

NOTES ON THE FIRST EPISTLE OF PAUL TO TIMOTHY

\* \* \* PRACTICES AND PRIORITIES IN THE LOCAL CHURCH \* \* \*

S.L.H.  
Soli Deo Gloria!

"These things write I unto thee . . . that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." (1Tim3:14-15)

AUTHOR: Paul (c. 62 AD)

AUTHORSHIP. The very first verse of the epistle asserts it to have been written by the Apostle Paul (1Tim1:1). Pauline authorship has only been challenged in recent centuries, associated with the rise of liberal (i.e., unbelieving) higher criticism. Modern critics have questioned Pauline authorship by alleging that the style and vocabulary of the pastoral epistles (i.e., 1&2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon) differ considerably from the larger body of Pauline epistles. Such differences, where they do in fact exist<sup>1</sup>, are readily explained by the fact that the pastoral epistles were personal letters written to individuals with whom Paul had close, intimate relationships, in contrast to the remainder of Paul's letters which were written to entire assemblies of believers (with only brief personal notes addressing individuals appended to the end of some of these). Believing scholarship has always accepted the pastoral epistles to have been written by Paul, since a denial of Pauline authorship is tantamount to a denial of the inerrancy of Scripture.

DATE OF WRITING. Paul wrote this letter to Timothy after the close of events recorded in the Book of Acts, so it is difficult to be dogmatic on chronology during this timeframe. The generally accepted chronology after Acts is that Paul arrived in Rome and was put under house arrest to await a hearing before Caesar; this detention lasted 2 years (c. 59-61 AD). During this detention (his so-called first imprisonment), Paul enjoyed considerable freedom; he was able to receive visitors, and he wrote Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians and Philemon (the so-called Prison Epistles). Paul was apparently released from this imprisonment and then travelled extensively, visiting Ephesus (1Tim1:3), Crete (Tit1:5), Nicopolis (Tit3:12), Troas (2Tim4:13), Miletus (2Tim4:20), Corinth (2Tim4:20), and likely Spain (Rom15:24,28); it was during this period of ministry that Paul wrote 1 Timothy and Titus to his two disciples he had left in Ephesus and Crete, respectively, as his apostolic representatives to guide the fledgling churches in these places. Sometime during 64-67 AD, Paul was arrested, taken to Rome and imprisoned there a second time (his so-called second imprisonment),

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<sup>1</sup> Upon careful examination, not all of the allegations of higher criticism can be honestly and genuinely sustained. For example, the periodicity of unique words (i.e., *hapax legomena*, 'once said') in the pastoral epistles, alleged to be much higher than in the remainder of epistles attributed to Paul, is not statistically different if the analysis is confined to the personal sections of his other epistles.

where he was eventually executed by Nero c. 67 AD. During this second imprisonment Paul wrote 2 Timothy, his final letter.

**WHO WAS TIMOTHY?** This epistle was a personal letter written by the Apostle Paul to Timothy (1Tim1:1-2). Timothy's mother was a Jewish believer in Lystra, but his father was an unbelieving Greek (Act16:1); Timothy's name is Greek<sup>2</sup>, meaning "one who honors God". From his childhood he had been well trained in the [OT] Scriptures by his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice (2Tim1:5; 3:15), but he apparently came to faith in Christ as a result of Paul's ministry on his second missionary journey through Galatia (1Tim1:2) and then assisted Paul in his subsequent missionary work (Act16:3; 17:14-15; 18:5; 19:22; 20:4); he is mentioned by name in Romans, 1&2 Corinthians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon and Hebrews (in addition to 1&2 Timothy). When Paul departed from Ephesus after visiting the church there, apparently between his first and second imprisonments, he left Timothy in Ephesus as his apostolic representative to guide the young church (1Tim1:3). Timothy was intimately associated with the Apostle Paul in ministry from the time of his conversion (c. 48 AD) until Paul's death (c. 67 AD).



**Ephesus/Asia Minor.**



**Temple of Dianna (Act19:27),  
An Ancient Wonder of the World**

**THEME OF 1ST TIMOTHY.** The theme of Paul's first epistle to Timothy is articulated in **1 Timothy 3:14-15**. Paul writes to Timothy, who he has left in Ephesus as his apostolic representative<sup>3</sup>, to instruct him on practices and priorities within the local church. Authority within the local church is clearly defined, including the place of women (1Tim2:9-15) and qualifications for bishops and deacons (1Tim3:1-13). Benevolence activities, including their limitations, are discussed relative to widows within the assembly (1Tim5:3-16). A decided

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<sup>2</sup> Numerous examples of Jews with Greek names occur in the New Testament, including Timothy (and even the apostles Andrew and Philip!). While it is often suggested that the Gospel writer Luke may have been a Gentile, primarily because his name was of Greek origin, such a suggestion cannot be reconciled with Scripture's assertion that it was to the Jews alone that Jehovah entrusted the "oracles of God" (Rom3:1-2).

<sup>3</sup> Timothy was not the pastor/elder/bishop (terms used interchangeably in the NT) of the church at Ephesus; the Ephesian church had long had elders (cf. Acts20:17). Rather, Timothy is left behind at Ephesus as Paul's apostolic representative to correct error that had arisen within the church, both in doctrine and practice.

emphasis on the teaching of sound doctrine as well as the refutation of doctrinal error prevails throughout the letter (1Tim1:3,10; 2:12; 3:2 4:6,11,13,16; 5:17; 6:1-3), consistent with Paul's previous prophecy/warning to the Ephesian elders that after his departure from Ephesus "grievous wolves" would enter into their fellowship (and even rise up from amongst them) "speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Act20:27-31). Timothy's labors in this respect were apparently successful, since the Lord Jesus' letter to the church at Ephesus, dictated to the Apostle John some 3 decades later, commends the church for their attention to sound doctrine (Rev2:2).

DISPENSATIONAL IMPORTANCE OF 1&2 TIMOTHY. Since the Apostle Paul's letters to Timothy are instructions written to one serving as an apostolic representative in the church at Ephesus with the express purpose of instructing him on church practice (1Tim3:14-15), this makes **1 & 2 Timothy** (complemented by Titus; cf. Tit1:5) **the preeminent sources for doctrine on the local church.** Rather than looking to the Gospels, which record the life of Christ under the Law (i.e., Mosaic covenant; Gal4:4) before the existence of the Church (Matt16:18), or to the Book of Acts, which is an historical account of the transition from Israel under the law to the birth and early growth of the Church apart from the Law (and which documents many unique occurrences during a transitional period that will not be normative practices during the Church Age), it is to the NT epistles written to established churches and their leadership that believers today must look for our inspired instruction on orthodoxy and orthopraxy in the Church Age.

As an interesting observation, Paul's epistle to the church at Ephesus (i.e., Ephesians) contains the richest revelation of doctrine regarding the **universal Church**, the body of Christ (Eph1:22-23) comprised of all believers during the Church Age, whereas Paul's epistles to Timothy (an apostolic representative to the church at Ephesus) are the primary source for doctrine regarding the **local church.**

#### OUTLINE OF 1 TIMOTHY.

- I. Introduction (1Tim1:1-2)
- II. The Importance of Doctrine (1Tim1:3-20)
- III. Order and Authority in the Church (1Tim2:1-3:16)
  - A. Importance of Prayer (1Tim2:1-8)
  - B. The Place of Women (1Tim2:9-15)
  - C. Requirements for Bishops (1Tim3:1-7)
  - D. Requirements for Deacons (1Tim3:8-16)
- IV. Pastoral Priorities (1Tim4:1-5:25)
  - A. Teach Doctrine and Refute Error (1Tim4:1-11)
  - B. Personal Holiness (1Tim4:12-16)
  - C. Honor and Respect for Seniors (1Tim5:1-2)
  - D. Honor and Care for Widows (1Tim5:3-16)
  - E. Honor and Support for Elders/Teachers (1Tim5:17-18)
  - F. Rebuke Sinners (1Tim5:19-25)
- V. Charges to Members of the Assembly
  - A. Slaves/Masters (1Tim6:1-2)
  - B. The One Who Would Be Godly (1Tim6:3-16)
  - C. The Rich (1Tim6:17-19)
  - D. Timothy (1Tim6:20-21)

## CHAPTER 1

### SALUTATION

- [1] Paul opens his letter to Timothy with a reminder that his apostleship was not something he had sought (quite the contrary; cf. Act9:1-16), but had been given to him as a "commandment" from both "God" and "Lord Jesus Christ".

The identification of "God" as "Savior" is common in the OT (e.g., Isa45:21), but in the NT occurs mostly in the pastoral epistles. The identification of Jesus Christ as our "hope" is also common in the pastoral epistles (Tit2:13). In NT usage, there is no connotation or association of "hope" with contingency or uncertainty, but rather has the idea of 'confident expectation' (cf. Rom4:18-21).

**Apostleship in the New Testament.** The word *apostle* means "one who is sent [by God], on a particular mission or with a special message". The word is used in both a broad and a technical sense in the NT. In its broad sense, "apostle" is used to refer to many individuals in the NT, including Barnabas (Act14:4), Epaphroditus (Philip2:25), Silas and Timothy (1Thess2:6), and "James, the Lord's brother" (Gall1:19). In its technical sense, however, "apostle" defines a unique office. Only the Twelve (Matt10:2) and Paul (1Cor1:1) occupied the office of apostle. Requirements for apostleship in the strict sense included being an eyewitness of the resurrected Christ (1Cor9:1) and being given new revelation to proclaim, which was authenticated by accompanying signs, wonders and miracles (2Cor12:12). Apostles were given to the Church after the ascension of Christ (Eph4:7-12) in order to lay a doctrinal foundation (Eph2:20) for the Church Age. No provision was made for any sort of apostolic succession. When the last apostle (John) died, both the office of apostle and its purpose to lay a foundation of new revelation for the Church ended.

- [2] In both his letters to Timothy, Paul refers to Timothy as his "son" (also 1Tim1:18; 2Tim1:2), obviously used in a figurative sense. Paul may not have been directly responsible for leading Timothy to faith in Christ (cf. Act16:1-2; 2Tim3:15), but Paul certainly led Timothy on to spiritual maturity and ministry as his most beloved disciple.

When Paul writes to churches, his standard greeting is "grace and peace" (cf. Rom1:7; 1Cor1:3; 2Cor1:2; Gall3; Eph1:2; Philip1:2; Coll2; 1Thess1:1; 2Thess1:2); when he writes to individuals, he adds "mercy" (cf. 2Tim1:2; Tit1:4).

### WARNING CONCERNING FALSE DOCTRINE

- [3] Paul writes this letter to Timothy, having left him behind in Ephesus (presumably after briefly visiting the church after being released from his first imprisonment in Rome). Timothy was not the pastor of the church, as it had long had a plurality of elders for its leadership (Act20:17), but apparently as Paul's apostolic representative; in a similar way, Paul left Titus as his

representative at the church in Crete (Tit1:5). Paul's purpose in leaving Timothy at Ephesus was to correct the teaching of false<sup>4</sup> "doctrine" taking place by "some" in the church. This development had been prophesied by Paul when he met with the Ephesian elders prior to his imprisonment (Act20:29-30).

- [4] The details of the false doctrine being taught at Ephesus is not known. Apparently it involved "fables" and "endless genealogies". A "fable" (Greek **μύθος**, which is transliterated into English as *myth*) is a 'fictitious story invented to teach a moral lesson'. It is common today for liberals to argue that it is not necessary that the record of Scripture be historically, scientifically, or literally true (and they assert that it is not!), since it is only the spiritual/moral message of the Bible that is important. Peter asserts that the apostles did not teach "fables" (2Pet1:16). And "genealogies", so important in the nation of Israel under the Mosaic Covenant, have absolutely no relevance in the Church (Gal3:28). Similarly, Paul also gives Titus the charge to refrain from giving heed to "Jewish fables" (Tit1:14) and to "avoid genealogies . . . and strivings about the law [of Moses]" (Tit3:9), suggesting that they are both of Jewish origin.

Note that Paul's concern is to end teaching in the church "which minister[s] questions" rather than "edifying" and encouraging believers in "the<sup>5</sup> faith". Even today, far too much teaching in churches (and especially seminaries) serves to create doubt in the mind of the believer regarding the certainty, clarity, and sufficiency of the truth of Scripture.

- [5] In contrast, "the end" (i.e., purpose, goal) of Paul's "commandment" (for Timothy to put an end to false teaching in the church) is "love". The Lord Jesus asserted that the two greatest commandments in the Law were: 1) "love the Lord", and 2) "love thy neighbor" (Matt22:36-40).
- [6] The false teachers at Ephesus did not have "godly edification in the faith" (v4) and "love" (v5) as their goal. Their teaching was nothing more than "vain jangling" (lit., useless, fruitless, or unprofitable words). Teaching of this kind should not be tolerated in the church.
- [7] Whereas the motive of Paul's teaching was love for God and love for the believers at Ephesus, the motive of these was self-exaltation: a desire to be viewed as respected "teachers of the law". Yet these teachers did not understand Scripture, and they were obviously not gifted to teach it. Paul had previously taught the believers at Ephesus that teachers were men with a spiritual gift given by Christ to edify the church (Eph4:7,11-14). James warned "brethren, be not many teachers, knowing that we shall receive the greater judgment" (Jas3:1). It is a dangerous thing to teach in the church without both the supernatural gift and the

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<sup>4</sup> In this verse, "teach no other doctrine" is the Greek verb **ἑτεροδιδασκαλεῖν**, literally 'teaching of a different kind', that is in contrast to what Paul had originally taught them (1Tim1:11).

<sup>5</sup> When the article is used with the Greek word for "faith", **πίστις**, it denotes the content of what is believed and is essentially a synonym for **doctrine**.

proper motive—dangerous both for the church and for the one who would be a teacher.

- [8] There is nothing wrong with “the law” (of Moses). Indeed, “the law is good” (cf. Rom7:12), a truth that has not changed even in the present dispensation of grace (Eph3:2) in which the believer is not under the law (Gal3:23-25; 5:18). There is still a place for the teaching of the law today, if it is done properly.
- [9] The proper role of teaching the law today is not to put “a righteous man” (i.e., believer) under legalistic constraints, but to convict “sinners” (i.e., unbelievers) of their rebellion against God.
- [10] Paul’s enumeration of sins in vv9-10 appears to come directly from the Ten Commandments, with only the prohibition against coveting omitted; it probably serves to represent all possible categories of sin against God, especially since it ends with the all-inclusive “any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine”.
- [11] Paul’s standard for judging what was “sound doctrine” was the “glorious gospel [of grace]” that was uniquely revealed (Gal1:11-12) and entrusted to him (Cp., 1Thess2:4) by God. When Paul had last met with the Ephesian elders at Miletus, prior to his imprisonment, he asserted to them that he had been faithful to pass on “all the counsel of God” (Act20:27) that had been committed to him.

#### PAUL’S PERSONAL TESTIMONY

- [12] No one understood/appreciated the grace of God more than Paul, for which he often gave thanks. Paul’s calling had come directly from the Lord Jesus Christ (Act9:15-16). Whom God calls, He “enable[s]” (Philip4:13), a truth demonstrated in the life of the Apostle Paul, who was apparently not a confident nor naturally gifted preacher (cf. 1Cor2:1-4; 2Cor12:9-10). Nevertheless, he was “faithful” to the ministry to which he had been called (1Cor4:1-2).
- [13] Paul was “before” (his conversion): 1) a “blasphemer”, in that he denied Jesus as Messiah and Lord, 2) a “persecutor” of believers (Act8:1-2; 9:1-2), and 3) “injurious”, even voting for Stephen to be stoned (Act8:1). And yet, Paul was shown “mercy” because he acted “ignorantly in unbelief”; Paul was sincere, in that he actually thought he was defending the (Jewish) faith against those trying to lead Israel astray (Deut13:6-11).
- [14] Here, “faith” and “love” are Paul’s response to the “grace” of God. Paul illustrated the truth that one forgiven much, loves much (Luk7:40-48).
- [15] Paul’s expression “a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance”, means that the following assertion is a truth to be accepted without qualification. Namely, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners”! The validation of this assertion is the life of Paul, who was the “chief” (Greek *πρωτός*, first in rank, foremost) of all “sinners”.

- [16] Since salvation originates in the grace of God, and not the merit of the recipient, there is no one who cannot be saved.
- [17] In discussing the "grace" of God that is "exceedingly abundant" (v14) in his own life, Paul (as he often does) bursts out in a seemingly spontaneous doxology, ascribing "honor" and "glory" to Him who is "King eternal" (lit., king of ages; cf. Heb11:3), "immortal" (attribute of eternity; Ps90:2), "invisible" (His essence is spirit; Jn4:24), and "**only** wise God" (emphasizing the uniqueness of His deity, to which Israel was called as witnesses; Isa43:8-13). "Amen" is the strongest affirmation of truth that can be expressed in the Hebrew language; it is a word that is directly transliterated into both Greek and English.

#### PAUL'S CHARGE TO TIMOTHY

- [18] Verses 12-17 were a brief personal digression. Now Paul returns to his charge to Timothy which began in v3. Paul calls Timothy's ministry to restore sound doctrine and correct error in the church at Ephesus "warfare". The implication is that this ministry will be long, difficult, and extremely taxing for Timothy (personally). During this difficult time, Timothy is to draw strength and encouragement from "the prophecies" according to which he was selected for this ministry (presumably alluded to in 1Tim4:14; 2Tim1:6). This war (ministry) of Timothy's would not be easy, nor enjoyable, but it is called "good" (Cp., 1Tim6:12; 2Tim4:7).
- [19] In this war, Timothy is to maintain his "faith" and "good conscience", in contrast to "some" (i.e., the false teachers in Ephesus). Faith and a good conscience necessarily go together; it is impossible for one who has departed from "the faith" (article is present in the Greek, denoting the content of faith, or sound doctrine) to have a clear conscience (Cp., 1Tim6:10).
- [20] Paul **names** two of the false teachers, "Hymenæus and Alexander". In his second letter to Timothy, Paul indicates that Hymenæus taught that "the resurrection is past already", an error which was overthrowing the faith of some at Ephesus (2Tim2:17-18). These men Paul has "delivered unto Satan", probably meaning excluded from the fellowship (Cp. 1Cor5:1,5). Outside the fellowship of believers and without God's invisible hedge of protection, these men would be subject to attack from Satan (cf. Job1:10-12; 2Tim2:25-26); this is divine discipline with the objective that "they learn not to blaspheme".

## CHAPTER 2

### ORDER AND AUTHORITY IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

In Chapter 1, Paul generally stressed to Timothy the importance and priority of teaching sound doctrine, and refuting error, in the local church (at Ephesus). In Chapter 2, Paul begins to address specific issues with specific instructions, namely order and authority in the church. Presumably, the issues addressed were not being handled properly within the church at Ephesus.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER

- [1] What so often receives little priority in local churches, Paul addresses first, namely "**prayer**". Prayer includes "supplications", "intercessions", and "giving of thanks". It is to be "made for all men"; since no one is beyond the reach of God's grace and mercy, as already illustrated from Paul's personal testimony (1Tim1:14-16), no one should be excluded from prayer.
- [2] It is proper to pray for "kings, and for all that are in authority" (i.e., government leaders), regardless of whether such officials are believers or not. It is as true in our day as it was in Paul's that most officials in government (or any secular occupation) are not believers. If they are unbelievers, they need our prayers for their salvation; if they are believers, they need our prayers for wisdom in governing, so that we might be blessed with a community in which we "may lead a quite and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty".
- Living in a Culture Hostile to Christianity. Paul wrote this letter only a few years before Nero would become Caesar, who would dramatically escalate the persecution of Christians throughout the Roman empire (and personally order the execution of Paul). In America today, our government seems to be escalating hostility toward Christianity, making it increasingly difficult to be faithful Christians and also live in harmony with the majority of unbelieving citizens.
- [3] While there may be many prayers that are not appropriate to offer up to "God, our Savior", prayers for government officials are "good and acceptable", and Paul "exhort[s]" believers to regularly offer them (v1).
- [4] Such prayers are good and acceptable because God, by His nature, is a "Savior" (v3), and it is His "will" that "all men be saved". The word translated "will" is from the Greek root<sup>6</sup> (v. **θέλω**, n. **θέλημα**) meaning 'preceptive will', that is 'desire'. It is God's desire that all men be saved, yet He has not decreed the salvation of all men; rather, He has made the salvation of any individual contingent upon personal faith.
- [5] As a validation of the assertion of v4, that God desires "all men to be saved", vv5-6 demonstrate that God has performed His part of the gospel (cf. 1Cor15:1-4). First, "there is one God" (Isa43:10-12). Second, there is only one way, through a "mediator", to come to the one God, and that is through the "man, Christ Jesus" (Jn14:6).
- [6] Third, Christ, our "mediator", "gave Himself a ransom for all". This assertion of Paul's is equivalent to John's in **1 John 2:1-2**, where Christ is said to be "an advocate with the Father" who "is

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<sup>6</sup> God's preceptive will (desire), expressed by the Greek word **θέλημα**, is in contrast with His decretive will, expressed by the Greek word **βουλή** (translated "determinate counsel" in Acts 2:23). It is possible for God's preceptive will (desire) to fail to come to pass (e.g., due to the free choices of creatures), but it is always impossible for God's decretive will to be thwarted.



the propitiation for . . . the sins of the whole world". These verses strongly assert an unlimited atonement. The work of Christ has made possible the salvation of all men (which is why Paul encouraged prayers for the salvation of all in vv1-4). However, although God has made possible the salvation of all men by the work of Christ, He had decreed that the salvation of any individual man depends on personal faith (cf. 1Cor15:2; Jn3:16; Rom3:25). Fourth, the work of Christ that completed God's portion of the gospel was "testified [to the whole world] in due time" (1Cor15:5-8; Gal4:4; Tit1:3); the preaching of the gospel to all men has been committed to the Church during the present age (Mk16:15<sup>7</sup>; Act1:8).

- [7] It was for the revelation and declaration of this gospel that Paul was "ordained" (i.e., chosen by the Lord; Act9:15) a "preacher" and an "apostle" (i.e., one sent out with divine authority to proclaim a message). His apostolic ministry was to take this message especially to the "Gentiles", whereas the Apostle Peter was tasked with making this message clear to the Jews (Gal2:7). Paul emphasizes the "verity" (i.e., truth) of the gospel; there is no intrinsic power in one's "faith" if the gospel in which he has believed is not true (1Cor15:14,17).
- [8] For these reasons, Paul decrees that "men pray everywhere", especially for the salvation of all men. In doing so, believers during the present Church Age are functioning in a priestly role (1Pet2:9), interceding before God on behalf of others, with "lifting up holy hands" being an allusion to the Aaronic blessing (Num6:24-26; cf. 1Kgs8:22). Such prayers should be without "wrath" (i.e., intercession should be for a person's salvation, not judgment) or "doubting" (Cp., Jas1:6-7).

Men Lead in Public Prayer? In this verse, Paul uses the Greek word **ἄνδρας** (accusative plural of **ἄνθρωπος**, meaning 'a male person of full age and stature', as opposed to a child or female), rather than **ἄνθρωπος**, the word used for 'mankind' or 'human beings' without an explicit reference to gender. Paul's instruction here likely means that he is charging the "men" of the congregation, in contrast to the women, to lead in these (public) prayers. This is supported by the fact that in the next verse, Paul turns his instructions toward "women".

#### THE PLACE OF WOMEN

- [9] This verse begins with "in like manner", probably referencing Paul's decree of v8; namely, the following is authoritative instruction from the apostle.

Women in the congregation are to outwardly "adorn themselves" in a way that emphasizes their (internal) godly character rather than their external appearance. Their "apparel" is to be "modest", and their hair is not to be elaborately dressed with "costly" adornments (commonly practiced by the rich in the 1st century). This is not a prohibition of believing women wearing stylish

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<sup>7</sup> If your Bible does not contain Mark 16:15, or includes a footnote that casts doubt on its authenticity, you need a new Bible.

clothing, using makeup, or dressing their hair; however, such external practices should be used in moderation and are not to take priority over, or detract from, the internal virtues of "godly fear" and "sobriety".

- [10] Christian women are to be more remarkable for their "godliness" and "good works" than their external appearance. This is consistent with the teaching of Peter (1Pet3:1-6).
- [11] Whereas the men in the congregation were to lead in prayer (v8), the women were to "learn in silence". The Greek word translated "silence" does not necessarily have to mean absolute silence, but can also denote a state of 'quietness', 'tranquility', 'rest', or 'without disturbance' (Cp., 2Thess3:12; 1Pet3:4). Paul's command here is not a total prohibition of women speaking during times of teaching in the church, but as prohibiting them from speaking in a controversial or disruptive way (elaboration of this will come in v12). Some attempt to join this verse with Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and argue for a total prohibition; however, the Corinthian passage (in context) probably refers to women 'speaking' in tongues, and the prohibition there is probably a charge uniquely directed to the women at that particularly problematic church.

The general rule in the local congregation is that the women are to be in "subjection" to the men (Cp., Eph5:22; Col3:18; 1Pet3:5); that is, Paul is decreeing that leadership in the church is to be male, which will be reinforced explicitly when he gives qualifications for bishops and deacons (1Tim3:1-2,12).

- [12] To clarify what is meant by women in the congregation being in "subjection" to the men (v11) and learning in "silence" (vv11&12), Paul explicitly asserts (with apostolic authority) that women are forbidden to "teach" or "usurp authority over the man". The context here is male leadership (v8) and the concern that the women not "usurp" that leadership role within the church, so the "teach[ing]" that is here forbidden is the doctrinal teaching of men in the church.

The prohibition against teaching by women relates only to men, since elsewhere Paul approves of women exercising teaching ministries relative to younger women (Tit2:3-4) and children (2Tim3:15).

- [13] In vv13-14, Paul gives two reasons for the prohibition of women teaching men (or exercising authority over them) in the church. **The reasons are doctrinal, not cultural**, so they are valid at all times and in all places. The first reason given is the order of creation, "Adam was first formed, then Eve". It is not simply the chronological order that is important, but the purpose to which the order speaks. The man was created by God first, with the woman subsequently created to be his helper (Gen2:18). Thus, before the Fall and the entrance of sin into the world, we see that God's original purpose in creation was male headship (Cp., 1Cor11:3,9).
- [14] The second reason given was that in the Fall, the woman was deceived, but the man ("Adam") was not. Some have argued from

this verse that women, in general, are more easily deceived than men in matters of doctrine (and go on to demonstrate how many cults have been started by women); such a conclusion may be taking this verse too far. More likely Paul is using it as an example of how quickly and awfully things can go awry when God's creation purpose is ignored or rejected.

- [15] This verse is one of the most difficult in the New Testament to interpret. The background to it would seem to be the following. God's original purpose in creation was for male headship and submission of the woman to the leadership of the man. Before the introduction of sin into the world, there would have been no resistance to this God-ordained relationship; but as a result of the curse, a tendency toward dissatisfaction with this relationship has been introduced into the world (Gen3:16). Nevertheless, as Paul illustrated in v14, only bad can come from resisting God's prescribed order.

For this reason, women should resist aspirations to lead/teach within the church, which would usurp male headship/leadership. Rather, women should accept as their primary role managing the home and bearing/raising children<sup>8</sup>; only by submission to God's revealed purpose for women will they find happiness and fulfillment. Eve submitted to this role, and only by her own bearing of children (which would eventuate in the birth of Christ; Gen3:15) was her own salvation (and the salvation of the world) made possible. The role/ministry God has ordained for women is no less important or necessary than that for men, but it is exercised primarily in the home rather than in the church.

### CHAPTER 3

#### QUALIFICATIONS FOR BISHOPS (a.k.a., ELDERS, PASTORS)

In this chapter, Paul lays out the qualifications for **bishops** (a.k.a. elders, pastors) and **deacons** in the local church. The fact that he does so in this letter to Timothy, sent to the church at Ephesus to correct matters of both orthodoxy and orthopraxy, may indicate that the church suffered from leadership that did not meet these requirements.

- [1] Paul begins by giving qualifications for a "bishop". Paul asserts that for a "man"<sup>9</sup> to "desire the office of a bishop" is a "good work"; thus, it is not sinful or wrong for men to aspire to such a position of leadership within the church. As will be evident in Paul's list of qualifications for a bishop, these are qualities that every Christian man should endeavor to develop, whether or not he desires or holds the office of bishop; it is from those men who best exemplify these qualities that bishops are to be selected (cf. Tit1:6-7).

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<sup>8</sup> It is acknowledged that although marriage and childbearing is the general rule, not all women marry and bear children. For these exceptions, there are many other fruitful ministries available to them apart from doctrinal teaching and/or leadership in the church.

<sup>9</sup> The Greek word translated "man" in this verse is actually the singular indefinite pronoun **τις**, meaning 'a certain one' or 'someone'; it can be both masculine and feminine, so gender here is ambiguous.

Bishops, Elders, Pastors. The New Testament uses three terms interchangeably for the same office in the local church. Bishop is derived from the Greek word **ἐπίσκοπος**, which means 'overseer'. Elder is derived from the Greek word **πρεσβύτερος** meaning 'elder'. Pastor is derived from the Greek word **ποιμήν**, which means 'shepherd'; this word is usually translated "shepherd" in the NT, even when referring to the church office, being translated as "pastor" only in Ephesians 4:11. These three titles seem to emphasize the different responsibilities or characteristics of the same position (within the church), rather than denoting three different positions. In giving the equivalent list of qualifications for this office in his letter to Titus, Paul uses both "elder" and "bishop" in this section (Tit1:5,7).

**Modern Church Hierarchies and Governments.** The understanding of these offices, and the governmental forms/hierarchies that have developed around them in the history of the church, is in many cases unbiblical. Today, the office of Bishop is often viewed as a position of authoritative leadership over multiple local churches. Denominations or sects having an *episcopal* form of church government are those ultimately ruled by a single, preeminent Bishop (e.g., Roman Catholicism, Anglicanism, Episcopalism). In contrast, the *presbyterian* form of church government is one in which each congregation is ruled locally by a group of elders (e.g., Presbyterian and Reformed churches, most Bible churches).

- [2] The qualifications for bishop begin with the imperative "must". A bishop **must** meet the following 15 requirements (vv2-7). The requirements in v2 are positive characteristics. 1) He must be "blameless", or above reproach. The Greek word means no conduct for which someone could justifiably base an accusation (Cp., Job1:1). 2) He must be "the husband of one wife". This means, at a minimum, that a bishop must be **a man** who has never been divorced (cf. Matt19:3-9; Luk16:18; Rom7:1-3); it may actually mean that a biblical marriage is a requirement for a bishop, which would seem to be consistent with vv4-5. 3) He must be "temperate", meaning not given to excess in any aspect of life. 4) He must be "sober", meaning serious rather than cavalier. 5) He must be of "good behavior". 6) He must be "given to hospitality", or generous. 7) He must be "apt to teach". This qualification is the primary one that distinguishes a bishop from a deacon. The bishop must be gifted and able to properly and skillfully teach the Word of God, which includes the refutation of false doctrine (Cp., Tit1:9), since this will his primary duty in the church (Act6:4; Eph4:11-14; 2Tim4:1-2; 1Pet5:1-2).
- [3] The requirements in v3 are prohibitions. 8) He cannot be "given to wine" (i.e., intoxicating drink). 9) He cannot be "violent", or unable to control his temper, but rather "patient" and forbearing with others. 10) He cannot be "greedy of filthy lucre". While it is permissible, and even appropriate, to pay some bishops/elders who labor full-time in their duties (1Tim5:17; 1Cor9:6-14), the pay they receive cannot be what motivates of their service (1Pet5:2). 11) He cannot be "a brawler", meaning he cannot be the source of divisions within the body (cf. 1Tim6:4). 12) He cannot be "covetous".

- [4] Verses 4-5 make up an extended description of a single requirement; the extent of space given to it seems to emphasize its importance. 13) He must be "one that ruleth his own house well". Specifically, his home must be one in which his children are in proper submission to his leadership (which may add an additional requirement to that of marriage, namely children).
- [5] The force of logic behind this requirement is clear. All (married) men are called to exercise Biblical leadership over their wife and children within their own homes. A bishop is to be selected from those men who have demonstrated they can properly lead their own homes; a man who cannot properly lead his own "house" cannot be expected to properly lead "the church of God", which is "the house of God" (1Tim3:15).
- Divorced Men Excluded from the Pastorate. The logic behind vv4-5 is even more forceful in excluding divorced men from the pastorate than the straight-forward requirement that they be "the husband of one wife" (v2). Divorce is a catastrophic failure of marriage; a man who has failed in leading his wife in marriage is forever disqualified from leading Christ's church (cf. Eph5:25-32).
- [6] 14) He cannot be a "novice", meaning a recent convert. A Christian man must not be rapidly advanced into leadership for fear of his being "lifted up with pride", after the pattern of "the devil" who desired to "be like the Most High" (Isa14:14) only days after being created!
- [7] Finally, 15) He must "have a good report", or a good reputation, from the perspective of those outside the church. Nothing damages the testimony and ministry of a church more than leaders who are publicly disgraced.

#### QUALIFICATIONS FOR DEACONS

- [8] The list of qualifications for "deacons" (the common Greek word for 'servants') begins with "in like manner", suggesting that most of the requirements will be similar to those for a bishop. That being the case, the role/function of deacons is very different from that of bishops/elders; the ministry of the deacons is to carry out (under oversight from the elders) some of the more menial tasks in the church so that the elders can devote their time "to prayer, and to the ministry of the word" (Act6:4).

Deacons must be "grave", or serious-minded, analogous to a bishop's requirement to be "sober" (v2). Deacons cannot be "double-tongued", meaning able to be trusted in what they say, not hypocritical. Deacons must not be "given to much wine" (v3); the addition of the adverb "much", not present in the analogous requirement for a bishop (v3), may allow for somewhat more liberty in this area for deacons. As for bishops, deacons must not be "greedy of filthy lucre" (v3); there is no indication in the NT that deacons were to be paid for their service, so that this requirement would be understood as not pursuing dishonest or disreputable gain in their vocations outside the church.

- [9] Here, "mystery" has the idea of divinely revealed [New Testament] truth (cf. Rom16:25-26). Whereas the requirement for a bishop is the ability to "teach" sound doctrine (v2), the requirement for deacons is that they "hold" (i.e., believe) the divinely-revealed "faith" in a pure conscience (i.e., sincerely, without equivocation). Thus, deacons are required to understand and believe sound doctrine, but the requirement stops short of being gifted to teach it in the church.
- [10] The enumerated requirements for deacons must be "proved" in the life of a man over a period of time, demonstrating that he is "blameless", before he is selected for "the office of deacon"; this is analogous to the requirement that a bishop not be a novice (v6).
- [11] The "even so" in this verse is identical to the "in like manner" of v8. In this case, some requirements similar to those for deacons extend to the wives of deacons. They must be "grave" and "sober-minded", "not slanderers" (i.e., gossips), and "faithful in all things".
- Deaconesses? Some suggest that this verse allows for women to hold the office of deacon (i.e., deaconess). They argue that "wives" should be translated "women". There is ambiguity with the Greek word *γυνή*, which is both the word for 'woman' and 'wife' depending on context. Such an argument, however, is extremely weak. The context here is clearly a discussion of men serving as deacons; note that the subject of the verse that follows immediately (v12) is the marital state of deacons, so that an allusion to "wives" here is natural from the context. Furthermore, if v11 gives the requirements for women who would be deaconesses, they are relatively few compared to those given for men—why would not the requirements be the same for both men and women?
- [12] Deacons, for exactly the same reasons as given for a bishop (vv2, 4-5), must be married men (having not been divorced) exercising Biblical leadership within their own homes, with both wife and children in submission to that leadership.
- [13] The "office of a deacon" is a menial position. While the outside world will look on it as deserving of little respect, deacons who serve well earn for themselves "good standing" from believers in the church, and more importantly from the Lord Jesus Christ, who taught that "if any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all" (Mk9:35), and "whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all" (Mk10:44).
- [14] Paul had left Timothy behind at his departure (1Tim1:3), but it was his desire to personally return to Ephesus.
- [15] In the event that Paul was unable to return (which was apparently the case), this letter was written to Timothy so that he would have apostolic instructions on how to set in order the affairs of the church at Ephesus.

The "church of the living God" is referred to metaphorically as:  
1) "the house of God", the same expression used of the Temple in

the Old Testament, and 2) "the pillar and ground of the truth". Some have taken these architectural analogies too far (most notably the false Roman Catholic Church). First, the NT church is not a temple; it is not a place where sacrifices for sin are continued, but a place where the once and for all sacrifice of Christ is remembered (1Cor 11:23-26). Second, the church is a "pillar" and "ground" (i.e., stay, prop, support) of "the truth"; that is, the church **supports** "the truth" revealed by God in His written Word (Jn17:17), but the church is not the source of "the truth".

[16] Paul has been emphasizing to Timothy the need for sound doctrine. This verse expresses a summary of such sound doctrine that is concise, compact, but vast in scope. It is described as being "without controversy", which in effect means it should be accepted by all as true. It is characterized as a great (i.e., important) "mystery", meaning it was unknown in past ages before being divinely revealed in the days of the apostles (Rom16:25-26; Eph3:5). This 'mini' statement of faith has six assertions:

1) "God was manifest in the flesh" in the Person of Jesus Christ. This is the greatest of all mysteries in the Bible, namely the **incarnation** (Jn1:1,14; Philip2:6; Col2:9; 1Jn5:7). 1 Timothy 3:16 being such a clear assertion of the incarnation, it has been the target of perversion since the early days of the church (see 'Note' at end of this verse).

2) [Christ was] "justified in [or by] the Spirit". This refers to the **resurrection** of Christ by the Holy Spirit (Act2:24-36; Rom1:4; 8:11), which validated the whole work of Christ on earth.

Notice that (1) and (2) contrast flesh/spirit.

3) [Christ was] "seen of angels". This refers to the **exaltation** of Christ as a glorified Man above all creation, especially the angelic order (Eph1:20-22; Philip2:9-11; Heb1:6).

4) [Christ was] "preached unto the [Gentile] nations". This is the Church age mandate for the world-wide preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ (Mk16:15; Matt28:19-20; Act1:8; Coll:23).

Notice that (3) and (4) contrast angels/men (nations).

5) [Christ was] "believed on in the world". This refers to the result of the world-wide preaching of the gospel, which is that *some* from all nations of the world will believe (Jn1:12; Rev7:9).

6) [Christ was] "received up into glory". This refers to the **ascension** (and **session**) of Christ, which placed a glorified Man on the very throne of God (Mk16:19; Act1:9; Eph1:20; 4:10; Heb1:2-3; Rev3:21).

Notice that (5) and (6) contrast world/heaven.

Note on an Infamous Textual Variant. A textual variant that has extremely significant Christological ramifications occurs in this verse. In the KJV, 1 Timothy 3:16 reads "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: **God** was manifest in the flesh..."; this

is a good English translation of the Greek text as preserved in the Majority/Traditional/Byzantine family of Greek texts which represent more than 95% of all extant NT manuscripts. As such, this is an unequivocal assertion of the full deity of Jesus Christ in His incarnation. In contrast, a small minority of Greek texts (Critical/Alexandrian<sup>10</sup>) read ὅς (masculine, singular relative pronoun "who") in the place of Θεός<sup>11</sup> ("God"), which in modern translations based on the critical text gives rise to English translations such as "he appeared in the flesh" (NIV), "he who was revealed in the flesh" (NASB), or "he was manifested in the flesh" (HCSB). Serious grammatical difficulty is introduced by this variant<sup>12</sup>, which casts doubt on it from a purely grammatical point of view. Much more disturbing, however, is the apparent perversion of a major Christological passage that results from this variant.

#### CHAPTER 4

##### PRIORITIES OF THE LOCAL CHURCH AND ITS LEADERSHIP

Chapters 4 and 5 lay out priorities for the local church its leadership. Consistent with Paul's opening charge to Timothy (1Tim1:3), the very first priority given for the local church (not the seminary) is to teach doctrine and refute error. The primary activity inside the local church should be "the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry for the edifying of the body of Christ (Eph4:11-12), not the evangelization of unbelievers (which should be the primary activity of believers when they are outside the church).

##### TEACH DOCTRINE AND REFUTE ERROR

[1] As "the pillar and ground of the truth" (1Tim3:15), the church is to understand by the clear revelation of the Holy "Spirit" (through the Word of God) that Satan will increasingly use his "spirits" and "demons" to deceive men, "seducing" them to "depart from the faith". That is, false "doctrines" and their propagation within the church are not merely human error, but a systematic

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<sup>10</sup> The three principle manuscripts in the Critical/Alexandrian family are Codex Sinaiticus, Codex Vaticanus, and Codex Alexandrinus. Codex Vaticanus does not contain 1 Timothy, and Codex Alexandrinus actually reads "God", not "who"; so the support for "who" really comes primarily from Codex Sinaiticus. Though Codex Sinaiticus was a manuscript that was unknown to Erasmus, Codex Vaticanus was well known to him. Erasmus had personally studied it at the Vatican, but in preparing his printed Greek NT, Erasmus rejected Codex Vaticanus as a manuscript that had been corrupted.

<sup>11</sup> The actual difference between the two variants is often extremely minor, since in most of the manuscripts of the Byzantine family Θες (a *nomina sacra*) is used in place of Θεός, which differs from the Greek relative pronoun only by the horizontal stroke in the theta.

<sup>12</sup> If the critical reading is accepted, the *masculine* pronoun "who" does not agree in gender with its antecedent (i.e., "mystery", a *neuter* noun), which is a violation of Greek grammar (a similar grammatical error is introduced if the *Johannine Comma* of 1 John 5:7 is removed, as in the critical text). Recognizing the grammatical difficulty caused by the masculine pronoun ὅς, a few Alexandrian manuscripts remove the sigma to leave the neuter pronoun ὃ; this solves the grammatical error in the Greek, but results in the absurd English translations of "which" or "it".



attack of Satan on the church (2Cor11:3-5,13-15). Paul portrays this Satanic attack as ultimately occurring in the future (from his perspective), described as "in the latter times" (Cp., 2Tim3:1) and reaching its crescendo in the period of time immediately preceding the revelation of the Antichrist (2Thess2:3-10), and yet it had already begun even in the 1st century (2Cor4:3-4; 1Tim1:19; Jude3-4). In fact, by his use of "some" in this epistle, Paul would seem to indicate that the false teachers in Ephesus belong in this prophesied category.

**Apostasy and Apostates.** Our English word *apostasy* comes from the Greek word **ἀποστασία**, used in its verb form in this verse and translated as "depart". In Greek the word simply means 'departure', but here it is said to be a departure "from the faith", which is what our English word denotes. **Apostasy** is 'a departure from the faith'; note that the use of the article with "faith" indicates it is the content of faith, or sound doctrine, and not the act of believing that is the subject of the departure. An **apostate** is one who, in his theological beliefs, has departed from the truth of sound doctrine. There is no implication that he originally believed the truth. Thus, an apostate is not one who at one time believed the truth (and was 'saved'), but now no longer does, but rather one who believes/teaches that which is a departure from the truth of sound doctrine. By definition, apostates never believed the truth (i.e., the Biblical gospel), so were never 'saved'.

- [2] These apostates teach "lies in hypocrisy", which has the idea of attempting to present their false teaching as orthodox faith. The perfect example of this is the modern 'liberal' minister/scholar, who presents/labels himself as a Christian even though his teaching undermines the essential truths of the gospel itself (cf. 2Cor11:3-15).
- [3] The false teaching in Ephesus is an incipient stage of Greek Gnosticism attempting to intrude into Christianity (which will be seen in its more mature and crystallized form in the 2nd century). At the heart of **Gnosticism** is the dualistic belief that: 1) spirit is good, and 2) matter is evil. Thus, to be spiritual, all desires that pertain to the material/physical (especially the human body) must be denied. Here, marriage is forbidden, since the human desire for sex is evil. Similarly, one should "abstain from meats", since the desire to satisfy human appetite with pleasurable foods is evil.
- [4] Such a dualism between spirit/matter is unbiblical. There is nothing 'unspiritual' about God's physical creation, including the human body. God ordained marriage (Gen2:24), including the sexual relationship between husband and wife that comes with marriage (Heb13:4), and God permits (at least during the present age) the eating of meat (Gen9:3; Act10:9-15). Even appropriate activities can be abused (as adultery is an abuse of the sexual relationship of marriage, and gluttony is an abuse of the normal appetite for food), but as long as these pleasurable activities are "received with thanksgiving", they are not sinful.

- [5] Even normal activities, when "sanctified by the word of God and prayer" can become occasions to praise and glorify the Creator God who provided for such mundane pleasures (Act11:7-9; 1Cor10:30-31).
- [6] It is the (primary) duty of "a good minister of Jesus Christ" to teach "the brethren" (i.e., believers in the setting of the local church) such matters (2Tim2:2), even while being attentive to his own spiritual needs which should be "nourished up in the words of the faith" (i.e., study of Scripture) and "good doctrine" (Lit., 'good teaching'; probably a reference to the many instructions Timothy had received as a disciple of the Apostle Paul).
- [7] Even while Timothy/the minister is charged with teaching the truth, he is to "[refute] profane and old wives' fables"; this is an allusion to the previous reference concerning the false teaching occurring in Ephesus (see comment on 1Tim1:4). The duty of a good minister is to both teach truth and refute error. He should also "exercise" (the same word used for physical exercise) himself "unto godliness".
- [8] Here Paul is using an athletic analogy. Even as an athlete exercises his body physically, the good minister should exercise himself in godly spiritual practices. Whereas physical exercise has benefit in this life only, spiritual exercise has benefit both in "the life that now is" as well as "that which is to come".
- [9] Here Paul makes another assertion that should be accepted by all believers (Cp., 1Tim1:15; 3:13).
- [10] Namely, that he (Paul) and his ministers (e.g., Timothy) should be willing to "labor" hard, and even "suffer reproach" (i.e., undergo persecution), because in doing so they are making known to men "the living God, who is the Savior of all men, specially of those that believe". God, in the Person of Jesus Christ, is "the Savior of all men" in that He desires the salvation of all (1Tim2:4) and His work has made possible the salvation of all. Nevertheless, Christ's general work of redemption is only applied to those who exercise personal faith; to believers, He is "the Savior" in a "special" (i.e., effectual) way.

**The Extent of the Atonement.** The extent of the atonement has been the subject of debate for centuries. When Christ "died for our sins" (1Cor15:3), whose sins were these? In other words, did Christ die for the sins of all men, making all men savable (Doctrine of Unlimited Atonement), or did He die only for the sins of the 'elect', those chosen by God for salvation, making only the elect savable (Doctrine of Limited Atonement)? 1 Timothy 4:10 and 1 John 2:2 speak strongly for an Unlimited Atonement. In His death, Jesus Christ is the "Savior of all men" (1Tim4:10) because He was "the propitiation . . . for the sins of the whole world" (1Jn2:2); **the extent of the atonement is unlimited.** The work of Christ does not provide universal salvation, however, since it is applied only to those who personally believe (Jn6:40).

- [11] These truths are to be taught by Timothy and every good minister.

PERSONAL HOLINESS

- [12] In writing to the Corinthians, Paul also charged the church in Corinth that they not "despise" Timothy, should he be sent to minister to them (1Cor16:10-11). No reason is given for such a concern relative to the Corinthians, but here the concern is the "youth" of Timothy. While impossible to be dogmatic, a chronological analysis of Timothy's relationship with Paul beginning in Acts 16 could put Timothy as young as his late 20's to early 30's.
- Presumably those teaching error at Ephesus were considerably older than Timothy. In order that Timothy's authoritative correction of those older than him not be dismissed because of his relative youth, his life among the Ephesians would have to be above reproach. He (and all good ministers) must be an example to the congregation in his "word", "conduct", "love", "spirit", "faith" (no article, 'personal faith'), and "purity".
- [13] Paul hopes to return to Ephesus, although it is not clear he was able to do so. In his absence, Timothy is to make sure that the priorities of the church are "the reading [of Scripture]", "the exhortation [from Scripture]" (i.e., preaching), and "the [teaching of] doctrine [from Scripture]". These are the means by which the errors of the false teachers will be refuted.
- [14] In ministering at Ephesus, Timothy was not to "neglect" to exercise the (spiritual) "gift" he received previously at a time when "the presbytery" (i.e., group of elders) ordained him. This allusion is descriptive in nature, not prescriptive. Though the exact nature of this "gift" is not given, this exhortation is Paul's way of assuring Timothy that he has been divinely enabled to perform the work he is being charged to do.
- [15] Verse 15 is a restatement of v14 in a positive manner. Timothy is not merely to "not neglect" the exercise of his "gift" in his ministry, he is in fact to actively "meditate" upon it and the charge that Paul has given him and "give [himself] wholly to them". In doing so, it will be apparent "to all" that he is operating under the influence and power of the Holy Spirit (1Cor12:7).
- [16] This verse summarizes the teaching of vv1-15. Timothy (and every good minister) is to "take heed" (i.e., watch over, carefully guard) in two areas: 1) "thyself" (i.e., personal godliness), and 2) "the doctrine" (the teaching of Biblical truth and the refuting of error). The order of these two charges would seem to be important, as a man was only to be elevated to the office of a bishop (a teaching position) after having proved himself in the area of his personal conduct (1Tim3:2-7; Cp., Ezr7:10). By focusing on these two areas, he will be able to "save" (i.e., deliver) both himself and those in the congregation from the seducements and errors of the false teachers among them.

## CHAPTER 5

### HONOR AND RESPECT FOR SENIORS

- [1] Timothy (and every good minister) should treat the members of the congregation as he would members of his own family (Cp., Matt12:48-50). An "elder" should be treated as a "father", and "younger men, as brethren".
- [2] Similarly, "elder women" should be treated as "mothers", and "younger [women], as sisters". Additionally, interaction with the women in the congregation should be with "all purity" (note 1Tim4:12).

### HONOR AND CARE FOR WIDOWS

- [3] Throughout the Bible (OT and NT), widows are always viewed as special objects of God's mercy. Timothy (and every good minister) is charged to "honor widows" within the congregation, but special mercies (from the church as a whole) are to be extended only to those that are "widows indeed" (i.e., widows that have no family to support them).
- [4] The responsibility for the support of widows falls first to their own "children" or "nephews" (lit., 'descendants', probably meaning grandchildren); children are expected to "requite their parents" (i.e., repay them). A widow with living children and grandchildren is not a "widow indeed" (v3).
- [5] However, a widow who has no children/grandchildren is a "widow indeed". Prior to our modern era, such a woman would be "desolate", dependent entirely upon the mercy of "God" for even the necessities of life. Such a widow within the congregation, without family for support and dedicating herself wholly to the Lord's work, was worthy of the respect and support of the local church.
- [6] A widow who has not dedicated her life to godliness, but has turned to a life of profligacy (Cp., Rom8:6), should not be supported by the local church.
- [7] As in 1 Timothy 4:11, Paul commands that these instructions be taught in the local church. Here, the target audience is both the widows desiring support as well as the congregation/families who should consider such support.
- [8] Following up on v4, the care and provision of a widow falls first to her own family. For a son to neglect or refuse to support a widowed mother is tantamount to a "deni[al] of the faith"; he is "worse than an infidel" in that even unbelievers care for their own families when in need.
- [9] Paul now gives specific requirements on the part of the widow in order to be "taken into the number" of those supported by the local church. 1) A widow must be over 60 years of age (the rationale for this will be given in vv11-15). 2) She must have "been the wife of one man". This is the exact analog to the

requirement of men who would be a bishop (1Tim3:2) or deacon (1Tim3:12). This requirement certainly encompasses having been faithful to her husband, but as with the bishops/deacons it probably also similarly precludes having been divorced.

- [10] 3) She must have had a public record of "good works", including the rearing of her own children as well as service on behalf of others. The logic here is: if she did not care for her own family when she was able, why should she expect them to care for her now, and if she did not care for those in need (i.e., "strangers", "saints", "the afflicted") when she was able, why should she expect others to care for her now? The widows that are supported by the local church must be women well-known for their godly lives.
- [11] But "younger widows" (i.e., 60 or less, v9) are not to be supported, since it is a reasonable expectation that they will not devote the entirety of their remaining lives in full-time service for "Christ", but will marry again (thus, being supported by new husbands).
- [12] This verse suggests that to have been accepted for support, the widow must have first given a "pledge" to devote her life to serving Christ within the local assembly (cf. v5); for her to turn from such a pledge and marry again would be tantamount to breaking her vow.
- [13] Furthermore, it is not good for young widows to be "idle" (i.e., have so much free time on their hands since they receive their support from the church), since this will inexorably lead to temptation toward gossip and other related sins.
- [14] The verb used here (Greek, **βούλομαι**), translated "I will", most often has the meaning of 'desire to have or experience, with implication of planning accordingly'. Paul says that the expectation should be that the "younger women" who are widowed will marry again, "bear children", and devote themselves to guiding their new homes (rather than remaining in full-time service within the local church). For this reason, they should not be put on the widow's list and receive support from the local church. This course would prevent these young women from falling into the sins of v13.
- [15] Apparently the church at Ephesus was supporting young widows, who had already and obviously fallen into such sins.
- [16] Paul summarizes vv3-15. Believers are responsible to support widows within their own families, rather than expecting the local church to do so. The support of the local church is to go toward those "widows indeed" who have no family (and who meet the qualifications detailed in vv9-10).

#### HONOR AND SUPPORT FOR ELDERS (BISHOPS)

- [17] Elders in the non-technical sense (i.e., seniors) were addressed in 1 Timothy 5:1. Here, "elders" in the technical sense of leaders in the local church (i.e., bishops) are in view. These

are the men who give themselves wholly to teaching "the word and doctrine" within the local church. Such elders "that rule well" are "worthy of double honor", meaning that beyond respect and admiration they should also be supported financially.

- [18] To support his assertion that full-time elders should be supported financially, Paul quotes "scripture", specifically Deuteronomy 25:4 and Luke 10:7. Although the Apostle Paul often refused support from churches among which he ministered, when to do so would have been a burden to them (1Cor9:15-23; 1Thess2:9), he always asserted his right to such support (1Cor9:14; Gal6:6).

Gospel of Luke Regarded as Scripture. Paul's quotation from the Gospel of Luke along side his quotation from Deuteronomy, calling them collectively "scripture", is highly significant. It indicates that virtually as soon as the New Testament writings were produced they were regarded by the apostles as Scripture, equal in authority to the Old Testament (cf. 2Pet3:15-16).

- [19] Paul was well aware that leaders in the church would be the subjects of accusations, many of which would be false. An "accusation" against an "elder" should only be "received" if supported by "two or three witnesses" (Deut19:15; Matt18:16).
- [20] Those elders who are genuinely guilty of "sin" (either in a matter of personal conduct or false teaching; 1Tim4:16) should be rebuked "before all" (i.e., **publicly**).
- [21] Here Paul strongly charges Timothy to be diligent in applying these instructions without "partiality"; they must be applied consistently and equally to all. Was this not being practiced in the church at Ephesus? The solemnity of this charge is reinforced by Paul invoking the authority of "God", the "Lord Jesus Christ", and the "elect angels", all of whom are associated with righteous judgment (cf. Mk8:38; Luk9:26; Rev14:10).
- [22] As a check against the need to rebuke an elder, Timothy is reminded that elders should not be appointed until after a significant time of proving (cf. 1Tim3:6,10); one who is young, or immature in the faith, should not be elevated to a position of leadership within the church. It is suggested here that those elders who are complicit in hastily and unwisely ordaining men who are not ready to be leaders share in the blame for the negative consequences that result.
- [23] Verse 23 is a parenthetical comment to Timothy. The previous verse included the commandment to "keep thyself pure". As a counterbalance to this command, which may have led to an unreasonable degree of asceticism on Timothy's part, Paul commends him to "use a little wine" due to his "frequent" digestive difficulties, probably caused by poor drinking "water".
- [25] The train of thought from vv22 is resumed in vv24-25. All men are destined to face a coming "judgment". God sees perfectly what is not always clear to men. Some men "sin" openly, others harbor sin privately. The "good works" of some men are apparent, those of others go unnoticed. It is for this reason that church leaders must not "lay hands suddenly" (v22) on men within the church;

discerning those gifted to be leaders in the local church is a process that takes considerable time.

## CHAPTER 6

### CHARGES TO MEMBERS OF THE ASSEMBLY

Whereas the epistle up to this point has been addressed primarily to Timothy, as Paul's apostolic representative at Ephesus, and to the leadership (i.e., bishops and deacons) in the local church there, Paul now closes the letter with instruction/warnings/charges that are directed toward ordinary members of the congregation, including slaves, their masters, and the rich.

#### TO SLAVES/MASTERS

There were as many as 60 million slaves in the Roman Empire (perhaps 20% of the population) of the first century. It was uncommon for slaves and masters to interact socially, but with the growth of Christianity it became increasingly common within the church.

- [1] Christian "servants" (i.e., slaves) were to "honor" their (unbelieving) "masters". Failure to do so would lead these unbelievers to think that this new Christian faith produced irresponsible, lazy, and worthless laborers, such that "the name of God and His doctrine" (i.e., Christianity) would be "blasphemed". History records that Christian slaves were prized above all others, and brought higher prices at auctions, because of their reputation for loyalty and hard work.
- [2] Even more so in the case of "believing masters", since as believers they were "faithful and beloved" [to God?], also being "partakers of the benefit" (i.e., salvation). Apparently there were both slaves and masters present in the church at Ephesus, so Timothy was to "teach and exhort" along these lines.

Application. While unbelieving critics of the Bible delight in pointing out that the practice of slavery is nowhere condemned (explicitly) in Scripture, it is a fact of history that slavery has been abolished in every society where Christianity has become prevalent (whereas this is **not** true of Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, or any other pagan religion). Notwithstanding, the NT teachings on the relationships between master/slave can generally be applied to those between employer/employee.

#### TO THE ONE WHO WOULD BE GODLY

- [3] The primary problem at Ephesus related to individuals within the church who "teach otherwise" (i.e., contrary to Paul's teaching from the Bible), the same Greek word used of false doctrine in 1 Timothy 1:3; Paul now directs his instructions directly toward them. False teaching cannot produce genuine "godliness", only "the words of our Lord Jesus Christ" and "the doctrine [from Scripture]" can do that. This is why teaching and **learning doctrine is practical.**

- [4] The false teachers were motivated by pride (false self-worth), but in fact they "[know] nothing" (about sound, Biblical doctrine); this reiterates 1 Timothy 1:7. Rather than edifying the saints (Eph4:12), their teaching was generating "questions" (i.e., doubts, skepticism) and "disputes", which resulted in "envy, strife, railings, evil suspicions" within the church; according to the teaching of Jesus Himself, such fruit should be recognized to be the ministry of false prophets (Matt7:15-23).
- [5] These false teachers are men who have "corrupt minds" (rather than the mind of Christ; 1Cor2:16). They are "destitute of the truth" (which comes **only** from the Word of God; Jn17:17). Their doctrine presumes "that gain is godliness"; this is pragmatism, which makes virtue dependent upon success<sup>13</sup> (subjectively defined). Furthermore, they were motivated to become teachers for financial profit; note that the qualifications for teachers (bishops) given by Paul in this epistle make clear this cannot be their motivation (1Tim3:3). From these the believer is commanded to "withdraw thyself", to separate from the false teachers (Cp., Rom16:17).
- [6] As is so frequently the case, the truth is the exact opposite of what unbelief asserts. In v5, the false teachers asserted that "gain is godliness", but the truth is "**godliness** with contentment **is great gain**".
- [7] Riches/possessions (i.e., circumstances) in this world are temporal; they have no lasting value. They certainly do not contribute to godliness of the believer.
- [8] This is not to imply that the believer does not have genuine needs, such as "food" and "raiment" (not necessarily exhaustive, we could add shelter?), for which he must be concerned and personally labor, but that when these basic needs have been met he should be "content" (Philip4:11-12), not requiring more than this for joy in this present life.
- [9] For the believer to be consumed by a desire to "be rich" in this present life will inevitably lead to "temptation[s]" and "snare[s]", which if pursued will result in his spiritual "destruction".
- [10] The sin of covetousness or greed ("the love of money") is a sin that necessarily leads to many others ("all kinds of evil"). It draws the believer away from "the faith" and tempts him to accept false doctrine (note that virtually all of today's mega-churches promote some kind of 'prosperity gospel'). This can only result in "many sorrows" for the believer.
- [11] The "man of God" is to "flee" from all such temptations and rather pursue "**righteousness**" (according to God's standard), "**godliness**" (i.e., sanctification, or growing in personal holiness), "**faith**"

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<sup>13</sup> Such today is the foundation of false teachers of the so-called 'prosperity gospel'. They teach that God wants a believer to be rich/happy/healthy; thus, one who is rich/happy/healthy by definition is under the blessing of God, and the one who is not is being disciplined by God for some sin in his life, or lack of faith, etc.



(with no article, personal trust in God and His Word), "**love**" (for each other, the mark of a Christian; Jn15:12), "**patience**" (or perseverance; Gal6:9; 1Cor15:58), and "**meekness**" (or willful submission to proper authority, patterned after Jesus Christ; Matt11:29; Philip2:5-8).

- [12] As in 1 Timothy 1:18, the life of the believer is again compared to warfare. The believer in this life is to "fight the good fight of [**the**] faith"; he is to "earnestly contend for **the** faith" (Jude3). At stake is "eternal life", since the gospel of the false teachers is another gospel (2Cor11:3-4), one that leads those who receive it to damnation (Gal1:6-9).
- [13] Here occurs Paul's most forceful "command" of the epistle; use of the singular pronoun ("thee") indicates it is directed personally to Timothy. Summoned as 'two witnesses' (Deut19:15; Matt18:16), Paul calls on "God" in His role as Creator of "all things" and "Christ Jesus" as the pre-eminent faithful witness (Heb3:1-2), even before "Pontius Pilate" who would have released Him had He softened His testimony (Jn18:37-38).
- [14] The "commandment" which Timothy is to "keep" is that of v. 12, to "fight the good fight of **the faith**". Namely, to above all proclaim and defend sound doctrine (Jude3) throughout this present age, "until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ".
- [15] Earlier in Paul's ministry he had expressed the expectation that Christ's return would occur during his own lifetime (cf. 1Cor15:51-52; 1Thess4:15,17); now, as the end of his life draws near, he concedes that the Lord's return would take place "in his times". As in 1 Timothy 1:17, Paul again erupts in a spontaneous doxology to the Lord Jesus Christ (v14), who is both the "blessed" (i.e., omni-beneficent) and "only Potentate" (Greek, **δυναστης**, a sovereign Ruler), the "King of kings, and Lord of lords" (the repetition of a substantive in the genitive is a Hebraism expressing a superlative; i.e., greatest of all kings, greatest of all lords).
- [16] Continuing, the Lord Jesus Christ alone possesses "immortality" (i.e., the divine attribute of eternality; Exod3:14; Jn8:58), He dwells in "light which no man can approach" (Cp., Dan2:22), and whom no man has ever seen in His full divine essence (Jn1:18); of particular note, these are divine qualities most often attributed to God the Father in the OT, but are here attributed to the Lord Jesus Christ (Jn10:30).

#### TO THE RICH

- [17] The charge (i.e., warning) to those believers who are "rich in this age" (emphasizing the temporality of riches) is that they not be "high-minded" (Philip2:3), nor trust in their "riches", which are "uncertain" (Cp., Luk12:16-21), but rather to trust in God as the source of "all things", and "with whom is no variableness" (Jas1:17).

- [18] Rather, believers should be "rich in good works", always "ready [and "willing"] to distribute" from out of their abundance to those in need.
- [19] By so doing, their "riches" can be credited toward "treasure in heaven" (Matt6:19-21); thus, by using their wealth to do good during this present age, their temporal riches can be exchanged for "eternal" rewards<sup>14</sup>.

TO TIMOTHY

- [20] And finally, to Timothy, Paul charges him to "keep" (i.e., carefully guard) what has been "committed to [his] trust", namely the revelation of divine truth given by God through the Apostle Paul. In guarding sound doctrine, he is to avoid "profane and vain babblings" (i.e., idle and/or trivial talk about matters that are not profitable) as well as teaching that is presented as "science" (i.e., knowledge), but which is in "opposition" to truth revealed by God in His Word. In Timothy's local context, such "[knowledge] falsely so called" was probably a reference to the teachings of the Gnostics (who professed to possess a 'higher' spiritual knowledge), though in our contemporary context could equally be applied to the assertions of so-called modern science (which are founded on the presupposition of materialism/naturalism and consequently exclude revelation from God as [the] source of truth-by definition; cf. Jn17:17; Col2:2-3).
- [21] Tragically, those who fail to avoid such unprofitable activities are often led into "[error] concerning the faith". Paul closes this epistle as he closes all his epistles, commending to the reader "grace and peace" (cf. 2Thess3:17-18) and affirming the truth of his inspired words with "Amen" (Hebrew, 'truth').

--- S.D.G. ---

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<sup>14</sup> Martyred missionary Jim Elliot famously said, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose".

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