong In Christ And Strive For The Crown

Having reaffirmed Timothy's charge to stand for the truth and to be not ashamed of the gospel, Paul continues to encourage the young evangelist to be determined and diligent in serving the Lord. These comments, though specifically aimed at the evangelist, hold deep meaning for all Christians looking forward to heaven.

A. Be Strong In The Grace That Is In Christ Jesus (vs. 1)

The early verses of this chapter very much resemble the words of Paul in Eph 6:10-20. The opening, "therefore," links this command to the good examples of Onesiphorus and Paul himself as mentioned in the previous chapter. The apostle urges the Christian to rely fully on the power of the Lord and to stand unashamed for the gospel.

- *Grace* – in its usual meaning, unmerited favor, but here specifically referring to the hope, peace, strength, contentment that come from Christ (cf. Phil 4:7; II Cor 12:29)
- *In Christ* – this grace is only available in Christ (cf. Rom 5:1-5; Eph 1:3)

B. Commit The Gospel To Faithful Men (vs. 2)

The gospel and the gospel alone is "God's power unto salvation for everyone who believes" (Rom 1:16), and thus nothing could possibly demand more protection, both for the gospel and how it is delivered to others. Thus, the apostle demands that the evangelist not only stand for the truth himself, but also entrust the responsibility of teaching to faithful, able men who will protect the sanctity of the truth. Note that the truth must be guarded by teachers:

- Pure in doctrine *and* example (Tit 2:7-8)
- Experienced in discerning good and evil (Heb 5:12-14)
- Disciplined in speech (Jam 3:1-2)
- Think of the examples of Stephen (Acts 6:3,5), Apollos (Acts 18:24-28), etc.

Note: The New Testament gives precedent for older preachers to train up young men to teach and preach the gospel, much as Paul trained Timothy and Titus, and Barnabas mentored John Mark. Part of the work of the evangelist is to teach and train other men (who are faithful, willing and able) to do the same work. Thus, Paul instructed Timothy to commit the gospel to faithful men who would teach others: entrusting such responsibilities would certainly demand lending the wisdom, knowledge and experience needed to "fight the good fight of faith."

C. Three Analogies For The Diligent Christian (vs. 3-7)

To further emphasize the need for focus and diligence in doing the work of the Lord, Paul next lends three analogies, almost like parables, comparing the diligent servant of the Lord to earthly jobs that require unwavering loyalty, hopeful perseverance, and fruitful hard work. Faithful servants of the Lord are like:

- *Soldiers* – Not entangled, engrossed in the cares of the world to the neglect of duty
 - Matt 6:24-34; II Cor 6:14-7:1; Eph 5:6-11; I John 2:15-17
 - The violent, carnal warfare of the world should be completely foreign to the Christian: we are soldiers for Christ; our highest allegiance is to Him
 - *Enduring hardship*: Matt 5:10ff; Lk 9:57ff, 14:25ff; John 15:18f; I Pet 4:12ff

- *Athletes* – All the diligence, perseverance, and discipline required to compete in the most strenuous athletic competition
 - I Cor 9:24-27; Heb 5:14, 12:1-2
- *Farmers* – Laboring tirelessly in hope of the fruit only the gospel can bear: first in our own lives individually, then in the lives of others
 - I Cor 3:5-9, 9:10-11, 15:58; Gal 5:22-25; Phil 2:16; Col 1:3-8

And Paul finishes this exhortation with a prayer: that God would give to young Timothy understanding, wisdom to understand and execute the will of the Lord. Paul’s prayers often included prayers of this kind for all Christians (see Eph 1:18; Col 1:9). The Father is surely able to do “exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think” – we may not know for certain how God gives us wisdom, but it is unwise to claim that He only gives wisdom to the Christian through the word (see also I Chron 22:12; II Chron 1:7ff).

II. Remember The Gospel And Be Faithful To Christ

And now Paul elaborates even further on the true motivation for faithfully striving with the diligence of a soldier, athlete, farmer: Jesus Christ was raised from the dead according to the gospel, and there is no limit to the power of that gospel.

A. Remember Jesus Christ, Raised From The Dead (vs. 8-10)

- *Jesus* – Of first importance in helping the Christian endure the trials of this world is to remember our Lord: His character, His trials, the prophecies He fulfilled, and His resurrection. Most of all, Christians are to remember that Christ endured trials and was raised from the dead, exalted by God (cf. Heb 12:2; Phil 2:5-11; Acts 2:22-36; I Pet 2:21ff) – the same glorification is promised all the faithful in Christ (I Pet 1:6-9; 5:10f; I Thes 2:12; etc.)!
- *Christ* – *Christ* literally means *Anointed One* and is a word which looks back to the Hebrew *Messiah* for meaning: Jesus was the anointed by God to deliver His people (cf. Luke 4:18f), and surely the Christian must find the deepest motivation and fulfillment in the blessings of salvation promised in the gospel:
 - Ex 14:12; I Sam 2:1; “salvation” in Psalms and Isaiah – God’s salvation gives strength to stand, smile and hope in the face of our enemies
 - Luke 1:77; 2:25ff – John the Baptist came as a herald of salvation, and the coming of Jesus fulfilled God’s promise of salvation to men
 - Acts 4:12 – There is salvation in none other than Jesus
 - Eph 6:17 – Salvation is the helmet in our spiritual armor in the fight against Satan and his minions
 - I Pet 1:3-12 – Prophets and angels have longed to see the fulfillment of this salvation which brings a living hope that no man can take from us
 - Rev 12:10-11 – Salvation and strength in the blood of Christ, who has cast down Satan and defeated the sting of Death
- *Seed of David* – God promised David that his seed and throne would stand forever (see II Sam 7:12-13; Ps 89:1-4; Is 9:6-7). The Jews were awaiting the fulfillment of this promise (John 7:42; Matt 12:23). The fact that Jesus fulfilled this promise rings forth from literally the first verse of the New Testament, and is one of the foremost truths of the gospel (Matt 1:1, 21:9, also Acts 2:29ff; Rom 1:3).

Though Christ's birth was humble and obscure, He was descended (according to the flesh) from the greatest of Israel's victorious kings, and this title assures the reader of two hope-filled truths:

- Christ fulfilled God's promise and prophecies in the Old Law, proving His faithfulness and perfect foreknowledge (Rom 3:3-4; Heb 2:2, 6:13ff)
- Christ, though declared to be the Son of God through His resurrection (see next section) was also the Son of Man, enduring all the hardships and temptations that we ourselves face (see Heb 4:14ff)
- *Raised from the dead* – The crowning truth of the gospel: Jesus Christ is declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection the resurrection from the dead (Rom 1:4). This fact forms the very core of the gospel (I Cor 15:3ff). Because Jesus Christ is raised from the dead, we can be sure of:
 - Our spiritual resurrection (Rom 6:3f; Col 2:11f; I Pet 3:21)
 - Our resurrection to new life after death (I Cor 6:14, 15:20ff; I Thes 4:14)
 - God's victory over the devil (I Cor 15:54ff; Col 2:15; Rev 1:18)
 - The living hope which cannot be taken away (I Pet 1:3,21)
 - The benefit of our sufferings (I Pet 3:18)

Through times of prosperity and blessings or trial and hardship, the Christian must always remain faithful, unmovable, serving the Lord with diligence: and our first need to remain thus motivated in our strivings for God is to remember Jesus, our Savior, the Son of Man, the Son of God. Paul knew, even in his chains, that no amount of suffering could compare to the glory which is ours in Christ (Rom 8:18; Phil 3:8ff), and he strived to impress this fact upon Timothy who would undoubtedly face similar hardships and opposition in his walk with God.

Note two other aspects of Paul's endurance of suffering:

1. Though Paul is in chains, the word of God is not chained – man can imprison and kill the body of every Christian, but the word of God cannot possibly be bound or imprisoned. Christ promised that the “gates of Hades” (i.e. the realm of the dead) could not prevail against His church, the pillar and ground of the truth (I Tim 3:15), and the truth of this statement was proved again and again in the centuries since the gospel was first preached: the world killed Christ, Stephen, James the brother of John, Paul, and on and on the list goes, but what was the ultimate result? “Those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word” (Acts 8:4) and “the word of God grew and multiplied” (Acts 12:24). Truly, the power of the word of God cannot be restrained by man, it will accomplish its purpose (Is 55:11); “the word of God endures forever” (I Pet 1:24f).
2. Paul's motivation to proclaim the gospel, even through trials, was not just for his own benefit, but also for the sake of the elect, i.e. those chosen by God in the gospel (see II Thes 2:13-14). As Christ suffered for the sake of the world (John 1:29; Eph 5:25-27), Paul preached and suffered many things for the sake of those who heard the gospel and those who (he knew by faith) would hear it and be saved, looking out not only for his own interests, “but also the interests of others” (Phil 2:4ff). May all the chosen aspire to live with such selfless compassion.

And now we come to the fourth “faithful saying” revealed by Paul in the New Testament (perhaps the previous discussion of obtaining salvation and eternal glory in Christ is part and parcel of this saying) – and its meaning is to remind the Christian to bear up under trial and endure hardship for the sake of his soul and the souls of others:

- *If we died with Him, we shall also live with Him* – i.e. died to sin, a death that continues *as long as* we live as one dead to sin (Rom 6; Eph 2:4-6)
- *If we endure, we shall also reign with Him* – Enduring hardship as a “good soldier for Christ,” striving for the “prize of the upward call of God” (Phil 3:14; I Cor 9:24ff; Rom 8:17; see also II Tim 4:8; Jam 1:12; I Pet 5:4; I Cor 4:8; Rev 1:6,2:10)
- *If we deny Him, He will also deny us* – Matt 10:32-33; Mark 8:38 – Of all the things we will desperately need at the judgment, the foremost are God’s grace and Christ’s testimony on our behalf (Rom 8:34; I John 2:1; Heb 4:14ff, 7:25)! Remember that to deny Christ can be in word or in deed (see Matt 26:69ff). How terrible to stand before God that day and hear the words, “Depart from me, you who practice lawlessness” (Matt 7:23, 25:41ff).
- *If we are faithless, He remains faithful* – Again we are reminded of the possibility of a Christian being faithless and disbelieving (Heb 3:12-19). That Christ remains faithful despite a Christian’s unfaithfulness does not mean that the sinner maintains his salvation even in sin (read the above references starting with Jam 1:12). Rather, though we stumble, God will never fail: His faithfulness to His word and promises is absolutely unwavering, for “*He cannot deny [or contradict] Himself.*”

III. A Faithful Workman For The Lord

In II Tim 2:14, Timothy is charged to put the brethren in remembrance of all the teachings that preceded this statement and all that will follow. The good evangelist must spend time both teaching Christians spiritual truths that are new to them, but also *remind* Christians of the things they have already learned (or at least should have, Heb 5:12ff; Jude 5). See also I Cor 4:17; II Cor 9:1; I Thes 4:9, 5:1; Tit 3:1; II Pet 1:12ff.

The work that Timothy was to do in reminding the brethren of the gospel also carried a solemn charge before God: do not quarrel (NIV) and wrangle (NASU) about words to the destruction of the hearer. Read again I Tim 6:3-5.

- This does not mean that Christians should allow the truth to be warped and perverted: we must contend for the truth of the gospel, Jude 3; I Tim 6:12; Acts 17:2-4.
- However, some people quarrel about words, trying to prove doctrines that are not true and dispute about things that do not matter: these quarrels destroy faith!
 - See I Tim 1:3-4; Eph 4:29

How is the evangelist, and truly every Christian, to show themselves as approved workers, and not these workers of iniquity who strive over pointless contentions?

A. Correctly Handling The Word Of Truth (vs. 14-19)

The first step in showing one’s faithfulness as a worker for the Lord is in “rightly dividing the word of truth” (NKJV) or as the NASU puts it, “accurately handling the word of truth.”

- *Be diligent* – The KJV has the word “study,” but this translation does not accurately convey the meaning of the Greek *spoudazo*, meaning: “to hasten to do a thing, to exert oneself, endeavor, give diligence” (Vine).
 - The workman is to pursue truth with righteous zeal, passion, persistence
 - There is no room for apathy or nonchalance in approaching the word: souls, including your own, depend on the truth to be set free (John 8:32)!
 - Other passages do indeed teach the need to diligently study the Scriptures, e.g. Ps 119; Acts 17:11; Eph 3:4; I Tim 4:13, and certainly, even in this passage, diligent study is needed to “correctly [handle] the word” (NIV)
- *Rightly dividing the word of truth* – The phrase “rightly dividing” is a word picture which literally means “to cut straight.” Examples of mishandling the truth:
 - Without the sum of the word, Ps 119:160; Matt 4:5-7 with John 8:44, 17:17
 - Out of context, vs. II Tim 2:17-18 – Evidently, there were Christians teaching that the resurrection was already passed, either in Jesus alone, or in the resurrection of the spiritual man (see Rom 6:1-11; I Thes 4:13ff; I Cor 15:12ff) – these people “*wandered away from the truth*” (NASU, vs. 18).
 - See other examples of Scripture used out of context in I Cor 5:9; John 21:23; false interpretations of Matt 24 neglecting vs. 34; etc.
 - Misusing Old Testament, Rom 15:4; Col 2:11ff; all authority comes from Christ!
 - Speaking where God is silent, I Cor 4:6; Deut 18:20
 - Simply teaching false things for unrighteous reasons, Gal 6:12
 - The word of God can be falsely applied to teach error! Every interpretation *is not* a valid interpretation!
- *Their message will spread like a cancer...[overthrowing] the faith of some* – False teachings are nothing to be neglected or treated lightly: they will cause some to fall away from salvation in Christ! How terrible it would be to mishandle the truth, teaching falsities, and cause others to stumble (Matt 23:13-15; Jam 3:1-2). The approved workman of the Lord realizes this awesome responsibility and strives to “accurately handle the word of truth.”
- *Solid foundation of God* – Matt 7:24ff; I Cor 3:11; Eph 2:20
- *The Lord knows who are His* – What comfort we find in this statement! No matter the misgivings, misjudgments or nefarious schemes of man, the Lord knows exactly who are His and who are not. Even if unrighteous men like Hymenaeus rose to great power and persecuted the righteous, they would not be forgotten by God (see III John 9ff). And even if the unrighteous live in cunning hypocrisy, fooling every brother and sister in Christ, the Lord is not mocked!
- *Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity* – There must be an absolute, marked distinction between the unrighteous and those who stand for the truth of God. Paul commanded the church to withdraw from Hymenaeus (I Tim 1:20), as he similarly commanded the Corinthian church (I Cor 5:5). Christians who loved the Lord and stand on His unshakeable foundation of truth can take no part in the works of darkness of those who do not love God or stand for His word! See II Cor 6:17ff; Eph 5:5-14; II John 9-11; etc.

B. Cleanse Oneself Of Dishonor (vs. 20-22)

The metaphor in these verses compares a house in which there are various furnishing meant of varying value and purpose to the house of God, i.e. the church (I Tim 3:15). Now, exactly what the metaphor means is the matter of some discussion:

1. Some interpret the vessels of honor and dishonor as Christians all varying in abilities and gifts. This is certainly a true principle (Rom 12:3-7; Eph 4:11-16; I Pet 4:10-11) – but does it best fit the context?
2. Others are inclined to a somewhat harsher view: the vessels of dishonor are dishonorable Christians, such as Hymenaeus and Philetus, who have contaminated themselves with false doctrines, sinful behaviors and generally have failed to remain “unstained by the world” (Jam 1:27, NASU)

Note that the latter of these two Scriptural interpretations fits the context better as a whole:

- Paul has just made a comparison between the faithful workman and the unfaithful, especially in Hymenaeus and Philetus, and he continues that comparison into verse 20, connecting the ideas with the word “but” (NKJV) or “now” (NASU)
- The status of being an honorable vessel is conditional upon whether one cleanses himself of dishonor (vs. 21): would we refer to faithful Christians with lesser abilities as dishonorable servants? This is precisely the opposite of Paul’s arguments in the passages cited above from Romans, Ephesians and I Peter, which teach the inherent and irreplaceable worth of all Christians in the proper functioning of the church!
- The vessel of honor is to “flee youthful lusts” (vs. 22): with words similar to those in I Tim 6:11, Paul reminds us that all Christians who are prepared for honorable service in God’s kingdom do not just passively avoid but fearfully run away from all forms of ungodliness, knowing these behaviors corrupt and condemn the soul.
- The vessel of honor pursues “righteousness, faith, love and peace”: is the Christian with lesser ability failing to pursue these things? His inabilities alone certainly do not justify this conclusion. However, the faithless Christian fails in all of these regards!
- The vessel of honor calls upon God with a pure heart. Remember the words of Psalm 24:3-4 – servants of God whose hearts and lives are purified by the words of Christ are worthy to stand in the holy and awesome presence of God. Those Christians who render themselves vessels of dishonor by their disobedience and impurity are not fit to stand in God’s holy place.

No, the apostle does not compare Christians with great ability to those with lesser ability in this passage, but he draws a stark distinction between the faithful and the unfaithful! All Christians who seek to serve God, in whatever capacities the fullness of their abilities allow, must remain clean from every dishonor! Read II Cor 6:17-7:1 and Matt 5:13-16.

The vessels of dishonor in a household, for instance those used to carry salt or refuse, are wholly unworthy of any more honorable and clean purpose, like cooking or serving food: likewise, the vessels of dishonor in God’s house are “good for nothing” in the kingdom because of their impurities and damaged influence (Matt 5:13)! Even the occasional act of good simply proves the unfaithful Christian a hypocrite before men and gives the world an opportunity to scoff at the faithful: “He may have done a good deed in one instance, but in all others he behaves

dishonorably – and he calls himself a Christian!” Christians must beware and inspect themselves with honesty: are you leading a life that shines as a light, or has your light been contaminated and extinguished by your dishonorable deeds, rendering you of no use in the service of God?

However, the vessel of honor is not so: this is the Christian, prepared by the word for every good work (II Tim 3:16f), whose heart and deeds are cleansed so as to be of service to God. (See the good example of Ezra in Ezra 7:10). May we all strive to serve God in this sanctified and useful capacity, no matter what our abilities may be!

C. Gentle Humility In Teaching (vs. 23-26)

To some extent all Christians must be teachers. Now this is not to say that all Christians are to take on the formal and public responsibility of preaching and teaching large groups of people, even believers – this is exactly what James warned against in James 3:1-2. However, each and every servant of the Lord must be able to give a defense of their hope in the gospel (I Pet 3:15), and make wise use of each opportunity we have to respond to the questions, beliefs, etc. of “those who are outside” (Col 4:5f). This responsibility can indeed be daunting: there cannot be a more intimate, important conversation than those dealing with the salvation of souls. But in God’s word we find guidance, such as the inspired advice offered in II Tim 2:23-26, for how we should approach religious conversations with the world (and with fellow Christians wandering from the fold).

Note before we proceed that these statements apply to *servants* of the Lord (vs. 24) – a word meaning bond-servant or slave. Christians must constantly be mindful that we belong to Christ and our bound by His will above our own. We were “bought at a price” (I Cor 6:19f): Christ’s own precious blood (Acts 20:28; I Pet 1:18f; Rev 5:9). Having been freed from the bondage of sin by this ultimate sacrifice, we became “slaves of righteousness” (Rom 6:18; I Pet 2:16). Therefore, let us all share in the sentiments of the apostle Paul: “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Gal 2:20).

- *Avoid foolish and ignorant disputes* – As stated previously in both letters to Timothy, some disputes are not worthy of the Christian’s time (see I Tim 1:4, 6:4; II Tim 2:14). Useless disputes, unprofitable arguments, ignorant controversies: these contentions are not worthy of our attention, much less precious time that would better be used in teaching the gospel and saving souls. It is clear, both from the New Testament and the useless wranglings of men we observe today, that the devil strives to deceive us to waste our time arguing about useless matters to no profit. Let us “[redeem] the time, for the days are evil” (Eph 5:15f)!
- *A servant of the Lord must not quarrel* – This same statement was prophetically made of and fulfilled in Jesus Christ (Matt 12:17-21). God’s people are to shun the tendency to be bitterly contentious and quarrelsome; the purpose of teaching the truth is not simply to make a solid academic point or win an argument, but to transform lives by “speaking the truth in love” (Eph 4:15)!
- *But be gentle to all* – At times, a strong word of warning and exhortation is needed against those who knowingly twist the truth, but this is not generally the case with the lost we meet day by day. When we approach unbelievers with the gospel, all aspects of our demeanor should be described by gentleness, pleading with the

“meekness and gentleness of Christ” (II Cor 10:1; Matt 11:29). People will reject the gospel because their hearts are not prepared to receive the truth (see Matt 13:1-23), however far be it from any Christians to cause another to reject the truth because of mean-spirited, prideful, contentious methods of teaching! Note that the words of II Cor 10 were written in persuading Christians who needed instruction: even in dealing with Christians who are struggling spiritually, great gentleness is needed in restoring them to the Way (Gal 6:1).

- *Able to teach* – Or as the KJV has it, “apt to teach.” The emphasis does not so much seem to be on the servant’s ability to teach (which, as stated previously, all Christians must be prepared in some degree to do) but his readiness and willingness to do so. Concerning questions on religious thought and the Scriptures, Christians should be the most approachable people of all, constantly ready to talk about the Bible and the one true and living God. Such a prepared and willingly talkative servant is one “apt to teach.”
- *Patient* – Characterized by perseverance and forbearance, faithful servants of the Lord realize that some questioners comprehend more slowly than others, some question with impure motivations, some argue in anger and oppose the truth, and some will never accept the truth at all – however, he is never moved to anger, harsh words, or (outward) annoyance. In all situations, Christians must strive to be understanding, compassionate and patient! May we never forget that God has been and continues to be exceedingly abundantly patient toward us, bearing with as we learn the truth and so often stumble into avoidable problems and temptations (Rom 15:5; II Pet 3:9). Remember the “patience of Christ” (II Thess 3:5).
- *In humility correcting those who are in opposition* – Some translations have “meekness” instead of humility, though these words are inherently connected. Meekness is an inner temperance which allows one to be under control in all things, strength under complete control (see Barclay, *New Testament Words*). It might well be said that gentleness and humility are outward expressions of a meekness in spirit (though certainly, a person must be meek and gentle in spirit, as well). Specifically in this verse, Christians are to be meek in correcting those who oppose the truth, realizing that we ourselves are subject to the temptations of error, that we ourselves were once the slaves of sin as well, and that we will answer before God for the words we speak and the manner in which we speak them (see II Cor 5:10f; Matt 12:35-37).

Note: The KJV translates vs. 25, “those who oppose themselves.” Though this is probably not the best translation of Paul’s words, the idea is certainly true. Though ignorant of this fact, those living in sin and error, and especially those who resist the truth, actively oppose their own good and best interest.

Our motivation for teaching the truth in a gentle, compassionate, but urgent and anxious manner should be all the more strengthened by verses 25-26: our effort in spreading God’s word is the world’s only hope to escape the captivity of Satan. While few actually recognize Satan’s rule over them, or actively pursue sin because it pleases Satan, unfortunate souls trapped and entangled in sin make themselves slaves of the devil’s will! (Read John 8:34; Rom 6:16.) God

has graciously given us the opportunity to hear and obey the truth, thus it is our responsibility to afford this opportunity to others by preaching the gospel, “God’s power unto salvation” (Rom 1:16). God doesn’t wish for any soul to perish, and neither should we! (Read II Cor 5:10-11 and II Pet 3:9.)

Note: The phrase “that God perhaps will grant them repentance” has led some to believe and teach that God must actively and personally turn a person’s heart toward Him in order for them to receive salvation, however this is much more than the apostles actually states in this verse. God grants repentance unto man in several senses:

1. He gives the word, the only source which teaches us of our sins that we might have godly sorrow leading to repentance (II Cor 7:8-11; this is the meaning in Acts 5:31, 11:18)
2. He demands in the gospel that those willing to receive it must repent – there is no way to salvation around it (Acts 17:30)
3. He grants time and opportunity for man to repent (II Pet 3:9), though there is no promise that such time and opportunities are unlimited.
4. He is not only tolerant and patient in waiting for us to repent, but is all the while kind, showering us with blessings (Rom 2:4; Jam 1:17-18).

However, even in passages like Acts 17:30 we see that the responsibility to repent falls solely upon the shoulders of man himself. Only we can allow the word to change and turn our minds. Only we can make the decision to actively alter our behavior and pursue God’s will. Commands, such as that in Acts 17:30, cannot be obeyed by anyone else on our behalf – therefore, “repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance” (Acts 26:20)!

THE SECOND EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY

CHAPTER 3

I. Perilous Times And Ungodly People (vs. 1-9)

Though the good servant of the Lord is to compassionately strive to warn the lost and persuade them to flee from the captivity of the devil's will, not all people will heed nor cheerfully receive this message. The world loves darkness, not light (John 3:19), and the apostle makes it abundantly clear in this passage that the church will face tremendous resistance to the truth by unholy people of perverted minds and corrupt hearts. As always, in this epistle and in the rest of the New Testament, the resource given Christians to arm them against ungodliness and build their hope against persecution is simply the word, the armor of God (read Eph 6:10-18a).

First in this passage, Paul enumerates the characteristics of ungodliness that will be rampant in the world until Christ's return (much as in the past), and reminds Timothy of the cautions which must be taken to keep such ungodliness from diffusing through the church. Note that the apostle warns of the prominence of these behaviors in the "last days," similar to the language employed in I Tim 4:1. This phrase simply refers to the gospel age, the time between Christ's ascension and His second and final coming. Passages like Acts 2:17 and Heb 1:2 illustrate that gospel age, from Pentecost onward, is referred to by the Holy Spirit as the "last" or "latter" days. Furthermore, the reader must remember that ungodliness and false teachings such as those mentioned in I Tim 4 and II Tim 3 were already plaguing mankind at the time Paul penned his letters (see, for instance, Col 2:20-23; II Tim 2:17; etc.). The warning of ungodliness found in I Tim 3 is not some apocalyptic forecast, but an exhortation to Christians then and now to guard against the contamination of worldliness and association with ungodliness.

- *Lovers of themselves* – i.e. selfishness and delighting only in one's own will. The love of oneself is an idol of the heart that takes the place of caring for others glorifying God. The Gentiles, in their idolatry, were said to have "worshipped the creature rather than the Creator" (Rom 1:25), and so the ungodly persons to whom Paul refers will worship and serve themselves as their god.
- *Lovers of money* – As Paul has already warned, "The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness" (I Tim 6:10). The love of money and the unholy pursuit of continually increasing wealth also easily becomes an idol of the heart (cf. Mark 10:17ff).
- *Boasters, proud* – Having an unwholesome regard for oneself and one's opinions causes division and hatred. Pride was one of the vices that caused such disharmony in Corinth (cf. I Cor 1:11, 5:2), and so Paul warned those Christians "not to think beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other" (I Cor 4:6). Pride in man's wisdom was partly the reason that many of the Jews in the 1st century, as well as false teachers then and now, rejected the gospel (Rom 11:25), and the apostle spoke of such pride as a kind of blindness, darkening the truth of the gospel (cf. Col 2:18). Thus the warning of the Holy Spirit exhorts us: "Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion" (Rom 12:16). Read I Pet 5:5.

- *Blasphemers* – This word simply refers to those who speak evil, and is translated “revilers” in the NASU and “abusive” in the NIV. Paul could be referring to blasphemy against God or against man, but given the context (that all who seek to live godly will face persecution, vs. 12), he probably refers most immediately to slander and evil speaking hurled against the righteous. Read Matt 5:10f; Acts 19:9. As for blasphemy against God, consider Jude 4.
- *Disobedient to parents* – The first signs of rejection of authority begin in the home, then with higher authorities, and even God. Thus, obedience to parents is referred to as a principle of utmost importance both in the Old Testament (Deut 21:18ff) and the New (Eph 6:1-3).
- *Unthankful* – Ingratitude, springing either from a heart that does not care enough to give thanks or an attitude of independence and self-sufficiency, is an abomination before God and our fellow man. Such ungratefulness paved the path to destruction for the Gentile nations (Rom 1:20-23), and was at least partly responsible for the downfall of the ancient Israelites as well (Deut 8:11-17, 28:47ff with Jer 5:24f; Hos 13:6). Such people are devoid of thanks to others (Prov 17:13) and to God. Christians, however, are to be thankful in all things (see I Thes 5:18; Col 3:17, 4:2; Phil 4:6).
- *Unholy* – This word (*anosios*) is only used elsewhere in I Tim 1:9, and literally is the very opposite of *hosios*, meaning “pure from evil conduct, and observant of God’s will, [as] used in 1 Thess 2:10 (Vine). Thus, these people are irreligious, not caring at all for the will of God, and their lives are perverted with blasphemy and evil. Consider again Rom 1:20-23.
- *Unloving, unforgiving* – Such evildoers care for no one but themselves: where is there room in their evil hearts for love and forgiveness?
- *Slanderers* – The Greek word here is *diabolos*, and literally means “an accuser,” thus it is translated “malicious gossips” (NASU) or “false accusers” (KJV). Vine notes that this word is used no less than 34 times in the New Testament as a title for Satan, the father of lies (John 8:44), the accuser of our brethren (Rev 12:10). Here the reference is to those who would falsely and maliciously slander and ruin the reputation of another. (See I Tim 3:11 and Titus 2:3 where the same word is used to warn certain women of becoming malicious gossips.)
- *Without Self-Control* – Fulfilling every desire of the mind and flesh without consideration of their own good, the good of others, or the will of God.
- *Brutal* – Having no mercy, compassion or sympathy. Think of the unforgiving servant, Matt 18:21ff.
- *Despisers of good* – They actively despise what is good because goodness exposes how truly wicked they are (see Gen 4:1ff; John 3:19ff). On the other hand, Christians (especially leaders of the church) must love what is good (Titus 1:8).
- *Traitors* – Or “treacherous” (NASU, NIV) – they betray others for their own advantage. Judas Iscariot was a traitor (Luke 6:16), as well as the Jews who betrayed Christ (Acts 7:52).
- *Headstrong* – Describing one who is impulsive, reckless (NASU) and rash (NIV), easily moved by anger, passion, and prejudices. “He who is impulsive exalts folly” (Prov 14:29, see also 19:2 and 29:20).

- *Haughty* – Or “conceited” (NASU, NIV). This is the same word used in I Tim 6:4, literally meaning “to wrap in smoke,” of which Wuest comments: “speaks metaphorically of a beclouded and stupid state of mind as the result of pride,” and thus are “unable to do any concentrated or reflective thinking.” Also I Tim 3:6.
- *Lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God* – Any pleasure, sinful or otherwise, that is exalted and comes between God and man destroys the heart. As Christ said, “no one can serve two masters” (Matt 6:24). Pleasures of the world become sin when given priority over service to God (see James 4:1-6; I John 2:15-17).
- *Having a form of godliness but denying its power* – i.e. Having an outward appearance of religious piety, but their lives and hearts are not touched/changed by the gospel (for the power of the gospel is to change lives leading to salvation, Rom 1:16; Jam 1:21). These are hypocrites, vain worshippers, the living dead (see Matt 15:7-8, 23:27-28; I Tim 5:6).

These types of ungodliness will surely exist until Christ returns and condemns the godless to eternal death (Rev 20-22). The influence of these ungodly behaviors can quickly spread from the world into the church through the unfaithful and those who allow the world to hold too much sway over their meditations and behaviors. Therefore, in no uncertain terms, Paul tells Timothy exactly how the church is to handle such unrighteous persons: **“And from such people turn away!”** This is not to say that Christians should shun unbelievers – this is the very mistake the Corinthians made in their false interpretation of Paul’s similar command to them (see I Cor 5:9-11). However, if a fellow Christian should refuse to listen to the words of Christ and insist on living in these types of despicable behavior, the church must withdraw from them, refusing to associate with them at all, “hating even the garment defiled by the flesh” (Jude 23). The consequences of ignoring or condoning these sinful behaviors are clearly delineated in Scripture and too awful to take lightly: “a little leaven leavens the whole lump” (I Cor 5:6), meaning that the ungodliness will spread through the church; and those who accept the ungodly along with their wickedness share in their evil deeds (II John 9-11).

Further notes: In continuing the reasons why Christians must withdraw from such people as those described in vs. 1-5, the apostle makes some additional comments about the character of these false teachers.

- vs. 6-7 – “gullible women” (NKJV) translates a Greek word which literally means “little”, implying immaturity and easily deceived minds. Other translations give “weak-willed” (NIV), “weak” (NASU), “silly” (KJV) and “idle” (NASU, footnote). The point *is not* that all women exhibit this character or are so easily deceived, but that the false teachers Paul warns of in this passage will seek to take advantage of those whose minds are the weakest: they will not prey upon the spiritually strong! The weakness of these particular specimens, given as an illustration, in vs. 6-7 is especially seen in that these weak women:
 - Are already burdened down by sin and easily swayed by their impulses and desires, showing their spiritual immaturity and weakness
 - Are easily swayed to listen to any doctrine, always learning but constantly being deceived or simply never grasping the truth from within the confusing clouds of error (see Eph 4:14). In trying to concisely convey

this idea, the translators of the RSV have “will listen to anybody and can never arrive at knowledge of the truth” (vs. 7).

- vs. 8-9 – “Jannes and Jambres” are nowhere mentioned in Scripture. It’s clear, since these men made such an excellent illustration so as to be included at this place, that whoever they were they:
 - Were known to the audience, namely, Timothy and those he was teaching
 - Opposed the truth Moses preached, swaying others to believe falsehoods
 - Bore wicked fruits, and their folly was evident to the honest observer

Note that Jewish tradition tells us (see, for instance, *Nelson’s Bible Dictionary*) that these men were two of the Egyptian magicians who opposed Moses and swayed Pharaoh from believing God (see Ex 7:11-12,22). Just like the false teachers spoken of in this passage, those magicians of old were shown to be deceivers when their works were tested against the works of God (see Ex 8:18-19, 9:11). Similarly, the false teachers of the gospel age are displayed to all spiritually minded persons as false and deceptive because their fruits are not the fruits of righteousness (read Matt 7:15-20). Thus, these unfaithful Christians are “disapproved concerning the faith,” i.e. condemned by the gospel, and their deceptive doctrines will not possibly progress to the point that they overthrow the gospel or completely destroy the church.

II. The Responsibilities Of The Faithful Amidst Persecutions (vs. 10-15)

Having warned again of the dangers of false teachers and unfaithful, rebellious Christians, Paul is quick to mark that Timothy does not display any of these behaviors:

- vs. 10 begins with the conjunction “but,” showing contrast between Timothy and the false teachers of the previous section
- Timothy is commended in vs. 10 for “carefully” following Paul’s doctrine and example (NKJV)
- Timothy is urged simply to “continue” in the principles he had learned and obeyed (vs. 14)

Virtually from the first introduction of Timothy (in Acts 16), the New Testament continually refers to his faithfulness and commitment (e.g. Acts 16:2; I Cor 4:17; Phil 2:19ff; etc.). In this passage, Paul mainly reminds Timothy of the responsibility of the Christian in times of trial and in face of persecutions due to the increasing evil of deceitful men.

It must be noted as we proceed into Paul’s exhortations for Timothy’s faithfulness that two fundamental facts form the foundation of this passage:

- *All people who desire to live godly will suffer persecution* – Notice how carefully this statement is worded:
 - Not all *Christians* will suffer persecution, for certainly many Christians will fail to suffer persecution due to lack of diligence and lack of obedience (consider Gal 5:11, 6:12)
 - Not all people who desire to live godly will necessarily suffer such persecution, those who desire to live godly *in Christ* – as harsh as it might seem, it is impossible to be a godly person outside of Christ, i.e. refusing to obey the will of Christ in the gospel (see Titus 1:15-16)

In following the example of Christ (John 15:18-21; I Pet 2:21-24, 3:13-18, 4:1-6), all those who strive to live in righteousness, considering God’s will above

all else, will absolutely face trial and persecution in this life. However, because these persecutions prove our faithfulness to God (is we suffer for doing good and not for doing evil, I Pet 3:17), thus confirming the words of Christ, such trials are cause for rejoicing! See, for example, Acts 5:41; Phil 1:27-30; James 1:2-3; I Pet 4:14-16.

- *Evil men and imposters will grow worse and worse* – Because the world loves darkness rather than light, it is not possible that evil men and hypocrites can be entirely eradicated from the earth.
 - Consider the Parable of the Sower (Matt 13:3-9, 18-23): only a small fraction of those who hear the gospel will believe and obey it.
 - Consider the Parable of the Wheat and Tares (Matt 13:24-30, 36-43): it is God’s will that the righteous continue to live amongst the wicked, having good influence on them (Matt 5:14-16), thereby allowing them time to repent (II Pet 3:9).

Faced with these facts, knowing that evil men and imposters will only multiply like weeds while all godly people are destined to face persecution from them, how is the Christian to behave? What are our responsibilities in the face of such wickedness and trial?

A. *Remember the diligence of the faithful*

No persecution or trial faced by any Christian is unique only to them: godly people of all generations have faced similar trials and remained faithful. Thus, it is important for Christians in times of persecution to remember the diligence of godly men and women before them. In this passage, Paul calls to Timothy’s mind the remembrance of himself, as Paul strived to always lead not only in word, but also in deed (see Phil 4:9). Particularly, Paul reminded the young preacher of his:

- *Doctrine* – i.e. teaching, which of course came from God, not from Paul’s own mind (cf. I Thess 2:13; Gal 1:11-12). Timothy was intimately knowledgeable of everything Paul taught, as is clearly seen in Paul’s confidence that Timothy would relay his gospel to all churches he worked with (see I Cor 4:17).
- *Manner of life* – As Paul lived to serve others and glorify God above all other priorities. Read Acts 20:34-35; Gal 2:20.
- *Purpose* – Denoting Paul’s motivation and ultimate goals. The purpose of all of Paul’s work in God’s kingdom was to meet two goals: 1) To know Christ and grow in faithfulness (Phil 3:7-14); and 2) To teach every person the gospel (Col 1:28-29).
- *Faith* – i.e. undying trust and belief in God’s word. Read, for example, Rom 8:28,38-39; II Cor 4:16-18, 5:7; etc. Remember that the faith of such godly people as Paul was a result of meditating on the word of God (Rom 10:17; Gal 5:5).
- *Love* – This is *agape*, the love described in I Cor 13 and so perfectly defined by God’s sacrifice of Christ (John 3:16). Paul’s love for God, his brethren, and all people simply overflows in the record of his actions in Acts as well as in his letters (see, for example, II Cor 2:3-4).
- *Perseverance* – or *steadfastness*. Paul was immovable in the work of the Lord, as he urged all Christians to be (I Cor 15:58). In the words of the Psalmist, “My soul,

wait silently for God alone, for my expectation is from Him. He only is my rock and my salvation; He is my defense; I shall not be moved” (Ps 62:5-6).

- *Persecutions and sufferings* – Paul suffered so greatly for the gospel (see II Cor 11), and many of his tribulations were witnessed by the young Timothy. Yet in all of these trials, Paul was emboldened to preach the gospel of peace still the more, trusting always in the Lord for deliverance.

B. Remember God’s deliverance of the faithful

Notice the reason Paul reminds Timothy of his own faithfulness, even in face of persecution: “*out of them all the Lord delivered me*” (vs. 11). The apostle’s message is simple and full of hope: God remembers and assures the deliverance of the faithful. The Psalmist was constantly aware of God’s faithfulness and deliverance (e.g. Psalm 23, 34:4-9), especially when remembering God’s deliverance of His children in the past (e.g. Psalm 105, 107). Think of all the examples of God’s deliverance of the faithful of old:

- Noah – Gen 6-7
- Lot – Gen 19
- Joseph – Gen 37ff
- All Israel at the Red Sea – Ex 14
- All Israel in the conquest of Canaan – Ps 44:1-3
- Elijah – II Sam 18, etc.
- Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego – Dan 3
- Daniel – Dan 6
- Jeremiah – Jer 38:6-13 with Lam 3:52-58

Paul’s own life was a shining example of this wonderful truth (consider Acts 9:23-25, 9:29-30, 13:49-52, 14:4-7, 14:19-20, 16:16-40, 18:12-17, Acts 21ff). However, note that the Lord’s deliverance of Paul did not necessarily ensure escape from persecution, physical suffering or even death – we will see in II Tim 4:18 that Paul was sure of God’s deliverance even at the close of his life, when he knew that he would be executed in short time! Rather than expecting escape from physical persecution or death, Paul knew by faith that whatever happened to him would work together for good because of God’s mercy, love and power (see Rom 8:28). Even in death, the righteous will be delivered and “shine forth as the sun” (Matt 13:41-43). In the face of fiery trials, it was important for Timothy to remember the deliverance of the faithful before him and to trust in God.

*The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears,
And delivers them out of all their troubles.
The LORD is near to those who have a broken heart,
And saves such as have a contrite spirit.
Many are the afflictions of the righteous,
But the LORD delivers him out of them all.*

– Psalm 34:17-19

C. Continue in the wisdom and teaching of God through the Scriptures

The close of the book of Deuteronomy holds the last words of the great prophet Moses as he prepared the children of Israel to enter the land of Canaan and Joshua to take on the burden of leading them in this quest. After recounting the entirety of the law before the people, Moses’ final command to the people was simple and clear:

Set your hearts on all the words which I testify among you today, which you shall command your children to be careful to observe: all the words of this law. For it is not a futile thing for you, because it is your life, and by this word you shall prolong your days in the land which you cross over the Jordan to possess.

– Deuteronomy 32:46-47

No command was more important to the children of Israel concerning their faithfulness and salvation than to remember and obey the whole word of God. Similarly, in the beginning of the next book of the Old Testament, as Joshua prepared to lead the children of Israel through all the struggles and trials that unconquered Canaan held in store, the Lord told him:

This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.

– Joshua 1:8-9

Many thousands of years later, As Timothy's beloved mentor and father in the gospel prepared to leave the earth, the young evangelist found himself in a similar situation to Joshua of old, and the same faced by every generation of Christians thereafter: how do we remain faithful and fruitful in a world full of wickedness and persecution? The remainder of chapter 3 holds the most important message Paul could give Timothy to guide him all the days of his life: at all times, especially when facing trials, Christians must keep the word of God freshly in their minds and firmly in their hearts, and continue to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ.

- *You must continue in the things you have learned* – Note that in all passages dealing with Timothy and his work in the Lord, the Holy Spirit commends this godly man for his diligence in teaching the gospel (see passages referenced above). Still, Paul knew that Timothy needed the reminder held in vs. 14 of this letter, and surely Christians today need this message still the more. Note the similar exhortations given by Paul in I Cor 15:58; I Thess 4:1-2; and by Peter in II Pet 3:17-18. All of these passage were written to faithful Christians, many of whom (especially Timothy and the Thessalonians) were clearly very diligent in their service to God. Why then was it so important for faithful Christians to be reminded to grow in their knowledge of Christ and be steadfast in their obedience to His word? The Scriptures reply that only by continued growth in knowledge of the word of God and obedience to His word can we:
 - *Remain faithful and assured of salvation* – see Col 1:21-23 (note the conditional “if” that begins vs. 23)
 - *Be thoroughly and safely guided through the storms of life* – Above passages in Deuteronomy and Joshua, along with Ps 119:105, etc.

- *Avoid temptation and the snares of the devil* – Ps 119:9-16; Eph 6:10-17
 - *Avoid the deceptions of false teachers* – Eph 4:11-14; II Pet 3:18
 - *Be thoroughly prepared to teach God’s word* – Ezra 7:10; Heb 5:12-14
- *Remembering from whom you have learned* – Again we are reminded of the importance of godly role models in shaping the lives and faithfulness of future generations of God’s people. Lois, Eunice, Paul and others had such tremendous impact on the spiritual growth of Timothy. That heritage was passed down as Paul and Timothy have become indelible role models to all Christians even today, thousands of years later (cf. I Tim 4:12). The Scriptures are full of examples demonstrating the power of godly roll models
 - Is it a coincidence that the only specifically said to have “walked with God” besides Noah was his great, great grandfather Enoch (Gen 5:24, 6:9)?
 - Many of the kings of Judah had lasting godly influence over their offspring – 1 Kings 22:42-43; 2 Kings 15:1-3, 15:32-34, etc.
 - Christ became the ultimate example to all children of God – I Pet 2:21
 - The Thessalonians, and other Christians of the first century, became shining examples or righteousness, leading to the salvation of souls throughout the world – I Thess 1:6-8
 - Elders bear the responsibility of faithfully living in such a way that others might emulate their faith – Heb 13:7; I Pet 5:3
 - Conversely, how quickly godliness is lost and forgotten when one generations fails to set a godly example for the next – Judges 2:7-10
 - A poor example echoes through the passages of time. “Remember Lot’s wife” (Luke 17:32). How often have you heard of a child being named Jezebel or Judas, even in a society where Bible names are common?

Considering these verses, the question for Christians today is: what heritage am I leaving to the generations of Christians after me? What influence am I having on my fellow Christians (see Titus 2:7f) and those of the world (I Pet 2:11f)?

- *From childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures* – The word *Scripture* will be examined more fully in the final section of these notes. For now, suffice it to say that the word Paul here uses refers to the word of God revealed to man. But what were these Scriptures that Timothy had known since childhood? Surely not the pages of the New Testament, for they were only nearing completion when this letter was written. The sacred writings (NASB) Timothy had known since his youth were certainly the *Old Testament* writings. And the Old Testament writings were able to make him wise leading to salvation in Christ. This is exactly the purpose of the Old Testament as Paul described it in Galatians 3:24 – “*Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.*” Many passages speak of the benefit of thus studying the Old Testament Scriptures (e.g. Luke 24:27; Rom 15:4; I Cor 10:11; etc.).
- *Which are able to make you wise leading to salvation...* – The Bible speaks of two types of wisdom: the wisdom of men, and the wisdom of God. The wisdom of this world (Prov 16:25; I Cor 2:6, 3:18ff; I Tim 6:20f; Jam 3:13-16) is foolishness

to God and cannot possibly lead to salvation. However, in contrast, the wisdom of God (i.e. “that is from above,” Jam 3:17f; I Cor 2:6-13) is able to give even the very foolish man wisdom that will lead him in the path of salvation. Note that this salvation is only available through “faith which is in Christ Jesus” – i.e. salvation is not available by any other means (John 14:6; Acts 4:12; Eph 2:4-10; etc.).

III. The All-Sufficient Scriptures (vs. 16-17)

Of all the passages in the Bible which concern the nature and purpose of God’s word, surely these verses are two of the most clear and meaningful. Truly, countless lessons either spring from or lead back to this declaration of the inspiration and all-sufficiency of the revealed word of God.

A. *All Scripture* – Paul employs two different words in vs. 15 and vs. 16 to refer to the revealed word of God. In vs. 15, the “Holy Scriptures” (NKJV) or “sacred writings” (NASB) comes from the Greek word *grammata*, which means *letters* (as in letters of the alphabet). The word is used in Luke 23:38 to refer to the letters of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew alphabets written on the sign which Pilate ordered to be hung on the cross of Christ, and in Gal 6:11 to refer to the large letters with which the ailing Paul penned that particular epistle. In II Tim 3:15, as previously noted, Paul directly refers to the writings of the Old Testament, and thus *grammata* is distinguished from all other letters by the adjective “holy” or “sacred” – the letters Paul refers to here are those set apart and made holy by the revelation of God, and so are translated “Scriptures.” Similarly, several other passages also employ *grammata* in referring to the Old Testament cannon, and in each of them something in the context distinguishes these letters as the revealed word of God (e.g. II Cor 3:7 and John 5:47).

In vs. 16, Paul writes that “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God.” The word here translated “Scripture” is the Greek word *graphe*, which literally means a writing, drawing or painting. This word is used 51 times in the New Testament (12 times by Christ), and always refers to the revealed word of God. For instance, Scripture(s) is used to refer to:

- The books of the Old Law – Jam 2:8 (Lev 19:18); Gal 3:8 (Gen 22:18); I Tim 5:18 (Deut 25:4)
- The Psalms – Matt 21:42 (Ps 118:22f); John 10:34-35 (Ps 82:6); Acts 1:16
- The prophets – Luke 4:17-21 (Is 61:1f); II Pet 1:20
- The entirety of the Old Testament – John 5:39; Acts 18:24; Rom 1:2, 15:4; I Tim 3:15
- The gospels – I Tim 5:18 with Luke 10:7; I Cor 15:3-4 (probably referring to both Old and New Testaments); Rom 15:26 (see NIV)
- The epistles – II Pet 3:14-16
- The entire Bible – II Tim 3:16

B. *Given By Inspiration Of God* – There are many views in the world concerning what the Bible is. A tremendous work of Middle-Eastern philosophy, a mythological account of the creation of the world, an historical account of the Jewish people, a collection of traditions and moral guidelines recorded by religious (even inspired people) – opinions about the nature and purpose of the Bible are many and conflicting. However, few people actually take the time to carefully read the Bible and examine what it claims about *itself*. According to passages like II

Tim 3:16, the Scriptures comprise the entirety of the word of God, the Creator and the giver of life and all good things, exactly as He revealed them to man.

- *Inspired* – The Greek here is *theopneustos*, literally, “God breathed.” The Scriptures are uniquely distinguished from all other writings in that they were breathed forth from the mind of God
- It is tremendously important to note that the Scriptures were not passed down to man as ideas and pictures, then interpreted by men and thus recorded. The words themselves, the very letters, were given to inspired men by God and recorded exactly as revealed:
 - Deut 18:18-22 – The very definition of a prophet (literally, a *mouth piece*) is one who speaks the exact words that are revealed to him, not some interpreted version of the message (compare Ex 4:10-16 with Ex 7:1)
 - II Pet 1:20-21 – The Scriptures were not revealed then interpreted, but the prophets wrote as they were “carried along by the Holy Spirit” (NIV)
 - II Sam 23:2 – David, a prophet (cf. Acts 2:29f), acknowledged that the very words of God were on his tongue as he spoke
 - I Cor 2:1-16 – Note especially vs. 13 in this grand comparison between the wisdom of men and revealed mind of God: “words...which the Holy Spirit teaches.”

In the last reference, Paul declares that the faith of the Christians to whom he preached was in no way dependent on the wisdom of any man. How could the word of God bring about faith totally independent of man’s wisdom if the interpreters themselves, being men, chose the words and phrases by which to express their personal understanding of God’s revelations? Note that in II Pet 1:20-21, Peter speaks of prophets that did not fully understand what they were writing at the time it was revealed – how then could these men have chosen words so perfectly without even understanding the full meaning of their message? The answer: God must have chosen the words for them! Therefore, all Scripture, both Old Testament and New, is handed down to man by the exact inspiration of God.

Now, who can deny that all the books and letters that make up the Bible carry marks of personality and emotion unique to their respective authors? However, surely the God who can inspire men to speak His own words can choose to do so without rendering his prophets as intellectual robots! The entirety of the Scriptures shows that God has the power to inspire men to speak His word in language compatible with their own personalities and emotions.

C. Profitable For Doctrine, Reproof, Correction And Instruction

Just as we learned in I Tim 4:8, that godliness is profitable for all things, indeed the Scriptures also are similarly profitable. In vs. 16-17 of this chapter, Paul enumerates on some of the areas in which the Scriptures are profitable, especially for the evangelist but truly for all Christians:

- *Doctrine* – i.e. teaching. The doctrines of men render all labor and worship vain in the sight of God (Matt 15:9). However, the word of God is profitable for teaching that “accords with godliness” (I Tim 6:3) and is “incorruptible” (Titus 2:7)
- *Reproof* – i.e. rebuke. Some manuscripts have “proving” or “testing,” and surely the Scriptures are profitable in this respect (cf. Acts 17:11; I John 4:1-2). However,

most manuscripts agree that the word here should be “rebuking,” something which must be accomplished on the basis of Scripture alone – I Tim 5:20; Titus 2:15 (authority from God)

- *Correction – lit.* “to restore to an upright or right state” (Vine). The Scriptures are able to give the Christian the knowledge and wisdom necessary to correct whatever aspect of his life or religion is amiss, as in II Tim 2:25. See Prov 10:17, 12:1, 15:10; Heb 12:8-10.
- *Instruction in righteousness* – i.e. training, much like the training up of a child (see Vine), Eph 6:4. The Scriptures are profitable for thoroughly training up the Christian in all that is right and whole in the sight of God.

Truly, whether in cultivating the mind and soul, instructing in all knowledge and wisdom, reproofing and correcting any aspect of life or religion that is askew, curbing the passions and desires, or thoroughly preparing the man of God to teach and grow in sound doctrine, the Scripture are entirely sufficient to meet all our needs for spiritual growth. In the revealed word of God, the Christian finds everything needed to make him or her complete, perfect, absolutely prepared for the service of God and man!

D. Thoroughly Equipped For Every Good Work

When Christ was preparing to leave the earth, He promised His disciples that the Helper to come, the Holy Spirit of truth, would guide them into everything they needed to know to live by His will and teach it to all nations (John 16:12-15). Much later in the New Testament story, when the apostle Paul wrote to a church that was in danger of losing its faithfulness and light, he reminded them that all they needed to know to maintain spiritual wisdom and godly influence could be found in the word of God (I Cor 4:6). Similarly, when Peter wrote to Christians scattered all over the world and facing terrible persecutions, he reminded them of the encouragement and instruction that God has perfectly given in His word (II Pet 1:2-4). And many times in New Testament, when Christians were facing false doctrines and deceitful teachers, they were reminded that only in the Scriptures can anyone find faith and salvation – and these Scriptures have been revealed once and for all, just as Christ died once for all to take away the sin of the world (Gal 1:6-8; Jude 3 compared to I Pet 3:18, Heb 10:10). Everywhere in the word of God, the Scriptures proclaim their own completeness and perfection – there are no further revelations needed from God to make us godly people, and our own philosophies and religious ideas cannot possibly improve upon the perfection of God’s wisdom given to us in the Bible. The inspired Scriptures are able to make God’s people thoroughly equipped for every good work – this means that if there is anything in God’s will for man to obey and accomplish, it must be revealed in the Scriptures. Contrastingly, if any person or persons, no matter how well intentioned, might suggest religious works for which no authority can be found in the Bible, they cannot possibly be good works (cf. Rev 22:18-29; II John 9-11)!

*Every word of God is pure;
He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him.
Do not add to His words,
Lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar.
– Proverbs 30:5-6*

THE SECOND EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY

CHAPTER 4

I. A Solemn Charge To Preach The Word (vs. 1-5)

As Paul ends his letter to the beloved evangelist, he gives Timothy one of the strongest and most solemn charges we find anywhere in the Scriptures. Reminiscent of the words at I Tim 5:21, the apostle charges Timothy “in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus” (NASU), clearly proclaiming that this command is both delivered and received in the presence of God, before whom both of these godly men must give account. Three reminders of Christ, the Divine witness, are given in order to impress upon Timothy the seriousness of the charge to follow and to motivate his strict adherence to the following commands:

- *Who will judge the living and the dead* – As stated in Rom 14:12, “so then each of us shall give an account of himself to God.” The certainty of judgment is a theme that radiates in all of the sermons found in Acts, such as Acts 10:42; 17:30f. In each of these passages, including the one at hand, teaching on the judgment serves as a proclamation and reminder that each person will stand before God and answer for their obedience (or lack thereof). This judgment will be of both those who are living when Christ arrives, as well as all those whose physical bodies died before His coming (see I Cor 15).
- *At His appearance and His kingdom* – The NKJV of this phrase apparently refers to time at which the judgment mentioned in the previous verse will actually take place, and consequently give a solemn reminder of the second coming of Christ and the reception of His eternal kingdom by the righteous. The Scriptures certainly teach that the judgment will take place immediately at the second coming, at which time the universe and all therein will be totally destroyed and the righteous will enter into the eternal place of paradise prepared by God before time began (cf. Matt 25; I Thes 4:13ff; II Pet 3:10; etc.). Christians are members of Christ’s kingdom, which is manifest on earth as His church, here and now (see Col 1:13; Heb 12:28f; Rev 1:9). However, there remains the eternal aspect of God’s kingdom: the reign of the righteous, forever in heaven with God (see Acts 14:22; II Tim 4:18; James 2:5; II Pet 1:11).
- Note that the NASU (as well as the NKJV margin) has “and by His appearance...” rather than “at His appearance...”. This rendering, which is evidently the most literal, shows that Paul’s immediate purpose is not to remind Timothy of the *time* at which the judgment will take place, but rather that the judgment, the second coming, and the eternal kingdom of heaven are three of the Christian’s greatest motivations to remain steadfast and immovable in the work of the Lord (I Cor 15:58).

And upon these solemn reminders, with God as witness and the judgment, second coming and eternal kingdom firmly in mind, Paul makes one of the most emphatic charges in Scripture:

A. *Preach the word*

Every Christian, and especially every teacher and evangelist, must remember that the *only* messages we have authority to teach and preach are those rooted firmly and soundly in the

word of God. Stories and jokes for the purpose of entertainment, political orations, social counseling, philosophical rhetoric, and the like have no place in the teaching and preaching of the church, the pillar and ground of the truth (I Tim 3:15). Neither do the vain religious traditions and doctrines of men (Matt 15:6ff). As we have already seen in II Tim 3:16-17, the Scriptures are entirely sufficient in preparing a person to do will of God, and thus the people of God must simply “preach the word” – nothing more, and certainly nothing less! As the apostle Peter states in I Peter 4:11, “If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God.”

Note: Preach in this passage is from the Greek *kerusso*, which “signifies ‘to be a herald,’ or in general, ‘to proclaim’” (Vine). This is one of the two Greek words translated *preach* in the New Testament, the other being *evangelizo*, which emphasizes the glad tidings of the message (cf. Rom 10:15), whereas *kerusso* emphasizes the authority and action of heralding those glad tidings before men. This word is used of John the Baptist (Matt 3:1), Christ (Luke 9:20), of the proclaiming angels (Rev 5:2), the apostles (Mark 16:15, 20; Col 1:23), and others. The important idea gained from these examples is that the Christian who teaches is a herald of truth, an official herald of the King of kings, proclaiming all the spiritual truths that pertain to the eternal salvation of the souls of men. It is God’s message which must be preached, not the ideas of any mortal man, because only the word of God “is able to save your souls” (Jam 1:21).

- *Be ready in season and out of season* – i.e. Be prepared to speak God’s word when convenient and painless, as well as when it is inconvenient and difficult. The church of the first century enjoyed both times of peace (Acts 9:31) and times of intense trial (Acts 8:1). However, notice by the divine commentary of the book of Acts, the word was preached boldly and the disciples grew in spiritual maturity and in number (e.g. Acts 5:41-42, 6:7, 9:31, 12:21). Christians are to ever be ready to preach the gospel (Rom 1:15), to give a defense for our hope (I Pet 3:15), and to do good works (Titus 3:1) – time is precious, and the night is at hand! Read Eph 5:15-16; Rom 14:11-12; and John 9:4-5.
- *Convince, rebuke and exhort* – In preaching to the world or to the church, the evangelist is to appeal to:
 - The reason (Acts 17:2-3, 19:8, 24:25, etc.), convincing of God’s spiritual truths and moving man to conviction of his sins and need for God (John 16:8; I Cor 14:24; Titus 1:9)
 - The conscience (John 8:9; I Tim 1:5; Heb 9:14, 10:22), rebuking in order to correct what is wrong, either in morals, behavior, or religion.
 - The will, exhorting and encouraging the proper response and behavior of the audience. This is just the reason that such teaching must be done with “*all longsuffering and teaching*”, or as the NIV reads, “*great patience and careful instruction*” (vs. 2). The word of the Lord as given in the gospel is meant to convict the sinner and correct his thoughts and behaviors – but this conviction and correction must be done with the utmost patience, encouragement, exhortation and care (II Tim 2:24-26; II Cor 10:1). The evangelist must be ever ready to preach the word, realizing both the urgency and the sensitive nature of the correction of God (Heb 4:12).

B. Troublesome Times Ahead

Verse 3 begins with the word *for*, meaning that Paul here gives one reason why the command to “preach the word” is so vital for Timothy to obey: the time is coming when Christians will not listen to the truth, but will seek out (and find) teachers who will tell them exactly what they *desire* to hear rather than what they *need* to hear. Note several important aspects of this verse:

- *The time will come* – Rather than referring to a specific time in the future when false teachers and unfaithful Christians will be in particular abundance, Paul employs this phrase (much like in I Tim. 4:1, II Tim. 3:1; also John 4:34, 5:25) to ensure that Timothy would be on his guard *at all times*. There were already many false teachers in the world while Paul penned this very epistle, teaching what would bring themselves the most profit and prominence, proclaiming what their audiences yearned to hear rather than the truth (e.g. Gal 1:6-10, 6:12).
- *They will not endure sound doctrine* – i.e. Christians will depart from the faith, refusing to hear and obey healthy, wholesome nourishment from the word. Sound doctrine convicts those who are going astray (Tit 1:9), and these unfaithful, rebellious souls will not want to deal with the truth that command them to change.
- *But according to their own desires, with itching ears* – Their own strong desires and ideas will dictate what they will or will not listen to, enduring only what they desire to hear. See, for example, Ahab in II Chron 18:7; the false prophets of Jerusalem, Jer 6:13-14; etc.
- *Will heap up for themselves teachers* – They certainly have no trouble finding false teachers to tell them soothing lies: such deceivers are available in abundance!
- *Turn their ears away from the truth* – What a terrible price is paid by seeking out deceitful teachers who speak comforting lies: all truth is lost, and with the absence of truth comes only bondage and death (see John 8:32)! They seek to be free but find themselves only enslaved once again to the sins that killed their souls to begin with! The Christians in Galatia were facing just such a situation in Paul’s day: they were deceived into departing from Christ for the old paths of the Law, evidently to escape persecution, but by doing so they merely plunged their souls into bondage and death (Gal 4:8-9, 5:1-6).

Christians must be ever so careful to test all doctrines by the standard of God’s word! When we find ourselves yearning for teachers who will circumvent the truth to appease our consciences rather than preach God’s word with conviction, clarity and boldness, we find ourselves traveling down the same desperate and destructive path as those in the 1st century who traded God’s truth for pleasant lies and comforting falsehoods to the loss of their souls!

C. Do The Work Of An Evangelist

In face of troublesome times when even Christians will not listen to the truth of God, what is the preacher of the gospel to do? Exactly what Paul commands in vs. 2: keep on preaching the word, whether they want to hear it or not! The man of God is not responsible for whether or not the audience *receives* God’s message, only for whether or not he himself perseveres in relaying the message of truth (Eze 3:16ff). When all those around fall into deception and turn their backs on the God who gave His Son for them, the faithful Christian is to simply keep on obeying God, studying His word, and proclaiming it to all who will listen. In particular, the evangelist must abound more and more in all of the responsibilities given to him

in the Scriptures, fulfilling every aspect of his ministry (or service) to God and man. “*Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ*” (I Peter 1:13).

Note: Verse 5 marks the third and final use of the term *evangelist* in the entirety of the New Testament (cf. Acts 21:8; Eph 4:11). This word is transliterated from the Greek and literally means *one who proclaims good news and glad tidings*, i.e. the gospel of Jesus Christ (Rom 10:15). Note that evangelists are distinguished in Eph 4:11 from pastors and teachers. The examples of Timothy (stationed in Ephesus for a time spanning both of Paul’s Roman imprisonments, I Tim 1:3; II Tim 1:18), Philip (who made his abode in Caesarea, Acts 8:40, 21:8) and other evangelists show that this is not necessarily a transient office as some people believe. Even Nelson’s Bible Dictionary states “*The evangelist was a gift of God to the early church (Eph 4:11). These persons were not attached to any specific local church. They traveled over a wide geographical area, preaching to those to whom the Holy Spirit led them.*” This is a popular misconception, and notice that not a single Bible verse supports this position. Just as the terms elder, bishop and pastor are terms that distinguish a specific group of leaders within the church by the functions they perform, an evangelist is simply a Christian who fulfills all those duties described in the New Testament of a brother in Christ who devotes his life to preaching the gospel! Thus, the term is evidently used interchangeably with *preacher* (I Tim 2:7; II Tim 1:11, 4:2) and *minister* (Rom 15:16; Eph 6:21; Col 1:7, 4:7; I Thes 3:2; I Tim 4:6). Notice in that case of Acts 21:8 that Philip is referred to as “*the evangelist*” in the same way John was referred to as “*the Baptist*” – this role of preaching was not a hobby for Philip: he was a man who took on the preaching the gospel as his *work* in the kingdom.

II. Paul’s Final Victory In Christ (vs. 6-8)

Though Paul did not know for certain the outcome of his first Roman imprisonment, he certainly expected to be released and reunited with his beloved brethren (cf. Phil 1:7, 12-26; 2:19-24; Phile 22). From II Tim 4:6-9, it is clear that the faithful apostle held no such hope during this second and final imprisonment. Here we have the touching and inspiring final words of one of the greatest evangelists the world has ever known – at least the last words that the Holy Spirit saw fit to record and preserve through the ages. In many ways, Paul was readying himself for his final victory, passing on the torch to young Timothy (and the Christians of his younger generation) whom he hoped to see shortly but would soon leave behind to carry on the work of preaching the gospel on earth as his own soul returned to God (Ecc 12:7). Many heart-warming and soul-stirring lessons are found here in one of the most touching farewells recorded in Scripture.

A. Paul’s impending execution

Several aspects of this passage (and the following verses) indicate Paul’s awareness that he soon would be put to death by his captors:

- *For I am already being poured out as a drink offering* – Referring to the drink offerings made in the Old Testament (Ex 20:40f; Num 28:5ff; I Chron 29:21; etc.), consummating the sacrifice of an animal to God.
 - Essentially, Paul’s life of sacrifice in God’s kingdom is drawing to a close

- “Already being” denotes that the chain of events leading to his death had already begun at the time Paul penned this letter, his sentence certain
- Phil 2:17 – Paul used this phrase once before, when he was not sure whether his first imprisonment would lead to liberty or death
- *The time of my departure is at hand* – Again, Paul used this word “departure” in his first imprisonment, Phil 1:23, when the apostle stated clearly his readiness, even eagerness to lay down his spiritual battle array and go home to God.
 - Vine notes that this word was used metaphorically of the sea vessel unloosed from its moorings are ready to depart to sea; also of the military encampment struck and ready to move on
 - Paul was ready to cease from toil, to lay down all the struggles, pain, temptations, and heartaches of this earthly life
- II Tim 4:9,13,21 – Paul urged Timothy to come to *him* quickly, whereas in his first imprisonment Timothy was with him at first but then sent *away* to Philippi (cf. Phil 2:19)

B. Paul reflects on his life lived for God

As Paul readies himself and Timothy for his departure, he takes a moment to reflect on his life of sacrifice in God’s service.

- *I have fought the good fight* – As he urged Timothy in I Tim 6:12 to “fight the good fight of faith,” to which Paul “also” was called, the apostle reflects on his life as a devoted soldier for Christ.
 - Think of all the things Paul fought against for the sake of the gospel: false accusers, false teachers, false brethren, the temptations and snares of Satan – truly he is a shining example to all Christians of contending for the faith!
 - Remember other passages in which Paul speaks of the fight for Christ – Eph 6:10-18; II Cor 10:3-5; II Tim 2:3-4
- *I have finished the race* – Competing for the cross as the one winner of a physical foot race, Paul disciplined and trained himself to win the “crown of righteousness”
 - I Cor 9:24-27 – Control of the will, body and mind are so vitally important in serving God and leading others to him: Paul proved this in word and example
 - In an earthly race, only one receives the crown. However, Paul makes it clear that all who are prepared at the coming of Christ will receive this righteous reward (see vs. 8)
 - See also II Tim 2:5; Heb 12:1-2
 - Every Christian, young and old, must fight and race for Christ in such a way that our efforts are all the stronger toward the end of our struggle: there is no time to lay down our effort and diligence before the goal!
- *I have kept the faith* – In upholding the truth of the gospel, obeying it in its fullness, and fully trusting in the power and faithfulness of God, Paul had certainly “kept the faith.” We see in Scripture that the point of discipleship is not to be found perfect when Christ returns – all fall short of God’s glory, and the gift of salvation is by God’s grace and not our own merit (cf. Rom 3:23; Eph 2). However, even until the end of our lives, we must keep fighting, we must keep pushing forward,

we must keep the faith with endurance and devotion. This is the attitude that Christ expects to find in God's children at His return.

C. Paul looks forward to the prize of heaven

Finally – it is difficult to hold back tears when we read these emotional words of one of the most beloved men in Scripture. After all his years of sacrifice, service and trial, it is time for Paul to receive the blessed reward and finally return home to God. Death held no terror for Paul – as he said in I Corinthians 15, “*Death is swallowed up in victory. O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?*” The death of Christ, in propitiation for the sins of the world, has assured God's children of glorious life after death, so there is no need to fear the loss of the body. When Christians look at death, we do not see the end: we see the glorious beginning of our eternal life lived in peace and paradise at the very feet of God. Remember Paul's words from Philippians 1: “*I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.*” There can be no greater goal than to look on the face of Christ in heaven after a faithful life devoted to his service, this is why Paul could face death with such readiness and peace. In the words of John the apostle:

Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

– I John 3:2-3

This hope belongs to all who “have loved His appearing,” i.e. all those who are readily waiting at Christ's return. The Scriptures promise that the return of Christ will bring the righteous judgment of God and the ushering of the faithful into heaven, reunion with faithful loved ones lost in this life, and beauty beyond compare in eternal love and light. We cannot possibly repay the Lord for what He has done for us in sacrificing His Son, but we certainly can show our love and gratitude for Him by our heartfelt obedience and diligent preparation for the Day when “*the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father*” (Matt 13:43).

III. Paul Abandoned By His Companions (vs. 9-16)

In Paul's first letter to the Timothy, he fully expected to shortly go to the young evangelist in Ephesus (cf. I Tim 3:15). Contrastingly, the tone of this final letter carries not only a sense of finality but also a sense of urgency, seen especially in this final command: “*be diligent to come to me quickly.*” Paul's time on this earth was quickly waning, like the last grains of sand through an hour glass, and he yearned to see Timothy again and knew that his “son in the faith” would be most helpful as he made his preparations to leave this life for the glorious next. Besides the fact that the events leading to Paul's death had already begun (see notes at vs. 6), the apostle gives several other reasons in these verses for his urgent request:

A. The apostasy of Demas

Besides all of the other stresses and concerns that weighed heavily on Paul's soul, perhaps the worst of all is described at vs. 10: “*Demas has forsaken me, having loved this*

present world.” Demas was not just Paul’s good friend, but his companion in the work of the Lord. He is referred to in only two other New Testament passages:

- Col 4:14 – “*Luke the beloved physician and Demas greet you.*”
- Phile 23-24 – “*Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you, as do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow laborers.*”

Some commentators have noted a supposed progression in these verses: in one passage, Demas is referred to as Paul’s “fellow laborers”; then in another passage we find only his name, with no admiring adjective; and then II Tim 4 tells us that he has fallen from the faith. The point usually made is that this is how many Christians fall away: they begin the race of faith with great zeal, then persecutions and cares of the world cause their spiritual flame to fizzle to the point that their light finally goes out – and this is sometimes certainly the case (see for example Matt 13:20-22; Gal 5:7-9; etc.). However, there is much evidence within Paul’s letters to suggest that both the letters to Philemon and the Colossians were written at approximately the same time, while Paul was in his first Roman imprisonment, while II Timothy was written nearly a decade later. For this reason, the above analogy is perhaps not prudent. However, several other lessons can and indeed must be learned from the sad history of Demas.

- *Demas’ apostasy harmed the whole church* – It is sometimes claimed by brethren who leave the faith that their decision to depart from Christ only hurts themselves. If for no other reason than for the pain expressed here by Paul, it is clear that this assumption could be no farther from the truth. Demas had forsaken:
 - His Lord and Savior, causing shame and sorrow of Christ (Heb 6:4-6)
 - Paul, his friend, companion, brother and fellow servant in the Lord
 - The church in its time of desperate need and trial (Eph 4:16; I Pet 4:10-11)
 - His immediate brothers and sisters in Christ, never to teach and admonish them in song, lift his heart and soul with them in prayer, or stir them up to love and good works (cf. Col 3:16; I Tim 2:8; Heb 10:25)
- *Demas gave up his eternal inheritance for the love of this world* – The only reason given for Demas’ fall from the faith is that he “*loved this present world*”
 - Notice that stark contrast between vs. 8 and vs. 10 – the faithful love the appearing of Christ while Demas loved this present world
 - At the very beginning of His ministry, Christ warned His disciples about the love of the world (read Matt 6:19-21)
 - We cannot know what carnal thing(s) tore Demas’ affections away from Christ. Was it the quest for riches (I Tim 6:9)? Was he tired of persecutions and willing to compromise the truth in order to escape them (Gal 6:12; Heb 12:3-4)? Was he frustrated with the hardships of preaching the word “out of season” (II Tim 4:2)? Was it loss of family and friends who refused to hear the gospel (Matt 10:37-39)? Whatever it is, we must remember that Demas suffered temptations and trials in his service to God – the same temptations and trials we will face! We must learn from his unfortunate example!
 - I John 2:15-17 – We must not love *any* aspect of the world to the point that it replaces our priority and zeal for the love of God!
- *Demas’ temporary pleasure came at high cost* – Though Demas may have found whatever fleeting comfort he was seeking, could it possibly have been worth the cost? Read Ez 18:24-26; II Pet 2:20-22; Heb 10:26-31.

B. *Paul's other companions*

For reasons not specified, all of Paul's other companions, save the beloved Luke, had also departed to various places:

- *Crescens*, mentioned only here in the New Testament, left for Galatia
- *Titus*, another of Paul's most beloved and trusted companions (Titus 1:4), left for Dalmatia, the southern portion of the Roman province of Illyricum (Rom 15:19)
- *Luke*, "the beloved physician," and frequent companion of Paul remained with Paul in Rome, though he was not with him at his first defense (vs. 16)
- *Mark* was now needed and useful to Paul, evidently referring to John Mark, the cousin of Barnabas, over whom Paul and Barnabas had some disagreement and division before the second missionary journey (see Acts 13:13, 15:36-41). It is not revealed why Mark chose to abandon the company on the first missionary journey, but the common suspicion is simply his immaturity. Whatever the reason, Paul and Barnabas were entitled to their difference in judgment concerning him, and the decision to split into two parties worked only to further the gospel. Paul spoke highly of Barnabas later when he penned the letter we call I Corinthians (I Cor 9:6), and at some point Mark again took part in his companionship and ministry (Col 4:14), even to the point that he was specifically useful to Paul here at the end of his life. A couple of lessons can be learned here:
 - When differences in judgment arise, brethren need to have the humility and mutual compassion to find a Scriptural solution and part as friends.
 - Though a person may not be prepared for a certain work at one point in his life, his brethren need to be ready to watch his spiritual growth and lay more responsibility upon him as he grows in spiritual maturity, diligence and desire to serve the Lord. Praise God that He grants us the time to hear the word and grow!

- *Tychicus*, mentioned five times in the New Testament, Paul sent to Ephesus.
 - We first meet this good soldier for Christ on the third missionary journey, a representative of the brethren in Asia who donated funds to aid the needy saints in Jerusalem (Acts 20:4).
 - Tychicus was with Paul during his first Roman imprisonment, and was the deliverer of the letters to the Ephesians and the Colossians, given instructions to exhort and comfort these precious brethren – a tremendously important responsibility (Eph 6:21f; Col 4:7-9)!
 - Note that Onesimus, the former slave of Philemon, traveled with Tychicus while delivering these messages, thus it can be certainly ascertained that Tychicus went forward with his brother to plead his case before Philemon.
 - Sometime after the first imprisonment, Paul sent Tychicus to relieve Titus in Crete so that he could leave and visit Paul in Necropolis (Titus 3:12)
 - Now again, in II Tim 4:12, we find that Paul has sent Tychicus away, this time to Ephesus. It is likely from the comments at II Tim 1:18 that Timothy was still in Ephesus at this time, thus most probable that Tychicus was to relieve the evangelist for enough time at least to visit Paul in Rome

Paul referred to Tychicus as "*a beloved brother, faithful minister, and fellow servant in the Lord*" (Col 4:7). Everything that is spoken of this man in the New Testaments proclaims his godly character, diligent service, unwavering faith and

absolute worthiness of Paul's deepest confidence to accomplish important work for Christ. May all Christians aspire to be prepared for any and every work that is within their ability, just as Tychicus constantly was!

Note: Some of Paul's companions left on their own accord; at least one of them was actually sent away by Paul for important work elsewhere. Whatever the circumstances were surrounding Paul's commands for his loyal companions to depart, remember that this in the very hour of his own greatest need. The apostle's willingness to part with his beloved friends and brothers in Christ for the spiritual sake of other Christians is a timeless testimony to his "*concern for all the churches*" (II Cor 11:8) and his own devotion to the very words he preached: "*Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others*" (Phil 2:4).

- *Carpus* – Nothing is known about Carpus than what is said here: he was either a Christian who lived in Troas, or he had been left in Troas by Paul. The apostle entrusted some of his personal belongings to Carpus, evidently before his journey to Rome. The last time Paul visited Troas that is recorded in the book of acts was during what is called the Third Missionary Journey (see Acts 20:1ff), but considering that this was some six or seven years before he wrote II Timothy, it is probable that he would have needed that cloak sometime before his second imprisonment. Remember that Paul spent a considerable amount of time in freedom between his imprisonments, perhaps five to seven years, so it is most likely that he visited the Christians in Troas sometime during those years. Paul expected Timothy to pass through Troas, another hint that Timothy was indeed still in Ephesus for Troas was directly en route between Ephesus and Rome. Paul himself traveled a portion of this route during the Third Missionary Journey (read Acts 19:1-20:12). Paul needed the cloak quickly, for winter was at hand (vs. 21)!

Note: Besides his much needed cloak, Paul also asked Timothy to gather his books and parchments. Exactly what these books and parchments were cannot be ascertained from Paul's words: perhaps they were Old Testament books, the earliest versions of the gospels, copies of his own letters, materials written by unbelievers (Acts 17:28; Titus 1:12), or even legal documents Paul would need in trial. However, given the context of the urgency of Paul's work and preparations in these last hours (see notes on vs. 6-8), it is most likely that these were religious materials. Paul might have been studying them on his own – nothing in the New Testament teaches that just because a person had the gift of prophesy he or she would never again need to study the revealed word of God again. Paul might have requested these materials to distribute to other Christians who had need of them. It is possible that the parchments were blank and Paul looked forward to penning more letters of encouragement and exhortation before his time on earth expired. The point that we can take away from vs. 13 is this: Paul had served a tremendous life of sacrifice and service in God's kingdom, accomplishing more in spreading the word than perhaps any other Christian from then till now, however even at the end of his life he was still fighting the good fight, still striving to find opportunities to be useful to God, still striving to both learn and to teach. God's will for his children is that we keep:

- Studying and never fall back (cf. Heb 5:12-14)
- Seeking, never shirking, opportunities to serve God (cf. Gal 6:7-10; 4:17)
- A fire for good works (cf. II Tim 1:6; Titus 2:14)

- Growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ (cf. II Pet 3:18)
- Pressing on to perfection (Phil 3:12-15a)

The life of the apostle Paul is a shining example to Christians of all time of what exactly it means to be a faithful servant of Christ. May we all aspire to have the same diligence, zeal and faithfulness in walking in the footsteps of our Lord!

C. Alexander The Coppersmith

This could be the same Alexander cited for his unfaithfulness in I Tim 1:20, or it could be a different person altogether. It seems from Paul's warning in vs. 15 that the apostle was concerned about this evil man's influence reaching Timothy even in Ephesus, which might link him to the Alexander mentioned in Acts 19:33, however there is no other evidence to support this supposition.

- I Tim 1:20 with II Tim 4:14-15 – If this Alexander is the same as him mentioned in Paul's first letter to Timothy, this is a man who used to be a faithful Christian but compromised the word and his own conscience to the point that he became unfaithful. He along with Hymenaeus were thus excommunicated at the command of Paul (who spoke the command of Christ, I Cor 14:37; see the notes at I Tim 1:20). Remember that the action of excommunication was meant to move these ungodly men to repentance; however it appears that Alexander rather lashed out against Paul and the truth. If this is the case, here is an example of a hardened heart moved to harm the cause of truth and its messengers (see I Kings 18:17, 19:10; Jer 31; Acts 7:51-53; etc.)
- Some authors (e.g. Patton quotes Barclay) point out that the verb here translated *did* literally means *displayed* and was sometimes used to describe the "laying of information against a man." If this is true, Alexander may have been the informer who gave Paul up to the Romans.

Though there is no way to be certain if either of these hypotheses is true, some things are certain from Paul's words here about Alexander:

- Alexander did Paul much harm – Though Alexander, as we shall see, also opposed the truth of the gospel, he did some amount of personal harm to the apostle.
- Alexander would answer for his misdeeds before God – Paul did not wish evil upon Alexander, but he was certain that this despicable man would be repaid by God for his evil works (see NIV, NASU translations). Christians look forward to the day when all inequalities and injustices will be recompensed by God. Read Ps 62:12; Rom 2:1-11, 12:17-21. Note that, in keeping with his own teaching, the apostle did not seek his own vengeance, but placed his assurance in God's justice.
- Alexander was a threat to Timothy – Remember that Timothy was still in Ephesus and would be until he came to Paul in Rome, if possible. Evidently, Alexander had the ability to work his ungodly influence even in Ephesus and against Timothy. The man who speaks lies, opposes the truth, and accuses his brethren is a threat to all Christians. See Ps 109:1-5; Prov 6:16-19.
- Alexander resisted the truth – On top of whatever he had done to harm Paul, Alexander opposed the truth and the way of righteousness. Note that he resisted the truth vigorously, not passively or indifferently. Note that this word is used concerning Elymas (Acts 13:8), and Jannes and Jambres (II Tim 3:8), and by

comparison the false teachers warned of in II Tim 3. Such men make the times “perilous” for those who love the truth (II Tim 3:1).

D. Paul’s First Defense

Evidently, the trial mentioned in vs. 16 was Paul’s preliminary trial before Rome, perhaps before Nero, when the charges would have been brought against him and he would have stood against his first examination. At that time no one, not even the beloved Luke, stood with Paul as his witness, supporter, or advisor. In many ways, as is seen in Paul’s tone, the apostle had been forsaken by all of his closest friends – so much like Christ many years before: “*Then they all forsook him and fled*” (Mark 14:50). However, before we pass to harsh a judgment on these men, remember that Rome at this time was extremely dangerous for anyone who called upon the name of Christ. Christians were subjected to unspeakable horrors simply because of their allegiance to the kingdom of heaven, and to stand with an apostle on trial would have meant almost certain death. Paul himself understood this awful reality, and rather than thinking upon his companions with spite, offered these words of mercy instead: “*May it not be charged against them.*” Christ had this sympathy for his accusers (Luke 23:34), as did Stephen even while being stoned to death (Acts 7:60). Paul preached about true love, that it “*keeps no record of wrongs*” (I Cor 13:5, NIV), and truly his love for his companions was exemplary of this high standard. In the same token, Paul didn’t want Timothy to hold his abandonment against those who should have stood boldly at his side.

IV. Paul’s Assurance In The Faithfulness Of God (vs. 17-18)

In these verses, Paul apparently expounds somewhat more on his first trial, while boldly declaring his assurance that God will continue to preserve him for the eternal reward of heaven.

- *But the Lord stood with me* – Though all of his most faithful companions forsook him and fled, the Lord stood with Paul. And the Lord promises all His disciples, though the entire world might choose to forsake us, He remains ever faithful and true.
 - This was the Lord’s promise to Moses and the Israelites (Deut 31:6-8)
 - Christ promised the same to His disciples before His ascension (Matt 28:18ff)
Note: The command of these verses (i.e. the Great Commission), was and is no small command – Christ was well aware of the sacrifice, toil, suffering and sorrow that is involved in a life striving to turn lost souls to Him!
 - The Hebrews author reminded Christians of this very truth in striving to teach them to have contentment in the Lord, especially in light of the temptations they were facing to backslide (Heb 13:5-6)
Note: Compare to Paul’s discussion of his own contentment, Phil 4:6-7, 11-13
- *The message might be preached fully* – The Lord promised His disciples that, through the power of the Holy Spirit, they would know what to speak in the hour of trial (read Matt 10:16-20). This passage is indeed remarkably similar to Paul’s own remarks here at the end of II Timothy – he stood before governors and kings, boldly proclaiming the gospel, and thus both Jews and many Gentiles heard the gospel. Though Christians do not speak as “carried along by the Holy Spirit” today (II Pet 1:21), we can too have confidence in proclaiming the word of God,

even in the intense hour of trial – by studying and meditating on the revealed word of God! Read Prov 15:28; Col 4:5-6; I Pet 3:15.

- *That all the Gentiles might hear* – It’s impossible to tell what group of Gentiles the apostle had in mind while writing these verses. Perhaps his first defense was before a large audience in one of the great Roman basilicas. It is possible that he stood even before the treacherous Nero himself! Whomever exactly Paul meant, he proclaimed the gospel boldly before so many Gentiles, even previously before kings and governors, and we have full confidence that his boldness and truthfulness shone through still more in these final trials. Note that in whatever paths the apostle walked, dangerous or peaceful, the result outcome was for the furtherance of the gospel (cf. Phil 1:12) – such a tremendous example of the power of God’s word when proclaimed from a zealous and devoted heart! Fail not to remember that God has the power to work such fruits in our lives too!
- *Also, I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion* – There are several possibilities for the meaning of this phrase, but the main thrust is that Paul stood in a position of serious danger at his first defense (probably the reason all his companions fled). However, God shut the lion’s mouth, as it were, and Paul was granted a time of several months to live as a prisoner until his second trial. It could be that Paul’s accusers brought two sets of accusations against him: the first charges failed, while the second led to his condemnation. It could be that Paul literally feared being fed to wild beasts, as such was horrifically common in the later years of Nero’s reign, but that this fear was not realized. It could be that Paul stood before a renowned tyrant at his first defense, maybe Nero himself (though this is unlikely), but the truth allowed him to escape to a second trial and a different judge. Or it could be that Paul is simply using familiar language from the Old Testament, from passages that speak of God’s deliverance (whether in this life or the next), e.g. I Sam 17:37; Ps 22:21.

Next, Paul speaks more of God’s faithfulness, and of his own assurance that the future would hold enormous joy and reward, no matter what man might do to him.

- *And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work* – The apostle could not possibly mean that the Lord would keep him safe from every form of physical harm, for he had already suffered physically to an enormous extent (cf. II Cor 11). Furthermore, Paul would certainly not hint that the Lord would protect him from all attempts to take his life, for many faithful brethren suffered just such deaths before him, and soon he also would go the way of the martyrs. Rather, it seems that this phrase and the next are reiterations of one another: the apostle has in mind the preservation of his soul. No matter what evils man might work in attacking God’s children, the Lord is the Guardian of our souls, and no one can snatch the faithful from His hand. (Read John 10:11,27-30; Matt 10:28.) Would Paul tremble in the presence of Nero? Certainly not! Paul’s fate rested in the hands of God, not man (John 19:11). He was a prisoner of the Lord, not Rome (Eph 4:1). Nero could hurl toward Paul his very worst, but nothing could strip the faithful apostle from the loving hand of God.

- *And preserve me for His heavenly kingdom* – Paul was a part of God’s kingdom already, having been saved by the blood of Christ (Col 1:13). However, the New Testament writers sometimes speak of the kingdom in the future sense of the eternal dwelling place of the faithful (cf. I Cor 15:50; II Tim 4:1; II Pet 2:11; etc.). This is a restatement of the previous sentiments: no matter what his fate on earth might hold, Paul’s soul was preserved by God in Christ. Paul’s death would merely be a casting off of his feeble body to inherit a heavenly body and a dwelling place in the tabernacle of the Almighty God!
- *To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen!* – The words of a man completely devoted to the exaltation of His Master and King, and absolutely confident in His providential care. In Paul’s own words, “according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Phil 1:20-22).

V. Paul’s Farewell

As the beloved apostle closes this, in all probability his last epistle, he mentions some familiar brethren, some whom are never mentioned before or after in the New Testament, and also gives Timothy one final urgent command.

- *Aquila and Priscilla* – The faithful couple met first in Corinth, and who joined and otherwise aided him on his preaching trips (see Acts 18:1-3, 18-19, 24-28; Rom 16:3-4; I Cor 16:19). These precious brethren came to Corinth from Rome due to persecution against the Jews, and evidently spent a good deal of time there and in Ephesus, even after Paul had departed. At some point, evidently they returned to Rome and that a group of brethren assembled in their home. From Paul’s words here, it appears that they had returned to Ephesus and were with Timothy. Or else, perhaps Paul expected Timothy to greet them upon his arrival in Rome to visit the apostle.
- *And the household of Onesiphorus* – Remember that this godly man took great risk in ministering to the apostle while in prison, evidently referring to this second and final imprisonment in Rome (II Tim 1:16). His household, and perhaps now even he himself, were in Ephesus with Timothy.
- *Erastus and Trophimus* – Evidently, Timothy would have expected to hear some news about these brothers in Christ, and thus Paul mentions them here. Perhaps they set out with Paul on his trip which led him to Rome, but Erastus remained in Achaia, namely in Corinth, and Trophimus fell ill and stayed in Miletus. Trophimus (from Ephesus) was one of the men who joined Paul on the third missionary journey, and a Gentile given the stir that arose over his presence with Paul in Jerusalem (Acts 20:4, 21:29). Erastus had labored with Paul and Timothy in the past (Acts 19:22) and probably is a different person than the treasurer of the city mentioned in Rom 16:23.
- *Do your utmost to come before winter* – Depending on the source, some scholars are inclined to believe that Timothy came to Paul before his execution in the midsummer of 66 AD. Others claim that Paul was executed earlier than expected,

perhaps even in the summer of 65 AD, thus only a very short time after Timothy would have received the letter. Whatever the case, this statement emphasizes the urgency of this letter – the end of Paul’s life was “at hand,” and he had much need and desire to be with his “son in the faith” before his final hour (II Tim 4:6; I Tim 1:2).

- *Eubulus greets you, as well as Pudens, Linus, Claudia, and all the brethren* – These Christians are only mentioned here in the New Testament. From the context, they were Christians of Rome, faithful to Christ as well as to Paul, even at this dark hour. The fact that these Christians remained in Rome, enduring the horrors of Nero’s reign and risking the most “exquisite torture” (Tacitus, *Annals*, 15.44) is truly a testimony to their faith which stood true though “tested by fire” (I Pet 1:7).

Conclusion

The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you. With this final prayer, the apostle Paul closed his final letter to one of his most beloved and cherished brothers in Christ. And here both the New Testament and secular history leave the apostle Paul to his final hours. There is no way of knowing whether or not Timothy was able to join Paul in Rome before his execution, and history affords us almost no details about Paul’s second defense. The charges made against Paul are unknown, though most probably he was accused of introducing *religio nova at illicita*, i.e. a new and illicit religion, prohibited by Roman law (see Conybeare and Howson 766-767). This law was rarely enforced, though Nero highly exploited it while persecuting the Christians, beginning in 64 AD. Whatever the charge made at this second defense, Paul was found guilty and condemned to die a criminal, probably a traitor, of Rome (II Tim 2:9).

Paul’s Roman citizenship allowed him to escape some of the more atrocious and appalling forms of execution and torture relished by Nero before the end of his reign, thus Paul would have died through decapitation by the sword. Such executions occurred outside the city walls, a mile or so along the road to Ostia, the port of Rome (Conybeare and Howson 781). Depending on the amount of fanfare given his trial and condemnation, a motley throng of all types of people would line the road, some hurling insults, garbage and other putrescence. And in the final moments, Paul would have kneeled before the headsman, and a swift stroke of the sword would have ended the earthly life of one of the most humble, faithful and compassionate men this world has ever known. Eusebius states that Paul was buried, along with Peter, in the catacombs of Rome, where persecuted Christians at that time found refuge and safety from the enemies of the cross. However Paul cast off his earthly tent, these timeless words define for us his hope and assurance even until the end:

For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life. Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has

given us the Spirit as a guarantee. So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.

– II Corinthians 5:1-8