

Tough Love: A Study of 1 Timothy

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Tough Love: A Study of 1 Timothy

Background, History, Greeting from Paul 1 Timothy 1:1-2

1 Timothy, 2 Timothy and Titus make up Paul's "pastoral epistles" because they feature the apostle's instructions to two young pastors. The letters focus on three main subjects that continue to be of great importance today: false teaching, church polity (how a local church is organized and operates), and sound doctrine.

It appears that 1 Timothy and Titus were written during the interval between Paul's two Roman imprisonments, while 2 Timothy was written during the second imprisonment and shortly before Paul's death. That means 1 Timothy likely was written about 65 A.D.; Titus, 66 or 67 A.D.; and 2 Timothy, 67 or 68 A.D. Some scholars place the writing of 1 Timothy and Titus two to three years earlier.

About Timothy

Timothy, or Timotheus (meaning "that which is dear to God"), is written about in Acts, Ephesians, and Philippians, and is mentioned in numerous other New Testament books. His father was a Greek. His grandmother, Lois, and his mother, Eunice, became Christians before him. He evidently was a native of Lystra, which Paul evangelized on his first missionary journey. Paul mentions in 2 Tim. 3:10-11 that Timothy was fully aware of the persecutions that came to Paul at Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, where Paul was stoned. Some commentators believe Paul actually died in Lystra and was raised from the dead, profoundly impacting Timothy, but the Bible does not state this explicitly.

Paul chose Timothy as a companion on his second missionary journey. Timothy had a good reputation (Acts 16:2). As he worked with Paul, he became one in whom Paul had the utmost confidence. Paul referred to Timothy as "my true child in the faith" (1 Tim. 1:2) and later addressed him as "my dearly loved child" (2 Tim. 1:2). Timothy agreed to have two things done to prepare him for missionary work with both Jews and Gentiles. First, he was circumcised, something not done when Timothy was a child probably because of his Greek father's objections. Second, he was ordained by the local council of elders in Derbe and Lystra, and by Paul (1 Tim. 4:14, 2 Tim. 1:6). Timothy went forward with Paul on the remainder of his second missionary journey, including the year and a half Paul spent in Corinth. Paul mentions Timothy in the opening or closing of several epistles: Romans, 2 Corinthians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians and Philemon.

Timothy also accompanied Paul on his third missionary journey, including faithful service while Paul was in prison. Paul left Timothy in Ephesus as a delegate or representative (1 Tim. 1:3) and gave him full instructions about how he should conduct the affairs of the Ephesian church until Paul himself could return (1 Tim. 3:14).

But what, specifically, was Timothy's position at Ephesus? And what was his responsibility to the other churches in Asia Minor as Paul's delegate?

It seems clear that Timothy served as overseer, bishop or, in modern terms, senior pastor of the church at Ephesus. As we'll see later in this study, the biblical terms "bishop," "elder," and "pastor/shepherd" describe the same office in the local church. Scripturally and historically, this office was confined to the local church, although there was interaction between congregations.

At the same time, Timothy served a vital role with Paul in providing oversight of the churches in Asia. This was part of Paul's apostolic calling. Timothy acted as a temporary representative of Paul in his apostolic capacity at Ephesus, as he had done earlier in Corinth, Thessalonica and Philippi (1 Cor. 4:17; 1 Thess. 3:2; Phil. 2:19-24).

Later, during Paul's second Roman imprisonment, he wrote affectionately to Timothy, requesting him to come "before winter" (2 Tim. 4:21), and to bring John Mark, Paul's cloak and some scrolls with him (2 Tim. 4:11-13). Paul seems to know he is about to be martyred, relying on the Lord to "bring me safely into His heavenly kingdom" (2 Tim. 4:18). His second letter to Timothy, asking the young pastor to be by his side during his last days, shows how tenderly Paul regarded his friend. Whether Timothy made it to Rome before Paul's death is not known.

The mention of Timothy in Heb. 13:23 indicates that he was imprisoned at some point in his ministry and later set free.

Greeting: 1 Timothy 1:1-2

The opening greetings in New Testament letters like 1 Timothy ("Paul ... to Timothy ... Grace, mercy and peace ...") follow the usual custom of first-century letter writers, placing the sender's name first, followed by the recipient's name and tidings of good health or well-being.

The name "Paul" comes from the Latin *paulus* and sounds very much like the Hebrew name "Saul." It's possible he used both names since childhood, preferring the name "Paul" after his conversion because of God's call for him to be an apostle to the Gentiles. The name *paulus* means small. Some believe that the apostle, while a spiritual giant, was diminutive in stature. In 2 Cor. 10:10, he acknowledged that people said of him, "his physical presence is weak." To the aesthetically minded Greeks, Paul's physique apparently left much to be desired, but as scholar Kenneth Wuest observed, "there was a great heart in a frail body" (*The Pastoral Epistles, Word Studies in the Greek New Testament*, Vol. II, p. 22).

Paul declares himself an “apostle of Christ Jesus.” The Greek noun *apostolos* comes from the verb *apostello*, which means “to send one off on a commission to do something as one’s personal representative, with credentials furnished.” In the first century, the term described an envoy or ambassador. Paul clearly saw himself as an ambassador for Christ, although by his own admission not the only ambassador (see 2 Cor. 5:20). By using the title “Christ Jesus,” Paul is addressing both Jews and Gentiles. “Christ” in Greek is the equivalent of “Messiah” in Hebrew and means “the anointed or chosen one of God.” The name Jesus comes from the Greek *Iesous* and the Hebrew *Jehoshua*, meaning “Jehovah saves.”

Paul clearly intended his letter to Timothy to be shared. “The use of this official title (apostle) is an indication that the Pastoral Epistles were not merely private letters, but were intended to be read to the churches committed to the charges of Timothy and Titus respectively (*The Expositor’s Greek Testament*, W. Robertson Nicoll, editor).

The fact that Paul declares himself an apostle “according to the command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus, our hope,” illustrates that Paul’s words, like his work, are under the authority of God. The title “God our Savior” refers to the finished work of redemption (our salvation past in regeneration, justification, and positional sanctification), while the description of “Christ Jesus, our hope” reminds us that God is faithful to finish the good work He began in us (through practical sanctification and glorification).

Paul calls Timothy “my true child in the faith.” When Paul contacted Timothy on his first missionary journey, Timothy already was a “disciple,” or a learner (Acts 16:1). The term does not necessarily mean a Christian. Timothy’s mother and grandmother were Jews, and he may have been a believer in the sense that Old Testament saints were saved, trusting in the Messiah who was yet to come. If so, then Paul, by expounding the truth of Jesus to Timothy, brought him to saving faith in Christ, which made him a “true child,” or “legitimately born one” in the body of Christ.

Paul’s letters often begin with greetings of “grace” (*charis*, the unmerited favor of God) and “peace” (*eirene*, the binding together of something once separated), but it is only in his letters to Timothy that the apostle adds “mercy” (*eleos*, demonstrated compassion or sympathy). The true reason is unknown, but some scholars believe Paul added this to his salutation because of his anxiety over Timothy’s administrative abilities. In any case, all three words of greeting describe precious gifts of God the Father and of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Next week: “The problems at Ephesus” (1 Tim. 1:3-11)

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The Problems at Ephesus 1 Timothy 1:3-11

Paul evidently has left Timothy in Ephesus with verbal instructions about the care and feeding of the local church. Now, in his letter to the young pastor, Paul provides written confirmation of his words, strongly urging Timothy to stay and fight some crucial battles.

False doctrine, myths, and endless genealogies

The first problem at Ephesus is false doctrine – not paganism or other forms of false religion blatantly opposed to Christianity, but counterfeit forms of Christianity itself. Just as Satan is the “father of liars” (John 8:44) who often quotes scripture and mixes half-truths with falsehoods in order to deceive us, those who promote false doctrines within the church come under the guise of Christianity, cleverly twisting scriptures and using their persuasive skills to draw people away from sound teaching. It was true in Galatia of the Judaizers, who taught that a person must be circumcised and adopt other Jewish practices in order to be saved. Paul strongly opposed such false teaching, accusing the Galatians of turning to “a different gospel” (Gal. 1:6) and warning them that “even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel other than what we have preached to you, a curse be on him” (Gal. 1:8). Sound doctrine must be the foundation of any church’s organization and activity. As J. Vernon McGee notes, “Your creed must be right before your conduct can be right. It is almost an impossibility to think wrong and act right.” (*1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon: Messages Given on the 5-Year Thru the Bible Radio Network*, p. 25.)

What are the sound doctrines that the apostles taught and fought vigorously to defend? They are many, but these certainly are central:

- The inspiration, inerrancy and authority of scripture.
- The person of Christ (especially His deity and virgin birth).
- The finished work of Christ (His sinless life, substitutionary death, burial, physical resurrection and ascension to the right hand of the Father).
- Salvation by grace through faith.
- The imminent physical return of Christ.
- The resurrection and final judgment of all mankind.
- The church as the body of Christ, with Jesus as the Head.
- The work of the Holy Spirit in drawing the unbeliever to Christ; that same Spirit doing the work of regenerating, sanctifying and equipping the believer for service.

A second problem at Ephesus is the heeding of myths, which Paul later calls “irreverent and silly” (1 Tim. 4:7). In the broadest sense, the Greek word *muthos* means “word, speech, conversation.” It initially referred to talk, rumor, or a story, whether false or true. Later it came to mean a fiction as opposed to an historic tale. Its meaning in this context is difficult to determine. Some believe this is a reference to the pantheon of gods worshiped vigorously in Ephesus. In fact, in this city in Paul’s day stood one of the seven wonders of the ancient world: the temple of Diana (Roman) or Artemis (Greek). Other commentators believe Paul’s reference to myths means traditional Jewish supplements to the law, Jewish stories of miracles, or rabbinical fabrications. It may help to see that Paul warns Titus about the dangers of “Jewish myths” (Titus 1:14). Still others believe Paul is referring to the philosophy of Philo, a brilliant Israelite who spiritualized the Old Testament. A modern-day equivalent would be those who claim the first several chapters of Genesis are myths or legends rather than a factual account of the creation, fall, and the flood. Finally, some believe Paul is taking note of the rising tide of Gnosticism in the church. Like the New Age movement today, Gnosticism is difficult to define because it incorporates a variety of philosophies. Basically, however, Gnosticism lays claim to a special knowledge of which the ordinary believer is incapable, yet which must be acquired for salvation to be experienced in its fullest sense. Whatever Paul meant by “myths,” it’s clear that these “irreverent and silly” teachings were undermining sound doctrine in the church at Ephesus.

A third problem in the church is “endless genealogies.” This could be a reference to Herod’s order that the Jewish public registers, including the genealogical tables, be destroyed, so that the preservation of the records relied heavily on memory or incomplete private records. This produced speculation over Jesus’ claim to be the Messiah, as well as questions about priestly lines and individual Jews’ personal ancestry. Paul’s teaching is clear on the person and work of Christ, and Gospel writers Matthew and Luke go to great lengths to establish Jesus’ lineage. Beyond this, all speculation is a waste of time. Others say Paul’s reference to “endless genealogies” is a rebuke of the false teaching that the church is just a continuation of Judaism. Still others say this is a reference to the *demiurge*, a Gnostic deity who creates the material world and often is seen as the originator of evil. By some forms of Gnosticism, there are many emanations from a divine center. In other words, the original created a creature, the creature created another below him, and so on. In this line of thinking, Jesus is a created being, not the uncreated Creator Himself. Whatever Paul means, he uses the word “endless,” which means “without limit.” It could be taken to mean endless with respect to its object or aim and thus would describe these genealogies as fruitless or vain.

There are other problems at Ephesus that become apparent later in Paul’s letter: relational problems having to do with the proper role of women in the church and the way in which spiritual leaders should relate to different age groups; ministerial problems having to do with the stress of the pastorate; and financial problems having to do with leaders who see their ministry as a means to financial gain. Paul will deal with all of these in due time.

“The goal of our instruction ...”

Paul says he and Timothy share a three-fold goal in their instruction. That is, if the believers in Ephesus follow their teaching, they will develop three things. First, “love from a pure heart.” The word translated “love” is *agape*, the highest expression of love. It is the kind of love God has for the lost (John 3:16), the love the Holy Spirit places in the heart of the yielded believer (Rom. 5:5), and the love Paul so eloquently describes in 1 Corinthians 13. The second benefit is “a good conscience” by which the believer obeys the Word of God, producing a sense of well-being, satisfaction and pleasure. The third advantage is “a sincere faith.” The Greek expresses it as the opposite of hypocrisy, a term used to describe stage actors who pretended to be someone they are not. In other words, the faith spoken of here is genuine, not merely intellectual or pretended. Some translations, like the NIV, show Paul communicating a single goal: love, which springs from a pure heart, a good conscience and sincere faith. In either case, Timothy’s faithful teaching will produce all of these results, according to Paul.

Fruitless discussion

Having laid out the benefits of following his teaching, Paul states bluntly in verse 6 that “some have deviated from these and turned aside to fruitless discussion.” The phrase “turned aside” is *ektrepo*, a medical term referring to dislocated limbs. The phrase “fruitless discussion” is *mataiologian*, meaning futile talk, or talk that is devoid of force, truth or success. This is no minor misinterpretation of God’s Word, but a major departure from sound doctrine and it is leading only to an excess of fruitless jabbering. Paul says these false teachers want to be *nomodidaskalos*, literally “law teachers,” focusing exclusively on the Mosaic law. The problem is that they don’t know what they’re talking about.

The law is good when used legitimately

To make sure he is not misunderstood, Paul affirms the value of the law in verses 8-11. The law, he says, is not for the morally upright, but for the unruly (those who will not come into subjection to the law), the ungodly (those destitute of reverential awe towards God), the irreverent (those who make themselves accessible to evil influence), those whose disregard for God and His standards do what comes naturally to them – they mistreat parents, murder, engage in sexual immorality, kidnap and ply the slave trade, lie, and much more. The law shows us God’s perfect and holy standard, reveals our sinfulness, and is meant to restrain our bad behavior.

At the same time, the law cannot save us. Paul is careful to point this out to the Galatians, who are under the influence of the Judaizers who insist one can not be saved apart from the law. Paul says the law was “added because of transgressions” (Gal. 3:19). Paul uses the word “transgressions” (*parabasis*) rather than “sin” (*hamartia*). Prior to the Mosaic law, man’s wrongdoing was recognized as sin, a deviation from the course of proper conduct. But when the law was added, it showed sin for what it truly is – a violation of God’s perfect standard. This was

intended to reveal man's separation from God, to cause him to fear God's wrath, and to drive him to God for forgiveness, which He offered freely by grace. More to the point, the law was not "added" to God's covenant of grace as another means of salvation but as an exclamation point on man's sin so he would more clearly see his need for God. Paul says the law was added "*until* the Seed to whom the promise was made would come" (Gal. 3:19). The law was given for the interval between the time of Moses and the time of Christ. So, what good is the law? It reveals God's holiness and man's depravity. It is brought alongside grace to magnify it. And as a guardian, it takes us by the hand and leads us to the Son of God. "... for although the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (John 1:17).

Next: "Receiving God's grace; engaging in battle" (1 Tim. 1:12-20)

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Receiving God's Grace; Engaging in Battle 1 Timothy 1:12-20

Paul ends chapter one with a powerful testimony of God's sovereignty and grace, and with the stirring exhortation to Timothy to "fight the good fight" (1 Tim. 1:18 NIV).

Paul's testimony

In reminding Timothy of Paul's own testimony, Paul emphasizes how God can take anyone – from the blasphemer to the immature young pastor – and mold him or her into a powerful servant. Paul is grateful to God for a number of things:

- **Strength.** The Greek word *enduno* means "to clothe with, to furnish with" and refers to the ability Christ Jesus has given Paul to proclaim the gospel.
- **Service.** God saw that the fiery, zealous Pharisee, Saul of Tarsus, would become the equally fiery, zealous apostle, Paul. So God placed him into the gospel ministry and empowered him with spiritual gifts.
- **Mercy.** Even though Paul once was a blasphemer, a man of violence and a persecutor of the church – things done directly against Jesus according to Acts 9:5, 22:7, 26:14 – God pardoned him. Even more, God gave Paul the opportunity to serve the One he had injured. It's important to note that Paul's reference to "ignorance and unbelief" in verse 13 does not mean God forgave Paul because Paul didn't know better. Rather, Paul's rejection of Jesus as Messiah and his fierce persecution of the saints so clouded his soul that he did wrong while fully believing he was doing right.
- **Grace.** The Greek word *charis* means unmerited favor, a good deed done for someone with no thought of personal gain. In classic Greek, grace was something one bestowed only on a friend. But the New Testament use of grace turns the entire concept on its head. God loved us and sent His Son to pay our sin debt while we were still sinners (Rom. 5:8), enemies of God (Rom. 5:10), and alienated from the life of God (Eph. 4:18; Col. 1:21).
- **God's patience.** In verse 15, Paul describes himself as "chief" among sinners (KJV), "worst of them" (HCSB), and "foremost" of sinners (Wuest). The patience of Christ will never undergo so severe a test as it has with Paul, who is "the representative instance of God's longsuffering to a high-handed transgressor" (Vincent, quoted in Kenneth Wuest, *The Pastoral Epistles, Word Studies in the Greek New Testament*, p. 35). Therefore, any sinner may rejoice; no one should despair. The Greek word translated "longsuffering" is *makrothumia* and means a patient holding out under trial; a protracted restraint of the soul from yielding to passion, especially the passion of anger.

Paul then gives a wonderful description of God, who is:

- **The King eternal.** “The King of the ages,” is a better translation. God is the absolute Ruler of time and eternity, and of all that takes place in them.
- **Immortal.** The Greek word is *aphthartus*, which means “uncorrupted, not liable to corruption or decay, imperishable.”
- **Invisible.** God is “the One who fills all things, works everywhere, and yet is invisible ... the perfect reverse of false gods and idols, who are confined to one spot, work nowhere, and, being sticks and stones, are seen by every body” (*Adam Clark's Commentary, Bible Navigator*).
- **The only God.** The word “wise,” which appears in some translations, is not in the best manuscripts. He is the one true and living God, unique, incomparable.

The apostle accords Him the awe, reverence and exalted position due to God alone.

Strongly engaging in battle

Well aware of Timothy's spiritual gifts and calling, and sensitive to Timothy's youthful inexperience, Paul exhorts him to carry on the work God has placed before him. The “prophecies previously made about you” (v. 18) may refer to predictions by Godly men about Timothy. More likely, the phrase harkens back to revelations Paul received about Timothy, or to advice Paul previously gave his young protégé. In any case, Timothy is to faithfully wage the spiritual battle that lies before him, armed with the shield of faith and the breastplate of righteousness (see Eph. 6:13-17; 1 Thess. 5:8).

The shipwreck of Hymenaeus and Alexander

Not all have served faithfully, Paul warns. Hymenaeus and Alexander, for example, have thrust aside the great truths of the Christian religion and now, blown about by every wind of doctrine (Eph. 4:14), have shipwrecked the faith. What does that mean? And how is it that Paul could deliver them to Satan?

Hymenaeus and Alexander are false teachers in the church. Paul mentions Hymenaeus in his second letter to Timothy, comparing his teaching to gangrene and charging him with deviating from the truth by teaching that the resurrection already has taken place (2 Tim. 2:17-18). Both in 1 Timothy with Alexander, and in 2 Timothy with Philetus, the name of Hymenaeus is mentioned first, suggesting that he is the leader among false teachers at Ephesus. Their doctrine is to deny the physical resurrection, teaching instead that all the resurrection means is the awakening of the soul from sin. “This spiritualizing of the resurrection sprang from the idea of the necessarily evil nature of all material substance. This idea immediately led to the conclusion of the essentially evil nature of the human body, and that if man is to rise to his true nature, he must rid himself of the thralldom, not of sin, but of the body. This contempt for the body led to the denial of the resurrection in its literal sense; and all that Christ had taught on the subject was explained only, in an allegorical sense, of the resurrection of the soul from sin” (*John Rutherford, International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*).

The name "Alexander" is mentioned five times in the New Testament. It's possible, but not certain, that the Alexander to whom Paul refers is mentioned three of these times. In Acts 19, the Jews urge Alexander, a fellow Jew and possibly a craftsman, to address an angry Ephesian mob bent on violence against Paul, whose teaching has resulted in a slump in the sale of idols. Alexander does not have the chance to use his speaking skills to clear the Jews of any wrongdoing, for when the mob sees that he, too, is a Jew, they shout him down with the words, "Great is (the goddess) Artemis of the Ephesians" (Acts 19:34).

We don't know if this is the same Alexander to whom Paul refers in 1 Timothy 1:19-20, but in this passage Paul says Hymenaeus and Alexander have "rejected" – thrust off, committed violence against, willfully abandoned – the central truths concerning Christ and as a result have shipwrecked the faith. "It was not with reference to their personal faith, but with regard to the Faith, the Christian Faith as looked upon as a revelation, that they made shipwreck" (Kenneth Wuest, *The Pastoral Epistles, Word Studies in the Greek New Testament*, p. 37.).

The final mention of Alexander is in 2 Timothy 4:14-15, where Paul says Alexander the coppersmith "did great harm to me ... he strongly opposed our words." Paul warns Timothy to be on guard against Alexander, whose speaking skills and persuasiveness are powerful.

It is important to note that Paul is not suggesting that Hymenaeus and Alexander have lost their salvation; some commentators are adamant that these two false teachers were never saved to begin with. In truth, we don't know and cannot judge. The "shipwreck" to which Paul refers is the natural outcome of false teaching. By denying the resurrection, Hymenaeus and Alexander are denying one of the central truths of the gospel. Without the resurrection, in fact, there is no gospel at all and our faith is in vain (1 Cor. 15:3-4, 12-22).

Finally, what does Paul mean when he says, "I have delivered them to Satan, so that they may be taught not to blaspheme" (1 Tim. 1:20)? Certainly, Satan could not be employed to teach anyone sound doctrine, so Paul is not talking about a deal with the Devil. But it is clear in scripture that Satan and his demons enjoy inflicting pain upon human beings and, when allowed by God, will go to the very limits of their power to wreak havoc on mankind. As in a similar case in Corinth (1 Cor. 5:4-5), it appears that Paul is exercising his apostolic authority to do several things:

- Excommunicate Hymenaeus and Alexander from the church.
- Give them over, "by an extraordinary power ... to be terrified or tormented by Satan" (*Matthew Henry's Unabridged Commentary*).
- Cast them back into the heathen world, over which Satan is the ruler (2 Cor. 4:4).
- Reform the offenders. "The primary design of the highest censure in the primitive church was to prevent further sin and to reclaim the sinner" (*Matthew Henry's Unabridged Commentary*).

Sadly, Paul's farewell to the church in Ephesus (Acts. 20:29-31) acknowledges that "savage wolves" with "deviant doctrines" already are at the door and, if allowed in, will not spare the flock. Remember, Paul writes, "that day and night for three years I did not stop warning each one of you with tears" (v. 31).

Next: "The What and Why of Prayer; Instructions to Men and Women" (1 Tim. 2: 1-15).

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The What and Why of Prayer; Instructions to Men and Women 1 Timothy 2:1-15

Paul devotes chapter two to teaching about prayer, telling Timothy what the church should pray for and why such prayers are beneficial. He closes the chapter with instructions to men and women about their behavior in the church, giving us two “hard sayings” about the proper role of women: 1) “I do not allow a woman to teach or to have authority over a man;” and 2) “But she will be saved through childbearing ...”

Prayers for everyone

Paul places a great deal of emphasis on prayer, telling Timothy that, first and foremost, he urges:

- **Petitions/supplications.** The Greek word is *deesis*, in this context referring to prayer for our personal needs as they are related to the government under which we live.
- **Prayers.** A more general term that embraces the others.
- **Intercessions.** The Greek word is *enteuxis*, whose verbal form means “to fall in with a person, to draw near so as to converse familiarly.” The verbal form used in Romans 8:26 indicates that the Holy Spirit throws Himself into our case. In Hebrews 7:25, the same word is used to convey the truth that the Lord is always meeting us at every point in our lives and intervening in our affairs for our benefit.
- **Thanksgivings.** We are to be thankful *in* all things (I Thess. 5:18). Further, Paul says in this passage that we are to be thankful *for* everyone. It means we are to be thankful for those who are in authority over us, even though they may be less than perfect, or even corrupt (see Rom. 13:1-7). At the time of Paul’s writing, Nero was emperor in Rome.

Paul then gives us three reasons we should pray for those in authority over us:

- “... so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity” (v. 2). The word “tranquil” is *eremos* and depicts an absence of outward disturbance; the word may imply freedom from political agitations and persecutions. The word “quiet” is *hesuchios* and refers to a quietness that arises from within.
- “This is good, and it pleases God our Savior.” God delights in the prayers of His people, particularly so when they pray for those in authority. In the Cult of Caesar, the reigning emperor was called *soter*, “savior.” Paul recognizes the authority of those in government to rule over the temporal affairs of their subjects, while reminding Timothy that God is the only One who can save our souls, deliver us from sin, and bring us into His kingdom.

- God “wants everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” The desire for salvation of lost sinners arises naturally from the love of God. While He does not violate man’s free will, He strongly desires that none should perish (2 Peter 3:9).

One God, one mediator

In verses 5-6, Paul shows how an infinite and holy God can have a relationship with finite and sinful people. They are linked by a mediator who is both God and man. The word “mediator” is *mesites*, “one who intervenes between two, either in order to make or restore peace and friendship, or to form a compact or ratify a covenant.” Jesus, the Son of God, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Spirit, left heaven and came to earth veiled in the flesh (John 1:14); He lived a sinless life though tempted in every way (Heb. 4:15); He laid down His life on the cross, becoming sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21); and He rose from the dead on the third day, conquering sin and death and fulfilling scriptural prophecy (2 Cor. 15:3-4). Paul uses the word *anthropos*, the racial, generic term for man when describing Jesus, rather than *aner*, meaning a male individual. His point is that God became one of us. And through Jesus’ finished work at Calvary, He satisfied God’s justice, extended to all mankind His grace, and made it possible for reconciliation between holy God and sinful people.

Holy hands, modest clothing

Paul now gives instructions to men and women concerning prayer and public worship. He begins in verse 8 by saying, “Therefore, I want ...” The Greek is *boulomai*, speaking of Paul’s desire that proceeds from reason, rather than *thelo*, a desire that springs from the emotions. When Paul continues with, “...the men in every place to pray,” he is writing about public worship and makes two key points. First, men are to lead by example. Second, worship must not be confined to a single place. The Jews supposed their prayers had special power and meaning when uttered from the temple, and the pagans had similar regard for prayers offered from their shrines. But Paul urges Christians to conduct public worship *en panti propoi*, “in every place” or wherever Christian congregations assemble.

As for “lifting up holy hands,” this was a custom among the Orientals when taking an oath, making a blessing, or offering a prayer. The early church adopted this practice and many continue it today. The word “holy” is not *hagios*, a common term that means set apart for God, but *hosios*, a term similar to righteous. The men who lead in public prayer must do so “without anger or argument.” In other words, prayer is to be free of irritation toward others and doubt toward God.

Now, Paul turns his attention to women and their role in public worship. His instructions about clothing, hair and jewelry in verse 9 are not meant to limit women’s participation in prayer but to set them apart from the women who played prominent roles, often as prostitutes, in pagan religions. In Corinth, for example, prostitution was a central part of the worship of the goddess

Aphrodite, and the prostitutes were distinguished by their disheveled hair; that's why Paul told the Christian women in Corinth to cover their heads in public worship – to set them apart. In Ephesus, women played a prominent role in the worship of the goddess Diana, or Artemis. Paul exhorted women to exercise their newfound freedom in Christ by distinguishing themselves with modesty and good works, “as is proper for women who affirm that they worship God” (v.10).

Hard sayings

We now come to four “hard sayings” in verses 11-15:

“A woman should learn in silence with all submission” (v. 11). This passage is best understood when laid aside 1 Corinthians 14:33b-35, where women are disturbing the church services by asking their husbands questions, presumably about that which was being preached. The silence Paul desires in both passages has to do with maintaining order in public worship and does not forbid women to take an active part in the church under the limitations given in 1 Timothy 2:12.

“I do not allow a woman to teach or to have authority over a man” (v. 12). The grammatical construction of the sentence requires a more accurate rendering as, “I do not allow a woman to be a teacher.” The context of this passage deals with church order and the position of man and woman in corporate worship. “The kind of teacher Paul has in mind is spoken of in Acts 13:1, 1 Corinthians 12:28, 29, and Ephesians 4:11, God-called, and God-equipped teachers, recognized by the Church as those having authority in the Church in matters of doctrine and interpretation. This prohibition of a woman to be a teacher, does not include the teaching of classes of women, girls, or children in a Sunday School, for instance, but does prohibit the woman from being a pastor, or a doctrine teacher in a school. It would not be seemly, either, for a woman to teach a mixed class of adults” (Kenneth Wuest, *The Pastoral Epistles, Word Studies in the Greek New Testament*, p. 49).

Keep in mind that in Paul's day women led the mystery religions and their worship largely consisted of sex orgies. At the same time, Paul's instructions are not grounded solely, or even primarily, in his response to contemporary society. Read on.

“For Adam was created first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and transgressed” (vv. 13-14). Paul appeals to two historical and irreversible events: the order of creation and the order of the fall. This makes it clear that Paul's instructions are not just for the church at Ephesus in the distant past; rather, they are equally authoritative and relevant today. The first use of “deceived” is from the Greek *apatao*, which means to “cheat, deceive or beguile.” The second use of the word is from a different Greek word, *exapatao*, which means to “completely or thoroughly deceive.”

“But she will be saved through childbearing, if she continues in faith, love, and holiness, with good sense” (v. 15). This is an extremely difficult passage about which many commentators disagree. One thing is clear: It cannot mean a woman will receive forgiveness of sin and everlasting life by bearing children. Paul spent too much time and ink arguing for justification by faith to throw it all away in one sentence. Further, Paul is addressing Christian women because he indicates they already are exhibiting some degree of faith, love and holiness.

Most likely, this verse is a reference to the curse God pronounced on Eve after she sinned: “I will intensify your labor pains; you will bear children in anguish” (Gen. 3:16). But Paul’s purpose is to encourage women at this point. While they were not designed for headship, and while the woman fell first, God still regards woman with the same love and purpose that led Him to create her. Though man would eat his food “by means of painful labor” (Gen. 3:17) and woman would “bear children in anguish” (Gen. 3:16), God nevertheless continued to provide for mankind’s physical needs and allowed them to propagate the human race. The fellowship of food and drink and the joy of childbearing are tempered by the painful reminder that we live in a sinful and fallen world that is waiting for the promised redemption (see Rom. 8:18-23). As an added comfort, women may remind themselves that the promised “seed” or Messiah (Gen. 3:15) came through a virgin teenage girl. While a woman (Eve) may have introduced sin to the human race, a woman (Mary) introduced the Savior, the virgin-born Son of God.

But what about the phrase, “... *if* she continues in faith, love, and holiness, with good sense” (1 Tim. 2:15)? First, the word “she” is literally translated “they” and likely refers either to all believing women or to wives and their husbands. It is faith in God, and the resulting love and holiness that faith produces, that enable people to see God’s provision for their physical and spiritual needs. The unbeliever sees only the curse of sin – hard labor and painful childbearing. But the believer sees God’s unflinching love through His provision for continued physical existence (food and drink, children) and, more importantly, through everlasting life and the end of the curse (Rev. 22:3).

Next: “Qualifications for church leadership” (1 Tim. 3:1-13)

Tough Love: A Study of 1 Timothy

Qualifications for Church Leadership

1 Timothy 3:1-16

Having delved into the proper role of men and women in corporate worship in 1 Timothy 2, Paul now lays out the qualifications for church leaders, specifically pastors and deacons.

Bishops, elders, and pastors

In his writings, Paul uses three different terms to describe what we now call “pastors:”

Bishops. Paul uses the Greek word *episcopos* in 1 Timothy 3:1-2 to describe “one who watches over.” The word is used four other times in the New Testament. In Acts 20:28 it is translated “overseers” and is applied by Paul to the Ephesian elders. Paul also refers to the “overseers and deacons” at Philippi (Phil. 1:1). In Titus 1:7 and following, Paul lays out what is required of an overseer. And in 1 Peter 2:25 Jesus is called “the shepherd and *guardian* of your souls.”

A bishop, or overseer, is “a man charged with the duty of seeing that things to be done by others are done rightly, any curator, guardian, or superintendent ... specifically, the superintendent, head or overseer of any Christian church” (Thayer, quoted in *Word Meanings in the New Testament*, p. 389). It is important to note that Scripture does not teach, or even mention, an office in which a bishop has authority over other bishops or over other churches. The bishop, or overseer, is a local official. And it appears that each local church has a number of them. The concept of a “diocesan bishop” arises in the second century apart from Scripture. By the time of Ignatius (around A.D. 115), we see one bishop over the local church in supreme authority over the church’s elders and deacons. This is the beginning of the Episcopal hierarchy that mushroomed in the second century. But for the church in Paul’s day, this local church structure is neither known nor taught.

Elders. In Titus 1:5-7 Paul uses the terms “elders” (*presbyteroi*) and “bishops/overseers” (*episcopoi*) interchangeably to describe the same officers in the local church. The name “elders” emphasizes the fact that the leaders of the church were to be older, more mature men, as was the case with the elders of Israel. Bishop Lightfoot of the Church of England gives six evidences that “bishop/overseer” and “elder” are the same: “(1) In Philippians 1:1, Paul salutes the bishops and deacons. He could not have omitted mention of the elders unless they were included in the ‘bishops.’ (2) In Acts 20:17, Paul has summoned to Miletus the elders of the church at Ephesus. But then he calls them ‘overseers’ (*episcopoi*) of the flock. (3) Peter does a similar thing (1 Pet. 5:1-2). (4) In 1 Timothy, Paul describes the qualifications of bishops (3:1-7) and deacons (3:8-13). The fact that he omits elders here would argue that they were the same as bishops. (5) Titus (1:5-7). (6) Clement of Rome’s First Epistle (ca. A.D. 95) clearly uses “bishops” and “elders” interchangeably” (quoted in *Word Meanings in the New Testament*, p. 413).

Pastors. In Ephesians 4:11, Paul uses the Greek word *poimen*, which means “shepherd.” This same term is used of Christ in John 10:11, 14, 16; in Hebrews 13:20; and in 1 Peter 2:25. A pastor is to be the shepherd of his flock. Since Christ is the Head of the Church (Col. 1:18), He is the “chief Shepherd” over all believers (1 Pet. 5:4), while the pastor is to feed and tend to the local congregation. Paul referred to “pastors and teachers” (Eph. 4:11) in the same breath, indicating that one of the pastor’s primary roles is to feed the flock with a steady diet of God’s Word.

In summary, the terms bishop/overseer, elder, and pastor refer to the same person who must be a mature believer serving the local church as a leader, manager and teacher. In addition, Paul’s writings establish a second office in the local church: the office of deacon. Together, pastors and deacons lead the church in meeting the needs of its members, as well as reaching out to unbelievers. Before we look more closely at the qualifications for these two offices, it may help to see how Christian denominations today interpret 1 Timothy 3 and other passages to explain their form of church government.

Forms of church government

Since the first century, many forms of church government have emerged. In general, though, three basic types of church government are most common.

Episcopalian. This term comes from the Greek word *episkopos*, which means “bishop” or “overseer.” In this form of government, authority rests with bishops who preside over a number of local congregations. Typically, they alone have the authority to ordain to the ministry. In many cases, episcopalian bodies argue that there is a succession of function and authority from the apostles to the bishops. Most Catholic and Anglican/Episcopal churches have adopted this form of church government.

Presbyterian. Coming from the Greek word *presbuteros*, meaning “elder,” this form of church government relies on a council or presbytery made up of elders. Some churches distinguish between “teaching elders” and “ruling elders.” Modern Presbyterian churches tend to practice this form of church polity.

Congregational. In this form of church government, authority rests with the members. “Congregationalism stresses the independence of the local church and the priesthood of the believer. Higher human authority within the church or over the churches is denied, and pastors are regarded as full-time servants – not church managers” (W.A. Criswell, *The Doctrine of the Church*, p. 66). Baptists are among those who practice this form of church government.

While each form of church government has its strengths and weaknesses, Paul’s point in 1 Timothy 3 is not to lay out a rigid way to “do church.” Rather, he focuses on the *character* of church leaders. It is far more important that pastors and deacons be men of God than for a church to run its affairs a certain way. That being said, it does appear that the congregational form of church polity is most consistent with Scripture and with the practice of the first-century church.

Qualifications

In verses 1-7, Paul lays out the qualifications for pastors, and in verses 8-13 he does the same for deacons. Simply put, pastors are charged with the spiritual welfare of the church, while deacons are responsible for its temporal well being.

Pastors must be:

- **Above reproach / blameless.** The Greek word *anepilambano* literally means “one who cannot be laid hold upon.” In other words, a pastor must be of such spotless character that no one can find anything about him that would cast reproach upon the cause of Christ.
- **The husband of one wife,** or literally “a man of one woman.” This certainly prohibits polygamy, but some commentators believe it goes farther than that, either requiring the pastor to be a married man or, if he is married and his wife dies, that he not remarry.
- **Self-controlled / vigilant.** The Greek word *nephalion* means “calm, dispassionate and circumspect.”
- **Sensible / sober** (*sophrona*), meaning soberminded, serious, earnest.
- **Respectable** (*kosmion*), meaning orderly, dignified.
- **Hospitable.** The Greek word *philoxenon* means “one who is fond of offering hospitality.” In the first century, this meant a willingness to house Christians whom the Romans had banished and persecuted; hosting traveling preachers and teachers; and holding worship services in the home.
- **An able teacher.** The Greek word *didaktikon* means more than given to teaching, but able and skilled at it, with a strong desire to serve God in this way.
- **Not addicted to wine.** The Greek words *me paroinon* mean “one who sits long at his wine, to behave ill at wine, to treat with drunken violence, to be quarrelsome over wine.” Kenneth Wuest comments: “The wine is fermented ... Paul’s meaning is that the bishop, in partaking of wine, which in the first century was a common beverage not having the associations with which it is identified today, must not drink it so freely that he becomes intoxicated and hence quarrelsome. While this injunction does not teach total abstinence in the case of intoxicating liquors, but rather temperance, yet the present day Christian should use such an injunction as 1 Corinthians 10:31 as a guide in the case of present day indulgence in intoxicating liquors” (*The Pastoral Epistles, Word Studies in the Greek New Testament*, p. 56.). Romans 14:21 may be an even more pointed exhortation to believers regarding drink.
- **Not a bully but gentle.** The Greek words *me plekten* describe one who is “a bruiser, one who is ready with a blow, a pugnacious, contentious, quarrelsome person.”
- **Not quarrelsome.** This means one does not go about with a chip on his shoulder.
- **Not greedy.** The Greek word *aphilarguron* means “not fond of silver.” The love of money is in view here.

- **One who manages his own household competently, having his children under control with all dignity.** The Greek term for “under control” is *hupotage*, which originally was a military term used of a general arranging soldiers in battalions. This doesn’t mean a pastor is a tyrannical drill sergeant, but rather that he raises his children to be obedient and respectful.
- **Not a new convert.** The Greek word *neophutos* means “to spring up” and is used to describe newly planted palm trees. Paul says the pastor must not be a new Christian, or thrust so quickly into a position of great responsibility he might become blinded with conceit and fall into the condemnation of Satan. By that, Paul makes reference to the pride that led to Satan’s downfall.
- **A man of good reputation among outsiders.** Those outside the church must regard the pastor as an honorable man. Expositors says, “One cannot safely assume . . . that because we are Christians, we are absolutely in the right and the world wholly wrong. Thus to defy public opinion in a superior spirit may not only bring discredit (reproach) on one’s self and on the Church, but also catch us in the devil’s snare, namely, a supposition that because the world condemns a certain course of action, the action is therefore right and the world’s verdict may be safely set aside” (*The Pastoral Epistles, Word Studies in the Greek New Testament*, pp. 58-59).

Deacons must be:

- **Worthy of respect.** The Greek word *semnos* means grave, dignified, inviting reverence.
- **Not hypocritical.** In the Greek, the word *dilogos* means “saying one thing and meaning another, and making different representations to different people about the same thing.”
- **Not drinking a lot of wine.** The deacon must not be “attached to” or addicted to wine.
- **Not greedy for money.** Expositors says, “The gain becomes disgraceful when a man makes the acquisition of it, rather than the glory of God, his prime object. On the other hand, the special work of deacons was Church finance; and no doubt they had to support themselves by engaging in some secular occupation. They would thus be exposed to temptations to disappropriate Church funds or to adopt questionable means of livelihood” (*The Pastoral Epistles, Word Studies in the Greek New Testament*, pp. 59-60).
- **Holding the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience.** The Greek word for mystery, *musterion*, means “truth which was kept hidden from the world until revealed at the appointed time, and which is a secret to ordinary eyes, but is made known by divine revelation” (Vincent, quoted in *The Pastoral Epistles, Word Studies in the Greek New Testament*, p. 60). “The faith” refers to Christian doctrine. “A clear conscience” goes beyond a mere intellectual attitude toward the Christian faith; it embraces the moral duty that Christianity teaches. In other words, the deacon must demonstrate deep commitment to the things of God.
- **Tested first.** The Greek word *dokimazo* means “to be put to the test for the purpose of approving, and having met the test, to be approved.” This does not refer to a formal examination; rather, it means the consensus of the Christian community as to whether the candidate meets the qualifications laid out in verse 8.

- **Married to women who are worthy of respect, not slanderers, self-controlled, faithful in everything.** The word translated “wives” in many versions is *gune*, “a woman.” The grammatical construction in the Greek does not require this to mean the wives of deacons, but the context implies it. Some translators use the word “women” and some commentators believe verse 11 speaks of women who hold the office of deaconess, citing the example of Phoebe (Rom. 16:1). The difficulty is that the Greek word for deacon (*diakonos*) means minister or helper. Paul and Apollos are called by this name even though they did not hold the office of deacon. Jesus is called deacon or minister in Matthew 20:28, as are government officials (Rom. 13:4) and “ministers” of Satan (2 Cor. 11:15). It is best to apply Scripture to Scripture in context; when we do that, it is clear that the offices of pastor and deacon are restricted to men.
- **Husbands of one wife, managing their children and their own households competently.** These qualifications are similar to those for pastors in verses 2 and 4.

Paul closes this section by saying that people who serve commendably as deacons will obtain a good standing in the esteem of their fellow Christians. They also will gain confidence in their walk with the Lord, growing more able to share Christ boldly with others.

Finally, he reminds Timothy that the purpose of all these instructions is so the young pastor “will know how people ought to act in God’s household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15). His closing lines about the “mystery of godliness” anchor Paul’s teachings in the truth of the person and work of Christ, who was:

- **Manifested in the flesh.** The unseen and eternal God became man and took up residence among us (John 1:14); He is our compassionate high priest (Heb. 4:14-15).
- **Justified in the Spirit,** meaning “vindicated, endorsed, proved, pronounced as.” This is a reference to His deity, which, unlike His humanity, He always had.
- **Seen by angels.** The angelic world beheld His virgin birth, temptation, agony in Gethsemane, resurrection and ascension.
- **Preached among the Gentiles.** A better translation is “nations.” Paul and Timothy are active participants in carrying out the Great Commission.
- **Believed on in the world.** Both men are seeing many come to faith in Christ.
- **Taken up in glory.** This is a reference to the ascension, with the word “glory” likely pointing out that the cloud receiving Jesus was the Shekinah Glory.

Next: “Demonic influence and faithful servanthood” (1 Tim. 4:1-10).

Tough Love: A Study of 1 Timothy

Demonic Influence and Faithful Servanthood 1 Timothy 4:1-10

Having just declared the great “mystery of godliness” (1 Tim. 3:16), Paul now transitions to a warning about demonic influence that will manifest itself through false teachers and lead to apostasy in the church.

Deceitful spirits and the teachings of demons

Paul writes that in “latter times, some will depart from the faith” (1 Tim. 4:1). He has in mind the days after his letter is delivered rather than the days immediately preceding the Lord’s return. His warning here is similar to what he told the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:29-31: “I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. And men from among yourselves will rise up with deviant doctrines to lure the disciples into following them. Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for three years I did not stop warning each one of you with tears.”

The word “depart” is key. In the Greek it is *aphistemi*, which means “to stand off from, to fall away.” The English word “apostasize” comes from this. Is Paul teaching that many Christians are about to lose their salvation? No, for the definite article “the” before “faith” makes it clear that what will be rejected is the body of doctrine central to the Christian faith, not a personal relationship with Christ. It is an important warning to us today that believers are subject to demonic influence and false teachings. While Christians cannot lose their salvation, they can be deceived and drawn away into false teachings that hinder their walk with Christ and destroy their testimony.

In verse 1 Paul refers to “deceitful spirits and the teachings of demons.” The word “deceitful” is *planos*, meaning “wandering, roving, misleading, leading into error.” The word “spirits” refers to evil spirits, or demons. Satan is the father of lies, blinding the minds of unbelievers so they will not receive the truth (2 Cor. 4:3-4). Meanwhile, his demons torment and possess unbelievers and use false teachers to draw Christians away from sound doctrine. The word “teachings” or “doctrines” is *didaskalia*, which means instruction, and the word “demons” is *daimonion*. It is important to note that there is only one devil (*diabolos*), Satan, and many demons (*daimonion*) that do his bidding. It is significant that Paul finds the source of false teachings in demons that use human agents to deceive others.

In verse 2, Paul describes the false teachers as hypocrites and liars “whose consciences are seared.” Vincent comments, “The metaphor is from the practice of branding slaves or criminals, the latter on the brow. These deceivers are not acting under delusion, but deliberately, and against conscience. They wear the form of godliness, and contradict their profession by their crooked conduct (II Tim. 3:5). The brand is not on their brow but on their conscience” (*The Pastoral Epistles, Word Studies in the Greek New Testament*, p. 67).

Paul then identifies two of their false teachings: “They forbid marriage and demand abstinence from foods” (verse 3). This likely is a reference to the Essenes, an ascetic Jewish brotherhood living on the shores of the Dead Sea. The Essenes repudiated marriage except as a necessity for preserving the race, and allowed it only under the most stringent regulations. They also abstained from wine and animal flesh. Paul’s response is that marriage and food of every kind (the Greek word is *broma* and means food, not just meat) are creations of God and are good, to be received with thanksgiving – a fairly bold statement for someone who spent most of his life in the strictest form of Jewish legalism.

A good servant of Christ Jesus

Paul tells Timothy in verse 6, “If you point these things out to the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus.” The word “brother” is *adelphos*, which literally means “from the same womb.” The believers at Ephesus are brothers because they have the same heavenly Father. The word “servant” is *diakonos*, from which the English word “deacon” comes. This is not a reference to Timothy’s position in the church – he was a pastor, not a deacon – but to his role as a servant or minister. As was pointed out in the previous lesson, the word *diakonos* is used numerous times in the New Testament to describe many different people – from Jesus to ministers of Satan – and many different kinds of service. The context tells us whether the word refers to service (as in this case) or to the office of deacon. Paul then tells Timothy he will receive the personal benefit of spiritual nourishment that comes from studying and teaching the Word of God.

In verse 7, Paul instructs Timothy to “have nothing to do with irreverent and silly myths.” The caution is against paying heed to tales that are devoid of divine or sacred character. “This seems to refer particularly to the Jews, whose Talmudical writings are stuffed with the most ridiculous and profane fables that ever disgraced the human intellect” (Adam Clarke’s Commentary). Rather, Timothy should train himself in godliness, which has everlasting benefits far beyond the ascetic practices of the false teachers (v. 8). Paul is not denying the value of physical exercise; he merely is contrasting true piety with the futile self denial of those who cling to fables, thinking their austere lifestyles will bring them mystical insight.

The Savior of everyone, especially of those who believe

What does Paul mean in verse 10, where he says “God ... is the Savior of everyone, especially of those who believe?” Is the apostle teaching universalism? Of course not.

God is the Savior of everyone in that He desires all to be saved (2 Peter 3:9) and has provided for the salvation of all through His Son’s finished work at Calvary (1 Tim. 2:6). He truly is “the Savior of the world” (John 4:42). The sin debt of the entire human race was laid upon Jesus on the cross, and He paid that debt in full (John 3:16; 2 Cor. 5:21). The offer of salvation – forgiveness of sin and everlasting life – is to all people. At the same time, God does not force Himself into anyone’s heart; He gives each person a free will and allows each person the right – and the responsibility – to use it. By the grace of God, the one who comes to Christ in faith is saved (John 5:24; Rom. 4:4-5; Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5-7), and the one who rejects Christ is condemned to spend eternity apart from Him in hell (John 3:18; Rev. 20:15). So, while God has made it possible for all to be saved, only those who place their trust in Christ can truly call Him “Savior.”

Next: “Instructions for Ministry” (1 Tim. 4:11-5:2).

Tough Love: A Study of 1 Timothy

Instructions for Ministry 1 Timothy 4:11-5:2

Paul has spent much of his letter telling Timothy *what* he should teach. Now, he takes a moment to remind the young pastor *how* he should lead. Take note of Paul's words: "Command and teach" ... "be an example" ... "give your attention to" ... "do not neglect" ... "practice these things" ... "be committed" ... "be conscientious" ... "persevere in all these things." The apostle packs a lot of exhortation into a few short verses. Let's look more closely at how Paul's instruction applies to Timothy and to church leaders today.

No one should despise your youth

Timothy is relatively young for a senior pastor of a large metropolitan church. Some commentators believe he is between 38-40 years of age. In any case, many church members, and perhaps even some pastoral staff members, are older than he is. This may be intimidating to Timothy, but Paul urges the young pastor to let no one "despise" his young age (verse 12). The Greek word is *kataphroneo*, which means contempt felt in the mind and displayed in injurious action. He *is* being despised. Moulton and Milligan comment: "The word does not denote a mere feeling of contempt – it is active. We may infer that Timothy is told not to let men *push him aside* as a stripling; and in all the N.T. passages, the action encouraged by contempt seems implied, rather than a mental state" (quoted in *The Pastoral Epistles, Word Studies in the Greek New Testament*, p. 72). Paul's recommended response is not that Timothy push back, but that he "keep on becoming" (Wuest) **an example** (*tupos*, the mark of a stroke or blow; a print; an example to be imitated) to the believers **in speech** (verbal communication, including instruction), **in conduct, in love** (*agape*, the love which God is and which the Holy Spirit produces in the heart of the yielded believer), **in faith**, and **in purity** (*hagnos*, purity of motive as well as of deeds). In other words, Paul is challenging Timothy to live in such a way that no one can accuse him of youthful indiscretions.

In verse 13, Paul says, "While I am coming, keep concentrating on public reading, exhortation, and teaching" (Wuest). The apostle highlights three elements in the ministry of the Word:

- Public reading in the local assembly of believers.
- Exhortation – using the Word of God as a basis for correction and encouragement.
- Teaching – *didaskalia*, a systemized body of teaching; doctrine.

Timothy should stay focused on "training of the saints in the work of ministry" (Eph. 4:12) and not allow himself to be distracted by older church members who regard him disdainfully simply because of his age.

Do not neglect the gift that is in you

Paul prods Timothy in verse 14. Based on the tense of the Greek, Paul tells the young pastor, “Do not *keep on neglecting* the gift that is in you,” implying a shyness that affects Timothy’s public ministry. The word gift is from *charisma*, “a special inward endowment which qualified Timothy for exhortation and teaching, and which was directly imparted by the Holy Spirit” (Vincent, quoted in *The Pastoral Epistles, Word Studies in the Greek New Testament*, p. 74). This gift was given to Timothy “through prophecy.” This simply means the Holy Spirit, who gave Timothy the gift, also confirmed in Paul and in the elders who ordained Timothy that the young man was God’s man for this work. Paul not only plays a vital role in bringing Timothy to faith in Christ; he also helps ensure Timothy’s spiritual growth and secures for him a vital place of service. The elders who lay their hands on Timothy are publicly identifying themselves with the young man and acknowledging his call to ministry. Beyond that, there is nothing mysterious or magical about ordination.

You will save yourself and your hearers

Ending chapter 4, Paul urges Timothy to “practice these things” – to carefully attend to the public reading of the Word, to exhortation, and to teaching. The young pastor also is to “be committed to them;” that is, Timothy is to throw himself wholly into his ministry. The result is that everyone will see his “progress.” The Greek is *prokopen* and means “to blaze the way, to make a pioneer advance.” Finally, Timothy is to fasten attention on his teaching and to persevere in his ministry. If he does these things, Paul says, “you will save both yourself and your hearers” (verse 16). Obviously, Paul is not writing about the salvation of sinners or the perseverance of the saints. These are the works of God. Rather, the context makes it clear that the apostle is promoting sound doctrine as a protection against heretical teachings of demon-influenced men. The best defense against lies is a firm grasp of the truth.

Do not rebuke an elder

Paul begins chapter 5 as a continuation of chapter 4 – there are no chapter or verse designations in the original languages – and as a transition into a new section on how to relate to different groups in the local church. “Do not rebuke an elder,” he says in verse 1. As it’s used here, the term “elder” (*presbuteros*) is to be understood as “older man.” Wuest comments, “It is best, therefore, to take the term ‘elder’ as a designation of a class of men in the church, the older men who by reason of age, character, and long church-membership, have a respected and trusted standing in the church” (*The Pastoral Epistles, Word Studies in the Greek New Testament*, p. 76). Timothy is not to rebuke (*epipecto*) them – to chastise them with words, chide, upbraid, or treat them harshly. Age must be respected, and the young pastor is to temper his corrections with gentleness and discretion. In the same way, the pastor is to deal with younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters.

Next: “Widows and Elders” (1 Tim. 5:3-25).

Tough Love: A Study of 1 Timothy

Widows and Elders 1 Timothy 5:3-25

In chapter 5, Paul lays out practical guidelines for how the church should support its widows and honor its elders. While many modern churches do not have a class of widows or recognize the office of elder, Paul's teachings are relevant for how the church should employ good stewardship of its resources.

Support widows who are genuinely widows

In verse 3, Paul instructs Timothy to “support” or “honor” widows. The Greek word *timao* means “to estimate, fix the value, to honor, revere, venerate.” We get the English word “honorarium” from it, and the context of Paul’s words make it clear that financial support is part of the package. Recall that in Acts 6 it was the care of widows – or the lack thereof – that led to the establishment of the office of deacon in the local church (although the seven are not called “deacons” in Acts 6). By the time of the Pastoral Epistles, widows have advanced from mere beneficiaries to holders of a quasi-official position in the church. In return for support, widows are expected to carry out certain duties such as prayer ministry, the care of orphans, the sick, and prisoners. Paul makes it clear that they must be “genuinely widows” – destitute, without children or other relations to care for them. In verses 4-8 there is no mincing of words. Believers must provide for their own families. Those who neglect to care for their parents and grandparents, for example, are “worse than an unbeliever” who, while rejecting Christ, at least accepts the natural obligations of family (v. 8). At the same time, Paul says the widow who is self-indulgent, living luxuriously, and concerned with her own desires rather than with the needs of others should not be allowed to sponge off the church (v.6).

In verses 9-10 Paul gives guidelines for enrolling women in the body of widows to receive church support. A genuine widow should be:

- At least 60 years old. Younger women may remarry or at least work to support themselves.
- The wife of one husband – literally, “a woman of one man,” meaning married only once.
- Well known for good works – specifically, bringing up children, showing hospitality to strangers, washing the saints’ feet, helping the afflicted, and devoting herself to every good work.

The genuine widow would be actively engaged in the ministry of the church, and be free from family obligations and the demands of eking out a living.

Paul warns Timothy against enrolling younger women as widows. Many are bent on remarriage, and there is nothing wrong with that in Paul's mind, unless they already have taken the widow's vow of service. The tension between serving Christ and meeting the needs of a new husband and family will prove too much for younger widows, resulting in the renunciation of their pledge to God and the judgment that comes with it – the stigma of disqualification from service. “The meaning here (verses 11-12) is that they (younger widows) have broken their first pledge: and this may refer to a pledge to devote themselves, after they became widows, to the service of Christ and the Church” (Vincent, quoted in *The Pastoral Epistles, Word Studies in the Greek New Testament*, p. 83). In addition, Paul is concerned that these young women might become “idle ... gossips and busybodies” (v. 13). Church widows may have been required to take part in house-to-house visitation, and younger women pressed into this service might find it a source of temptation to pry into the private affairs of others. J. Vernon McGee comments: “There is the danger for the young widow, who has been relieved of the responsibility of being a wife and homemaker (perhaps having no children), that she will become a regular gadabout” (*I & II Timothy, Titus and Philemon*, p. 79).

Paul encourages younger widows to remarry, have children and manage their households (v. 14). This is consistent with Paul's teaching in 1 Cor. 7:8-9, where he prefers that the unmarried and widows not marry; however, he encourages marriage for those who “do not have self-control.” The reason for this, he tells Timothy, is so their sexual desires would not give opponents of the gospel a base of attack. “Some have already turned away to follow Satan,” Paul says in verse 15, meaning not that they have lost their salvation, but that they have fallen prey to worldly temptations.

Honor the elders

“The elders who are good leaders should be considered worthy of an ample honorarium, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching,” Paul writes in verse 17. This is a reference to the office of elder/pastor/overseer, not to older men in the church. The Greek word for “honorarium” is *time*, which includes payment but is not limited to that. The use of *time* as pay or price appears in a number of other New Testament passages (Matt. 27:6, 9; Acts 4:34, 7:16; 1 Cor. 6:20). Paul's point is that the pastor who works hard (*kopiaio* means “to grow weary, tired, exhausted”) at preaching and teaching should be both respected and rewarded financially. At the same time, Paul cautions Timothy against receiving unsubstantiated accusations against elders (verse 19). “Among the Romans, a plebeian might be condemned on the deposition of one credible witness; but it required two to convict a senator. The reason of this difference is evident: those whose business it is to correct others will usually have many enemies; great caution, therefore, should be used in admitting accusations against such persons” (*Adam Clarke's Commentary*). If an elder is guilty of sin, he should be rebuked before the congregation so the other leaders in the church will be afraid and, perhaps, keep themselves from sin (verse 20). The word “rebuke” in the Greek is *elegcho* and means “to rebuke another with such effectual wielding of the victorious arms of the truth, as to bring him, if not always to a confession, yet at least to a conviction of his sin” (Trench, quoted in *The Pastoral Epistles, Word Studies in the Greek New Testament*, p. 86).

Pastoral do's and don't's

Paul ends this chapter with some brief but pointed instructions for Timothy. When he says, “I solemnly charge you” (v. 21), he hints that he has some doubt about Timothy’s moral courage, so he urges the young pastor to:

- “Observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing out of favoritism” (v. 21). The word “prejudice” (*prokrimatos*) means “preferring one before another,” and the word “favoritism” (*prosklisis*) means “a showing of partiality towards one.” Timothy should neither prejudice one person as better than another, nor lean in favor of someone due to personal preference; rather, he should carry out his duties with a mind toward God, who is “no respecter of persons” (Acts 10:34 KJV).
- “Don’t be too quick to lay hands on anyone” (v. 22). There are at least two lines of thought expressed in commentaries: first, that this refers to the ordination of church officers; second, that this refers to the restoration of sinning Christians to church fellowship. In either case, being too hasty sends the wrong message to the church and may in fact create problems for the congregation. In the case of the wayward sinner, *Expositors* comments: “Timothy is bidden to restrain by deliberate prudence, the impulses of mere pity. A hasty reconciliation tempts the offender to suppose that his offence cannot have been so very serious after all; and smoothes the way to a repetition of the sin. ‘Good-natured easy men’ cannot escape responsibility for the disastrous consequences of their lax administration of the law” (quoted in *The Pastoral Epistles, Word Studies in the Greek New Testament*, p. 87).
- “Don’t share in the sins of others” (v. 22). The pastor should set himself apart by his example of Godliness.
- “Keep yourself pure” (v. 22) – that is, upright, honorable.
- “Don’t continue drinking only water, but use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses” (v. 23). Vincent comments: “Observe that *oinos* (wine) here, as everywhere else, means *wine, fermented, and capable of intoxicating*, and not a sweet syrup made by boiling down grape-juice, and styled by certain modern reformers ‘unfermented wine.’ Such a concoction would have tended rather to aggravate than relieve Timothy’s stomachic or other infirmities” (quoted in *The Pastoral Epistles, Word Studies in the Greek New Testament*, p. 88). Wuest continues: “We must remember that wine was one of the chief remedial agents of those times in which the science of medicine was in its infancy among Greek physicians. We must remind ourselves that Paul was speaking of wine as a medicine here, not as a beverage. The rule for the Christian today in the midst of the complex civilization in which we live is found in I Cor. 10:31, ‘Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God’” (*The Pastoral Epistles, Word Studies in the Greek New Testament*, pp. 88-89). It also is suggested by commentators that this verse, immediately following the command in verse 22 to “keep yourself pure,” may be telling Timothy that if he limits his liquid intake to water only, it might embolden the ascetics who taught that self-denial in regard to food and drink has intrinsic spiritual value.

Next: “Honoring Masters; False Doctrine and Human Greed” (1 Tim. 6:1-10).

Tough Love: A Study of 1 Timothy

Slaves and Masters; False Doctrine and Greed

1 Timothy 6:1-10

Paul begins the final chapter of his first letter to Timothy with instructions for how believing slaves are to regard their unbelieving masters. He then reminds Timothy to stand firmly against false teachings in the church and to oppose false teachers who use their “ministries” for financial gain.

Regard masters to be worthy of all respect

In verse 1 Paul instructs Christian slaves to treat their pagan masters with respect so that the cause of Christ will suffer no harm. Slavery was common throughout the Roman Empire. While the general ethics of Christianity do not allow slavery, the apostles never preached openly against it. It was common for Christians to have slaves; Philemon, for example, owned the slave Onesimus. The phrase “under the yoke” implies a hard and disagreeable condition. *Expositors* says: “The heathen estimate of a slave differed in degree, not in kind, from their estimate of cattle. A Christian master could not regard his slaves as under a yoke” (quoted in *The Pastoral Epistles, Word Studies in the Greek New Testament*, p. 90). The term “master” is *despotes*, which denotes absolute ownership and uncontrolled power. Paul calls upon Christian slaves to regard their heathen masters with “all respect, so that God’s name and His teaching will not be blasphemed” (v. 1). They are not expected to honor what their masters *are* – unbelieving and, at times, cruel taskmasters – but to respect the authority they *have*. This is consistent with Paul’s teaching to submit to all governing authorities in Romans 13.

At the same time, Paul urges Christian slaves not to take advantage of their Christian masters (v. 2), even though they are brothers in Christ and share equality and fraternity in the church. One commentator (Robertson) even suggests that some of these slaves may be pastors of the local congregations to which their masters belong. In any case, Christian masters are experiencing a newfound tension since trusting in Christ; they share Christian brotherhood with their slaves yet live in a society that takes slavery for granted and sees nothing morally wrong in it. Christian slaves should try to understand this position without judging their masters or becoming bitter toward them, says Paul. Instead, they should serve their masters even more faithfully.

If anyone teaches other doctrine ...

Paul now turns his attention back to the issue of false teachers. He acknowledges that already there are those in the church who are teaching things diametrically opposed to “the sound teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ” (v. 3). The word “sound” in the Greek is *hugiaino* and

means “to be well, healthy.” It is the word from which we get “hygiene.” Paul describes the condition of these false teachers. They are:

- **Conceited.** The Greek word is *tuphoo*, which means “to raise a smoke, to wrap in a mist.” It speaks metaphorically of one who is in a “beclouded and stupid state of mind as the result of pride” (Wuest). The tense of the verb describes a person who is in a permanent and settled state of pride.
- **Understanding nothing.** This person is so corrupted in his mind that he is not able to do any reflective thinking. The word “nothing” literally means “not even one thing.”
- **Having a sick interest in disputes and arguments over words.** This person has an unhealthy and morbid interest in questions. Adam Clark comments: “He is sick, distempered, about these questions relative to the Mosaic law and the traditions of the elders; for it is most evident that the apostle has the Judaizing teachers in view, who were ever, in questions of theology, straining out a gnat, and swallowing a camel.”

Paul continues by showing what the pursuits of these false teachers naturally produce:

- **Envy** – “uneasiness, pain, mortification, or discontent, excited by another's prosperity, or by his superior knowledge or possessions” (*Barnes' Notes on the New Testament*).
- **Quarreling** – as opposed to the peace and unity sound teaching produces.
- **Slanders** – harsh and abusive language toward those who will not concede a point.
- **Evil suspicions** – “suspicions that they are led to hold their views, not by the love of the truth, but from sordid or worldly motives” (*Barnes' Notes on the New Testament*).
- **Constant disagreement among men whose minds are depraved and deprived of the truth.** The word “deprived” is *apostereo* and means “to defraud, rob, despoil, to allow oneself to be defrauded.” The implication is that they once possessed the truth but have set it aside.
- **The imagination that godliness is a way to material gain.** In other words, these false teachers believe the profession of Christianity is a means of making money. One commentator (Vincent) suggests that the false teachers demoralize slaves by suggesting that their conversion to Christianity would result in an improvement in social position and worldly prospects – a first-century prosperity gospel.

To all of this, Paul responds with a resounding, “No!” Instead, he says, “godliness with contentment is a great gain” (v. 6). The word translated “contentment” is *autarkeia*. It describes an inward self-sufficiency – not merely the removal of attachment to the physical world, as some might teach, but the possession of a spiritual equilibrium in the midst of any circumstance. Paul writes to the Philippians about such contentment: “I have learned to be *content* in whatever circumstances I am. I know both how to have a little, and I know how to have a lot. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being content—whether well-fed or hungry, whether in abundance or in need. I am able to do all things through Him who strengthens me” (Phil. 4:11-13). This inward self-sufficiency is the natural result of godly piety.

Paul reminds Timothy that “we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out” (v. 7). Man comes into this world naked (Job 1:21), and when he leaves “he will take nothing for his efforts that he can carry in his hands” (Eccles. 5:15). Nothing the world can give is any addition to the man himself, so we all should be satisfied with the food and clothing God provides for our physical needs (v. 8). Nothing of outward circumstances can harm the inner life.

The love of money

But there are those who are unsatisfied with the basic necessities of life. After giving the matter considerable thought, they desire to be wealthy, setting their minds on the acquisition of worldly possessions. This strong desire, Paul warns, is a trap and plunges people into “ruin and destruction” (v. 9). One of Paul’s most famous – and oft misquoted – statements comes next: “For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil” (v. 10). *Expositors* comments: “The warning applies to all grades of wealth: all come under it whose ambition is to have more money than that which satisfies their accustomed needs. We are also to note that what is here condemned is not an ambition to excel in some lawful department of human activity, which though it bring an increase in riches, develops character, but the having a single eye to the accumulation of money by any means” (quoted in *The Pastoral Epistles, Word Studies in the Greek New Testament*, p. 95).

The desire for money can become so destructively addictive, Paul says, that by it “some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains” (v. 10). As in earlier passages about those who have departed from the faith (1 Tim. 4:1, for example), Paul is not suggesting they have lost their salvation – or ever had it to begin with. He is describing their conscious decision to discard sound Biblical teaching and embrace false teachings; in this case, they have forsaken the Scriptures in favor of an unhealthy, and ungodly, pursuit of wealth. Finally, Paul’s reference to those who have “pierced themselves” is an allusion to a trap in which a hole is dug in the ground, filled with sharp stakes and then covered loosely with turf so that an unsuspecting one who steps into the trap will be severely wounded in many places, unable to escape and perhaps dying in such a state.

Next: “Compete for the Faith” (1 Tim. 6:11-16).

Tough Love: A Study of 1 Timothy

Run Away ... and Fight 1 Timothy 6:11-16

Not one to pull punches, Paul urges Timothy to run from false doctrine and human greed so that he is well positioned to “fight the good fight for the faith” (v. 12).

Compete for the faith

Having just cautioned Timothy about the dangers of false doctrine and human greed – “some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains” (v. 10) – Paul tells the young pastor to “run from these things” and pursue “righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness” (v. 11). The word for “run” is *pheugo* and commands a continuous action; Timothy is to make it a habit to flee from the fondness for money. “Pursue” is *dioko* and means “to run swiftly in order to catch some person or thing, to endeavor to acquire.” As a “man of God,” Timothy is to constantly run away from the siren call of money while running hard after the things of God:

- Righteousness – not justification, or a right standing with God, in this sense, but moral uprightness.
- Godliness – “denoting character and conduct determined by the principle of love or fear of God in the heart ... the summing up of genuine religion. There can be no true religion without it: only a dead ‘form’ (2Tim 3:5)” (*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*).
- Faith – that is, faithfulness in his walk with God.
- Love – *agape*, God’s love as produced in the heart of the yielded believer by the Holy Spirit.
- Endurance – *hupomone*, “the characteristic of a man who is unswerved from his deliberate purpose and his loyalty to faith and piety by even the greatest trials and sufferings” (Thayer).
- Gentleness – *praupatheia*, “that temper of spirit in which we accept God’s dealings with us as good, and therefore without disputing or resisting ... This meekness, however, being first of all a meekness before God, is also such in the face of men, even of evil men, out of a sense that these, with the insults and injuries which they may inflict, are permitted and employed by Him for the chastening and purifying of His elect” (Trench).

Running hard after these Godly traits will enable Timothy to “fight the good fight for the faith” (v. 12). Paul uses the Greek word *agonizomai*, which means “to contend in the athletic games for the prize.” Paul at times uses athletic references in his writings (see 1 Cor. 9:24-27; Phil. 3:12). He received his Greek training at the University of Tarsus, at that time the foremost Greek university in the world, outstripping even the University of Athens in its zeal for learning.

There were Greeks in every church Paul started, and Timothy's father was a Greek. One of the main activities of Roman life was the Greek games, held throughout the empire. In a real sense, when Rome conquered Greece militarily, Greece conquered Rome culturally. So Paul's use of athletic terms is most appropriate. And when you consider that the gloves of the Greek boxer were lined with fur, while the outside was ox hide with lead and iron sewed into it, and that the loser in a Greek wrestling match had his eyes gouged out, you can grasp the seriousness of Paul's charge to "fight the good fight for the faith." By "the faith," Paul refers to the body of doctrine and its ethical requirements known as Christianity and the Christian life. In Paul's second letter to Timothy, near the end of the apostle's life, he writes, "I have fought the good fight" (2 Tim. 4:7). The word "good" is not *agathos*, referring to intrinsic goodness, but *kalos*, speaking of goodness as seen from the outside by spectators.

When Paul says "take hold of eternal life" (v. 12), he is not implying that Timothy is lost, or that he is in danger of losing his salvation. Rather, Paul wants the young pastor to experience more of the *quality* of life that comes through a faithful walk with Christ. Still in verse 12, and referring to eternal life, Paul says Timothy was "called" and "made a good confession before many witnesses." Jesus said, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws (brings, leads) him" (John 6:44). Further, Jesus spoke of the necessity of the Holy Spirit in bringing the lost person to redemption (John 16:7-11) Jesus "called" his disciples to follow Him. Because salvation and all it entails are the work of God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit work in unity to bring the lost sinner into the Kingdom. Without God, no one could be saved. This is not to deny the free will God has given each person, but it is stress that God – in His sovereignty, grace and mercy – is to be our focus in coming to Him for eternal life. Finally, when Paul speaks of Timothy's good confession, he is likely referring to Timothy's public statement of his agreement with the doctrines of Christianity at the occasion of his baptism. In the early church, the entire congregation generally took part in the ceremony. *The Didache* instructed new believers, and any others who were able, to fast in preparation for baptism. And there was a public confession of faith before "many witnesses" before a new believer was plunged into the baptismal waters.

Beginning in verse 13, Paul stresses that Timothy's ministry is under God's watchful eye and the fruitfulness of his work is under God's power. Paul reminds the young pastor that Jesus gave "a good confession before Pontius Pilate" (v. 13), declaring Himself to be the Christ in front of the chief priests and elders who cried for His execution, and before the Roman governor who would order it. The apostle urges Timothy to "keep the commandment without spot or blame" (v. 14). The "commandment" probably is a reference to 1 Timothy 1:3, in which Paul tells Timothy to "command certain people not to teach other doctrine." The word "keep" is *tereo* and means "to watch, observe, guard, protect." Kenneth Wuest comments, "Paul gives the order to Timothy with military snap and curtness. Timothy, a good young man, was rather diffident. He was not cast in the heroic mold of Paul. He needed just sharp prodding once in awhile" (*The Pastoral Epistles, Word Studies in the Greek New Testament*, p. 99).

Timothy is to press on in view of the imminent rapture of the church and the personal return of Christ, “which God will bring about in His own time” (v. 15). The word for “time” is not *chronos*, time in general, but *kairos*, “the critical and epoch-making periods foreordained of God” (Trench). Christ’s return will be in God the Father’s own personal time. Jesus told his disciples, “It is not for you to know times (*chronos*) or periods (*kairos*) that the Father has set by His own authority” (Acts 1:7). Further, He reminded his followers that He did not know the time of His return (Mark 13:32). So, until that day comes, Timothy is to relentlessly teach sound doctrine.

Finally, Paul says God is:

- The blessed and only Sovereign. The word “blessed” is *makarios* and means happy in the sense of prosperous. God is all-sufficient, the Creator of everything, Owner of “the cattle upon a thousand hills” (Ps. 50:10). The word “Sovereign” comes from *dunastes*, meaning “strength, power, ability.” It is the word from which we get “dynamite.”
- The King of kings, and the Lord of lords. This is a direct statement against the Cult of Caesar in which the Roman emperor is worshiped as god and lord. Domitian (81-96) assumed the titles of “lord” and “god.” The Roman emperors were called “saviors of the world.”
- The only One who has immortality. The Greek *athanasia* means “no death, incapable of dying.”
- Dwelling in unapproachable light, whom none of mankind has seen or can see. “Dwelling” is *oikeo*, “to be at home.” *Expositors* comments: “This is a grander conception than that of Psalm 104:12, ‘Who covereth thyself with light as with a garment.’ Here, if one may venture to express it, the Person of God is wholly concealed by His dwelling, which is light; and this dwelling itself is unapproachable” (quoted in *The Pastoral Epistles, Word Studies in the Greek New Testament*, p. 101).

Next: “Instructions to the Rich; Guarding the Heritage” (1 Tim. 6:17-21).

Tough Love: A Study of 1 Timothy

Instructions to the Rich; Guarding the Heritage 1 Timothy 6:17-21

Paul closes his first letter to Timothy with instructions for the rich and a firm charge to the young pastor to fervently guard the sound doctrine entrusted to him.

The uncertainty of wealth

Evidently there are wealthy members of the church in Ephesus. While nothing in Scripture prohibits men and women from having money, or even a lot of money, Paul repeatedly warns against the dangers of lusting after, misusing or trusting in wealth (see 1 Tim. 6:9-10). He tells Timothy that those who are “rich in this present age” are “not to be arrogant or to set their hope on the uncertainty of wealth” (v. 17). “The idea is, that they should not value themselves on account of their wealth, or look down with pride and arrogance on their inferiors. They should not suppose that they are any better men, or any nearer heaven, because they are wealthy. Property really makes no distinction in the great things that pertain to character and salvation. It does not necessarily make one wise, or learned, or great, or good. In all these things the man who has not wealth may be vastly the superior of him who has; and for so slight and unimportant a distinction as gold can confer, no man should be proud” (*Barnes' Notes on the New Testament*).

While this should be clear to Christians, commentator Kenneth Wuest says Paul is targeting unbelievers in this passage: “He is thinking here of those who belong to the unsaved portion of humanity and are part of this age system, and who think that the material wealth which they possess is the sum of all existence. Timothy is under the responsibility of charging them not to be high-minded” (*The Pastoral Epistles, Word Studies in the Greek New Testament*, p. 102). In any case, Paul’s teaching is consistent with that of Jesus, who declared that “one’s life is not in the abundance of his possessions” (Luke 12:15).

In verses 18-19, Paul tells Timothy to instruct the rich “to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous, willing to share.” In so doing, they will:

- Store up for themselves a good foundation for the age to come. Treasures on earth are fleeting and corruptible, but treasures in heaven are everlasting and pure (see Matt. 6:19-21). “Riches are uncertain because they may soon be taken away. No dependence can be placed on them in the emergencies of life. He who is rich today, has no security that he will be tomorrow; and if he shall be rich tomorrow, he has no certainty that his riches will meet his necessities then. A man whose house is in flames, or who is shipwrecked, or whose child lies dying, or who is himself in the agonies of death, can derive no advantage from the fact that he is richer than other men” (*Barnes' Notes on the New Testament*).

- Take hold of life that is real. “The oldest manuscripts and versions read, ‘*that which is really life,*’ its joys being solid and enduring.... The life that now is cannot be called so, its goods being unsubstantial, and itself a vapor” (*Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary*).

Guard ... and avoid

In verse 20, Paul urges Timothy to “guard what has been entrusted to you.” The word “guard” is *phulasso* and is used in a military sense. Timothy is to defend, as a sacred trust, the truth Paul has placed in his care. He also is reminded to avoid “irreverent, empty speech,” or literally “empty voices.” The quality of a person’s character and the depth of his or her understanding cannot be measured by the quantity of words or the eloquence of speech; rather, all speech must be measured by the yardstick of God’s Word. Much of what Timothy faced in Ephesus amounted to little more than hot air. Paul insisted that Timothy “avoid” – *ektrepo*, “turn aside, turn away from, shun” – such kinds of communication.

The young pastor also is instructed to avoid “contradictions from the ‘knowledge’ that falsely bears that name” (v. 20). It is Paul’s broadside against Gnosticism, which would become the most formidable enemy of the church by the second century. Already, it is rearing its head in Ephesus and elsewhere. Kenneth Wuest provides a summary of Gnostic teaching: “The Gnostics claimed a superior knowledge peculiar to an intellectual caste. According to them it was by this philosophic insight, as opposed to faith, that humanity was to be regenerated. Faith was suited only to the rude masses, the animal-men. The intellectual questions which occupied these teachers were two; to explain the work of creation, and to account for the existence of evil. Their ethical problem was how to develop the higher nature in the environment of matter which was essentially evil. In morals they ran to two opposite extremes – asceticism and licentiousness” (*The Pastoral Epistles, Word Studies in the Greek New Testament*, p. 103). Paul may have had additional false teachings in mind – for example, the pursuit of Jewish myths and legends, the continuation of the Levitical rites, or the false claim to the spiritual gift of knowledge – but Gnosticism most certainly is rising up by this time to challenge sound doctrine in the church.

Whatever the false teachings are, Paul says that those who profess them have “deviated from the faith” (v. 21). They have “missed the mark” concerning the key doctrines of God, salvation and the Christian life.

Summary

Paul’s first letter to Timothy is a firm yet tender charge to a young pastor struggling with multiple challenges and some self-doubt. Paul confirms his deep affection for the man saved under his ministry, his companion on missionary journeys, co-author of six epistles, and faithful servant entrusted with making sure the believers at Ephesus “know how to act in God’s household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15).

Tough Love: A Study of 1 Timothy

Final Exam

1. In what capacity is Timothy serving when Paul writes to him?

- a) Chairman of deacons
- b) Senior pastor
- c) Paul's representative to the church at Ephesus
- d) Both b and c

2. Even though Timothy probably is in his late 30s, why does Paul make reference to his youth?

- a) Timothy is younger than Paul
- b) Late 30s is relatively young for a senior pastor of a large metropolitan church in Paul's day
- c) Timothy is spiritually immature
- d) Timothy once called Paul an "old geezer" and Paul is sore about it

3. Why does Paul write a letter to Timothy?

- a) "So that you may command certain people not to teach other doctrine ..."
- b) So Timothy will come to Rome to visit Paul in prison
- c) Paul's Blackberry is not working
- d) To tell Timothy to make plans for Paul's visit to Ephesus

4. Which of the following is not an issue at the church in Ephesus?

- a) Gnosticism
- b) Jewish myths
- c) Kabbala
- d) The false teachings of the Essenes

5. Why does Paul get tough on Timothy at certain points in his letter?

- a) Timothy is visiting the Temple of Diana in his spare time
- b) Timothy lacks Paul's toughness in confronting troublemakers in the church
- c) His low bowling average is hurting the rest of the team
- d) Timothy wants to quit

6. What does Paul say about pastors/elders/bishops in the local church?

- a) They are to meet strict moral standards
- b) Those who work hard at preaching and teaching are to be financially rewarded for their excellence
- c) When they sin grievously, they are to be publicly rebuked as an example to others
- d) All of the above

(over)

7. Which of the following is not a way Paul instructs Timothy to treat church members?

- a) He is to exhort older men as fathers and older women as mothers
- b) He is to treat younger men as brothers
- c) He is to treat younger women with all propriety as sisters
- d) He is to treat Seattle Seahawks fans as apostates

8. Paul's desire for the church at Ephesus is that the believers there would:

- a) Send him money to compensate him for starting the church
- b) "... know how to act in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth"
- c) Start ordaining women elders
- d) Use mercenary tactics to destroy the temple of Diana

9. Which two false teachers at Ephesus have suffered the "shipwreck of their faith?"

- a) Hymenaeus and Alexander
- b) Bob and Ray
- c) The Doobie Brothers
- d) Bosnia and Herzegovina

10. How does Paul want women to dress when they come to worship?

- a) Like Imelda Marcos
- b) In modest clothing, with decency and good sense
- c) With good works
- d) Both b and c

11. Which of the following is not a danger of greed, according to Paul?

- a) Falling into temptation
- b) Many foolish and harmful desires
- c) Being voted off the island
- d) Wandering away from the faith

12. Which of the following is a true statement, according to Paul's teaching in 1 Timothy?

- a) Money is evil
- b) Pastors and deacons are to be morally upright, spiritually mature men
- c) Timothy is to exercise his authority as the head of the local church
- d) Mountain-grown coffee really is the richest kind

Answers: 1) d; 2) b; 3) a; 4) c; 5) b; 6) d; 7) d; 8) b; 9) a; 10) d; 11) c; 12) b.