

The Chapel Ministry



CLEARCREEK
CHAPEL

Tested Truths from 1st Timothy

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*S*avoring the *S*upremacy of *G*od
*S*tudying the *W*ord of *G*od
*S*haping the *P*eople of *G*od
*S*preaching the *G*ospel of *G*od

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Introduction

The letters of Paul to Timothy and Titus are personal and pastoral. Timothy and Titus were men who were charged with challenging responsibilities that stretched their graces and character. Paul dictated these letters in a rush of carefully thought out ideas articulated with forceful expression and tender affection. It is evident that his concern is not just for the situations, but also for these men whose lives are poured out drink offerings in sacrificial ministry.

These letters were sent in the context of dealing with the error that plagued the church in its first generation and often ever since in different forms. There were those who were attempting to use the Old Testament Law in the church as it was used for the Jews before Christ. This error was marked by intellectualism and intellectual arrogance, fables and genealogies, asceticism as its teaching, immorality as its practice and a denial of the resurrection as its primary heresy. Some have tried to show that what Paul was attacking Gnosticism. More likely, the arrows that Paul is firing at the errors of his day hit the target of heresies in a later time (including our own) because both share some of the same errors.

1st Timothy was written by the Apostle Paul around 63-64 AD from Macedonia (1 Timothy 1:3). He wrote to Timothy, his dear son in the faith and co-laborer in ministry who had been left in Ephesus to serve in the church there. Paul writes to give Timothy instruction on how to govern the church, encouragement to sustain his faltering spirit, direction in dealing with destructive errors and their proponents and guidance on proper worship and order in the church.

The Christian Message: Truth

1 Timothy 1:1-20

Introduction

What is the Christian message? Answers in today's world abound. It is about our psychological brokenness and a gospel of therapy. It is about our poverty and sickness and a gospel of health and wealth. It is about our aloneness and a gospel of human relationships. It is about our ignorance a gospel of education and improvement. It is about our social breakdown and a gospel of Law.

But all of this is not the Christian message. The Christian message is about God. It is from God's Word, about our sin against God, about His salvation and sovereign rule, about the grace in the present and the glory to come. At the center of the Christian message is God. And it is truth. It is not an opinion. It is not a suggestion. It is not an interpretation. It is not a truth among many. It is THE TRUTH. And guarding the deposit of truth is what this epistle is all about.

Salutation The letters of Paul's day always opened with the writer identifying himself and his recipients. Paul often uses these salutations to set the tone. So he does here. He is writing as one who is an apostle by God's royal decree, a decree from the God who saves and the Lord Jesus who is our hope. We will find then that authoritative instruction that imparts faith in Christ, as our hope will figure large in the letter.

The immediate recipient is Timothy who is identified as a genuine, legitimate child in the sphere of the faith. Behind Timothy stands the congregation at Ephesus who will hear, if not the letter itself read to them, the instruction in it preached to them by Timothy. And then us: we must hear this letter in a real and personal way. We are deeply prone to distance ourselves from the truth of the text by changing the "you and I" to "they and them".

As we study this book together, may the grace, mercy and peace with which Paul greeted Timothy be our portion as well.

The Problem of False Teachers

(v.3-11)

All churches face the problem of error and false doctrine. The church at Ephesus faced this. Upon Paul's departure, Timothy was left there to confront the false teachers and their teaching. This is ever the problem and the solution. Error is always taught and learned from false teachers. Error must always be confronted by godly men and women who teach truth.

How is this done? It is done through the kind of authoritative instruction in truth that is the voice of God commanding from the Word. It is a declaration of truth that is clear and commanding. This was Timothy's responsibility and Titus' imperative, "These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you or think their way around you." (Titus 2:15)

Their Characteristics Examined

(v.3-7)

The symptoms of those who turn away by fruitless discussion to teach strange errors rather than being entrusted with sound doctrine.

The error these men taught is called "strange or false doctrine". It was something different from the Apostolic teaching. In our words, it was different from the Scriptures and therefore false. Yet this false doctrine was being taught from the Law. As we so often find today, the Scriptures are taken and misused to teach false doctrine. So the task is to expound and explain the Scriptures correctly.

Their teaching of error came because they occupied themselves with myths and stories. These fables were like what Jewish teachers did with taking the genealogies of the Old Testament and fabricating narratives about people in the genealogies. This sort of approach merely becomes speculative. When our teaching is speculative and false doctrine, then there can be no grace-filled provision of God by faith.

Not what is Paul's aim in giving Timothy and us this authoritative instruction to confront false teachers? Here is to be the ever-present objective of Biblical declaration and confrontation (v.5). We ever aim for love:

- From a pure heart – We so want to see Christians whose lives are love lived out from hearts whose thinking and motivations are pure and holy.
- From a good conscience – We desire that you have consciences that are Biblically informed, unscarred by calluses and sensitive to truth. We aim for the quality of knowing oneself without shame.
- From a genuine faith – Only truth can be believed with a faith that is genuine. We aim for you to have an un-hypocritical faith – one that is real and genuine and not phony.

So Paul modeled this: these were his aims in his instruction to Timothy just as Timothy was to have these objectives in his authoritative instruction to the false teachers. In confronting them with truth and the command to stop teaching error, love from a pure heart, the cultivation of a good conscience and a genuine faith would develop by that very ministry.

This is the dynamic of all Biblical discipleship. We declare to you the truth in the areas you have learned and live error with these God-honoring objectives in mind. This is my expectation in preaching and teaching. O, that God's grace would enable and sustain love in purity, good consciences and authentic belief that issues in obedience.

Verses 6-7 show us how important these objectives are for when men wander away from them they turn to fruitless discussion. When one deviates from true doctrine, one misses God's destination (Hendrickson). They lost sight of the purposes of God's grace by faith (v.4) and objectives of sound teaching (v.5). Therefore, they turn to useless discussion and meaningless talk. In the church at Ephesus, this useless discussion and speculation was being driven by a desire for recognition as authorities in the Law. They wanted to be the resident experts while they actually had no real knowledge of the subject they so confidently declaimed on.

How often this is true. It can be seen in religious books, media and even in preaching. There is a hungering after affirmation and recognition that fuels useless discussion and speculation about things in Scripture that people claim to be experts on and yet have no real knowledge of. So they become false teachers who are a danger to the church. And when we confront people like this we must do so with love from a pure heart with a good conscience having authentic faith ourselves in the hope that God's grace will work these things in them as well.

The Correction Explained

(v.8-11)

They want to teach the Law and yet do not understand it. As a result they are misusing and misapplying the Law. This must be corrected. That is what Paul is about in these verses.

Now I want us to think about this at both levels. Observe that what Paul is doing when he writes these verses. It is not merely enough to say, "You are teaching error. You must stop." The authoritative declaration must not only identify the error but also should teach the truth in its place. Where the false teachers were trying to apply the Law to believers, Paul said its proper use was for unbelievers and the lawless. So we must as well. All through our confrontation of error and false teaching must run a "not that, but rather this."

So it is not enough to merely declare with authority that self-esteem is false teaching and error. We must not only identify it and its proponents, but we must also teach the truth it is an aberration of. Quite simply, what the Bible calls for is an all encompassing esteeming of God in Christ. The self-centeredness of self-esteem must be replaced with a great Christ-centeredness that treasures and values His great worth. And so it is with all error. Answer it with truth. Do not just say what is not to be believed, but what is to be taught and believed and lived instead.

Further, I want to draw your attention to the truth Paul was teaching. We need this word today. In the ever-deepening wickedness of the world around us, there is an ever-growing motivation to teach believers to live by the Law. But this is an illegitimate use of the Law. Its purpose, according to Paul, is for the lawless. In a world where sin and evil are everywhere, we must preach the Law to the lost. Further, it is not enough to preach about the lost using the Law to believers. I must actually aim the Law at the wicked. Paul uses a set of couplets to identify those to whom the Law speaks. Some commentators have associated Paul's words with the two sections in the 10 Commandments. Paul expands its content to include any sound teaching based on the glorious gospel or the gospel of the glory of God.

Since these categories of sin characterize the lawless, they must not be the practice of believers. This is one of several of these kinds of lists in the New Testament. Look at how these categories are such an accurate description of our own sinful culture. All around us are people who are lawless and rebellious, who are openly hostile to God and sinners. While in college, I worked with a man whose unholiness would make your skin crawl. There are the profane – people whose sin soils all they come in contact with like snails leaving their slimy trail. The news daily brings us stories of kids killing their parents, of murders. Our immorality is public reaching from the lowest to the highest offices in the land. Homosexuals and lesbians are open and aggressive in their recruitment and their attacks on purity. Child stealers are like predators stalking our young. Advertising and selling have become so jaded with lying that we hardly recognize it anymore. Lying and perjury now are skills required for any success in many vocations. And we are supposed to be living in a country and culture under the rule of law!

O, we have been entrusted with awesome and wonderful truth. We have been given the good news of the glory of the blessed or happy God. This gospel and this glory and this blessed God are the standard for true and holy doctrine. The Law must be preached to sinners like this. You must understand that you and all your actions are loathsome to God. Even your righteousness must be shown to be filthy rags. (By the way, that phrase in Isaiah refers to used menstrual rags. So we

must get people to see even the best of their good works are nothing but used tampons in God's sight.) But then we must proclaim the gospel, the good news of a saving Sovereign who died a sacrificial and substitutionary death to suffer for the sin of those who believe. We must proclaim the good news that the wrath of God has been turned away from those who will believe the truth about the death and resurrection of Jesus and will bow to Jesus Christ as sovereign Lord over their life. We must proclaim the good news of peace with God, pardon from sin and grace for purity and godly living.

The solution to false teaching is truth. When error abounds, we must *teach sound doctrine*.

The Example for Faithful Servants

(v.12-17)

Paul's testimony in this paragraph is a model of what a godly teacher ought to be. There is a sense in which he is placing his own life and ministry in stark contrast to that of the false teachers. His primary focus is on the mercy he has received from God and the glory he must return to God.

In the Contrasts Described

(v.12-13a)

Paul's testimony is powerfully simple: I who was once a sinner of the worst sort have been saved to serve, not on my own, but by the strength God gives. This is so in spite of the horrendous nature of his past as one who violently opposed the church, even to hunting down and putting Christians to death. Here is what the Law must do: it must humble proud religious hearts and bring self-righteous sinners to the end of their goodness. That grace has done this work is evident in the gratitude by which it is expressed.

In the Mercy Received

(v.13b-16)

What was it that turned "the persecutor into a preacher, the murderer into a minister and missionary?" (Wiersbe)? It was the mercy of God. That such mercy should be given to such a sinner! (Hendrickson) God is magnified when His grace and mercy are made much of.

Is Paul making a connection between the ignorance of his unbelief and the mercy God shows? Does God show mercy *because* men are ignorant of the Christ in their unbelief? Does mercy come to those who are ignorant *because their ignorance allows mercy to overlook justice*? No, we are all shown mercy because our unbelieving ignorance does not allow mercy to excuse us. It takes mercy for God to move on our behalf.

That is why it is a super abundance of grace that operated from the wellspring of God's mercy. Paul loves to put the superlative in front of what God does. Along with the more than abundant grace comes a

Christ-centered faith and love. While he was once a persecutor of Christ, the mercy of God and super-abounding grace of God was poured out so that he had faith in and love towards Christ.

Is this the essence of our testimony *even when we must confront error with authoritative instruction*? Do you see how Paul, the apostle with God's calling, appointing, entrusting and enabling still views himself as the chief of sinners (v.16)? Is this absolutely so? Or is this hyperbole that articulates Paul's right view of himself, a view all of us are to have as well. I think everyone of us ought to be able to genuinely make the same statement about ourselves: I am (present tense) the foremost of sinners. This is the truth of the gospel: Jesus Christ came to save sinners. This is the experience of the gospel: I am the worst of those sinners he came and saved.

For Paul, the mercy that saved such a sinner as he, is a public demonstration of the patience and long-suffering of God. It fleshes out the truth of the saving mercy of God in a living model to those who were to be saved. Not that we all are brought through the same life-experience, but we are all saved through the same gospel truth. So we can hold up the life and testimony of Paul to encourage us in our giving and living out the Word.

In the Praise Offered

(v.17)

Here is truth and sound doctrine articulated in exuberant doxology. This is what doctrine and duty are all aimed at. To this kind of God: on who is an immortal, invisible and eternal King be honor and glory. This is the primary objective of life and ministry. God exalting worship makes Him look large in every aspect of our lives. It is filled with content and lifted with praise and passion.

Beloved, we can only truly see ourselves and the way we are when we have bowed to who God is and what He is truly like. In the failure of my sin and the frailty of my life, in the wonder of His mercy and the power of His saving and sending and sustaining grace, how great is the King of the universe whose life knows no death, whose habitation is eternity, whose essence is invisible, who is the only God. To which Paul, and Timothy and all God's people say, "Amen".

Here is the soul-searching pattern left for us by a humble servant of God. We must *proclaim the gospel* for the glory of God. And when we do there will be no self-esteem and pride. Rather there will be writ large in our praise the esteem and love of Christ in His mercy and the purposes of His grace.

The Exhortation to Personal Diligence

(v.18-20)

In the light of both the possibility of failure and the pattern of faithfulness, we must be diligent to pursue our doctrine and our duty.

The Warfare to be Waged

(v.18-19a)

Paul was entrusted with the gospel (v.11) so he entrusts Timothy with this command (v.18). If Paul has been faithful in the gospel, Timothy must be faithful in the fight. Paul has been appointed by God's choice and calling. Timothy has been affirmed by the preaching and prophesying of the elders. Both are sent out onto the battlefield to fight for the truth.

But there is also the great warfare inside to be waged. Timothy must fight the good fight all the while holding true to the faith (doctrine) and maintaining a good conscience (duty). This rings so true in the whole letter. Personal discipline leads to public profit. We must take heed to ourselves, then to our flock. There must be purity in life before there can be real power in the pulpit. There must be self-confrontation before there can be effective discipleship.

The Warning to be Heeded

(v.19b-20)

"Look at how important this is," Paul says to Timothy. Then as now, the rocks and shoals and reefs were littered with the shipwreck of some who have rejected the importance of doctrine and duty, of keeping faith true and consciences clear. Among these generally, Timothy needs to think about Hymenaeus and Alexander in particular. These were men they both knew. Their errors were blasphemous. Their obstinance had resulted in their being under apostolic and church discipline. Learn from them, Timothy! Learn from them beloved.

May we fight the good fight in our place and time. May we be vigilant for truth and diligent in our lives. Pay attention to the disciplines of God in the lives of those shipwrecked by rejecting sound doctrine. Be warned that God is serious about His glory and the truth that makes it clear. Be warned that God is serious about the devotion and duty of His people. Understand that being in a gathered church among God's people is to be highly prized and not treated lightly.

Conclusion

Hold true to the faith and maintain a good conscience. Confront error and false doctrine aiming at love from pure hearts, good consciences and authentic faith. Remember your sinful past in such a way that instills wonder at His choice and calling, fosters gratitude for His mercy and spurs diligence in doctrine and duty. Savor the supremacy of God in the good news of the glory of the blessed God.

Christian Worship: Purity

1 Timothy 2

Introduction

Paul has a great concern for the church in its life together. We have seen that already as he has instructed Timothy to authoritatively confront the false teachers who were leading people astray with strange doctrine. Now he turns his concern for the church on the effects that teaching has had in the public worship and order in the congregation.

Paul's approach is important for us as well. When we see wrong behavior, we need find the root and cause of that behavior. The thoughts and ideas and "teachings" that are the basis for that conduct must be dealt with first. Often, it must be dealt with by confronting and silencing those who are teaching the error.

Men – Anger and Dissension Affecting Prayer (v.1-8)

We know that the church at Ephesus had been caught up in endless discussions and fruitless debates (1:1-7) focusing on Old Covenant genealogies, fables and Law. This error seems to have narrowed the congregation's view of outreach. It had caused dissension, division and strife. This conflict, as all relational conflict does, affected their praying. Conflict between husbands and wives hinders prayer; conflict between brothers and sisters in the church hinders prayer.

What is being written here in chapter 2 is connected by the "therefore" to the authoritative instruction of chapter 1 that is fighting the good fight.

The Command for their Praying (v.1-2)

Praying is one of those Christian activities that we talk about doing while often not really doing. It is much easier to discuss prayer than to pray. So Paul begins by turning the spotlight on prayer and on praying men.

The Scope of their Praying

Their praying is various in its kind. They are to be entreating, praying, interceding and giving thanks. The variety of praying here reflects the subtleties and nuances of the way we ought to be praying. At times, we ought to feel greatly the intensity of others needs. At times it is the regular discipline of praying from our requests. Often it must be a coming alongside of others so as to represent their needs and interests before our Sovereign God. And always, we must find the effect of the grace bringing us to pray in gratitude and thanksgiving.

The narrowness of the Jewish perspective arising from the genealogies and the Law seems to have closed the circle of whom they prayed for. So the exhortation here is to a prayer for more than just my circle. It is a reaching outward by prayer to all kinds of people. For the church at Ephesus, this meant praying for the Roman government and Nero. It meant praying for the city government. It mean also praying for a church leadership that was rocked by the dissension and error that Paul predicted would come.

For us this means that we must pray regularly for President Clinton and Mr. Gore, for our senators and representatives. We must pray for our Governor and our Mayor. And we must not just talk about it, we must do it.

The Effect of their Praying

Why is this important? Paul identifies the aim and purpose of this kind of praying.

- That Christians might live quiet and tranquil lives with their governments who provide for the safety and peace of their people. The freedom and relative peace and safety of America comes partially because of the regular praying by God's people. To the same degree, a loss of that safety and peace will be our responsibility as well. Beloved, we tend to criticize and curse the government we have; maybe what we need more of is prayer and thanksgiving: prayer that God would preserve and thanksgiving for the peace and freedom we have.
- That Christians might live quiet and tranquil lives with their brothers and sisters in the faith. The word quiet refers to the peace that comes from a lack of outward disturbance and tranquil to the peace that comes from settled, inward hope. So the kind of praying here for all that are in leadership, including their church leadership, allows the church to live together in a tranquility and peace not disturbed by unnecessary dissension and division.

The Corrective for their Thinking

(v.3-7)

Paul does not call for this kind of broad Christian activity without grounding it in solid Biblical thinking. The error they have heard must be corrected by truth. The scope of their praying is widened, not just by sheer command, but also by Biblical reasons grounded in person and work of Christ. The prayer he urges must arise from thinking rightly about God and salvation.

Exegetical Problem What does *all* mean in this paragraph? I could spend a whole message teasing out all the interpretative pitfalls in this text and others like it.

- What it cannot mean – the all's in this paragraph cannot mean every single human being. That would mean that we should be

praying for every single king, president, senator, governor, etc and etc (v.2) not to mention all 6 billion people on earth (v.1). That would mean that God desires or wishes for something in salvation that is not happening (v.4) [that may not be such a great problem]. That would mean that many people who had been ransomed by Jesus would go to hell or that no one goes to hell because all are ransomed (v.6).

- What it does mean – the all's in this paragraph are inclusive of all kinds of people: common people, kings, leaders, Nero (Clinton), Gentiles and all people groups. So we should not be narrow in our praying, but interceding for all kinds of people because God desires (and possibly willed) that all kinds of people be saved. Jesus has died for all kinds of people and God has called Paul to be an apostle to all kinds of people including the Jews.

So the universal scope of our praying is grounded:

In the Character of our God

(v.3-4)

God is not just the God of the Jews, or the God of church at Ephesus. He is not just the God of Americans or whites or the common people. He is not just the God of Reformed people or Biblical counseling people. That we pray widely and globally is good and acceptable to the God whose desire and decree extends salvation and truth to all the reaches of humanity.

In the Nature of our Salvation

(v.5-6)

That we pray widely and evangelistically is because there is no other means to the salvation of men and women, boys and girls across the globe. The fact that there is only one God and one Mediator is the fuel for missions and mission praying. We pray for governmental officials, and people in New York and Africa and India and Saudi Arabia because the gods and idols they worship and pursue are not leading them to the one true God. So we must pray and go and tell the good news of the one Sovereign Creator God who has given His Son as the mediator who gave Himself as a ransom for sin.

In the Aim of Paul's Ministry

(v.7)

That we pray widely and evangelistically is encouraged by the apostolic call and commission of Paul. He expects that we along with the church at Ephesus, will begin *to pray* for all kinds of people all over the world because he has been appointed *to preach* to all kinds of people all over the world.

The Consequence in their Worshipping (v.8)

Notice what it is that Paul wants. His desire is that *the men in every place, not having wrath or dissension, to pray*. I see two serious matters to reflect on.

- The importance of men praying. We tend to think of this as a women's ministry. We at the Chapel are not exempt: there is a women's prayer ministry; there is no men's prayer ministry. The Bible constantly stresses the importance of prayer. It is our aim here to make prayer the visible engine of all our efforts at ministry.
- The importance of dealing with conflict. It is not just that men should pray – they must be holy men, men not characterized by wrath (a sustained and burning anger) and dissension (divisive and destructive dialog). The error that had been taught was causing dissension and conflict that eroded the health and power of godly praying.

So what does this mean for us in practical terms?

- In February, I plan to do a series on handling conflict. We will equip you by ministering the Word to you in this whole area.
- Men, let us pray. We have opportunity already at SALT and Iron Sharpeners. I have determined to be here at church on Sunday Mornings at 8:15 and to open my office for men to meet together for prayer.
- It is imperative that we, all of us, individually and collectively, begin to regularly and systematically pray for our governmental leaders. It may well be that God will see fit in His mercy to yet give us people in government who will allow us to live a quiet and peaceful life.
- We must widen the scope of our praying so that the gospel will go by missionaries who tell to all the people groups.

Women – Dress and Authority Affecting Purity (v.9-15)

Further, the false teachers who were all men (1 Timothy 1:20; 2 Timothy 2:17-18; 4:14), were influencing the women with their errors and heresies (1 Timothy 5:11-15; 2 Timothy 3:5-7). Their heresies were encouraging women to immodesty in dress and improper seeking of positions of teaching and office bearing.

The Requirements in their Appearance (v.9-10)

From what Paul writes, it is apparent that there were women in the church who attracting attention to themselves and asserting their independence from authority by the way they dressed. There was a

great emphasis being placed on the outward appearance. This has been a perennial problem in the church. A measure of a woman's position is not in how she dresses, but in how she ministers. The standard is not in the wonderfulness of her garments, but in the goodness of her works.

The Contrasts that Explain the Requirements

(v.9-10a)

In the same way that it is important that Christian men pray publicly with holy lives, it is important that Christian women appear in worship in modest and discreet dress. The *likewise* makes his addressing of women's attire as important a subject in the church as men praying without wrath and dissension.

What is it that Paul is addressing here? How does obedience to this look in our own congregation and services?

The emphasis is on dressing in such a way as not to draw attention to themselves. It is characterized as with modesty and discreetly. The words point to a way of dressing that is neither overtly sexual nor extravagant. Further, this proper dress is not to focus on the outward by means of elaborate hair do's or expensive jewelry or lavishly expensive clothing. Why are these things pointed to? Because these women had been affected by the errors of the false teachers in what the total equality of the sexes implied. In their day, just as in ours, there was a teaching that denied the role based relationships and espoused a total equality between men and women that wiped out authority structures. So these women were asserting their independence from the authority of their husbands and their church leaders by dressing as they did.

So for us today, the lesson speaks to us at two levels.

- Ladies, be sure that your dress and appearance is not designed to draw attention to yourself in an immodest or indiscreet way. I cannot define modesty in absolute terms. In fact, attire that is modest on one lady may be immodest on another because of the lady's attitude and the way she carries herself. And teens, give attention to this. Is the way you dress designed to draw attention to yourself? By the way, it is possible to dress so impossibly ugly and anti-culturally so as to have the same, calling attention-to-self effect.
- Much too much stock is put in the outward appearance of our dress. I respect the convictions of those who believe in dressing in their Sunday best in order to honor God. My problem is that there is not solid Biblical evidence that would make that conviction necessary for others. Often such statements of piety are merely cover ups for expensive, attention getting clothes. We don't have this much here and so I speak this only by way of warning. May God preserve us from a sort of Christian clothing one-upmanship.

Put the emphasis on where it belongs: Biblical godliness that pursues good works for God's glory. The most attractive thing about a Christian lady ought to be her heart for God lived out through good works.

The Claim that Establishes the Requirements

(v.10b)

Paul's great concern here is for women to reflect the true aims of godliness. Good works with modest, discreet attire is proper, right and good for those who make a claim to godliness. This is set over against the claim for godliness in asserting independence, liberty and equality

The Roles in their Submission

(v.11-15)

Now, in our day, this is one of the most controversial texts in the New Testament. Much has been written and spoken about this paragraph. In some cases, it has been used to keep women from legitimate ministry. In others, it has been misinterpreted (or re-interpreted) so as to have no real meaning or application to us. The objections to what the text is saying are almost always motivated by a prior belief that contradicts what the text says. The objectors come to the text already believing that women can teach and exercise authority over men in the church and are looking for ways to maintain their belief in the face of what Paul is saying. I want to indicate what those objections are and answer them so that we can work through the text Biblically.

- Objection #1** Paul was simply wrong. He was culturally conditioned to lessen the role and significance of women. Some have even said that Paul disliked women. Our response is simply that this is an attack, not on Paul, but on the integrity of the Scriptures.
- Objection #2** The text does not teach what it appears to. One reinterpretation makes this a prohibition against wives (instead of women) teaching and exercising authority over husbands (instead of men). Others argue that the woman may teach as long as she is under her authority, for example her pastor or husband is present (Kay Arthur). These are simply poor exegesis of the text itself.
- Objection #3** The prohibition here applied only to the church to which it was written or the time in which it was written and does not apply to us. The situation was only a local problem or a cultural problem that we don't face today. Our response is that Paul expects that the principles and practices of this text (v.8) to be practiced everywhere. Further, Paul does not ground his prohibition in passing cultural realities, but in creation and pre-fall realities.

Now, let's see what the text is saying...

The Precepts that Describe their Role

(v.11-12)

The two phrases here are strongly connected together. You cannot have the one without the other. And an attempt to violate one almost

always leads to a violation of the other. What Paul is writing here is not a dislike or a denigration of women, but is a description of their role in the church as it relates to teaching and office bearing.

First, he addresses the manner in which women are to learn. The command here is not that women must learn, although that is assumed that women will be under the teaching of the Word. The command is how they will behave while the Word is being taught. They must *quietly receive instruction*. It seems that the women were interrupting the teaching of the Word with argumentative questions and dissension. Rather, they must submissively receive the instruction of the Word.

Second, he addresses the exclusion of women from teaching over men and exercising authority over men. Now women are allowed (even commanded) to teach in Titus 2. What is in view here is the teaching of the Word to or over men. They also are not to exercise (possibly, usurp) authority over men. The phrase "over men" qualifies both teach and exercise authority. Women may lead ministry, but they may not bear the office of an elder. Further, the exercise of authority has teaching and instruction in view since the contrast is "to remain quiet". So what does this refer to? What is being prohibited to us in our own congregation?

Christian women show submission to the leadership in their homes and churches (1) by quietly sitting under the Word without interrupting and arguing and (2) by not teaching/preaching/instructing from the Word to men and (3) by not governing or exercising authority over men (possibly, as an elder). This is not allowed or permitted. However else this may be understood, we will not allow a lady to preach or teach in a mixed group nor will a lady be placed in a governing office, especially that of eldership.

The Principles that Define their Role

(v.13-14)

Why is this so? What possible justification can there be for this prohibition? Paul tells us in verses 13-14. The prohibition of 11-12 is because of the principles of 13-14. Now fasten your seat belts and get on your crash helmets. What Paul is about to say so seriously challenges our culture that it can scarcely be heard, much less accepted and embraced. But what he is about to say is TRUTH.

- That Adam was created first indicates that God has given man the role of headship. This is not indicating some kind of superiority, but rather authority. It is interesting that Paul does not attempt to deal with all sorts of objections. This is how Christians are to think. "God made Adam first and gave him headship. This is what God did, even before the fall, so it is good. Ladies are to be in submission and we are to reflect that good order and roles in the teaching and governing of our homes and churches."

- The second argument is a bit more difficult. Is Paul saying that women should not be teachers because they are naturally more susceptible to being deceived? Doug Moo writes, "[This] is intended to remind the women at Ephesus that Eve was deceived by the serpent in the Garden (Genesis 3:13) precisely in taking the initiative over the man whom God had given to be with her and to care for her. In the same way, if the women at the church at Ephesus proclaim their independence from the men of the church, refusing to learn in quietness and full submission (v.11), seeking roles that have been given to men in the church (v.12), they will make the same mistake Eve made and bring similar disaster on themselves and the church." *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, p. 190

So the role Christian women are given in the teaching and governing over men is rooted in the creation order and in the lessons to be learned from the fall.

The Perspective that Honors their Role

(v.15)

When it comes to this verse, I wish I had more light on it. I can tell you that Paul is not saying that women will be saved by some other method than the cross, namely bearing children. It seems rather that he is connecting physical preservation with spiritual godliness. The woman's role was to be a companion to her husband and to be the mother of the living. Yet, sin and the curse have twisted both, one with a desire to rule her husband (Genesis 3:16) and the other with pain. So a Christian woman needs continuance in faith and love and holiness in order to fulfill and be satisfied in her God-given role.

Conclusion

Christian men, let us give ourselves to praying and to a praying that has an enlarged vision. Let us deal with our differences and anger. Let us be holy men whose leadership is worthy to be respected and followed. *Be characterized by prayer in holiness.*

Christian women, embrace your God-given role and express it with godly attire and submission. Hear and heed God's Word. Even in the face of enormous cultural and peer pressure, don't usurp the teaching and authority of the leadership in your home and church. Be honored that God has given you the privilege of bearing and rearing children. *Be characterized by purity in humbleness.*

No matter how hard or even how odd it might appear, may this people be godly in its teaching and living against the enormous pressures of our culture.

Christian Leadership: Shepherds & Servants

1 Timothy 3:1-16

Introduction

If you want to start a stirring discussion at most Christian conferences today, raise the question of how the church is to be governed. What is the structure of church leadership and who is to fill that structure? In America, we tend to bring our love for democracy to the church. I have served as "the pastor" in a church where the pastorate was viewed as the executive branch and the deacons were viewed as the elected, representatives of the congregation. The pastors had no vote on the Board and the Deacons were to vote largely as they believed the people wanted. Many churches have some form of this.

But we have to ask ourselves, is this the model the Bible gives us? Is the Pastor the CEO of the church and the elders and deacons the vice-presidents and the unit managers of the church? If this is so, then I would like for you to go through the New Testament and find the name of any one person in any church who is identified as the Pastor. I'll save you the time; it can't be done. Now if the common structure in churches today is Biblical, why can you not find it explicitly in the Scriptures?

This morning, I cannot do a full-orbed theology of church governance and prove every point. The text before us is primarily aimed to give us the qualifications for those who are the office bearers in the church. But I know that many of you come from many different backgrounds, most of which have very different forms of church leadership structures than we believe the Bible teaches. So, I am going to take a few minutes before unpacking this text to give you a Biblical perspective on the leadership and governance in the church.

- Christ is the sole head and senior pastor (chief shepherd) of the church. He alone is its High Priest and King. He rules from heaven and mediates that rule through the Scriptures.
- Now lets read a couple of texts develop a summary from them. Acts 20:17,25-28; Ephesians 4:11-13; 1 Peter 5:1-5; Hebrews 13:17. From this we see that a plurality of godly men called elders are to govern (oversee) the church by shepherding and teaching and equipping the congregation. The congregation is to learn, respect, follow and obey the elders in the Word. Elders, pastors and overseers are all the same group of men.
- Among the elders, usually one who is experienced, trained and able in the Word is designated to carry the burden of the public preaching of the Word. In our congregation, that person also is

primarily responsible to teach, train and equip the elders by disciplining them. This person may be a leader among equals due to his experience and ability and gifts, but he has no greater authority than the other elders.

- Elders are to be supported financially as the church is able. Those elders who work hard at teaching and governing and desire to be supported, should be given priority (1 Timothy 5:17-18). It is usually wise to support the primary teaching pastor full-time.
- There is a second office in the church and is referred to by the Greek word *Diakonos*. They are the servants of the church. The church has traditionally transliterated the word to Deacon. The duties of this office are not specified by the Scripture which do specify the qualifications for the office. The seven men chosen in Acts 6 to see to the care of the Greek widows are a prototype of this office. As we will see, this office is open to men and women in some capacity.
- It is certain that the deacons are not to govern or oversee the church, as is done in many churches. This oversight and governing responsibility is given to the elders who are accountable to God for their work (Hebrews 13:17).
- Since the Bible does not tell us specifically what the Servants or Deacons duties are, it seems that these faithful men and women may be given whatever duties are deemed most needful by the elders to meet the needs of the church. This may include everything from being leaders on ministry teams to compassionate care of the flock, especially widows and the sick, to the maintaining of the physical resources and facilities of the ministry.

So we have elders who oversee the church by pastoring it and are primarily responsible for the preaching and teaching. We also have deacons and deaconesses who serve the church by meeting its needs in a multi varied way.

So how do we know who should be appointed to these offices. If truth and teaching are critical to the life of the church (1 Timothy 1) and the congregation must exhorted to live and behave in a God-honoring way (1 Timothy 2), then by what criteria are elders and deacons qualified for office? That is what Paul deals with in chapter 3 of 1 Timothy.

Shepherds – The Oversight of God's People (v.1-7)

I have chosen with real intentionality to refer to these two offices and not use the traditional words. I want you to come to these texts as though you have never heard them before, have never been in a church before and are deeply committed to gathering in God's Kingdom as God's Word teaches.

The Honor of the Office (v.1)

What is being commended here is not the pursuit of the office, but the honor due to the office of elder. One who wishes or desires the office of elder is aiming at a high and honored work.

Now it is possible to have a wrongly motivated desire for the honor given to the office and not the hard work that comes with the office. Some seeking ambition and position seek this office. But it is still necessary that a man have an inward, God-given desire to be an elder/pastor.

Therefore, those who desire to oversee God's flock as elders and shepherds must see the honor of the work of the office and have a great inward desire for that work.

The Qualifications of the Office (v.2-7)

The Scripture lists the minimum qualifications for a man desiring to be an elder. A full picture of these characteristics is formed from a composite of what is listed in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. Before we walk through a brief description of these characteristics, let me note a couple of things first.

- These are to be general characteristics of a man's life. There should be no violation that has not been confessed and repented of outstanding.
- These are characteristics for all Christian men to strive for. They are to be cultivated as habits of godly obedience that bears fruit as character in all our men. Those who have reached that level of personal growth and spiritual character meet the qualifications for the eldership.
- These qualifications have a married man in view. Though they assume this, we do not believe they require this. Single men were elders in churches (Timothy, Titus, Paul). Where the qualifications are home or marriage based, a single man must be developing parallel qualifications given his own station in life.
- Further, there may be some qualifications for an elder that are related to the ministry in which he is to serve. These qualifications are not exhaustive. For example, an elder whose primary role is to administer, needs to be qualified. Just because a man meets these

qualifications of character does not mean that he can serve in some capacity he is not suited for by gift, experience or ability.

Most of these characteristics are easily identified. I will spend a bit of time of a couple that are more difficult.

- Above reproach** This is an overall characteristic of which most of the rest are a part of. There must be no present, on-going mark against him, particularly in the given qualifications.
- Husband of one wife**
One woman man The point here is that he must be characterized by moral purity. He is to be a man whose sacrificial love is focused on his spouse. It rules out a polygamous man. It means that a man who has been divorced must be presently demonstrating a commitment to his present marriage and that the issues leading up to the divorce must have been dealt with.
- Temperate** He is filled with spiritual and moral earnestness as a person who reflects on the serious nature of life.
- Prudent**
Self-controlled Literally, he is of a sound mind, discreet and keeps himself under control. He is not easily swayed by sudden impulses. A steady man.
- Respectable** His outward manner invites respect and honor. He is in his appearance and way, a person people tend to listen to.
- Hospitable** He is someone who loves and is drawn to strangers and new people. His heart and home is open to people who are new and are different from himself.
- Able to teach** He must be someone who has the gift of teaching or the ability to teach to some degree. This gift sets elders apart from deacons. This underscores that leadership in the church is primarily a matter of instruction. Titus tells us that this teaching ability may be that of exhorting in doctrine or in responding to error.
- Not addicted to wine** He is not someone who loves to linger over his wine, is literally how this reads. If abstinence is in view, why doesn't he say, "may not drink wine." Because the Bible denounces drunkenness, he must not be someone who is held in the bonds of excessive drinking. A case can be made here that he is not to be given to any excess.
- Not pugnacious (violent), but gentle** He is not someone who is given to striking people. He must not be someone who enjoys violence, even vicariously. In contrast, he is known for his gentleness and tenderness.
- Peaceable**
Not quarrelsome He is not someone who loves to fight, quarrel and argue. He is not contentious, always looking to get into arguments and debates.

- Not love money** He is someone who is not driven by money and what money can buy. We might say today, he is not materialistic. It does not say that he must be poor. But it must be obvious from his life that money has no hold on him.
- Manages household well** He has learned to oversee his home well. He is skilled in managing his finances, his possessions and his time. He organizes well. He is the real head of his home, lovingly leading his wife. He is keeping his children under control in a dignified, honorable way. What he is learning in managing his home, money and family trains him for overseeing ministry.
- Why is this important? Because a man who fails at home will fail in the church. The skills in management, oversight, authority and mediation must be learned and practiced at home, then used in the service of the King.
- Not a new convert** He cannot be a new believer because he will be susceptible to pride, self-sufficiency and self-assertiveness that caused the devil's condemnation.
- Good reputation with those outside the church** He is someone who is respected by his neighbors, his banker, his business associates. Becoming an elder should not cause unbelievers who know him well to wonder what the church is doing!

The Dangers in the Office

(v.6-7)

Paul in this warns of several dangers to those who serve as elders.

- He must be a man of wisdom and experience lest the pressures and conflicts of ministry destroy his effectiveness. Many of these qualifications are directly related to the destructive pressures of shepherding God's flock.
- He must constantly keep his life in balance, maintaining the management of his home and the oversight of the church in proper proportion lest he disqualify himself by losing the respect of his spouse and the obedience of his children.
- He must be humble and self-effacing lest he become prideful, self-assertive, self-important and self-exalted. A man who allows these sins to creep into his life will soon ruin the church, disgrace the ministry and call forth the condemnation of God on his life.
- He must be a man whose godliness pervades every aspect of his life. As an elder, he is watched by the world. And his sin brings reproach to the Lord. It can also make him vulnerable to being tripped up by the tricks and snares and schemes of the devil.

What holy men we must have who will, with great humbleness, desire the honor and hard work of shepherding God's people. May all our

men be striving to be these kind of men. And may God give us more gifted and fit men as elders, shepherd-teachers to oversee God's flock here.

Servants – The Ministry to God's People (v.8-13)

Further, and in the same manner, those who seek to serve the church in the office of deacon must be qualified in their character. Once again, due to varying backgrounds, I must set forth some basic propositions about this office that we believe and teach.

- The office of deacon is not a governing or overseeing office. It does not function as a representative and legislative body like our Congress. It is not to balance the power of the pastor (or elders).
- The office of deacon requires much the same qualifications as that of an elder, largely because, again, these are the common qualifications just to be a godly man or woman.
- The responsibilities of a deacon or deaconess are not spelled out anywhere. In fact, there are only two texts that definitely refer to deacons at all: 1 Timothy 3 and Philippians 1:2 and possibly Acts 6. The responsibilities and tasks given to those in this office are assigned by the elders in view of serving the congregation and leaving the elders free to dedicate their time to study and prayer. As God permits, we will be giving more responsibilities to deacons and ministry team leaders so that elders may not be so consumed with administrative detail.
- The deacons and deaconesses in this church are valuable and valued assets in ministry. What you do in serving here makes much that we do in practical ministry possible.

The Qualifications for Men (v.8-10,12)

Let's consider these qualifications.

- Worthy of dignity** He is a man whose way of carrying himself calls forth respect from those who know him. His outer demeanor corresponds to his inner maturity.
- Not double-tongued** He is honest and unhypocritical. His speech is straightforward and trustworthy. He does not say one thing to people's face and another behind their back.
- Not addicted to much wine** The phrasing here is different than from the qualification for an elder. The warning is still much the same. He is not someone who is controlled by or addicted to wine or alcoholic beverages. Again, this may point to not being overtaken by excess in any area of life.

Not fond of (pursue) sordid (dishonest) gain	The emphasis here is different from that of an elder. He is not one who with a mercenary spirit goes all out in his pursuit of riches, anxious to add to his possessions regardless of method (Hendriksen). The emphasis here is due to the responsibility to handle money with the temptations that go with it.
Holds the faith in a pure conscience	He is one whose conduct is aligned with his confession. He knows his doctrine and does his duty. His conscience is clear before the Lord.
Tested	The qualities of his life are verifiable and examined. Since men and women who serve in this office tend to be servants and more in the background, then more effort will need to be put forth to ensure their qualifications. This does not refer to some sort of probationary period, but rather to an examined life.
Husband of one wife One woman man	As with an elder, he must be characterized by moral purity. He is to be a man whose sacrificial love is focused on his spouse..
Manages household well	As with an elder, he has learned to oversee his home well. He is skilled in managing his finances, his possessions and his time. He organizes well. He is the real head of his home, lovingly leading his wife. He is keeping his children under control in a dignified, honorable way. What he is learning in managing his home, money and family trains him for overseeing ministry. Why is this important? Because deacons will often be delegated the oversight of ministry in the church. This qualification fits him to be in charge of ministries.

The Qualifications for Women

(v.11)

Verse 11 introduces an exegetical and interpretive problem. Simply this, should the word *gunaikas* (Γυναῖκας) be translated women or wives. The NASB and NIV translate it differently reflecting the two approaches.

It is our conviction that the word should be *women* for the following reasons: (1). Nothing so far in the text would press us to think of the persons referred to here as wives instead of women. Normally, to translate the word as wives, there must be a compelling contextual reason to do so. (2) The word *likewise* is used here introducing this section. It sets this paragraph up as parallel to elders must be (v.2), Deacons likewise must be (v.8) and women likewise must be (v.11).

The second question problem is: are these women (1) a separate office, (2) an adjunct office to deacon or (3) the qualifications for women who serve as deacons. It seems that these women are connected to the office referred to by the word deacon. In verse 12, Paul returns without break to the qualifications of the deacons. We have

chosen here to designate the women who serve in this capacity with the feminine form of the word, deaconess. Within the limitations discussed in 1 Timothy 2:12, deaconesses serve in the capacities given them by the elders and deacons. Though this is so, it is very much a necessary and honored responsibility to serve Christ and His church as a deaconess or a woman deacon.

Now consider her qualifications.

- Dignified** She is one who conducts herself in a dignified and respectable manner. Her outer way of carrying herself reflects her inner maturity.
- Not malicious gossips** She is not involved in gossip. She does not talk about others in such a way as to destroy their character or reputation, either by speaking lies or by maliciously repeating truths.
- Not slanderers**
- Temperate** She is well-balanced and self-controlled, not driven by her emotions. She is careful and mature in her discernment and in her judgments or decisions.
- Trustworthy** She is someone who can be trusted implicitly with information or money.
- Faithful in all things** She is someone who carries through with her commitments. She is a careful and reliable steward of her time and responsibilities.

The Honor for Serving Well

(v.13)

Those who give themselves to sacrificial service as servants in the church are not without reward. In serving well comes affirmation and assurance. They will be put up in a high place of honor and will gain a confidence in truth among the people being served.

Standards – The Behavior among God's People (v.14-16)

This paragraph is the theme statement for the book. It tells us why Paul wrote to Timothy.

The Concern for the Church (v.14-15a)

He writes because of his concern for the church and for Timothy's ministry in the church. He has both the immediate and long-term welfare in view. We can see his wisdom exhibited in being sure that the most important problems are dealt with first by carrying out the instructions in the epistle and waiting on other matters until the providence of God permits him to visit the church.

The Conduct in the Church (v.15b)

Here is that purpose statement: the aim of 1 Timothy is that believers will know how to behave in the gathered church (household of God). Our behavior in the church is critical because what the church is. She is the pillar and support of the truth. "The church's duty here is hold up truth in such a way that all men may see it" (Barclay). May be a reference to the 127 pillars in the Temple to Diana in Ephesus. The church is the display and support of the strength of truth. Since this is so, we must behave in way that is appropriate.

The Confession of the Church (v.16)

If there is to be a commanded conduct (v.15) it must arise from a common confession (v.16). The duty of believers together requires a commonly held and shared doctrine.

This is a short excerpt from a hymn and is in poetic or lyrical form. Hendriksen, along with others, has convincingly shown the chiasmatic structure of this confession. The truth of the Christian faith can be communicated by complex artistic forms, as illustrated here. The truths are represented by brief, poetic lines whose enigmatic words capture large vistas of truth.

This hymn was a *confession*. It was a way of saying truth together. By its words the church(es) shared and confessed a common understanding of the grand truths, in this case, of the incarnation. This is why we write *Articles of Faith* and *Things We Teach* documents (admittedly not in gloriously artistic confessional lyrics). We want to confess together what we believe.

The subject of the hymn is *the incarnation*. We know that both from its heading, "the mystery of godliness" and from its content. It shows us that the incarnation is a revealing of Christ. He appeared in human existence and a real body. Yet was authenticated by the Spirit in the realm of the Spirit. There is much here that I would love to explore. For those of you familiar with Gerhardus Vos will see the "sphere of

the flesh and sphere of the Spirit" here in his two age representation. So Christ is disclosed in the physical while vindicated in the spiritual. He was seen or attended to by angels. He was proclaimed among the people groups (and continues to be preached) and believed on in the world (and continues to be believed and trusted and treasured) and was taken up to glory in a visible and bodily ascension with all the hope that gives for a glorious return.

The hymn is *Christ centered*. It is sung about Christ to others to exalt Him. This is a legitimate function of worship in the church; to ascribe honor to Jesus Christ by describing truth about Him to others. Though it is vital that we sing praise to Jesus, it is also vital to proclaim Jesus by praising Him to others.

Conclusion

In a day of confusion and conflict, we need to accurately understand and carefully obey and practically implement the Bible teaching on church leadership. Much of our received traditions are encrusted with unscriptural ideas. We as elders are continuing to study so as to more clearly articulate what the Bible teaches and how we are to implement here at the dawn of the 21st Century.

Pray as we desire so much to elevate deacons and deaconesses to the place of responsibility and respect the Bible gives them. There is much to do and much being done. May God bless each of you who serve so well and so faithfully with recognition and confidence among those you serve.

May we learn to articulate truth with clarity and with beauty. And may our doing of that be turned to praise and adoration that magnifies Christ and delights our Sovereign God.

Christian Ministry: Usefulness

1 Timothy 4:1-16

Introduction

"The modern pastor in America is expected to be a preacher, counselor, administrator, PR guru, fund-raiser and hand-holder. Depending on the size of the church he serves, he may have to be an expert on youth, competent on a [computer] , something of an accountant, janitor, evangelist, small groups expert, an excellent chair of committees, a team player and a transparent leader. Of course, his own home must be exemplary, and he should never appear tired or discouraged, since he must be always spiritual, prayerful, warmhearted and passionate but unflappable. He should spend no fewer than 40 hours a week on sermon preparation, no fewer than 30 – 40 hours counseling, 20 hours in regular flock visitation... [And so on]. He has to be available at any hour of the day or night. And then a neighbor will ask his wife: 'Excuse me, I don't mean to be rude, but I'd really like to know: What does your husband do the rest of the week, apart from, you know, his work on Sundays?'" (Carson and Woodbridge, *Letters Along the Way*, p127.) In modern America this (or some form of it) is what it takes to be "a good servant of Jesus Christ."

Praise God for serving in an elder governed church where we do not function this way, though sometimes there are some of the expectations. But what does it mean to be a good servant of Jesus Christ? In chapter 3 we saw the formal qualifications to enter Christian leadership; now we will see the personal and practical disciplines to exercise Christian leadership.

What does it really take to be truly useful in Christian service?

- These paragraphs are written to a particular person in the midst of circumstances of his life. Yet from them we must learn what it means to be useful in the Kingdom. From the particulars of Timothy's life and ministry, we must gain principles that speak practically to the particulars of our own life and ministry.
- These paragraphs are written to someone who was serving as an elder and an apostolic delegate or representative. But we must not then turn away from the text as though it has little to say to you who teach Sunday School or keep nursery or mow the yard. Much that is said here can be applied to most of our ministries.

And when it cannot, it still informs us as to what we are to value in ministry and how we are to know who among us are good servants of the Lord Jesus.

The Context of Useful Ministry

(v.1-5)

Since the church must know how to *conduct* itself (3:15) and is the supporting *column* of truth (3:15) and the congregation is to together *confess* truth (3:16) therefore it is imperative that we know what the deceiving strategies of the enemy are if we are fight good fights of faith (1:18). In the midst of the ministry and life destroying danger of error and apostasy faithful usefulness is so much more necessary.

Recognize the Conditions

(v.1)

Timothy and each of us must be aware of our ministry context. We must know the pollution of error the poisons the atmosphere of our culture and age. What we do not see as a danger, we may eventually embrace as a friend.

- As taught by the Spirit – The Spirit has taught us over and over again in very clear and stated terms that there will be an ever escalating failure up to the end. For Paul and Timothy, it was an ongoing speaking through the prophets and apostles and teachers that is now deposited for us in the Scriptures. It is not that the Spirit spoke and is now silent; no, the Spirit continues to speak in the words, phrases, sentences and paragraphs of the Bible.
- As evidenced by the consequences – the sad effect of the errors that infest our fallen world is the power they have to produce apostasy. The departure here is from the faith, from the body of truth we call doctrine. It is not a personal falling away from saving faith in Christ. Rather is a massive departure from truth.

Now why does this massive departure from doctrine happen? Why is it that in every age and more so in the end, will this be so?

Identify the Causes

(v.2)

The errors that are everywhere evident do not just grow up on their own. They have two primary causes:

- Ultimate Source– The errors that threatened them and the errors that threaten us have a demonic source. There are errors inside and outside the church that are formed in the perverse, deceptive mind of our great enemy and his minions. Do not think that cultural and religious errors around us are of mere human origin. They are deceptive and demonic. This is why we must not allow them to infiltrate the church.
- Immediate Source – These deceptive and demonic ideas are being taught and disseminated by human agency. We can take every error, every heresy and every cultural myth and tell you who was its primary or original teacher.

Look at Paul's characterization of them: they are hypocritical liars whose consciences are seared. The God-given means of restraining error and evil has been callused to insensitivity so that these men and women can teach their lies and deceptions without conscience. And they are hypocrites. It seems to me that Paul is showing that error cannot be consistent. This is, after all, God's world. It is a great lesson to look at the lives and practices of men and women who brought forth these ideas and to see that they could not live out their own ideas: they were hypocrites.



So the ideas and philosophies and religions that shape our world are demonic deceptions taught by conscience seared and inconsistent deceivers (liars).

Examine the Content

(v.3a)

Good servants of Christ understand their times by examining the ideas and propositions that shape their times. Paul here identifies two major errors that would be a departure from the faith: celibacy and dietary restrictions. These are the way that the ideas are obeyed or are carried out in life. We find these particular ideas taking root in the Catholicism during the Middle Ages. I am puzzled by Christians who want to impose restrictive diets as means of holiness. These regulations arise from ideas that are wrong.

Principle

There is an important principle here. It is simply this: the destructive power in deception and error is not in that it is believed, but in that it is obeyed. This is why the antidote to sin is faith; that is, believing God in an obeying way.

Develop the Correction

(v.3b-5)

Notice how the emphasis is not on graphic descriptions and elaborate illustrations of the error but rather on detailed explanation and examples of the truth that corrects. When we are tempted by the deceptive ideas of false teachers to do (or not do) what God has set forth as good, we err.

The answer to celibacy and restrictive diets is simply that God made sex and food. He made it and pronounced it good. And we are to receive what God has made and declared to be good with gratitude, particularly when we shape our approach to sex and food by the Word of God and prayer.

Does this mean there are no boundaries as though any sex anywhere is good and all the food you can consume with gratitude is OK? Of course not. The instructions and imperatives of the Word say, "Sex in marriage not outside. All food yet with moderation."

So we need, when we have done the work on our culture to know where its ideas come from and to have some understanding of its root

principles and propositions, to formulate Biblical answers and statements whose truths feed faith and shape obedience.

The Requirements for Useful Ministry (v.6-10)

The good servant of Christ is one who *points* out error, *profits* from the Word and *purposes* to be godly. From this paragraph I get three important requirements for the useful Christian.

Centered in Doctrine (v.6-7a)

The good servant in useful ministry understands the important of truth and doctrine. I am calling this being centered in doctrine. Note what you must be doing with doctrine if you want to be a good servant of Christ.

- You must use it to point out error to brothers and sisters. Truth is the content of your discipleship and your admonition.
- You must feed and nourish your soul by reflecting on its words and statements. You spend time and effort to read through the Word, to meditate on it and to articulate its truths with the help of good books.
- You must be disciplined in following or living it out. The power of truth is that it can be followed and pursued and obeyed. When we do not obey the truth, we are obeying the lies that replace that truth.
- You use it to sort out what is truth and what is myth. You shine the light of truth on cultural myths and show them to be deceptive and dangerous and deadly.

Committed to Godliness (v.7b-9)

The good servant in useful ministry disciplines himself in pursuit of godliness. It is so important, in our undisciplined and unruly age, to be challenged toward discipline.

- You develop discipline shaped by *purpose* (v.7b). It is not discipline for its own sake, but self-control aimed at godliness. In my observation over the years, no one becomes more godly than they are self-disciplined.
- You treasure godliness as being *profitable* (v.8a). Timothy was focusing his energies on physical exercise because it got immediate results. Paul says that we must pursue godliness because we think it is worthwhile. I am convinced my own failures in godliness stem from not treasuring it as a valuable thing.
- You believe in an obeying way that godliness has present and future *promise* (v.8b). Unlike physical exercise, godliness' profit is

lasting and eternal. That this is not a real motivator in our life just simply tells us how desperate our present condition is.

Every believer ought to be developing self-discipline, admonished and held accountable by a shared discipline and respectful and responsive of the discipline of God-given authority structures.

Challenged by Hope

(v.10)

This is an amazing assertion. It keeps all this in perspective. We work hard now because our hope is attached to God. You fix your hope on the living God who is the Savior of all kinds of men and are challenged to be active—to labor and strive. So I am motivated by my hope to diligent effort in godliness and ministry. Your hope helps you work hard. That God is the living God gives depth to life and ministry. That God is the Savior of all men, not every single man, but all men without distinction to age, gender, language, nationality or people group gives breadth to ministry.

It seems to me that every Christian who wants to be a good servant in useful ministry must prize doctrine, pursue godliness and be pressed to hard work by a heavenly hope.

The Responsibilities in Useful Ministry

(v.11-16)

But what does a good servant of Christ DO in useful ministry. That is what this paragraph is all about.

Explain Biblical Truth

(v.11)

Proclaim – Command and teach

This is a present active imperative indicating that we are to keep on commanding and teaching. It is the primary and ongoing imperative of a useful ministry.

Exemplify Godly Behavior

(v.12)

Pattern – Walk your talk

How can Timothy control the attitudes of others? The sense here is that Timothy was behave as an exemplary mature believer in spite of his relative youth. In all these categories he must give no one grounds to despise his chronology. He was to model maturity beyond his years. These are key categories for Christians to use in evaluating their example before others.

Speech - We must be mature not only in what we say, but how we way it and in what we don't say. James tells us that someone who is disciplined their tongue sets the tone for the rest of their godliness.

Conduct - We must be an example of the behavior that is required of all believers in the church (4:15). *Love* – We must sacrifice and sub-

mit in a God honoring way in love for God and neighbor. *Faith* – Here is a category we usually don't think too much about. Do you reflect in the caliber of your faith? Is it a model for others? *Purity* – think about this – Paul was asking the youth to set the tone for purity.

So young people, is this true of you? Are you modeling for all of us what it really means to be a believer?

Emphasize the Scriptures

(v.13)

Prioritize – Focus on the Word

Good servants of Christ are useful when they emphasize the Word in all their ministries. Timothy, as an elder, was to pay special attention to lifting up and exalting the Word. He was to bring the congregation under the hearing of the Word, the preaching of the Word and the admonition or practical application of the Word.

Exercise Your Ministry

(v.14)

Practice – Minister in giftedness

How many of our gifts are lying around neglected! We can walk through the church and here is teaching rusting away, there an unused mercy, over here a cobweb encrusted giving. If Timothy was in danger of neglecting such publicly given and affirmed gift, what about us whose gifts are not so widely known. Beloved, don't neglect the exercise of your grace for serving others.

Expend Serious Effort

(v.15)

Progress – Keep moving ahead

Good servants of Christ who are useful in service dedicate themselves to the hard work and diligent labor required for growth and progress. Make no mistake – useful ministry requires serious effort and great sacrifice of time and energy. O that we would be more consumed by these things instead of all the things that do consume us.

Evaluate Yourself Carefully

(v.16)

Perspective – Pay attention

Here is a mislaid emphasis in ministry. You must pay attention to yourself and your teaching before you will be useful and profitable in ministry. Paul is not here talking about selfishness. He is talking about sustained and serious self-evaluation that enables endurance and effectiveness. Beloved, all of us need to pay attention to our own life and teaching so our ministering to one another will be truly useful.

Conclusion

Good servants of Christ in useful ministry understand the age and culture in which they live. You evaluate carefully the myths of our day and respond with truth.

Good servants of Christ in useful ministry prize doctrine, pursue godliness and are pressed to hard work by a heavenly hope. They are centered on doctrine, committed to godliness with the disciplines it entails, and are motivated by their future hope to hard work now.

Good servants of Christ in useful ministry:

Proclaim – Command and teach

Pattern – Walk your talk

Prioritize – Focus on the Word

Practice – Minister in giftedness

How many of our gifts are lying around neglected! We can walk through the church and here is teaching rusting away, there an unused mercy, over here a cobweb encrusted giving. If Timothy was in danger of neglecting such publicly given and affirmed gift, what about us whose gifts are not so widely known. Beloved, don't neglect the exercise of your grace for serving others.

Progress – Keep moving ahead

Perspective – Pay attention

May God give us grace to:

Explain Biblical truth

Exemplify godly behavior

Emphasize the Scriptures

Exercise our gifts in ministry

Expend serious effort

and evaluate ourselves carefully.

May we be good servants of the Lord Jesus Christ who are useful in the ministry and glorify our great God.

Notes

Christian Seniors: Honor & Help

1 Timothy 5:1-16

Introduction

Youth is worshipped today. No, being young is worshipped today. We see this in thousands of adverts extolling age defying crèmes, bodies by Gold's Gym and gray washing hair dyes (a little at a time, mind you). How sad all this is. Yes there is the energy of youth, and its madness pursuit of pleasure. There is the hopeful idealism, and its folly.

How we should prize the hard earned wisdom of gracious age. Because of the foolishness of our age and the shallowness of our churches, too many Christian senior saints have great experience with God, but not much knowledge. But let us set ourselves to grow old with God and His Word.

Growing older has its trials. The body begins to fail. Memories fade as the past grows longer and the future shorter. Precious friends and loved spouses slip into eternity. And one of the sad and difficult realities is that sometimes, saintly women are left in great need. That is what this text is all about today.

Being a Biblical church and a useful servant in ministry means that we will know how to minister to senior saints, specially those who are widowed.

Precept: the Approach Expected

(v.1-2)

Correction and admonition have an important role in Christian growth. Maturity in loving and following Christ oft requires careful application of sword of the Spirit to the heart. Though this is often painful, it is utterly necessary. The pastor in the pursuit of Biblical ministry must "preach, reprove, rebuke and exhort with great patience and much instruction" (2 Timothy 4:2).

But all who give that admonition and correction still have sinful hearts. So we must know how we are to go about giving the correction and admonition needed. This is even more so when we are young. We are impatient with others and particularly with those who are older who may be slower to change. Timothy needed this. The instruction Paul required him to implement at Ephesus was going to require correcting and admonishing senior saints. So fighting the good fight of faith does not verbally assassinating senior saints.

Instructions to Obey

The primary instruction is to guard in our correcting and admonishing against harshness. This was part of the temptation that spiritual believers faced when restoring those overcome by sin (Galatians 6:1f). We must not strike out with our words so that our admonition and correction looks like sharp rebukes.

Instead, we are to appeal to them. There is to be a tender approach with gently persistent words of love-clothed truth. What we do in God honoring correction is to be a coming alongside in order to affect change. The word appeal is a form of *paraklasis*, a term used to identify that tender work of the Spirit. What powerful loving appeals the Holy Spirit makes in our lives to confront us, convict us and to change us.

Because we are so prone to sin, the Bible gives us this "model in the family" as constraints on our attitudes and approach in correction. You can easily lay this out as a chart.

Aim	Approach	Attitude
Older men	Fathers	Respect and humility
Younger men	Brothers	Common ground & interests
Older women	Mothers	Gentleness and honor
Younger women	Sisters	Modesty and purity

The family and community connections should govern so much of our interaction together. We come to each other in love, respect, honor, humility, gentleness, modesty and purity all sharing a common ground and pressing toward deeply held and shared objectives. We see this in Philippians 2 where the common shared family and community truths in Christ (v.1) are a part of the admonition that follows (v.2-4).

Yet those who are young men in ministry must give special heed to treating young women to whom we minister, not only as sisters, but in all purity. What grave danger we are in when with honey voice, tender words, and shared secrets there and a touch here, impurity is stirred. What a reproach on the name of Christ comes when we guard not our affections and actions with women.

Illustration to Observe

Philemon

This approach to correction and admonition is not like the world's. And it is so wonderfully illustrated in the life Paul. All through the book of Philemon, Paul makes a large appeal for a right response to returning of the escaped slave to his master. Just listen to Paul's words.

Philemon 2-22 (NIV)

⁸ Therefore, although in Christ I could be bold and order you to do what you ought to do, ⁹ yet I appeal to you on the basis of love. I then, as Paul—an old man and now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus— ¹⁰ I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, who became my son while I was in chains. ¹¹ Formerly he was useless to you, but now he has become useful both to you and to me.

¹² I am sending him—who is my very heart—back to you. ¹³ I would have liked to keep him with me so that he could take your place in helping me while I am in chains for the gospel. ¹⁴ But I did not want to do anything without your consent, so that any favor you do will be spontaneous and not forced. ¹⁵ Perhaps the reason he was separated from you for a little while was that you might have him back for good— ¹⁶ no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother. He is very dear to me but even dearer to you, both as a man and as a brother in the Lord.

¹⁷ So if you consider me a partner, welcome him as you would welcome me. ¹⁸ If he has done you any wrong or owes you anything, charge it to me. ¹⁹ I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand. I will pay it back—not to mention that you owe me your very self. ²⁰ I do wish, brother, that I may have some benefit from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in Christ. ²¹ Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I ask. ²² And one thing more: Prepare a guest room for me, because I hope to be restored to you in answer to your prayers. Such powerful, persuasive pathos aimed at changing hearts and motivating obedience.

Principles: the Requirements Expounded**(v.3-8)**

Transition The Scriptures are clear on the requirements for all of those involved in need. Note how each of these are spheres of relationships that are often involved in any issue of Christian living.



Relationship Spheres Slide

The Church: Honor**(v.3)**

God has a special place in His heart for widows and orphans. He provided for them under the Law and condemned Israel under the prophets. His love and care and special protection over them is reflected in the Psalms and in the Proverbs. And in Jesus Christ, that honor walked about in human form loving and caring for those ladies who were bereft.

The church learned both from its Scriptural heritage and the example of Christ the importance of caring for its own. One of the first problems to arise in the church was the inadequate care given to Greek (probably, non-Jewish) widows in the church (Acts 6). So all over the world where the gospel went, churches showed the love of Christ to women who were bereft of support.

But, as usual, there were abuses that led to the church being burdened (v.16) unnecessarily. So, Paul is concerned that the church honor true widows. The word honor here is used all through the New Testament to refer to giving to someone what they are due because of their station in life. Therefore we are to honor parents, honor the king and honor God. In all these cases it refers to an attitude that works itself

out in respectful behavior. It also means that finances are involved. We honor God by giving, kings by paying our taxes and parents by making provision for them, particularly for our mothers.

Who are these widows? One thing we must note. The word translated widow primarily meant one who had lost a husband, but was also applied to any lady who destitute because of death, divorce or desertion. The Bible places the primary responsibility for support and care and protection upon men and husbands. If husbands and fathers leave ladies bereft by dying or desertion or divorce, the church must evaluate what its responsibility is in this case.

So we must honor senior saints by gently caring for them, showing them real respect and appreciation and being prepared to sustain them when it is appropriate. And we must not forget those among us who find themselves alone and without support due to consequences of sin.

The Family: Support

(v.4)

The honor due within the community of the church rests first with the family. The requirement rests on four important ideas.

- It is learned. This is not natural behavior to hearts who love self and serve self all the time.
- It is the proper way to put your Christianity in practice as a family. It leaves a godly testimony and example to follow to your children and to the church.
- It is an opportunity to make a return on the huge investment parents and grandparents have made in your life.
- This pleases God. He delights in people who honor their parents with their finances.

The Person: Qualify

(v.5-6)

But how do we know who is qualified to be supported when there is no family? Do we just support all widows regardless of profession of faith or lifestyle?

It strikes me that the point of verses 5-6 is to establish her credentials as a believer. In the church's vocabulary, only those who have devoted themselves to Christ and demonstrated that relationship through frequent and effective prayer are to be God's widows. Further, she cannot have denied her profession by a life given to pleasure. A woman who gives herself to pleasure surely shows that she is spiritually dead even while she is physically alive (v.6).

So it is believing widows who demonstrate their relationship with devotion and rejecting a self-centered, pleasure seeking life who are qualified.

The Shepherds: Instruct

(v.7-8)

The shepherds of the church, her elders, must be sure that the church, its families and widows, know these things. In keeping on commanding these things, he keeps the church and its families from becoming a reproach. So we have a huge responsibility to keep on instructing you to plan, prepare and provide for your parents. We must as a church plan, prepare and provide for those widows who qualify for support.

Part of our instruction and exhortation is to remind you:

- Of your responsibility – this area of concern is a piece of the overall responsibility of families to provide the basic necessities of life. We have transferred a lot of this to the government with the consequence that the return on our investment for the sustenance of our parents is small.
- Of the results – Paul identifies two dire results of failing.
 - ① There is a denial of the faith. Again, this is not a personal loss of salvation, but a public denial of the clear instruction and implications of the body of truth we call doctrine.
 - ② Failure makes us worse than the unbelievers around us. It can be easily shown that the common culture of Paul's day felt that providing for parents was important.

We have an enormous responsibility to authoritatively instruct you as to what your responsibilities are. We must, because God tells us to, couch it in strong words that help you to practically flesh out truth and publicly maintain testimony.

Practices: the Guidelines Explained

(v.9-16)

Transition Time does not permit me to cycle through all the positions on this text. Hendrickson seems to have the best understanding of it. While verses 4-6 refers to widows in need, these refer to a special category of widows. They are committed to serving in the church who in return are supported by the church. Their being supported by the church required them to be involved in the ministry of the church as a life-long commitment. The abuse of this over 300-400 years developed into the Nunnery and Convent system in Catholicism.

Paul sets forth some very important qualifications, particularly for those who station in life makes them less a candidate for remarriage.

The Older Widows: Qualifications

(v.9-10)



Qualifications Slide

Note first that a list was maintained identifying those who were to be supported. So the qualifications and guidelines are not being implemented without thought and careful implementation. Further, it seems

from verse 12, that a long-term and possibly, life-long commitment was required from the widow being supported.

- She must be at least 60 years old
- She must be a one-man kind of woman.
- She must have a reputation for good works.
- She must have been involved in nurturing (bringing up) children. Primarily, it is child rearing as a godly woman that is in view. So she doesn't have to have been a mother, but certainly must have been involved in the nurture of children in some way.
- She must have maintained an open home for hospitality and love strangers.
- She must have humbly served in the ministry of the church, expressed in this text by washing the feet of the saints. She has followed Christ's example of lowly service, not seeking position or place.
- She must have been involved in alleviating the distress of others. How can she expect the help of the church when she has closed up her heart to the needs of others?
- She has exerted real effort and self-discipline in every good work. In other words, her Christian living has been an active exhibition of devotion to Christ.

It is interesting to me that these qualification somewhat parallel those for a deacon. It makes me wonder if the commitment or pledge required to be put on the list actually made a supported widow an official servant in the church. It is almost certain that any widow being supported was expected to serve.

The Younger Widows: Expectations

(v.11-15)

This list of widows committed to serving and being supported by the church excluded younger women. That does not mean that those younger widows were left bereft and uncared for. It does mean that the church was to view their situation is temporary and requiring short-term assistance. Again, I want to express this: I personally believe that attempts now to argue that welfare support is the responsibility of the church is misguided and unbiblical. Permanent support of those who could be supported by other means is simply not in view here.

The Problems Experienced

(v.11-13)

Paul is addressing problems particular to the situation at Ephesus. I gather from the text that there were young widows there who were

applying for support and possibly had even made the commitment and were put on the list. Yet these younger widows were now seeking to be married because of sexual frustration and desire (v.11) and thus were breaking their covenant bond with the church. Meanwhile, probably in their serving capacity, they had turned the privilege of ministry into an opportunity to sin. They had become lazy, gossiping busybodies whose talk had degenerated into discussion of improper topics, possibly related to sensuality.

Now is that going to be the problem with all younger widows in all cultures? Yes and no.

Yes, because the sinful heart under certain conditions tends to express itself in the same sort of ways. When one does not have to work to support oneself in on ones home, then idleness breeds laziness and passivity. When one is free or even directed to be involved in people's lives, there is an enormous temptation to turn ministry into mere meddling. And when one is widowed and still young enough to have strong sexual desires, the heart seeks to express itself through sensual fantasy or discussion about improper topics.

By the way, we have men here who have been divorced and are in this sort of position as well. Let me sternly warn you that you do not have to have a woman's heart to be tempted to idleness, gossip, meddling and sensuality. All you must have is a sinful heart!

And no. What we must do today in implementing our compassionate care is to carefully note what sins we are most prone to, how the spirit of the age and the myths of our own culture drive depraved hearts to sinful expressions. And faithful shepherds will authoritatively instruct so that as we obey the Bible in one area, we do become a reproach in another.

The Correctives Implemented

(v.14-15)

So what must be done instead? It is never enough to merely point out what must not be done. We must give direction for positive, active obedience.

Basically, Paul commands younger widows to marry and be godly in the sphere of the home. Now I know, you can look at me and say, "But what if there aren't any guys? What do I do?" Well, I think the practical outworking of this instruction requires prayer over the individual situation and possibly better instruction about this whole area. Certainly, the younger widows in the church at Ephesus would be in the same boat. Maybe we need to rethink this whole notion of romance in dating. Is it possible for godly men and women to marry and then develop Godly love? Why certainly. It happens all over the Bible. Remember, in the culture in which this was written, marriages were usually arranged. Much here to think about and reflect on.

The Able Women: Responsibilities

(v.16)

Finally, in order that the church be not overburdened with this responsibility (implying frankly, that the church in Ephesus was at risk in this area), when a single, but able woman had a dependent widow, she was to care for her. This is clarifying verses 4-6 to include not just families in which there is a husband, but single women who were self-supporting and able were to sustain their widowed relations. This makes sense: a single lady who is supporting herself serves Christ by sustaining a mother left alone and without care.

Conclusion

We have much to think about here as a church. As we grow and as we reflect on this, and other like-minded texts, we will dedicate time to develop practical steps of action and processes so as to be able to love bereft widows with God's love by sustaining them and being served as a church by them.

I want to leave us with a touching illustration of this kind of care. Turn to John 19:25-27 – Here is an amazing example of loving provision for a widow: Jesus as the godly son, John as the Christian brother.

Christian Vocation: Elders and Employees

1 Timothy 5:17-6:2

Introduction

Whatever happened to the idea of a Christian vocation? We are swamped today in a culture that works too hard at its playing and plays too much at its working. The Bible addresses this in many texts that show how in a Christian's work God is honored.

Paul has woven together this large section on *honoring*. There is the honoring of widows (5:1-16), honoring of elders (5:17-25) and honoring of masters (6:1-2) all aimed at a Biblical conduct that honors God.

Elders: Leaders in the Church

(v.17-25)

We are painfully aware of the abuses in supporting elders/pastors in the church over the last number of years:

- By the church – In many churches pastors are kept at a subsistence level of support. This often makes life in ministry difficult. And sadly, leadership boards in these churches often do not see the need for more adequate support. In some cases that I know of, the aim was to keep the pastor humble and dependent. Frankly, my beloved, this is disgrace.
- By the leadership – What has been more publicly reported is the self-serving gain by many in church leadership as they have heaped up wealth and spent money in the name of their ministries, sometimes all out of proportion to its ability to pay. This has become epidemic in the Christian circles where the health and wealth error is prevalent.

There is a lot I could say about all this, but in God's great mercy, none of it would be true here. The church is supporting us very well and I haven't order a BMW or a Learjet yet.

It is my conviction that our fundamental errors in our theology of governance and elders have led us to these problems. When we have *the pastor* who is usually a hired gun brought in from outside the church to be the CEO, it is no wonder we fall into numerous traps and pitfalls because we have strayed from the path of Biblical instruction and direction.

I am grateful to have been a part of a church and elders who have understood the Scriptures and implemented them, even in their calling me to this role in which I serve. Now we come to a very important text that we as elders together and I in particular, believe to be central

in our understanding of the practical guidelines for elders in the church.

The Provision for their Support

(v.17-18)

The first thing addressed is the issue of honoring elders and supporting them. The New Testament is clear that those who labor in the Word are to be supported by that labor (1 Corinthians 9:1-14). Paul sometimes did not accept the support due him and labored as a tent maker to support himself. At Grace Bible in Germany, I supported myself all six years with varying degree of support from the church.

Responsibility for Honor

(v.17)

Look at your text carefully. I want you to note several things explicit in this text:

- Elders govern the church. We are avoiding the word "rule" here because it carries baggage with it in terms of dictatorial oversight that is not in the word itself. But elders govern: not the pastor, not deacons, not the congregation. Whenever governing or oversight is in view, it is elders *plural*. It is a council of men who oversee and govern the church.
- There are elders who will excel in their ministry. That is evident here. There are those among the elders who will stand out in excelling in the work God has enabled them to do.
- Some among the elders work hard in the Word and teaching. (I think the NASB should have translated instead of interpreted.) What is in view here are those men whose excellent governing of the church is exhausting, hard work at studying, understanding and communicating the Word.

These men, the elders that work hard to the point of exhaustion in devoting themselves to the Word, are identified and singled out for double honor. From the context, congregations honor elders by respect and remuneration. They respond to their ministry by hearing, heeding and supporting them. Why double honor? Because all elders are to be respected; some elders are to be respected and remunerated. Hendrickson helpfully writes, "An elder should be honored for the sake of his office; and he should receive double honor if he does his work well [and] this holds with special emphasis with respect to [those] who labor in preaching and teaching."¹

The word translated *considered worthy* usually means to evaluate with the aim of arriving at a worth or value. So one might evaluate a diamond to see its price. The honor given was a result of valuing and holding in high esteem the treasure that tireless godly ministering the Word is.

So lets bring this all together into a "should" statement for us and the whole chapel family.

We will honor and value the godly men God gives us to lead us as shepherd elders by respecting them and by financially supporting those who work hard at the Word and teaching as we are financially able, God provides and they desire.

Reason from the Scripture

(v.18)

Why should we do this? Because the Scripture tells us to, not only in this text, but also in others on which this text is based. First is a quote from Deut. 25:4 which establishes a principle of not frustrating even an animal in his work. Second is a quote from Luke 10:7 (remember that Luke was Paul's traveling companion and possibly, personal physician) in which Jesus establishes the principle of supporting the servant of the kingdom in his work in the gospel.



So what does this mean for us here over the next months. Presently, we have a need for a staff elder whose primary role will be in administration and in ministry development. We also have a desire to have a staff elder who will carry some of the oversight responsibilities of our Discipleship and Counseling Ministry. We have a present elder who has worked hard in his oversight and desires to be supported so that he can give himself more fully to the ministry. To do these will require your financial commitment of around \$800 - \$1,200 per month. So, as we pray and pursue this objective, we would encourage you to begin thinking and strategizing so that when we can present specifics, you will know whether you can give to make this so.

The Principles for their Correction

(v.19-21)

Not only may a congregation dishonor and disrespect their elders, but also elders may dishonor and disobey their Lord. What are the Biblical guidelines in dealing with the accusation and the actuality, the possibility and reality of an elder who sins?

Protection in the Accusation

(v.19)

First, all elders are subject to Matthew 18 and to church discipline. Being an elder does not place you above the need for correction. But being an elder also makes you vulnerable to casual or to malicious accusations aimed at destroying reputation, ministry or qualifications. In view of that vulnerability, the elders (and by extension, the church) must not receive or entertain an accusation of sin against an elder unless it can be verified by at least two or more witnesses.

The question here is as follows: are these the witnesses of Matthew 18 meaning that an elder is subject to the discipline process as any other believer or are there multiple witnesses of the sin itself required? Note that the witnesses of Matthew 18 establish unrepentance.

I believe that it is the latter. Accusations against elders are not to be entertained unless there are multiple witnesses of the elder's sin. Otherwise the elder is not protected by individual accusations with malicious aims. Further, improper accusations are not to be investigated, but are to be ignored by going to the accuser and answering them with this text. If a sin by the elder is witnessed by two or more who can verify the sin, then the accusation by the multiple witnesses is to be investigated under Matthew 18 and the proper discipline implemented if the elder does not repent.

Let me say this quite clearly then: there is to be no anonymity in the church. I believe that Christians should be accountable for their votes, statements and accusations. Anonymous letters, emails or any other form of correspondence or "off the record" accusations will NOT be entertained. I DO NOT read unsigned correspondence of any kind. Period. Nor will the elders or any church leadership group here. Learn to be accountable for your words and deeds, all of them.

Openness in the Correction

(v.20)

However, if an elder is found to be in sin and will not repent, he is to be sharply rebuked in public in the presence of all the church. I believe that in this an elder is more exposed than a member. "In the presence of all" seems to be referring to more than just the members. The public rebuke of an unrepentant, sinning elder must be in the presence of all the church because he has been ministering in all the church. The unrepented of sins of an elder are serious with ever spreading consequences and are to be dealt with severely.

Now I know, there are all kinds of objections to this. But in view of the carnality of the church and the wide failure of church leadership today, we must uphold the Biblical standard at all costs. We must do so even if it means legal risk or public censure.

The purpose in this quite clear: it has a purifying affect on the other elders (*the rest*) by instilling in them a fear of God and weight of the responsibility they are entrusted with.

Impartiality in the Implementation

(v.21)

Here is the ever-present danger in discipline, and particularly in the discipline of elders: that we do this with bias and partiality. Paul places a solemn charge on Timothy and on any church embarking on such a serious step. This charge reminds us that we are living our lives *Coram Deo*, before God's face and in His Presence. He and His Son and His holy, chosen angelic messengers are watching and weighing what we do. May God help us then to set aside personal bias and partiality when we are dealing with sin. It is a serious and solemn and fearful thing, fraught with danger. But, when an elder will not repent of sin, it must be dealt with for the glory of God.

The Procedures for their Selection

(v.22-25)

What can we do to be sure that the elders we have govern well by laboring hard in ministry and are holy, godly men who are above both specious and actual accusation? By going through a process of selection that has these objectives in mind.

Patience in the Process

(v.22)

There must be patience. It is so easy to see a man who appears to be leadership material and to move too quickly and suddenly and imprudently in making him an elder. There must be time to establish his character and his credentials. One commentator has wisely written, "Hasty ordination, without proper examination, makes those responsible culpable in the man's sin. God's chastening may be on a church not only for the leader's sin, but also for the sins of those who failed to properly evaluate him."² In this process, Timothy and now, elders responsible to identifying, examining and ordaining an elder must keep themselves pure or free from sin in the process. Time does not permit for me to list all the attendant sins in the process.

But let us commit ourselves to a careful, Biblical and patient process. Please pray as we begin to consider, (under our present Constitution) nominate and examine men for the eldership over the coming months.

Wisdom in the Application

(v.23)

This sentence appears at first to an aside, a personal instruction to Timothy in the midst of the overall discussion. But maybe not. Is it possible that Timothy has taken prior instruction on the serious weight of holiness for elders to an extreme? So Paul wants Timothy to be wise in the application of these instructions, first in his own life, then in the lives of the church at Ephesus.

Therefore, while an elder must not be addicted to wine (1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7) not all uses are forbidden, the conclusion Timothy seems to have drawn. So Paul encourages him to a medicinal use in view of the poor water and his own digestive difficulties. The lesson to Timothy and us is simple: be wise in the application of the character quality standards required as we evaluate a man's suitability for the eldership.

Thoroughness in the Investigation

(v.24-25)

In the context, these are further instructions on the selection process. Here is an example of a text whose sound out of context is quite different from its meaning in context. Often misquoted and misused, these verses do not refer to eventual Divine judgment, but to the evaluation and decision of those examining elder candidates.

So, some potential elder's sins are evident even before the evaluation process begins. Others will inevitably come to light after the process

unfolds. This is what verse 6 means. Sometimes, men will ask to be considered and their disqualifications will already be known. Sometimes, a candidate's disqualifications will follow him into the examination and be exposed in the assessment process.

Further, those who are qualified will have their good deeds open visible for assessment. It will be quite evident that they are men of good character and conduct. We will not have to search deeply for the good deeds of men qualifying to be elder

In either case, move forward in the evaluation and examination of candidates for eldership in faith that God will bring to light what needs to be known for the good of the church.

As we are selecting the elders, let us move patiently as we are wise in our application of the qualifications and thorough in our evaluation.

Employees: Believers in the Workplace

(v.1-2)

How are we today to hear this text in our culture where the slavery as addressed here does not exist?

- Hear the text for what it says first. If we don't, we will lose the real impact of the text both on the church then and now. We must see that he is talking to servant and slaves. These were men and women who had been captured, bought or sold into slavery. They don't have much choice. They certainly have no union, no rights, and little recourse. They can't change masters when one is bad or positions when they get tired or bored with it. They must learn to live godly in their situation. This alone speaks volumes. We are too easy to change our situation. Usually, we take the problem with us because the problem is us.
- Make application of the principles and practices to employees and employers on the job. Since we in our culture do not have or keep slaves (no matter what some of you think about your bosses or parents), these principles can be quite clearly applied to our jobs and job situations.

For the sake of time this morning, I am not going to deal with the whole issue of slavery as an institution.

General Perspective as Christians

(v.1)

Here is the first attitude required of Christians in the workplace. You are to regard your managers (I'll use this term as a catch-all for bosses, employers, etc.) as worthy of all honor. You must respect and respond to them in such a way that the Name and truth of God are not thrown into disrepute.

What *attitudes or actions* might this be speaking of? Certainly we should work diligently and with all the skill we have. We should not complain or grumble. We should do our work for the good of the employer. And in your interaction with your managers, you must respond as a Christian. We ought to set the pace in production, the tone in our communication and the example in submission.

What is to be my *aim* in this? My goal is to magnify the name of Christ: to so honor Him as to make it obvious to others that the treasuring and valuing of Christ Jesus as Lord drives my life. My aim is to never leave the possibility that someone will be able to disparage God or denounce the truth I represent in my life in the workplace.

With this general attitude in mind, consider a special problem faced by church members.

Special Problem as Christians

(v.2)

How is a Christian slave to act when his master is a Christian? He or she could come to church and sit down in their chair for worship and word with the man who owned them. By the way, what do you think the slave's teens thought of all this? What would be their primary temptations?

Let's identify with the particular challenges he faces:

There would be a real temptation to not honor them in your heart and thus be disrespectful in your speech and attitude and body language. The temptation would be hard at church and even harder at work. House slaves in particular would see masters at their worst. They might be the slave of a master who was just converted with a lot of growing to do.

There would be a real temptation to expect special treatment and not to be expected to work hard. "After all, we're brothers in Christ."

Let's implement the practical counsel he follows:

Christian slaves in the service of Christian masters and Christian employees in the service of Christian employers must eschew [avoid] presumption and privilege, serving with all submission, respect, excellence, diligence and humility, as unto the Lord for His reputation and His reward.

As Timothy was required, so must I teach and exhort with urgency that you work on your job in such a way as honors Christ. You must not argue with instructions and learn to appeal. You must give a full days work. If you are on the clock, you should not be writing personal or even church emails. As a Christian employee, you should show the proper respect to those to whom you give an account. You must do what you can to make them successful. And frankly, you must guard

carefully against the prevailing attitudes I see in many unions and union shops.

Why must you do this when your employer/manager is a Christian? You must because both of you are united in Christ and serve in the Kingdom and are in the community of faith together. You are brother and sister in Christ first, before you are master, slave; employer and employee. This partnership you have in Christ as family and community is the foundation on which to build a God-honoring relationship at work.

Conclusion

How must you change as a result of hearing these words?

- Many of you need to rethink your understanding of elders and pastors, particularly in the selecting and supporting of staff elders/pastors. Most of the "normal" way it is done in the modern church is simply not the way the Bible would have us do it.
- *We will honor and value the godly men God gives us to lead us as shepherd elders by respecting them and by financially supporting those who work hard at the Word and teaching as we are financially able, God provides and they desire.*
- This is an opportunity to encourage those of you who do not give systematically, regularly and proportionally to consider your stewardship. It is my conviction that every household in this church, member and regular attender, should be giving a regular, proportionate amount of your total household income every pay check. I say this because we have some significant challenges in front of us in terms of growth. And I am confident that the grace of God will enable you to give as you believe God's Word and trust God's promises.
- Does your behavior on your job give people a reason to speak against Christ and to dishonor Him? In what specific ways has it been wrong? What must you do to change? Do you need to humble yourself and go to your employer/manager and ask their forgiveness of disrespect, disobedience, dishonesty?
- May God give us grace in our Christian vocation as elders and as employees to bring glory to God's name in the godliness of our attitudes and our actions.

Christian Priorities: Godliness and Gain

1 Timothy 6:3-21

Introduction

"Christianity has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult and left untried." G.K. Chesterton

"We can loan you enough money to get you completely out of debt." *Sign on bank*

Its Biblical Perspective

(v.3-10)

Our Christian priorities must be shaped by a Biblical perspective.

On the Problem of Error

(v.3-5)

The Biblical *standard* against which all teaching must be judged is *established* (v.3). It is weighed against sound words, correct propositional statements that correspond to the teaching of the Scriptures and the Lord. It is also weighed against the teaching that shapes true godliness.

The inward *characteristics* of the false teacher's heart are *evaluated* (v.4a). He is shown to be conceited, ignorant and primarily concerned about controversy, particularly controversial questions and word-strife.

The divisive *consequences* of controversy are *explained* (v.4b-5a). The focus on controversial questions and disputes about words is the seedbed of envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions and never ending friction. It is error that divides and truth that unites.

The underlying *rationalization* of a materialistic heart is *exposed* (v.5b). They wrongly believe that religion is the way to riches.

This text frames for us how to evaluate an error:

- Content – What is being taught over against the texts of Scripture?
- Character – What are the people like who are teaching it?
- Consequences – What does the teaching produce?
- Cause – What is the primary underlying reasoning?

What is portrayed here is men, depraved in mind and deprived of truth, who stir up controversy by teaching error; men whose hearts are actually pursuing *gain* instead of *godliness*.

On the Potential of Contentment

(v.6-8)

Godliness does bring real gain, but only when accompanied by contentment. The gain that godliness brings is not material, but rather true

treasures that can only be appreciated by a heart satisfied with God, His providences (v.7) and His provision (v.8).

How can I be a person whose godliness is accompanied by contentment and is therefore a real gain?

- Right evaluation of the failing and fleeting nature of all that we often prize so much but is temporal and passing (v.7). We didn't bring it with us and we can't take it with us. As one will read, "Being of sound mind and body, I spent it all."
- Deep satisfaction with the basic provisions of life. I almost hesitate to speak of this. We are reminded often in Scripture to be content with basic necessities. What we consider to be basic necessities often reveals what we want and will cling to.

On the Power of Riches

(v.9-10)

Christians must be wary of wealth. That sounds strange in our ears, doesn't it? These two verses show us the corrupting power of prizing and pursuing wealth. Now it is not *being* wealthy that destroys; it is the *desire* for wealth (v.9) and the *love* of money (v.10) that has a soul and life destroying capacity.

- Wanting riches exposes us to the kind of temptations that ensnare us into addictive and harmful practices. We become entrapped in the mesh of our desires and thus are plunged into spiritual and physical ruin. Wanting riches, for example, may cause us to borrow more than we are able to pay and thus make us the servant of our debt. Wanting riches may expose us to terribly addictive sins whose grip ever tightens until we are destroyed in its tentacles.
- Loving money is a root from which all kinds of evil grows up whose clinging vines choke out our spiritual life and whose thorns pierce and poison bringing terrible grief. Pursuing money may lead you to wander from the faith and bring deep depression and despair.

Why is this so? Consider Matthew 6:24. Because Jesus has taught us clearly that it is not possible to serve both God and money: not that it is not desirable, not that it is not the best, not that it is forbidden – rather, it is impossible. When you serve money and wealth, you are not serving God and cannot serve God. And when you are truly serving God, you will not and cannot be serving money.

Its Personal Application

(v.11-16)

But Timothy and God's faithful people are to flee from the desire for wealth and the love of money and to follow after a godliness marked by a high calling and a good confession. So here is how to be faithful in ministry and reverent towards God.

In His Responsibilities

(v.11-12)

The antidote to false doctrine (v.1-5) and foolish desires (v.6-10) is a mix of three simple words.

- From which we *flee* – Beloved, when we see a snake or a lion we know it threatens us and we flee. So we must see these as so terribly dangerous and destructive that we rise up to flee from them.
- After which we *follow* – Ours is not a blind fleeing, but a targeted following, an aimed pursuit. So while we will not learn false doctrine and not love foolish wealth, we will bend all our efforts by grace to pursue those categories of Christian character most suited to make us into men and women of God. Does your life look like a pursuit of wealth or godliness? Do you long to be a person with classy clothes, nice cars, large homes and the latest and greatest toys? Or do you hunger to be a person marked by righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness?
- For which we *fight* – What is the good fight of faith? It is the fight against sin. It is the fight not to doubt God's Word and His promises so that we do not sin. It is the fight to believe God in an obeying way. It is the fight that lays hold of life eternal because it is seen as a high calling and issues from a good profession. In other words, I fight with faith against sin because it is the essence of my salvation and sanctification that I be moving toward glorification.

In His Motivations

(v.13-15a)

- By the *exhortation* of Christians (v.13) – Paul charged Timothy with a powerful exhortation pointing to the example of Christ that was designed spur him on to the good works that God had ordained for him. So our fleeing and following and fighting should all be stirred up by mentors and friends who hold up our hands and tighten our grip and straighten our paths.
- By the *examination* by Christ (v.14) – Timothy was to be motivated to a pure keeping of God's commands in the light of their being examined and evaluated by our Lord Jesus at His coming. So we desire to be without stain or reproach in our keeping of His Word on that day.
- By the *expectation* of Christ (v.15) – There is a powerfully purifying effect of looking for Jesus' return. Your expectation of His appearing is potent fuel for grace enabled obedience. A passion for Christ will shape our purity in conduct.

In His Theology**(v.15b-16)**

A truly holy life and faithful ministry will be Godward in its orientation. Not just in some intangible way, but in articulated statements of truth about the character and nature of God. Pursuing God means that we pursue a knowledge about God that leads us to know God. The higher the God we love, the purer will be the life we live.

This text is full of massive doxology. Look at what is being said of the God whose coming and will be the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.

- In His Royalty – What words! What more can be said. He is the blessed and only Sovereign, King over all kings and Lord over all lords. We must savor His sweet sovereignty and find His rightful rule a delight to the soul.
- In His Reality – He is immortal in His life and unapproachable in His light. The center of His being is a spring of life immortal and a shining of light impenetrable. He clothes His essence with glory and dwells in brightness of holiness that hides Him from mortal eyes. Yet we will see Him who is the exact image of God and who is the outshining of God's glory. And when we see Him, we will become changed!
- In our Response – To Him and Him alone be honor and never ending dominion.

So true doctrine (v.1-5) leads to faithful duty (v.6-14) from an exalted doxology (v.15-16).

Its Needed Instruction**(v.17-19)**

Paul here brings us full circle. Do verses 17-21 almost seem anti-climatic? Yes, but this is way it is since we are still living in the "already, but not yet." It reminds us that we are merely hungering and tasting now for that which will be a rich feast of God centered joy and worship then. But right now, today, we must instruct others on how to be rich in life and wealthy towards God.

To a God Centered Hope**(v.17)**

So what about those who are already wealthy in this present world? Frankly, what about most of us? What do we do?

- We must not be self-satisfied – the word conceited here has to do with a smug, snotty, self-satisfaction in the privileged provision we have experienced. The riches that we have must not cause us to think that we are better than others. A Christian who is wealthy must also be lowly and humble or he becomes offensive.

- We must set our hope in God, not our wealth – Money has the tendency to draw our attention to it. It will soon be that on which our assurance in the future rests. So many people's saving and investing is not a matter of right stewardship but of wrong hope. Beloved, what will a man trade for his own soul? In my experience and in the eyes of the Bible, almost anything.

To a Future Oriented Expectation

(v.18-19)

A Christian who is rich should not be characterized by his great wealth, but by his good works. He should not have a reputation for his largeness of his gain but for the liberality of his generosity. He should not be known by what he drives and where he lives and what he owns, but by his eagerness to give and share.

How does one become a Christian whose life is full of good works, liberal generosity and eager giving? By having a heart whose treasure is the foundation for the future, whose heart treasures God and life indeed. It is a misunderstanding of the parable that says we will put our money where our heart is. The parable actually teaches that our heart will go where we put our money. So if we give and share and store up in heaven, that is where our heart will go for Matthew 6:21 says, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

So we need a God centered future orientation, not on the future of this life, but on the future of the life to come. In other words, I will give and share and be generous when I measure my life, not by what comes before the death line, but by what comes after it.

Its Concluding Charge

(v.20-21)

Hear the loving concern and passionate appeal in Paul's tone. Hear it for Timothy. Hear it for your own sake.

To a Vital Aim

(v.20)

Timothy has been given a great trust, a vital responsibility to carry out for the spiritual life and sake of the church. He must be guided by the aim of guarding that trust so as to carry it out.

To a Purifying Action

(v.20b-21)

Guarding that trust means avoiding certain things. He must avoid two destructive things to the purity and power of his ministry.

- Empty and worldly chatter – I tell you that we need to hear this today. We are drowning ministry in flood of foolish, empty, senseless talking that is simply noise filling the dreaded silence. All this talk, talk, talk about nothing deadens the soul's senses so that we cannot hear God in the Word nor serve God in the world.

- Arguments of false knowledge – To you who are going off to school anywhere be warned about hearing and heeding arguments that will destroy your faith. I say this especially to you who are in Christian schools, colleges and seminaries. It is there that we least expect and are often exposed to error.

So we aim to take care and protect the truth and ministry we have been given. We will do so by avoiding that which destroys our faith and lowers our esteem of God.

And we will hold fast to truth; we will watch carefully over hearts the want and desire and are mesmerized by wealth; we will hold God high in our honor and our hope; we will be generous and store up heavenly treasure – all by the grace of God that is with us.

Conclusion

My beloved, how will we be changed by such a powerful word about our priorities this morning?

- Let us be strong in the truth against those whose error and false teaching extols wealth and health as God's greatest good. Their panting after riches, their conceit, their spiritual arrogance and their destructive divisiveness must be exposed and opposed wherever found.
- May we value God as our highest treasure so that we will not pursue wealth but rather hunger after God. May just being godly be gain enough for us as we satisfy ourselves in the rich flow of grace, glory and gladness that comes from God alone.
- Be a generous people. Be a people whose love for God fleshes itself out in humble deeds of sacrificial love and giving to one another. Pursue those character qualities most suited to help you flee your sinful bents.
- Honor God in exalting Him in your thoughts and songs and actions of worship. May His sweet supremacy cause you to bow in glad submission to His awesome and overarching sovereignty. Long for His coming. Set your hope on Him whom you cannot see yet will gaze on, He who is immortal, invisible and dwells in light unapproachable yet bids us come with confidence and courage to a throne of grace.

To Him who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of Lords, who alone possesses immortality and dwells in light unapproachable, whom no man has seen or can see, to Him be honor and eternal dominion! And all God's people said, "Amen."

End Notes

¹ Hendrickson, William, *NTC: Thessalonians, Timothy and Titus*, p.188-189.

² MacArthur, John, *MNTC: 1 Timothy*, p.225.