

FIRST TIMOTHY

Before looking at the content of Paul's two letters to Timothy, it is important to look at the recipient of those letters.

Who was Timothy?

The Fausset's Bible Dictionary states about him that he is: "First mentioned (Acts 16:1) as dwelling in Lystra (not Derbe, 20:4; compare 2 Tim 3:11). His mother was Eunice, a Jewess (2 Tim 1:5); his father a Greek, i.e. a Gentile; he died probably in Timothy's early years, as he is not mentioned later. Timothy is called 'a disciple,' so that his conversion must have been before the time of Acts 16:1, through Paul (1 Tim 1:2, 'my own son in the faith') probably at the apostle's former visit to Lystra (Acts 14:6), when also we may conjecture his Scripture-loving mother Eunice and grandmother Lois were converted from Judaism to Christianity (2 Tim 3:14-15; 1:5): 'faith made its dwelling (*enookesen*, John 14:23) first in Lois and Eunice,' then in Timothy also through their influence. The elders ordained in Lystra and Iconium (Acts 14:21-23; 16:2) thenceforth superintended him (1 Tim 4:14); their good report and that of the brethren, as also his origin, partly Jewish partly Gentile, marked him out as especially suited to assist Paul in missionary work, laboring as the apostle did in each place, firstly among the Jews then among the Gentiles."

The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia gives the following extensive and informative information about Timothy:

1. One of Paul's Converts: Timothy was one of the best known of Paul's companions and fellow-laborers. He was evidently one of Paul's own converts, as the apostle describes him as his beloved and faithful son in the Lord (1 Cor 4:17); and in 1 Tim 1:2 he writes to 'Timothy my true child in faith'; and in 2 Tim 1:2 he addresses him as 'Timothy my beloved child.'

2. A Native of Lystra: He was a resident, and apparently a native, either of Lystra or Derbe, cities which were visited and evangelized by Paul on his 1st missionary journey (Acts 14:6). It is probable that of these two cities, it was Lystra that was Timothy's native place. For instance, in Acts 20:4 in a list of Paul's friends there are the names of 'Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy'; this evidently infers that Timothy was not 'of Derbe.' And in Acts 16:3, the brethren who gave Paul the good report of Timothy were 'at Lystra and Iconium'; the brethren from Derbe are not mentioned. Lystra was evidently Timothy's native city.

3. Converted at Lystra: In 2 Tim 3:10-11 Paul mentions that Timothy had fully known the persecutions and afflictions which came to him at Antioch, at Iconium and at Lystra. These persecutions occurred during the apostle's first visit to these towns; and Timothy seems to have been one of those who were converted at that time, as we find that on Paul's next visit to Lystra and Derbe, Timothy was already one of the Christians there: 'He came also to Derbe and to Lystra: and behold a certain disciple was there, named Timothy' (Acts 16:1). Timothy was now chosen by Paul to be one of his companions. This was at an early period in Paul's apostolic career, and it is pleasing to find that to the end of the apostle's life Timothy was faithful to him.

4. His Father and Mother: Timothy's father was a heathen Greek (Hellen, not Hellenistes, a Greek-speaking Jew); this fact is twice mentioned (Acts 16:1,3). His mother was a Jewess, but he had not been circumcised in infancy, probably owing to objections made by his father. Timothy's mother was called Eunice, and his grandmother Lois. Paul mentions them by name in 2 Tim 1:5; he there speaks of the unfeigned faith which was in Timothy, and which dwelt at the first in Eunice and Lois. It is evident that Eunice was converted to Christ on Paul's 1st missionary journey to Derbe and Lystra, because, when he next visited these cities, she is spoken of as 'a Jewess who believed' (Acts 16:1).

5. Becomes a Co-worker with Paul: On this 2nd visit to Derbe and Lystra, Paul was strongly attracted to Timothy, and seeing his unfeigned faith, and that from a child he had known the sacred Scriptures of the Old Testament (2 Tim 3:15), and seeing also his Christian character and deportment, and his entire suitability for the work of the ministry, he would have him 'to go forth with him' (Acts 16:3). Timothy acquiesced in Paul's desire, and as preliminaries to his work as a Christian missionary, both to Jew and Gentile, two things were done. In order to conciliate the Jewish Christians, who would otherwise have

caused trouble, which would have weakened Timothy's position and his work as a preacher of the gospel, Paul took Timothy and circumcised him.

6. Circumcised: Paul was willing to agree to this being done, on account of the fact that Timothy's mother was a Jewess. It was therefore quite a different case from that of Titus, where Paul refused to allow circumcision to be performed (15:2) - Titus being, unlike Timothy, a Gentile by birth. The other act which was performed for Timothy's benefit, before he set out with Paul, was that he was ordained by the presbytery or local council of presbyters in Derbe and Lystra.

7. His Ordination: Showing the importance which Paul assigned to this act of ordination, he refers to it in a letter to Timothy written many years afterward: 'Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery' (1 Tim 4:14). In this ordination Paul himself took part, for he writes, 'I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee through the laying on of my hands' (2 Tim 1:6).

2 Tim 1:6 should be viewed in the light of 1 Tim 4:14. Probably it was prophetic voices (through prophecy; compare 1 Tim 1:18, 'according to the prophecies which went before in regard to thee') which suggested the choice of Timothy as assistant of Paul and Silvanus, and his consecration to this work with prayer and the laying on of hands (compare Acts 13:2 f). The laying on of hands by the presbyters (1 Tim 4:14), and that by Paul (2 Tim 1:6), are not mutually exclusive, especially since the former is mentioned merely as an accompanying circumstance of his endowment with special grace, the latter as the efficient cause of this endowment. The churches in the neighborhood of Timothy's home, according to Acts 14:23, had been furnished with a body of presbyters soon after their founding.'

8. Accompanies Paul: Thus, prepared for the work, Timothy went forth with Paul on the apostle's 2nd missionary journey. We find Timothy with him at Berea (Acts 17:14), having evidently accompanied him to all places visited by him up to that point, namely, Phrygia, the region of Galatia, Mysia, Troas, Neapolis, Philippi, Amphipolis, Apollonia, Thessalonica and Berea. Paul next went-and went alone, on account of the persecution at Berea-to Athens (Acts 17:15); and from that city he sent a message to Silas and Timothy at Berea, that they should come to him at Athens with all speed. They quickly came to him there, and were immediately sent on an errand to the church in Thessalonica; 'When we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left behind at Athens alone; and sent Timothy, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellow-laborer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith: that no man should be moved by these afflictions' (1 Thess 3:1-3 the King James Version). Timothy and Silas discharged this duty and returned to the apostle, bringing him tidings of the faith of the Christians in Thessalonica, of their love and of their kind remembrance of Paul, and of their ardent desire to see him; and Paul was comforted (verses 5,6,7).

9. At Corinth: Paul had left Athens before Silas and Timothy were able to rejoin him. He had proceeded to Corinth, and it was while the apostle was in that city, that 'when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul was constrained by the word, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ' (Acts 18:5). Timothy evidently remained with Paul during the year and six months of his residence in Corinth, and also throughout this missionary journey to its end. From Corinth Paul wrote the Epistle to the Romans, and he sent them a salutation from Timothy, 'Timothy my fellow-worker saluteth you' (Rom 16:21).

10. Salutations: In connection with this salutation from Timothy, it should be noticed that it was Paul's custom to associate with his own name that of one or more of his companions, in the opening salutations in the Epistles. Timothy's name occurs in 2 Cor 1:1; Phil 1:1; Col 1:1; Philem 1. It is also found, along with that of Silvanus, in 1 Thess 1:1 and 2 Thess 1:1.

11. At Ephesus: On Paul's 3rd missionary journey, Timothy again accompanied him, though he is not mentioned until Ephesus was reached. This journey involved much traveling, much work and much time. He was at Ephesus alone for more than two years. And when Paul's residence there was drawing to a close, he laid his plans to go to Jerusalem, after passing en route through Macedonia and Achaia. Accordingly he sent on before him 'into Macedonia two of them that ministered unto him, Timothy and Erastus' (Acts 19:22).

12. To Corinth Again: From Ephesus Paul wrote the First Epistle to the Corinthians (1 Cor 16:8), and in it he mentioned (verse 10) that Timothy was then traveling to Corinth, apparently a prolongation of the

journey into Macedonia. After commending him to a kind reception from the Corinthians, Paul proceeded to say that Timothy was to return to him from Corinth; that is, Timothy was to bring with him a report on the state of matters in the Corinthian church.

13. In Greece: Soon thereafter the riot in Ephesus occurred; and when it was over, Paul left Ephesus and went to Macedonia and Greece. In Macedonia he was rejoined by Timothy, whose name is associated with his own, in the opening salutation of the Second Epistle, which he now wrote to Corinth. Timothy accompanied him into Greece, where they abode three months. From Greece the apostle once more set his face toward Jerusalem, Timothy and others accompanying him (Acts 20:4). 'We that were of Paul's company' (Acts 21:8 the King James Version), as Luke terms the friends who now traveled with Paul-and Timothy was one of them-touched at Troas and a number of other places, and eventually reached Jerusalem, where Paul was apprehended.

14. In Jerusalem: This of course terminated, for the time, his apostolic journeys, but not the cooperation of his friends, or of Timothy among them.

15. In Rome: The details of the manner in which Timothy was now employed are not recorded, until he is found once more with Paul-during his 1st imprisonment in Rome. But, from that point onward, there are many notices of how he was occupied in the apostle's service. He is mentioned in three of the Epistles written by Paul at this time, namely, in Col 1:1, and Philem 1, in both of which his designation is 'Timothy our brother,' and in Phil 1:1, 'Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus.' In Phil 2:19, there is the interesting notice that, at a time when Paul's hope was that he would soon be liberated from his imprisonment, he trusted that he would be able to send Timothy to visit the church at Philippi:

16. To Visit Philippi: 'I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state. For I have no man likeminded, who will care truly for your state. But ye know the proof of him that, as a child serveth a father, so he served with me in furtherance of the gospel. Him therefore I hope to send forthwith.'

17. Appointed to Ephesus: Paul's hope was realized: he was set free; and once again Timothy was his companion in travel. Perhaps it was in Philippi that they rejoined each other, for not only had Paul expressed his intention of sending Timothy there, but he had also said that he hoped himself to visit the Philippian church (Phil 1:26; 2:24). From this point onward it is difficult, perhaps impossible, to trace the course of Paul's journeys, but he tells us that he had left Timothy as his delegate or representative in Ephesus (1 Tim 1:3); and soon thereafter he wrote the First Epistle to Timothy, in which he gave full instructions in regard to the manner in which he should conduct the affairs of the Ephesian church, until Paul himself should again revisit Ephesus: 'These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly' (1 Tim 3:14).

18. His Position in Ephesus: 'The position which Timothy occupied in Ephesus, as it is described in 1 Timothy, cannot without doing the greatest violence to history be called that of a bishop, for the office of bishop existed only where the one bishop, superior to the presbytery, represented the highest expression of the common church life. The office was for life, and confined to the local church. This was particularly the case in Asia Minor, where, although as early as the time of Revelation and the time of Ignatius, bishoprics were numerous and closely adjacent, the office always retained its local character. On the other hand, Timothy's position at the head of the churches of Asia was due to the position which he occupied as Paul's helper in missionary work. It was his part in the apostolic calling, as this calling involved the oversight of existing churches. Timothy was acting as a temporary representative of Paul in his apostolic capacity at Ephesus, as he had done earlier in Corinth, and in Thessalonica and Philippi (1 Cor 4:17; 1 Thess 3:2 f; Phil 2:19-23). His relation was not closer to one church than to the other churches of the province; its rise and disappearance did not affect at all the organization of the local congregations.'

19. Paul Summons Him to Rome: From the Second Epistle still further detail can be gathered. Paul was a second time imprisoned, and feeling that on this occasion his trial would be followed by an adverse judgment and by death, he wrote from Rome to Timothy at Ephesus, affectionately requesting him to come to him: 'Give diligence to come shortly unto me' (2 Tim 4:9). The fact that at that time, when no Christian friend was with Paul except Luke (2 Tim 4:11), it was to Timothy he turned for sympathy and aid, closing with the request that his own son in the faith should come to him, to be with him in his last hours, shows

how true and tender was the affection which bound them together. Whether Timothy was able to reach Rome, so as to be with Paul before his execution, is unknown.

20. Mention in Hebrews 13: One other notice of him occurs in Heb 13:23: 'Know ye that our brother Timothy hath been set at liberty; with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you.' As the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews is not Paul, it is problematical what the meaning of these words really is, except that Timothy had been imprisoned and-unlike what took place in Paul's case-he had escaped death and had been set free.

21. His Character: Nothing further is known of him. Of all Paul's friends, with the exception, perhaps, of Luke, Paul's beloved friend, Timothy was regarded by him with the tenderest affection; he was his dearly loved son, faithful and true. Various defects have been alleged to exist in Timothy's character. These defects are inferred from the directions and instructions addressed to him by Paul in the Pastoral Epistles, but these inferences may be wrong, and it is a mistake to exaggerate them in view of his unbroken and unswerving loyalty and of the long and faithful service rendered by him to Paul, 'as a child serveth a father' (Phil 2:22)."

The Epistle:

In his book *Explore the Book*, J. Sidlow Baxter, introduces Paul's epistles to Timothy with the following observation: "If there is one part of the Bible more than another which Christian believers should thoroughly study it is that part which is specifically written to Christian believers, namely, the nine Christian Church Epistles (Romans to 2 Thessalonians). We would ... add that if there is any part of the Bible which Christian ministers should study it is that part which particularly addresses them, namely, the Pastoral Epistles (1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus, to Philemon). These Pastoral Epistles are known as such because they have to do with the organized church from the pastor's point of view. They are full of instruction for all Christian believers, of course; yet their message in a special sense concerns those who have the oversight of local Christian assemblies or churches."

The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia states about Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus in general: "The First and Second Epistles to Timothy, and the Epistle to Titus form a distinct group among the letters written by Paul, and are now known as the Pastoral Epistles because they were addressed to two Christian ministers. When Timothy and Titus received these epistles they were not acting, as they had previously done, as missionaries or itinerant evangelists, but had been left by Paul in charge of churches; the former having the oversight of the church in Ephesus, and the latter having the care of the churches in the island of Crete. The Pastoral Epistles were written to guide them in the discharge of the duties devolving upon them as Christian pastors. Such is a general description of these epistles. In each of them, however, there is a great deal more than is covered or implied by the designation, 'Pastoral' - much that is personal, and much also that is concerned with Christian faith and doctrine and practice generally."

Outline:

Linda Belleville, in *1 Timothy* gives the following outline:

- I. Opening Greeting (1:1-2)
- II. Instructions concerning Various Pastoral Responsibilities (1:3-6:21)
 - Dealing with False Teaching (1:3-11)
 - Paul recounts His Call to Ministry (1:12-17)
 - Timothy's Responsibility (1:18-20)
 - Public Prayers in Worship Corrected (2:1-7)
 - Public Demeanor in Worship Corrected (2:8-10)
 - Women Learners and Teachers (2:11-3:1a)
 - Leadership Credentials for Overseers (3:1b-7)

Leadership Credentials for Deacons (3:8-13)

The Truths of Our Faith (3:14-16)

Warnings against False Teachers (4:1-5)

A Good Servant of Christ Jesus (4:6-16)

Advice about the Old, the Young and Widows (5:1-16)

The Selection and Discipline of elders (5:17-25)

Advice to Slaves (6:1-2a)

Advice on False Teaching and True Riches (6:2b-10)

Paul's Final Instructions (6:11-21)

The Text:

I. Opening Greeting (1:1-2)

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope,

2 To Timothy my true son in the faith: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

Paul introduces himself in this epistle as “an apostle of Christ Jesus.” The word “apostle” is derived from the Greek verb *apostello*, meaning “set apart to send out.” The title “apostle” originates with Jesus Himself, who called His disciples “apostles” as He sent them out on their first evangelistic campaign. We read: “He appointed twelve — designating them apostles — that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach.”

About Paul using the term apostle and applying it to himself, *Barnes' Notes* states: “It was important for Paul to state this, (1) Because the other apostles had been called or chosen to this work (John 15:16,19; Matt 10:1; Luke 6:13); and (2) Because Paul was not one of those originally appointed. It was of consequence for him therefore, to affirm that he had not taken this high office to himself, but that he had been called to it by the authority of Jesus Christ. His appointment to this office he not infrequently takes occasion to vindicate; 1 Cor 9:1, etc.: Gal 1:12-24; 2 Cor 12:12; 1 Tim 2:7; 2 Tim 1:11; Rom 11:13.”

The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia comments on Paul's application of the title apostle to himself: “The very fact that the name ‘apostle’ means what it does would point to the impossibility of confining it within the limits of the Twelve. (The ‘twelve apostles’ of Rev 21:14 is evidently symbolic; compare in 7:3 ff the restriction of God's sealed servants to the twelve tribes.) Yet there might be a tendency at first to do so, and to restrict it as a badge of honor and privilege peculiar to that inner circle (compare Acts 1:25). If any such tendency existed, Paul effectually broke it down by vindicating for himself the right to the name. His claim appears in his assumption of the apostolic title in the opening words of most of his epistles. And when his right to it was challenged, he defended that right with passion, and especially on these grounds: that he had seen Jesus, and so was qualified to bear witness to His resurrection (1 Cor 9:1; compare Acts 22:6 ff); that he had received a call to the work of an apostle (Rom 1:1; 1 Cor 1:1, etc.; Gal 2:7; compare Acts 13:2 ff; 22:21); but, above all, that he could point to the signs and seals of his apostleship furnished by his missionary labors and their fruits (1 Cor 9:2; 2 Cor 12:12; Gal 2:8). It was by this last ground of appeal that Paul convinced the original apostles of the justice of his claim. He had not been a disciple of Jesus in the days of His flesh; his claim to have seen the risen Lord and from Him to have received a personal commission was not one that could be proved to others; but there could be no possibility of doubt as to the seals of his apostleship. It was abundantly clear that ‘he that wrought for Peter unto the apostleship of the circumcision wrought for (Paul) also unto the Gentiles’ (Gal 2:8). And so perceiving the grace that was given unto him, Peter and John, together with James of Jerusalem, recognized Paul as apostle to the Gentiles and gave him the right hand of fellowship (verse 9).”

Interestingly, there would have been no need for Paul to defend his apostleship in writing to Timothy. Timothy would never have doubted Paul's call or position. The fact that Paul introduces himself like this in this personal epistle to Timothy may be an indication that he intended Timothy to share the content of his letter with others.

One of the definitions of apostleship was being a witness of Christ's resurrection. The eleven disciples had seen Jesus after His resurrection and they had received Christ's marching orders. After His resurrection, Jesus had said to His disciples: "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."¹ At his vision of the risen Lord, on the way to Damascus, Paul received the same orders. We do not read this in so many words, but Jesus told Ananias to go to Paul and anoint him, because: "This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel."²

In differentiating between God the Father as the Savior and Christ Jesus our hope, Paul emphasizes the fact that he is a Jew and a Christian, demonstrating that being a follower of Jesus Christ does not mean giving up one's Jewishness. For a modern Jew to convert to Christianity would be considered to be an act of betrayal. Paul considered it to be an act of completion.

The Wycliffe Bible Commentary calls Paul's reference to Christ Jesus as "our hope": "a succinct way of tying all eschatology to the person of Christ." In fact, Paul uses the word "hope" elsewhere as an equivalent for the Second Coming. To Titus, he would write: "We wait for the blessed hope — the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ."³ In his Epistle to the Colossians, he refers to Christ as

"Christ in you, the hope of glory."⁴

Paul addresses Timothy as "my true son in the faith." This can only mean that Timothy's conversion had been the result of Paul's preaching, or of a personal conversation in which Timothy had accepted Paul's invitation to ask Jesus into his heart. Yet, when Timothy is first mentioned in The Book of Acts, he is called "a disciple."⁵ Since we are told that his mother was Jewish and his father a Greek, which probably means a pagan, it may mean that Timothy had accepted his mother's Judaism as his religion.

We may assume that, as Paul calls Timothy his "true son in the faith," that Timothy considered Paul to be his spiritual father, that is not only the one who led him to Christ, but also who taught him the first principles of discipleship.

It was not unusual for Paul, or for any other letter writer of that time, to begin a letter with a greeting. We tend to put our greetings at the end of our letters; the ancients began theirs with salutations and well wishes.

In this epistle Paul slightly deviates from his customary "Grace and peace," which is the salutation he uses in all of his epistles to churches. The greeting could be considered a mixture of two cultures, "grace" being the Greek greeting *cháris* and peace, the Hebrew *shalom*. Here the word *eleos*, "mercy" is added. Paul uses the same formula in his second letter to Timothy.⁶

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines "mercy" as "compassion shown to an offender," or "a blessing resulting from divine favor or compassion." As such it can be seen as an equivalent to "grace." Both are unmerited demonstrations of God's redeeming love. "Peace" can be seen as the renewed relationship with God as a result of received pardon and also as the fruit of grace and mercy in the heart of the believers. All this gives to Paul's greeting a depth of content that is missing in the polite exchanges of civility that have become customary in our time.

II. Instructions concerning Various Pastoral Responsibilities (1:3-6:21)

A. Dealing with False Teaching (1:3-11)

3 As I urged you when I went into Macedonia, stay there in Ephesus so that you may command certain men not to teach false doctrines any longer

¹ John 20:21

² Acts 9:15

³ Titus 2:13

⁴ Col. 1:27

⁵ Acts 16:1

⁶ II Tim. 1:2

4 nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies. These promote controversies rather than God's work — which is by faith.

5 The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.

6 Some have wandered away from these and turned to meaningless talk.

7 They want to be teachers of the law, but they do not know what they are talking about or what they so confidently affirm.

8 We know that the law is good if one uses it properly.

9 We also know that law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious; for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers,

10 for adulterers and perverts, for slave traders and liars and perjurers — and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine

11 that conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me.

Having blessed Timothy in this way, Paul comes to the business, which was the actual reason for his writing. The topic is Timothy's ministry in the church of Ephesus. Evidently, Timothy had wanted to follow Paul when he left Ephesus after spending a year and a half in that city. Paul probably spent so much time there because of a vision he received while there, in which Jesus said to him: "Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city."⁷ He was finally forced to leave Ephesus because of an uproar started by Demetrius, the silversmith, who saw his business declining when people ceased to buy his silver shrines of the goddess Artemis.⁸ Timothy and Silas had joined Paul on his trip to that city.⁹ And, evidently, Timothy, being part Jewish and part Greek was not forced to leave Ephesus when Paul did.

The church in Ephesus had its problems in that some of the members of the congregation got involved in false teachings, probably of Gnosticism. The term "teach false doctrines" is the translation of the single, unique, Greek verb *heterodidaskaleo*, which literally means "to instruct differently." The verb is only found here and in chapter 6:3 of this epistle.

There is always a danger of adding non-essentials to the Gospel message. C. S. Lewis warns of the danger of preaching, for instance, a Gospel of salvation + abstinence. Some Protestants believe that one cannot be a Bible believing Christian and a Democrat, or a Christian and not be pro-Israel. I do not intend to introduce or criticize any specific political or a-political elements into this study, but I want merely to state that we must be careful in our interpretation of the "pure Gospel." We may be a disciple of Christ and yet not believe that a certain political figure is the Antichrist.

Some Bible scholars believe that the terms "myths and endless genealogies" refer to Gnosticism, but *The Pulpit Commentary* explains: "If the spirit which gave birth to the fables of the Talmud was already at work among the Jews, we have a ready explanation of the phrase. And that they were Jewish fables (not later Gnostic delusions) is proved by the parallel passage in ... Titus 1:14, 'Not giving heed to Jewish fables.' The prevalence of sorcery among the Jews at this time is a further instance of their inclination to fable (see ... Acts 8:9; 13:6; 19:13)."

And *Barnes' Notes* states about "myths and endless genealogies": "[Neither give heed to fables] The 'fables' here referred to were probably the idle and puerile superstitions and conceits of the Jewish rabbis. The word rendered 'fable' *muthos* means properly 'speech' or 'discourse,' and then fable or fiction, or a mystic discourse. Such things abounded among the Greeks as well as the Jews, but it is probable that the latter here are particularly intended. These were composed of frivolous and unfounded stories, which they regarded as of great importance, and which they seem to have desired to incorporate with the teachings of Christianity. Paul, who had been brought up amidst these superstitions, saw at once how they would tend to draw off the mind from the truth, and would corrupt the true religion. One of the most successful arts of the

⁷ Acts 19:8-10

⁸ Acts 19:22-20:1

⁹ Acts 18:5

adversary of souls has been to mingle fable with truth; and when he cannot overthrow the truth by direct opposition, to neutralize it by mingling with it much that is false and frivolous.

[And endless genealogies] This also refers to Jewish teaching. The Hebrews kept careful genealogical records, for this was necessary in order that the distinction of their tribes might be kept up. Of course, in the lapse of centuries these tables would become very numerous, complicated, and extended-so that they might without much exaggeration be called 'endless.' The Jews attached great importance to them, and insisted on their being carefully preserved. As the Messiah, however, had now come-as the Jewish polity was to cease-as the separation between them and the pagan was no longer necessary, and the distinction of tribes was now useless, there was no propriety that these distinctions should be regarded by Christians. The whole system was, moreover, contrary to the genius of Christianity, for it served to keep up the pride of blood and of birth."

According to *The Pulpit Commentary*, the Greek word *apérantos*, "endless" is found only here in the New Testament and so one of the words peculiar to the Pastoral Epistles, but used in the LXX for 'infinite,' 'immeasurable.'"

It is interesting to see that Paul contrasts the tendency to devote oneself with myths and genealogies with faith. Concentrating on the peripherals instead of the core of the message is a way to avoid making a choice and come to surrender. Devotion to myths and genealogies is an activity of the brain; exercising faith is a matter of the heart. The Gospel message should govern both our thoughts and emotions. We are commanded to "Love the Lord [our] God with all [our] heart and with all [our] soul and with all [our] strength."¹⁰ In quoting this verse in the New Testament, Jesus adds: "and with all your mind."¹¹

The Greek text of v.5 reads literally: "Now the end of the commandment is love (*agape*) out of a pure heart, and [of] a good conscience, and [of] unfeigned faith." The Greek word for "end," NIV: "goal" is *telos*, meaning "to set out for a definite point or goal." Obedience to God's will is a goal-oriented attitude.

Actually, love should not be the response to a command; it is a matter of choice. This was exemplified in Paradise when God placed the first human couple between two trees, the tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. If Adam and Eve had chosen to eat of the tree of life, they would have received eternal life. Their eating of the fruit of life would have been a demonstration of their love of God. When they ate of the other tree, they indicated that they wanted knowledge without God. From that time on love was no longer a choice; it became a command to be obeyed.

In the context in which Paul speaks of love it is stated that love is the fruit of "a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith." Faith is the foundation. To believe that Christ has paid the price for the debt we owe to God purifies the heart and gives us a good conscience. As the Apostle John explains, we can only love God if we realize how much He loved us. We read: "This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us."¹²

The Pulpit Commentary observes: "Each of these phrases, 'a pure heart' and 'a good conscience' and 'faith unfeigned,' seems to rebuke by contrast the merely *ceremonial cleanness* and the *defiled conscience* and the merely *nominal Christianity* of these heretical Judaisers (comp. ... Titus 1:10-16)."

True obedience to God's command will always bring about humility. The discovery that we are unable, even to obey the smallest command in our own strength, and that we need all the power of the Holy Spirit to comply with the will of God, reduces our ego to the smallest. It is much easier to talk about obedience than to practice it. Evidently, that was what the people Paul mentions here were demonstrating. They talked about the law and the need for obedience; they even told others to obey, but they didn't do it themselves. James issues a warning to that kind of person, saying: "Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my

¹⁰ Deut. 6:5

¹¹ Matt. 22:37; Mark 12:30

¹² 1 John 4:10-12

brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. We all stumble in many ways. If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to keep his whole body in check.”¹³

When Paul says “We know that the law is good if one uses it properly,” he corrects the false impression that may be received from other statements he makes elsewhere about the fact that the law does not produce righteousness. In Romans, for instance, he stated: “No one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.”¹⁴ And in Galatians, we read: “We who are Jews by birth and not ‘Gentile sinners’ know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified.”¹⁵

It is not the law that is wrong, we are! In a sense “the righteous” in this context is a fictitious character. Quoting from some Old Testament passages,¹⁶ Paul writes in Romans: “There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.”¹⁷

Barnes’ Notes comments on the phrase “We also know that law is made not for the righteous”: “There has been great variety in the interpretation of this passage. Some suppose that the law here refers to the ceremonial laws of Moses ...; others to the denunciatory part of the law ...; and others that it means that the chief purpose of the law was to restrain the wicked. It seems clear, however, that the apostle does not refer merely to the ceremonial law, for he specifies that which condemns the unholy and profane; the murderers of fathers and mothers; liars and perjured persons. It was not the ceremonial law which condemned these things, but the moral law. It cannot be supposed, moreover, that the apostle meant to say that the law was not binding on a righteous man, or that he was under no obligation to obey it—for he everywhere teaches that the moral law is obligatory on all mankind.”

If sin had not entered the world and the human heart, there would indeed not have been any need for a law. The love of God in one’s heart would have given man a perfect knowledge of the will of God and obedience would have been a natural tendency.

It is important that the term “the righteous” is interpreted correctly in this context. The righteous is not the sinless person, but one who is covered by the righteousness of Christ. It is the one who has received a new heart and a new spirit. In contrast to that person, Paul gives us a list of seven characteristics of people whom he qualifies under the terms: “lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious.” These are “those who kill their fathers or mothers, murderers, adulterers and perverts, slave traders and liars and perjurers.” Incidentally, this is the only verse in which slavery is condemned, although indirectly, in the New Testament.

Paul implies that the preaching of the Gospel, which he calls “the sound doctrine,” would eliminate the sinful behavior mentioned above.

B. Christ’s Past Charge to Paul 1:12-17

12 I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his service.

13 Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief.

14 The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

15 Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners — of whom I am the worst.

¹³ James 3:1,2

¹⁴ Rom. 3:20

¹⁵ Gal. 2:15,16

¹⁶ Ps 14:1-3; 53:1-3; Eccl 7:20

¹⁷ Rom. 3:10-12

16 But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.

17 Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

In order to illustrate the above, Paul proceeds to give Timothy his personal testimony. The things Paul mentions here about his previous life were probably not unknown to Timothy. Paul's reason to mention them was in order for Timothy to pass on to others that even the worst sinner can be saved. The apostle puts himself as an example of what God can do in situations that, humanly speaking, would be impossible to change.

The Wycliffe Bible Commentary observes about Paul's testimony: "The writer's testimony is in two parts: (1) 12-14; (2) 15,16. These parts run parallel, in that Paul's pre-conversion condition is stressed; and also in each section the turning point and contrast comes with the words, 'but I received mercy.' The heartfelt doxology of the Introduction to the book (v. 17) comes as a fitting climax to Paul's testimony."

The Greek text of v.12 reads literally: "[And] I thank our Lord Christ Jesus, who enabled me, for that He counted me faithful, putting [me] into [the] ministry." Paul ascribes his previous condition to ignorance and unbelief. Unbelief, probably, refers to a lack of faith that Jesus is the Messiah. Paul had considered Jesus, not as the God-appointed Christ, but as an imposter.

Although Paul does not seem to differentiate between his conversion and his call to ministry, it is obvious that without conversion there would not have been a call. The phrase "he considered me faithful" does not pertain to his conversion but to his subsequent service. The first time the Greek word *pistos*, faithful, is used in Scripture is in the parable of the faithful servant. We read in Matthew's Gospel: "Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions."¹⁸ That may be the story Paul refers to in this text.

The Pulpit Commentary states: "This outburst of praise for the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ, who had called him to the ministry of the Word, is caused by the thought, which immediately precedes, of his being entrusted with the gospel. He thus disclaims any notion of merit on his part."

The word "enabled" is the translation of the Greek verb *endunamoo*, "to empower." The English word "dynamo" is derived from it.

The Pulpit Commentary comments: "This verb occurs once in the Acts (9:22); three times in St. Paul's other Epistles (... Romans 4:20; ... Ephesians 6:10; ... Philippians 4:13); three times in the Pastoral Epistles (here; ... 2 Timothy 2:1 and 4:17); and ... Hebrews 11:31. It denotes the giving that peculiar power which was the gift of the Holy Ghost, and which was necessary for the work of an apostle to enable him to bear witness to Christ in the face of an adverse world. This power (*dunamis*) Christ promised to his apostles before his ascension (... Acts 1:8). St Paul received it after his conversion (... Acts 9:22). He continued to hold it throughout his apostleship (... Philippians 4:13); he enjoyed it especially at the approach of his martyrdom (... 2 Timothy 4:17). It comprised strength of faith, strength to testify and to preach, strength to endure and suffer. St. Paul's whole course is the best illustration of the nature of the *dunamis* which Christ gave him (see in ... Ephesians 3:6 the *charis*, the *diakonía*, and the *dunamis* all brought together as here)."

Paul describes his previous life in terms of being "a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man." The Greek nouns used are *blasphemos*, *dioktes*, and *hubristes*. The last is also used in Romans, where it is translated "arrogant" in the NIV. *The Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines "arrogant" as "offensively exaggerating one's own importance." From someone who considered himself to be a very important person, Paul became the worst of sinners in his own eyes. He attributes this transformation to the grace of God. A vision of God's holiness will create in us a conviction of sin that only the Holy Spirit can bring about. It is good if, even in a life of daily fellowship with God, we don't lose the memory of what we used to be. That will keep the miracle of our salvation alive.

¹⁸ Matt. 24:45-47

The characteristics of his new life are described as “grace and love that are in Christ Jesus.” The fruit in Paul’s new life are the fruits of the vine, which is Jesus Himself. Christ in us will make us gracious and loving. The transformation of Saul, the violent, into Paul the gracious is a sheer miracle that God is ready to produce in every person who comes to Him with a confession of sin and shame.

Paul says to Timothy and to us: “If God can do this in me, He can do it in everybody!” That realization triggered in him the great doxology to “the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God.” *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary* comments on this doxology: “To the double testimony just given, the doxology of praise comes as the climax and the welling-up of Paul’s deep adoration and thankfulness. God the Father has not been mentioned in the context, so this doxology to God may possibly be taken as directed to Christ or to the Triune God.” The problem in applying the doxology only to Jesus is that the word “invisible” would be out of context. It seems more logical to apply this to the Father, about whom John testifies: “No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father’s side, has made him known.”¹⁹

The title “the King eternal” is the translation of the Greek *basilei toon aioónoon*, “King of ages,” or “King of worlds.” As *The Pulpit Commentary* observes, the phrase is found nowhere else in Scripture, but it occurs in The Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament.

Timothy’s Responsibility (1:18-20)

18 Timothy, my son, I give you this instruction in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by following them you may fight the good fight,

19 holding on to faith and a good conscience. Some have rejected these and so have shipwrecked their faith.

20 Among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme.

Barnes’ Notes comments on Paul’s charge to Timothy: “The general meaning of this is plain. It is, that Paul was committing to him an important trust, and one that required great wisdom and fidelity; and that in doing it he was acting in conformity with the hopes which had been cherished respecting Timothy, and with certain expressed anticipations about his influence in the church. From early life the hope had been entertained that he would be a man to whom important trusts might be committed; and it had been predicted that he would be distinguished as a friend of religion. These hopes seem to have been cherished in consequence of the careful training in religion which he had had (2 Tim 2:1; 3:15), and probably from the early indications of seriousness, prudence, and piety, which he manifested. It was natural to entertain such hopes, and it seems, from this place, that such hopes had even assumed the form of predictions.”

Paul encourages Timothy to “fight the good fight.” In his Second Epistle, Paul gives his own testimony as: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day — and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.”²⁰ Serving the Lord is seen as fighting a war. *The Matthew Henry’s Commentary* observes: “The ministry is a warfare, it is a good warfare against sin and Satan: and under the banner of the Lord Jesus, who is the Captain of our salvation (Heb 2:10), and in his cause, and against his enemies, ministers are in a particular manner engaged.”

Twice in his letters to Timothy Paul refers to the fact that Timothy had been dedicated to the Lord’s service by the laying on of hands. The gathering or church service in which this occurred is not recorded in the New Testament. But we learn from the references Paul makes to the event that during the ceremony one or more of the elders who participated received a prophetic message regarding Timothy. We read: “Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you.”²¹ And Paul admonishes him to develop the spiritual gift that was given to him at that

¹⁹ John 1:18

²⁰ II Tim. 4:7,8

²¹ I Tim. 4:14

occasion. We read: “For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands.”²²

When God gives us gifts, He holds us responsible for the way we develop them. This is clear from Jesus’ parable about the talents and the minas.²³ It is possible to lose the gift by neglect. Quoting Calvin, *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary* states: “There is danger lest faith be sunk by a bad conscience, as by a whirlpool in a stormy sea.”

The prophecies about Timothy must have been an important impetus for Paul also. *The Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary* observes: “Such prophecies and the good report of Timothy given by the two churches, Lystra (the scene of his conversion) and Iconium, where under the elders he probably had been ‘messenger of the churches’ (2 Cor 8:23; Acts 14:21,23; 16:2), induced Paul to take him as his companion.”

We are not told what particular gift Timothy received at this prayer of ordination and commission. It may have been a gift of preaching, teaching, leadership, or any other that would serve to build up the body of Christ.

Timothy may have been quite young when he was called into the Lord’s service; elsewhere in this epistle, Paul writes: “Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.”²⁴

Young people sometime struggle with a sense of awe when being called upon to serve older believers who are better educated and who have the advantage of experiences that the young have not yet encountered. It is easy to forget that the power of a ministry is the message of God, not the know-how of the messenger.

There are two sides to the “good fight” Timothy was called upon to engage in: there is the warfare against sin and Satan, *Matthew Henry* referred to, but there is also the inner conflict of the messenger. There is a great danger of being self-confident, of believing that we are not the kind of person who could be tempted to commit certain sins. It was this confidence that brought about Peter’s fall in denying Christ. He had declared himself to be willing to die with Jesus, but lied about his relationship with Christ when confronted by a servant girl. The only way to be kept from stumbling is to trust, in Jude’s words, that only God “is able to keep [us] from falling and to present [us] before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy.”²⁵ Since we are our own worst enemy, the good fight consists primarily in “holding on to faith and a good conscience.” That means trusting in God’s power to keep us from stumbling and in confessing our failures, and allowing our conscience to be sprinkled by the blood of Christ.

Paul mentions two examples of people who were probably members of the church in Ephesus, who had rejected the faith. In this context it probably means that these two believed that they could not be enticed to sin because of their own willpower. Paul writes that their faith had shipwrecked because they rejected the faith; they failed to trust God in being kept from stumbling. The Greek verb for “reject” is *apothomai*, “to push off.” *The Pulpit Commentary* states: “It is a strong expression, implying here the willful resistance to the voice of conscience.”

Paul mentions the names of Hymenaeus and Alexander as opponents to the Gospel message he preached in Ephesus. We read about Hymenaeus that he taught “that the resurrection has already taken place.”²⁶ This probably means that he denied the resurrection of the body and considered resurrection only to refer to a conversion experience. The Alexander mentioned here is probably not the same as the one mentioned in second Timothy, although some Bible scholars believe he is. Both people named here may have been teaching some kind of early Gnosticism in the church in Ephesus. Paul mentions that he had handed them over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme. The same expression is used in First Corinthians, where Paul suggests that the congregation perform that kind of act in connection with a member of the church who refused to accept church discipline. We read there: “When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus

²² II Tim. 1:6

²³ See Matt. 25:14-30; Luke 19:12-26

²⁴ I Tim. 4:12

²⁵ Jude 24

²⁶ II Tim. 2:17,18

and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present, hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord.”²⁷

The act of handing someone over to Satan is difficult for us to comprehend. *The Pulpit Commentary* observes: “The passages in Scripture which throw light on this difficult phrase are, chiefly, the following: the almost identical passage ... 1 Corinthians 5:5; ... Job 1:12; 2:6, 7; ... Luke 13:10; ... Acts 5:5, 10; 10:38; 13:11; ... 1 Corinthians 11:30; ... 2 Corinthians 12:7; and ... Hebrews 2:14. Putting these together, it appears that sickness and bodily infirmity and death are, within certain limits, in the power of Satan to inflict. And that the apostles were able, on fitting occasions, to hand over peccant (²⁸) members of the Church to this power of Satan, that by such discipline ‘the spirit might be saved.’ In the case of Hymenaeus and Alexander (as in that of the incestuous person at Corinth), the punishment incident on this delivery to Satan would appear to have been short of death, but in the case of the two first not to have had the effect of bringing them to a true repentance.”

The Wycliffe Bible Commentary states: “A comparison with 1 Cor 5:3-5 makes excommunication the more probable meaning. He who does not belong to the Church, the body of Christ, is under the dominion of Satan. Blasphemy is any violation of the third commandment, any light and sinful use of God’s name.”

Public Prayers in Worship Corrected (2:1-7)

1 I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—
2 for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.
3 This is good, and pleases God our Savior,
4 who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.
5 For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,
6 who gave himself as a ransom for all men — the testimony given in its proper time.
7 And for this purpose I was appointed a herald and an apostle — I am telling the truth, I am not lying — and a teacher of the true faith to the Gentiles.

The opening verb “I urge” is an interesting one. The Greek word is *parakaleo*, which has the basic meaning of “to call near.” As a noun, it is used for the Holy Spirit, the *Parakletos*, the comforter.

Linda Belleville, in 1 Timothy, comments: This type of request was used by one who had the authority to command obedience but chose instead the route of a diplomatic request.”

In this short section Paul touches briefly on four different topics: 1. What to pray for, 2. God’s plan for the whole world, 3. Paul’s own ministry and 4. How to pray.

Paul uses four different Greek words for “prayer”: *deesis*, “a petition,” *proseuche*, “a prayer of worship,” *enteuxis* “a supplication,” and *eucharistia* “an expression of gratitude.” The word *enteuxis* is only found in this epistle, here and in 4:4 and 5.

Bible scholars have wrestled with the interpretation of the words Paul uses here for prayer. *The Adam Clarke’s Commentary* states: “It is difficult to know the precise difference between the four words used here by the apostle. They are sometimes distinguished thus: [Supplications] *Deeseis*. Prayers for averting evils of every kind.

[Prayers] *Proseuchas*. Prayers for obtaining the good things, spiritual and temporal, which ourselves need.

[Intercessions] *Enteuxeis*. Prayers in behalf of others.

[Giving of thanks] *Eucharistias*. Praises to God, as the parent of all good, for all the blessings which we and others have received. It is probable that the apostle gives directions here for public worship; and that the words may be thus paraphrased: ‘Now, I exhort first of all that, in the public assemblies, deprecations of

²⁷ 1 Cor. 5:4,5

²⁸ “peccant” means sinner; it is derived from the Latin word for sin.

evils, and supplications for such good things as are necessary, and intercessions for their conversion, and thanksgiving for mercies, be offered in behalf of all men—for pagans as well as for Christians, and for enemies as well as for friends.”

The opening words of v.1 “I urge,” although it sounds strong in this context, does not always have the same urgency as here. In one instant in Matthew it refers to consolation, as in: “A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to *be comforted*, because they are no more.”²⁹ A stronger use is in the verse: “The demons *begged* Jesus, ‘If you drive us out, send us into the herd of pigs.’”³⁰

The Greek text of v.1 reads literally: “I exhort, therefore, that, first of all, supplication, prayers, intercessions [and] giving of thanks be made for all men ...” As the first people to be prayed for Paul mentions kings and civil authorities.

The Matthew Henry’s Commentary observes: “Though the kings at this time were heathens, enemies to Christianity, and persecutors of Christians, yet they must pray for them, because it is for the public good that there should be civil government, and proper persons entrusted with the administration of it, for whom therefore we ought to pray, yea, though we ourselves suffer under them.” When Paul wrote this, the Roman emperor was Nero, who reigned from 54-68 AD. Christians were persecuted at that time and some were thrown to the lions. Yet, Paul does not suggest that Christians should pray against those in authority, but for them. It is true that he describes the purpose of prayer as “that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.”

Among present-day Christians this kind of prayer is rarely found, except in some churches where it is part of a liturgy. It is easier to criticize than to pray.

If Paul urges this kind of prayer in a world where being a Christian could be a health hazard or lead to death, how much more ought we, who live in freedom should remember in prayer those in authority over us.

The reason Paul gives opens a wide field of theological interpretation. God “wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.” That statement clearly contradicts Calvin’s creed that God elected some to be saved and some to be lost.

Linda Belleville, in *1 Timothy*, writes: “The contentious atmosphere during worship is connected with the larger issue of false teaching. The opening ‘therefore’ ... links Paul’s correctives in chapter 2 with his previous concerns about heretical teachers. His repetition of the opening ‘I urge you’ – first to Timothy, now to the whole congregation – strengthens this connection (1:3; 2:1); Paul’s mention of the shipwrecked faith of two church leaders in the immediately preceding verses does as well (1:19-20).

Paul’s first corrective has to do with the role of prayer in public worship. Two key terms are ‘all’ and ‘everyone.’ They appear six times in verses 1-7: ‘I urge you, first of *all*, to pray for *all* people ... for kings and all who are in authority ... so that we can live ... lives marked by [*all*] godliness and dignity. This is good and pleases God our Savior, who wants everyone to be saved. ... Christ Jesus ... gave his life to purchase freedom for everyone.’ Another key term is ‘human being’ or ‘person’ (*anthrōpos*). Prayers are to be offered ‘for all *people*’ (2:1). God wants, lit., ‘all *people* to be saved’ (2:4). And Christ, himself a *human*, became the sole mediator between God and *humanity* (2:5-6). The overall stress on all people suggests that an elitist attitude was at work in the Ephesian church. The church was being selective about whom they welcomed and received into the fold. In all likelihood this was being fueled by a belief that salvation was an option only for the spiritual ‘in the crowd.’”

Paul links the ministry of intercession to our personal salvation by reminding us that Jesus Christ came to be the mediator and the ransom. The two concepts may seem irreconcilable to us. In the situation of conflict we know at the present time, a mediator is a person and a ransom is an amount of money paid to those who have taken someone hostage. Paul depicts the scene of a slave market, where people were bought and sold. The Greek word for “ransom” is *antilutron*, meaning “a redemption-price.” The word is only found here in the New Testament. We can imagine that someone walked around at a slave market and

²⁹ Matt. 2:18

³⁰ Matt. 8:31

spotted a relative who was being sold as a slave. Having the financial means to rescue this nephew or uncle from the fate that awaited him, he would buy the person, not for the reason to use him as a slave, but to purchase his freedom.

The image represents well what Jesus did for us in paying the price for our redemption. In order to see the picture clearly, we must remember Jesus' words about what constitutes slavery. "[Amen] everyone who sins is a slave to sin." And: "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."³¹ "The wages of sin is death."³² Jesus paid the ransom for us with the price of His own blood. Although the comparison is a weak one, we could say that He offered Himself as a slave in our place. The great difference, of course, is that Jesus never could be a slave of sin Himself. He took our place as sinners, without being a sinner Himself.

It is the realization of what it means to be saved from sin and death by the blood of Christ that makes us into intercessors.

Paul's suggestion to Timothy to organize prayer meetings is for the purpose of creating peaceful living conditions for believers. Although it is true that the church of Jesus Christ often grows in persecution, persecution is not God's wish for the church. God does not intend Christian life to be a constant warfare, although in most cases it is. He takes no pleasure in the suffering of His children. Our prayer for the government is meant to lead to conditions in which the believer can live a quiet life of godliness and holiness.

But we must not merely pray for favorable conditions for ourselves. The main purpose of our prayer ought to be the salvation of mankind. God "wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth." Peter writes the same in his Second Epistle, saying: "The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."³³

Linda Belleville, in *1 Timothy*, observes: "The overall stress on all people suggests that an elitist attitude was at work in the Ephesian church. The church was being selective about whom they welcomed and received into the fold. In all likelihood this was being fueled by a belief that salvation was an option for the spiritual 'in crowd.' Paul countered this exclusive attitude by pointing to an inclusive God, who 'wants everyone to be saved' (2:40, and an inclusive Christ, who 'gave his life to purchase freedom for everyone' (2:6)."

Paul's statement in v.5 is one of the most basic declarations of Christian doctrine: "For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." The Greek text of this verse reads literally: "For [there is] one God, and one mediator [between] God and man, [the] man Christ Jesus." Noting the words that are not in the Greek, but are added to the English text for clarity of style, we see that Paul actually uses the Old Testament quotation that is called the *Shema*: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one."³⁴ While the deity of God the Father is clearly emphasized, it seems that, as far as Jesus is concerned, the full stress is on His humanity. *The Pulpit Commentary* observes: "The human nature of our Lord is here insisted upon, to show how fit he is to mediate for man, as his Godhead fits him to mediate with God." It is obvious from other statements elsewhere that Paul does not deny the deity of Christ. In Philippians, for instance, he writes about Jesus: "Who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped ..."³⁵ *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary* observes: "Here is the sharpest and most unequivocal assertion of the deity and humanity of Christ. It is also involved in the idea of the one true and perfect mediator that he must be God (cf. Heb 7:22; 8:6; 9:15; 12:24)."

About the term "one mediator," Linda Belleville, in *1 Timothy*, writes: "The expression 'one Mediator ... Christ Jesus' is unquestionably Pauline. Christ's role in Paul's view is a mediatorial one. 'Through him God created everything in the heavenly realms and on earth' (Col. 1:16) and then reconciled it all to himself 'through Christ' (2 Cor 5:18) ... The target audience for mediation is all-embracing: 'He gave his

³¹ John 8:31,32,34

³² Rom. 6:23

³³ II Peter 3:9

³⁴ Deut. 6:4

³⁵ Phil. 2:6

life to purchase freedom for everyone.’ But the route to freedom is wholly exclusive. Salvation comes solely through this mediator and none other. As [one Bible scholar] notes, ‘If there were many gods, there could be different ways of salvation, but since there is only one, the possibility is excluded.’”

The Greek word for “mediator” is *mesites*, which is defined as “a go-between,” or “a reconciler.” Paul writes elsewhere about a mediator: “A mediator, however, does not represent just one party; but God is one.”³⁶

Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words explains: “mesites ... lit., ‘a go-between’ (from mesos, ‘middle,’ and eimi, ‘to go’), is used in two ways in the NT, (a) ‘one who mediates’ between two parties with a view to producing peace, as in 1 Tim 2:5, though more than mere ‘mediatorship’ is in view, for the salvation of men necessitated that the Mediator should Himself possess the nature and attributes of Him towards whom He acts, and should likewise participate in the nature of those for whom He acts (sin apart); only by being possessed both of deity and humanity could He comprehend the claims of the one and the needs of the other; further, the claims and the needs could be met only by One who, Himself being proved sinless, would offer Himself an expiatory sacrifice on behalf of men; (b) ‘one who acts as a guarantee’ so as to secure something which otherwise would not be obtained. Thus in Heb 8:6; 9:15; 12:24 Christ is the Surety of ‘the better covenant,’ ‘the new covenant,’ guaranteeing its terms for His people.”

Paul describes himself in his Gospel ministry to the gentiles as being “a herald and an apostle” and “a teacher.” The Greek word, rendered “herald” is *kerux*, which elsewhere is translated “preacher.” Again, the reason for Paul writing this kind of information to Timothy was not primarily for Timothy’s benefit; it was meant to be passed on to the church in Ephesus.

Linda Belleville, in *1 Timothy*, states about Paul’s job description: “These are three facets of Paul’s job description. First, there is that of ‘a herald’ (NLT, ‘preacher’). The herald in antiquity was the town crier, the person officially designated to make newsworthy announcements and proclamations. The obvious qualifications were a loud voice and verbatim reporting. In a Christian context, it means to announce the gospel to the nations (3:16) and to do the work of an evangelist (2 Tim 4:5; NLT, ‘work at telling others the Good News’). It is a role that Paul passed on to Timothy (2 Tim 4:2, 5). The second facet is that of ‘an apostle.’ It is a claim that was hotly contested by Paul’s opponents and that he staunchly defends elsewhere (Gal 1-2; 1 Cor 9; 2 Cor 11-12). The veracity of Paul’s apostleship is underscored by exclamations, ‘I’m not exaggerating—just telling the truth.’ It comes right after his claim to be an ‘apostle’ and right before his claim to be a teacher of the Gentiles. ... Paul’s interjection could be his way of empowering Timothy as his apostolic protégé. It could also be that Paul is emphasizing his ongoing wonder that a persecutor of the church was chosen to be the apostle to the Gentiles.”

Public Demeanor in Worship Corrected (2:8-10)

8 I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing.

9 I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes,

10 but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God.

The emphasis in v.8 is not on the required physical attitude of the person who prays. Paul speaks about the state of mind, not of the position of the body. We ought not to lead in prayer in a public meeting if we have a quarrel with someone else or are angry with another person. Paul writes here the same as what Jesus said in The Sermon on the Mount: “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.”³⁷ Our inter-human relationships play a major role in our relationship with God.

³⁶ Gal. 3:20

³⁷ Matt. 5:23,24

The lifting up of hands in a prayer was the Jewish way of praying. We see examples of this in the Psalms: “Hear my cry for mercy as I call to you for help, as I lift up my hands toward your Most Holy Place.”³⁸ And: “Lift up your hands in the sanctuary and praise the Lord.”³⁹ We see that Jesus sometimes prayed, simply by looking up. We read as He prayed the “high-priestly prayer” for His disciples: “After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed.”⁴⁰ Luke records that Jesus “knelt down and prayed” in Gethsemane.⁴¹ According to Matthew, “he fell with his face to the ground and prayed.”⁴² At the feeding of the five thousand, Jesus probably just stood and prayed.⁴³ Our physical attitude in prayer should be determined by the mental attitude in which we approach the Lord.

The Adam Clarke’s Commentary comments on “Lifting up holy hands”: “It was a common custom, not only among the Jews, but also among the pagans, to lift up or spread out their arms and hands in prayer. It is properly the action of entreaty and request; and seems to be an effort to embrace the assistance requested. But the apostle probably alludes to the Jewish custom of laying their hands on the head of the animal which they brought for a sin-offering, confessing their sins, and then giving up the life of the animal as an expiation for the sins thus confessed. And this very notion is conveyed in the original term *epairontas*, from *airoo*, to lift up, and *epi*, upon or over. This shows us how Christians should pray. They should come to the altar; set God before their eyes; humble themselves for their sins; bring as a sacrifice the Lamb of God; lay their hands on this sacrifice; and by faith offer it to God in their souls’ behalf, expecting salvation through his meritorious death alone.”

In his instructions for women who attend the worship service Paul seems to concentrate particularly on the dress code, which he prescribes as “modestly, with decency and propriety.” The first Greek word used is *kosmios*, “modest,” only used here and in 3:2, where it is applied to the husband and rendered “respectable.” The second word is *aidos*, “decent.” The word also only occurs here in the New Testament. Interestingly, the KJV renders it “shamefacedness,” which sounds like “overkill.” The third Greek word is *sophrosune*, “sobriety.” Paul used this word in his defense before the Roman governor Festus, saying: “What I am saying is true and *reasonable*.”⁴⁴

The New Living Translation renders verse 9: “And I want women to be modest in their appearance. They should wear decent and appropriate clothing and not draw attention to themselves by the way they fix their hair or by wearing gold or pearls or expensive clothes.” Linda Belleville, in *1 Timothy*, comments: “Paul here was not concerned with the first-century equivalent of plunging neckline, tight-fitting clothes, and short skirts. The issue was flaunting one’s wealth in public. The well-to-do came to worship with gold-braided hair, pearls, and expensive clothes (2:9b). In so doing, they drew attention to themselves (2:9) and distracted from worship of God.” The same kind of distraction in worship may need the same kind of attention, but in the opposite direction, when people come to church with torn jeans and a hairdo that would suggest that the person had lost a comb. I am in favor of a modest medium.

Women Learners and Teachers (2:11-3:1a)

11 A woman should learn in quietness and full submission.

12 I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent.

13 For Adam was formed first, then Eve.

14 And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner.

15 But women will be saved through childbearing — if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety.

³⁸ Ps. 28:2

³⁹ Ps. 134:2

⁴⁰ John 17:1

⁴¹ Luke 22:41

⁴² Matt. 26:39

⁴³ John 6:11

⁴⁴ Acts 26:25

3:1a Here is a trustworthy saying:

Linda Belleville, in *1 Timothy*, has some interesting explanations of the Greek words Paul uses in these verses. We copy the following: “2:11 *Women should learn quietly*: The Greek word for ‘quietly (*hēsuchia*) denotes not an absence of speech but a calm demeanor (cf. 1 Pet 3:4).

Submissively: *Hupotagē* is not a passive idea. It denotes the voluntary waiving of one’s rights for the sake of another (cf. 3:4; 2 Cor 9:13; Gal 2:5). Some assume that Paul is speaking of submission to a husband. However, ‘submissively’ modifies ‘learn’ – that is, women are to learn ‘calmly’ and ‘submissively.’”

The same commentary continues: “Some jump to the conclusion that women are being asked to submit either to their husbands or to male leadership. The command, however, is, ‘let a woman learn’ not ‘let a woman submit.’ *How* she is to learn is Paul’s concern. All too often, the fact is missed that Paul affirms that a woman should be allowed to learn and be instructed. This affirmation is no small thing. While a female student is hardly a novelty today, it was quite unusual in Paul’s day. Girls in the Greco-Roman period were taught three ‘Rs.’ But higher education past the age of 12, though on the rise, was still not commonplace. This verse may imply submission to a teacher. A submissive spirit was (and is) a necessary prerequisite for learning. This would not eliminate expression of one’s own opinions. It has more to do with a willingness to take direction. On the other hand, the verse may imply ‘self-restraint’ or ‘self-control.’ This sense appears in 1 Corinthians 14:32, where Paul states that those ‘who prophesy are *in control* of their spirit and can take turns.’ In either case, Paul was not questioning a woman’s prerogative to learn as long as she did it ‘quietly’ and ‘submissively.’”

The Greek text of v.12 reads literally: “But I suffer not a woman to teach, not to usurp authority over [the] man, but to be silent.” The key word in this phrase is, obviously, the Greek word *authenteo*, which can be translated “to dominate.” Since this is the only place in the New Testament where this word is found, there is no way to do a comparative study. It is obvious, however, that there is a great difference between having authority and usurping authority. The verse does not exclude the possibility that there are instances in which a woman can legally have authority over a man. The word “usurp” suggests an illegal use.

Linda Belleville, in *1 Timothy*, writes: “Paul’s third corrective is found in a much-debated text: ‘I am not permitting a woman to teach.’ The ongoing sense of the present tense verb is to be noted. The corrective is not the commonly found categorical prohibition, ‘I do not permit,’ (aorist tense) but a restriction specific to the current situation at Ephesus (‘I am not permitting [you Ephesian women]’). The NLT’s ‘I do not let women’ can be easily misunderstood as Paul’s universal practice and overlooks the context of false teaching specific to the Ephesian situation. It is also important to note that Paul introduces verse 12 as a point of contrast with verse 11. The initial *but* in Greek makes this quite clear: ‘Let a woman learn quietly and submissively but for a woman to teach ... a man I am not permitting’ (my translation).

What then is the restriction? It can’t be women teaching per se, since Paul commands Cretan women in a letter written roughly at the same time to ‘teach others what is good’ (Titus 2:3-5; cf. Acts 18:26). It could be that Paul was restricting women from public or ‘official’ teaching. Yet this too has its difficulties, for teaching was part of what a prophet did in a public setting. To prophesy was to instruct so that ‘everyone will learn’ (1 Cor 14:19, 31). And women were certainly active in the early Christian communities in this way (e.g. 1 Cor 11:5). Also, Paul taught elsewhere that when believers gather corporately ‘one will sing, another will teach, another will tell some special revelation God has given, one will speak in tongues, and another will interpret what is said’ (1 Cor 14:26). There are no gender distinctions here. Both women and men brought a teaching to the congregation.

Some claim that the issue is women teaching men doctrine and that Paul is stating that women cannot do so. But this misconstrues the verb *didaskō* and the term ‘doctrine.’ To ‘teach’ (*didaskēin*) is to provide instruction in a formal or informal setting ... The Greek term for ‘teach doctrine’ is *katēcheō* (cf. English ‘catechism’; Luke 1:4; Acts 18:25; 21:21, 24; 1 Cor 14:19; Gal 6:6). ‘Doctrine’ as a system of thought assumes that authority lies in the act of teaching (or in the person who teaches). Yet, in the Pastorals, authority resides in the deposit of truth—literally, ‘the mystery of the faith’ (3:9), ‘the message of faith’ (4:6), ‘the faith’ (4:1; 5:8; 6:10, 12, 21), and ‘the trust’ (6:20) that Jesus passed on to his disciples and that they in turn passed on to their disciples (2 Tim. 2:2). So ‘doctrine’ with this definition was not a first-century development. That is why Paul instructed Timothy to publicly rebuke (5:20) anyone who departed

from, literally ‘the sound instructions of our Lord Jesus Christ’ (6:3). The teacher was subject to evaluation and discipline just like any other leader or minister.

Perhaps the prohibition only applies to the ‘wife’ and ‘husband’ (and not ‘woman’ and ‘man’): ‘I do not permit a wife to teach or have authority over her husband’ (TNIV mg, NRSV mg). The difficulty is that Paul gives no clue that he is shifting from men and women in general (2:8-10) to husbands and wives specifically (2:11-15). It is true that Adam and Eve are mentioned in the following verse. But they are pointed to as the prototypical male and female, rather than as husband and wife.

The command for a quiet demeanor while learning and teaching suggests that women were disrupting worship. The men, too, were praying in an angry and contentious way (2:8). Since Paul targeted women who teach men (2:12) and used the example of Adam and Eve as a corrective, it is reasonable to conclude that there was a bit of a battle of sexes going on in the congregation.”

To settle the point Paul intended to make in his instructions to Timothy, he refers to the original plan of God with the human race as exemplified in its creation and in what went wrong. We read in the Genesis record that God created Adam first and did not create Eve until Adam began to have a desire for a helpmate. Eve’s creation was not one of God’s afterthoughts. After having declared all of creation “very good,”⁴⁵ God said: “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.”⁴⁶ But God did not create Eve until Adam saw that the animal world consisted of male and female creatures and that, as a male creature, he had no female counterpart he could relate to. Eve’s creation was, in a way, a fulfillment of God’s plan and Adam’s desire. As such it was quite unique. We do not read that God created the female animals in that way. Neither do we learn that animal females were created from parts of the male’s body, as Eve was formed from one of Adam’s ribs.⁴⁷ As a result of this way of creation Adam and Eve learned to love each other, both emotionally and physically.

Paul does not go into the details of the creation of our first ancestors; he merely mentions the order in which they were created. The Greek text of v.14 reads literally: “And Adam was not deceived, but the woman was being deceived in the transgression.” The Greek verb rendered “deceived” is *apatao*, which can be rendered “to cheat.” We cannot conclude from Paul’s phrasing that he believed only Eve to be guilty and Adam innocent. In his Epistle to the Romans he clearly holds Adam responsible, saying: “Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned.”⁴⁸ God held Adam responsible⁴⁹ and so does Paul. All Paul is saying is that the serpent tempted Eve, probably thinking that she would be an easier target than her husband. In a way, Adam was never tempted; he simply accepted the forbidden fruit, which he knew to be taboo, from his wife’s hand.

V.15 is one of the most problematic verses in all of Paul’s writings, if not in the whole New Testament. It seems to contradict everything Paul writes elsewhere. The Greek text of the verse reads literally: “Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.” The strange construction of the singular “she shall be saved ... and “if they continue” catches the eye. It is obvious that Paul did not believe that childbearing in general would be the means of a woman’s spiritual salvation.

The Pulpit Commentary states: “The transition from the personal *Eve* to the generic *woman* is further marked by the transition from the singular to the plural, ‘if they continue,’ etc. The natural and simple explanation of the passage is that the special temporal punishment pronounced against the woman, immediately after her sin, ‘In sorrow shalt thou bring forth children’ (... Genesis 3:16) — (to which St. Paul here evidently alludes) — and endured by all women ever since, was a set-off, so to speak, to the special guilt of Eve in yielding to the guile of the serpent; so that now the woman might attain salvation as well as the man (although she was not suffered to teach) if she continued in faith and charity.”

⁴⁵ Gen. 1:31

⁴⁶ Gen. 2:18

⁴⁷ Gen. 2:20-24

⁴⁸ Rom. 5:12

⁴⁹ Gen. 3:17-20

The Adam Clarke's Commentary adds: "The salvation of the human race, through child-bearing, was intimated in the sentence passed on the serpent, Gen 3:15: I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed. It shall bruise thy head. Accordingly, the Savior being conceived in the womb of his mother by the power of the Holy Spirit, he is truly the seed of the woman who was to bruise the head of the serpent; and, a woman, by bringing him forth, has been the occasion of our salvation.' This is the most consistent sense, for in the way in which it is commonly understood it does not apply."

Linda Belleville, in *1 Timothy*, comments: "Paul concluding statement is one of the most difficult to interpret. The NLT alternatives reflect this: 'But women will be saved through childbearing.' 'will be saved by accepting their role as mother,' or 'will be saved by the birth of the Child.' Salvation through childbearing is theologically problematic. In the New Testament, salvation is by grace through faith (e.g. Eph 2:6-8). 'There was not need for Christ to die' if salvation is by any other means (Gal 2:21). That women will be saved by accepting their divinely created role as wife and mother (NAB, NLT mg) is equally problematic. Nowhere does Paul (or any other biblical author) link salvation with motherhood. In fact, it conflicts with his teaching elsewhere that women (and men) can best serve God in a state of singleness (1 Cor 7:34-35). Paul does counsel young widows later in the letter to remarry and raise a family (5:14), but this is because they were heeding the false teachers' negative teaching about marriage (4:3). Elsewhere he explicitly counsels widows not to marry (1 Cor 7:8; 7:39-40).

Paul could be employing the Greek word in the non-theological sense of 'protect' or 'preserve': 'But women will be preserved through the bearing of children' (NASB, Bible in Basic English, Darby Bible, NIV) ... Ephesus was temple warden of Artemis, the goddess to whom women turned for safe travel through the childbearing process. The legend of Artemis's birth gave rise to women invoking her help during labor ...

The Greek article in verse 15 points the way to the most plausible reading: 'But women will be saved through the birth of the Child' – that is, Jesus Christ. Although the NLT has 'but they,' it is actually the singular 'but she' – the historic Eve. Paul had already mentioned Eve twice in the preceding verses, recalling the Genesis 2-3 narrative about her creation, deception, and redemption. First, there is her creation as Adam's partner and personal counterpart (Gen 2:23). Second, there is her deception by the serpent. 'The serpent deceived me,' she replied. 'That's why I ate it' (Gen 3:13).

This third instance recalls the Genesis 3 narration of Eve's role in the redemption of the human race. 'I will cause hostility between you [the serpent] and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring. He [the Child] will strike your head, and you [Satan] will strike his heel' (Gen 3:15). Even though Eve was created for partnership (Gen 2:23, 24) and then botched it through non-partnership (Gen 3:6-7), ultimately she fulfilled her created purpose through the bearing of the Christ child (Gen 3:15). Robert Young's 1898 edition catches the sense: 'And she shall be saved through the Child-bearing.' Even so, it is conditional salvation: 'assuming they continue to live in faith, love, holiness and modesty' (2:15b)."

Ms. Belleville concludes her comments by linking some of Paul's statement in the following chapter to the above observations. We read: "Paul concludes his reflections about salvation coming through the Christ child with 'This is a trustworthy statement' – the second of five occurrences of this phrase, which is unique to the Pastorals. Although the NLT attaches this phrase to the leadership qualifications that follow in chapter 3, elsewhere in the Pastorals it either introduces (1:15; 4:9; 2 Tim 2:11) or concludes (Titus 3:8) a statement about salvation. Trustworthy and commendable for full acceptance is the fact that Christ Jesus came into the world *to save sinners* (1:15). Our hope is in the living God, who is *the Savior* of all people (4:9-10). Paul's ministry is *to bring salvation* and eternal glory in Christ Jesus to those God has chosen (2 Tim 2:10). God generously poured out the Spirit upon us through Jesus Christ *our Savior* (Titus 3:6-7)."

Leadership Credentials for Overseers (3:1b-7)

1b If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task.

2 Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach,

3 not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money.

4 He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect.

5 (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?)

6 He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil.

7 He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap.

The Greek text of the first verse in this section reads literally: "If a man desire [the] office of a bishop, he desires a good work." The Greek word rendered "overseer" in the NIV is *episkopos*. The word that is related to this in this verse is *episcopo*, which is derived from the Greek word for "inspection." The same word is used by Peter in the sense of "visitation," in: "Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day *he visits* us."⁵⁰ That context gives us a sense of the job description of the overseer. He is not merely the person who orders other around, but he involves himself in the spiritual wellbeing of the members of his flock.

The Adam Clarke's Commentary comments: "It is strange that the episcopacy, in those times, should have been an object of intense desire to any man when it was a place of danger, and exposure to severe labor, want, persecution, and death, without any secular emolument whatsoever."

Although the English text uses the verb "to desire" twice in this verse, the Greek text actually uses two different words. The first one, *oregomai*, suggests "a longing," a kind of desire that looks forward to reaching a goal. We find the same verb used in the verse about the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who were "longing for a better country — a heavenly one."⁵¹ The second Greek verb used is *epithumeo* "to set the heart upon ..." It stands for any kind of intense longing, good or bad. In the bad sense it occurs in the verse: "I tell you that anyone who *looks* at a woman *lustfully* has already committed adultery with her in his heart."⁵² In the case of the prodigal son it was a legitimate desire about which we read: "He *longed* to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything."⁵³ In a more spiritual sense it occurs in the verse: "For I tell you the truth, many prophets and righteous men *longed* to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it."⁵⁴

Linda Belleville, in *1 Timothy*, comments: "Paul turns next to the topic of leadership qualifications. The shift is not totally unexpected since leadership credentials follow quite naturally from a consideration of the appropriate demeanor of those who lead in public prayer. But the attention he gives to this subject brings us back to the overall problem of false teaching and highlights its impact on the Ephesian church. Leaders had continued to sin (5:19-20), two leaders had been disciplined (1:20), and others had stepped down so that there was a need for new leadership (5:22). Paul's focus on the Christian character and lifestyle of leaders is suggestive of the inroads made by the false teachers. Their teaching against marriage, their speculative mindset, and their ability to ruin whole households (4:3; 2 Tim 3:6; Titus 1:11) account for Paul's stress on leaders who are faithful in marriage, good household managers, strong in conviction, discerning of sound teaching and able to instruct. Congregational jealousy, in-fighting, slander, and intrigue (6:4) explain his insistence that leaders be temperate, dignified, self-controlled, and above reproach and not be inclined to brawl, bully, gossip, drink too much, or be quick tempered. The false teachers' greedy motives and exploitative behavior (6:10; Titus 1:11) shed light on Paul's call for leaders not to be new believers, materialistic, or domineering. It also explains Paul's requirement that they undergo a period of testing before assuming leadership responsibilities."

Paul gives a checklist of fifteen qualities to which the candidate for eldership must be able to respond. The first word, which the NIV renders "above reproach," is the Greek word *anepileptos*, which is the negative of a word that may be translated as "being arrested." We could say that someone who has a police record could not qualify as an elder. The Greek word only appears in this epistle in the New Testament and that

⁵⁰ 1 Peter 2:12

⁵¹ Heb. 11:16

⁵² Matt. 5:28

⁵³ Luke 15:16

⁵⁴ Matt. 13:17

three times.⁵⁵ Since Paul mentions “a good reputation with outsiders” at the end of the list, the “above reproach,” evidently, pertains to the person’s reputation within the church.

“The husband of but one wife” ought not to be interpreted in the sense that he could not be a widower who had remarried. Paul lived in a world in which polygamy was considered acceptable. Bible scholars, however, do not agree on the point. Some believe that Paul insists that a single person could not serve as an elder; others that someone who remarried after having been a widower, would not qualify.

Even the early church fathers did not agree with one another on the subject. *The Pulpit Commentary* observes: “As regards the opinion of the early Church, it was not at all uniform, and amongst those who held that this passage absolutely prohibits second marriages in the case of an *episcopus*, it was merely a part of the asceticism of the day.”

Paul’s own condition, which was, as is generally accepted, single, is not mentioned in this context. Neither does Paul make any reference to Jesus’ remark to His disciples about the virtue of celibacy: “Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given. For some are eunuchs because they were born that way; others were made that way by men; and others have renounced marriage because of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it.”⁵⁶

The words “temperate, self-controlled” pertain to the persons’ character. The Greek adjective *nephaleos* is derived from the word *nepho*, which *Strong’s* defines as “abstain from wine.” The Greek word *sophron*, “sober” seems to say the same. At least it would be similar in English. In Greek, however, it seems to have a broader meaning of being “moderate as to opinion or passion.”

Barnes’ Notes states: “The most correct rendering, according to the modern use of language, would be, that he should be ‘a gentleman.’ He should not be slovenly in his appearance, or rough and boorish in his manners. He should not do violence to the usages of refined conversation, nor be unfit to appear respectable in the most refined circles of society. ... A minister of the gospel should be a finished gentleman in his manners, and there is no excuse for him if he is not.”

The Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary comments: “‘Sober’ refers to the inward mind; ‘orderly,’ to the outward behavior, tone, look, gait, dress. The new man bears a sacred festival character, incompatible with all disorder, excess, laxity, assumption, harshness, and meanness (Phil 4:8).”

It is interesting to observe that different Bible scholars define Paul’s description of the ideal elder in terms of their own culture.

“Respectable” is the translation of the Greek word *kosmios*, meaning “orderly.” In 2:9 Paul uses it for women, who he wants to be dressed modestly. We could say that an elder ought not to be a “flashy dresser.” The general idea seems to be that someone in leadership in the church must not draw attention to himself, but to the Lord.

“Hospitable” refers to the custom of entertaining strangers in one’s home. Abraham was a good Old Testament example of this virtue. It is to this quality that the author of Hebrews referred when he wrote: “Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it.”⁵⁷ Our home should not be our castle in which we protect ourselves from all outside interference. **✠** **II** Christ is the head of our home, He will welcome our guests. The ability to teach is a gift from God. It is not directly related to a person’s character.

Paul does not preach abstinence from alcohol use, instead he preaches moderation. C. S. Lewis writes about this: “Temperance is, unfortunately, one of those words that has changed its meaning. It now usually means teetotalism. But in the days when the second Cardinal virtue was christened ‘Temperance’, it meant nothing of the sort. Temperance referred not specially to drink, but to all pleasures; and it meant not abstaining, but going the right length and no further. It is a mistake to think that Christians ought all to be teetotalers; Mohammedanism, not Christianity, is the teetotal religion. Of course it may be the duty of a particular Christian, or of any Christian, at a particular time, to abstain from strong drink, either because he is the sort of man who cannot drink at all without drinking too much, or because he wants to give the money to the

⁵⁵ 1 Tim. 3:2; 5:7; 6:14

⁵⁶ Matt. 19:11,12

⁵⁷ Heb. 13:2

poor, or because he is with people who are inclined to drunkenness and must not encourage them by drinking himself. But the whole point is that he is abstaining, for a good reason, from something which he does not condemn and which he likes to see other people enjoying. One of the marks of a certain type of bad man is that he cannot give up a thing himself without wanting everyone else to give it up. That is not the Christian way. An individual Christian may see fit to give up all sorts of things for a special reason – marriage, or meat, or beer, or the cinema; but the moment he starts saying the things are bad in themselves, or looking down his nose at other people who do use them, he has taken the wrong turning.

One great piece of mischief has been done by the modern restriction of the word Temperance to the question of drink. It helps people to forget that you can be just as intemperate about lots of other things. A man who makes his golf or his motorcycle the center of his life, or a woman who devotes all their thoughts to clothes or bridge or her dog, is being just as ‘intemperate’ as someone who gets drunk every evening. Of course, it does not show on the outside so easily: bridge-mania or golf-mania do not make you fall down in the middle of the road. But God is not deceived by externals.”

The KJV has “not greedy of filthy lucre.” The NKJV renders this “not greedy for money.” But the phrase is absent in the more modern versions, since it is not found in the best New Testament Greek manuscript. It is already covered in the last characteristic mentioned: “not a lover of money.”

The word “violent” is the translation of the Greek word *plektes*, which the KJV renders ‘a smiter.’ He would be the kind of person who breaks his wife’s dishes when angry. The word is only found here and in Paul’s letter to Titus.⁵⁸

Paul considers the elder’s family life one of the most important qualifications for leadership in the church. He thinks that, if an elder is not a good father and is not recognized as such by his own children, he will not be accepted as a good leader in the church either. What Paul is saying is that when we do not represent Christ at home, “with our hair down” we will not do so in public either.

The Greek text of verses 4 and 5 reads literally: “One that rules his own house well, having his children in subjection with all gravity; for if a man know not [how] to rule his own house, how shall he take care of [the] church of God?” The Greek word rendered “gravity” is *semnotes*, which elsewhere is rendered “holiness.”⁵⁹

Paul states that an elder “must not be a recent convert.” The Greek word used is *neophutos*, which is derived from a word meaning “newly planted.” The word “neophyte” has entered into the English language as meaning a new convert. Since one cannot guide others on a road where one has not yet traveled, it is important that an elder have spiritual experience which can be of use to those who are still young in the faith. Paul uses an interesting Greek word to make his point. A novice who wants to jump into a role of leadership overnight is in danger of becoming proud. The Greek word used is *tuphoos*, which literally means “to envelop with smoke.”⁶⁰ We could say that such a person has smoke but no fire. The first time the word is used in the New Testament is in the quotation from Isaiah about Jesus’ ministry: “A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out.”

It is interesting to observe that Paul wants an elder to have a good reputation among those who are not Christians. In Romans he gives the same advice to the church: “Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody.”⁶¹ Most non-Christians have a clear idea what a Christian lifestyle ought to look like. If a person proclaims to be a Christian does not live up to a Christian testimony, and even more important, if a person who is in leadership in the church does not exhibit the fruit of the Holy Spirit in his life, it does great damage to the testimony of the faith and the church as a whole.

The reason Paul gives for the importance of one’s testimony to the outside world is “so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil’s trap.” The Greek word, rendered “disgrace” is *oneidismos*, which elsewhere is rendered “insult,”⁶² or “disgrace.”⁶³ Paul’s thoughts may be somewhat difficult to follow here,

⁵⁸ Titus 1:7

⁵⁹ I Tim. 2:2

⁶⁰ Matt. 12:20

⁶¹ Rom. 12:17

⁶² Rom. 15:3

⁶³ Heb. 11:26

due to the concise way in which he expresses himself. Some Bible scholars interpret the verse to mean that an elder's previous life, before becoming a Christian must have been exemplary. But it seems that the testimony of one who came out of the gutters of life and was changed by the Gospel and cleansed by the blood of Christ, provides a glorious testimony to the power of God to change lives. It seems more consistent to interpret the words as meaning that the Christian life of an elder should be such that no one can reproach him any wrongdoing. An Old Testament example of such a life was Daniel's. Daniel's peers tried to find something in his life that would give them grounds to bring in accusations that would remove him from office. We read: "The administrators and the satraps tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs, but they were unable to do so. They could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent."⁶⁴ That is the kind of testimony Paul requires an elder of the church to have.

The reference to "the devil's trap" seems to be that Satan will try to drive a wedge between a person's public life and his personal one. The same thought was expressed earlier in Paul's concern that an elder would be the head of a healthy and loving family.

Leadership Credentials for Deacons (3:8-13)

8 Deacons, likewise, are to be men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain.

9 They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience.

10 They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons.

11 In the same way, their wives are to be women worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything.

12 A deacon must be the husband of but one wife and must manage his children and his household well.

13 Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus.

Linda Belleville, in *1 Timothy*, states about the word "deacons": "The Greek word *diakonein* (cf. the verb form which originally meant 'to wait on tables') is used more broadly in the NT as 'to serve.' Stephen, Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas (the 'seven') were asked to assume a 'servant' role during the Jerusalem Church's early years (Acts 6:1-7). In Greco-Roman culture, the *diakonos* was an attendant or official in a temple or religious guild."

The Greek text of v.8 states that deacons must be "grave." The Greek word used is *semnos*, which can be rendered "honorable." Paul uses the same word in Philippians, where it is translated "true," in the verse: "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable — if anything is excellent or praiseworthy — think about such things."⁶⁵

The requirements for being a deacon are basically the same as for the elder. In a way, Paul puts greater emphasis on the person's spiritual condition for being a deacon than for being an elder. This doesn't mean, of course that the deacon must be more spiritual, but it is understood that someone who wants to be an elder must be spiritually minded. The thought regarding requirements for being a deacon may be that since their occupation is more with money than with the Word of God, the latter occupies a less important place in the requirements. Paul puts those requirements beautifully in the words: "They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience." The Greek text reads literally: "Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience." Linda Belleville, in *1 Timothy*, comments on "the mystery of the faith": "'The faith' points to a concrete body of teaching commonly referred to as the kerygma (or 'Gospel proclamation'). The Apostles' Creed is one such example. 'Mystery' (*mustérion* ... can mean secret (that is something hidden or not divulged) or mysterious in character (that is 'difficult to understand or comprehend')."

Ms. Belleville further comments on the specific requirements for deacons: "The two requirements unique for deacons are they 'must not slander others' (lit., 'not be double-tongued,' 3:11) and they must be tested

⁶⁴ Dan. 6:4

⁶⁵ Phil. 4:8

over a period of time and proven trustworthy (3:10). Both are understandable, if the job included some house-to-house visitation. Not being prone to gossiping, imbibing, or dishonesty and the emphasis on trustworthiness are all qualities that would be essential for this sort of ministry.”

Bible scholars do not agree on whether the Greek word *gunaikas* refers to women in general, to wives of deacons, or to deaconesses. One of the reasons for conflicting opinions is that Paul does not mention the wives of elders, but only of deacons. It is true, of course, that the ministry of an elder differed from that of a deacon. Deacons would visit homes for the purpose of providing material help where needed. The wives of deacons would hear about the condition of certain families, which could easily become a topic of conversation between neighbors. Since the New Testament church at that time had moved away from the early days of Pentecost, when people would sell their property to give money for those in need, the financial condition of some church members could become merely a topic of gossip. That is what Paul may have had in mind.

The Pulpit Commentary holds that Paul refers to deaconesses. The commentary states that Chrysostom refers to women “who hold the rank of deaconesses.” Part of the confusion about who the topic refers to is the fact that Paul, in the next verse, returns to the qualifications of the male deacon, without any further mention of the ladies.

Those qualifications are the same as for elders; they must be heads of healthy and well-balanced families. But Paul adds something as benefit for deacons that is not mentioned in his words about elders. Their service will be a stimulant to their faith in Christ. Oswald Chambers makes the biting remark: “Some saints cannot do menial work and remain saints because it is beneath their dignity.” In washing the disciples’ feet, Jesus demonstrated what sanctification and serving God is all about.

The Truths of Our Faith (3:14-16)

14 Although I hope to come to you soon, I am writing you these instructions so that,

15 if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God’s household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.

16 Beyond all question, the mystery of godliness is great: He appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory.

Evidently, Paul planned to make a trip to Ephesus in the near future, but anticipated that he might be held up. The instructions Paul had given pertained, as we have seen, to the organization of the church in the appointment of elders and deacons. Paul’s stay in Ephesus had been interrupted rather brutally by the opposition of the silversmiths. Evidently, Paul felt that, at this point, it would be safe to return. We understand from the account in Acts that Paul never went back, but only met with the elders of the church on the beach in Miletus.⁶⁶ *The Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary* suggests: “This verse best suits the theory that this letter was not written after Paul’s visit and departure from Ephesus (Acts 19 and 20), when he resolved to winter at Corinth, after passing the summer in Macedonia (1 Cor 16:6), but after his first imprisonment at Rome (Acts 28); probably at Corinth, where he might think of going on to Epirus before returning to Ephesus.”

From the mundane style of discussing travel plans, the apostle changes rather abruptly to the spiritual reality in which he defines the church as “God’s household” and the Incarnation as God’s “mystery.”

Paul uses two interesting Greek words, *stulos* and *hedraioma*, in his description of the church: “the pillar and foundation of the truth.” *Hedraioma* is only found here in the New Testament. *Stulos* is used elsewhere to describe “James, Peter and John, those reputed to be *pillars*.”⁶⁷ Linda Belleville, in *1 Timothy*, describes *stulos* as: “A pillar was a free-standing column built to honor the accomplishment of a person of renown.” As such it is a perfect image of the Lord Jesus Christ, the founder of the church, which is His body.

⁶⁶ Acts 20:17-38

⁶⁷ Gal. 2:9

In v.16 the Apostle introduces us to “the mystery of godliness,” in Greek: *eusebeías musteérion*. “Godliness is one of Paul’s favorite words; he uses it eight times in his epistle to Timothy. Peter also used it at the healing of the paraplegic at the temple gate, where he said to the amazed crowd: “Men of Israel, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?”⁶⁸

V.16 is generally considered to be a hymn that was sung in the church. Some of the older versions render the opening line: “God was manifest in the flesh ...”⁶⁹ The different reading depends on whether the Greek word *hós* is considered an abbreviation for Theos or the whether it is simply “which.”

The Wycliffe Bible Commentary suggests that the hymn was one of Paul’s own compositions. We read: “Beginning here and in the remainder of the verse, the lines are in regular pattern, such as poetry or a hymn would furnish. It suited Paul’s purpose well to tie his thoughts to something well known and current, since the message would then be remembered better. Many of the references to songs and singing in the NT are in connection with Paul (Eph 5:19; Col 3:16; Acts 16:25; 1 Cor 14:15). Hence it is not difficult to believe that Paul himself wrote this early Christian hymn, assuming, of course, that these lines (and Eph 5:14 also) are taken from a hymn. All the leading words occur elsewhere in Paul’s writings.” The thought that Paul’s quotes from his own works is an interesting one, but it is difficult to prove or disprove.

Linda Belleville, in *1 Timothy*, comments: “Paul expanded on the content of this truth in the form of a hymn six lines in length (v.16). The singing of hymns is found throughout Paul’s congregations: ‘When you meet together, one will sing, another will teach, another will tell some special revelation God has given, one will speak in tongues, and another will interpret’ (1 Cor 14:26); ‘singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, and making music to the Lord in your hearts’ (Eph. 5:19); ‘sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs’ (Col 3:16). First Timothy 3:16 could well be one of those hymns.

Because of the hymn’s compact nature, exalted language, and strophic character, it is more difficult to interpret with exactness than prose. Like the Old Testament Psalms, there is a preface or introductory statement: ‘Without question, this is the great mystery of our godliness.’ The NLT mg rendering ‘of godliness’ is to be preferred to ‘of our faith.’ Paul’s concern was with ‘godly living’ that flows from faith ... In the culture of that day, godly living involved carrying out one’s religious obligations such as concern for orphans, widows, the needy, and strangers. The term ‘godliness’ is distinctive to the Pastorals. Eleven or thirteen occurrences are found in these letters. Paul already used the word in 2:2 of the need for believers to lead a peaceful and quiet life marked by ‘godliness (*eusebeía*) and dignity.

The first strophe of the hymn is a statement about the Incarnation: ‘[He] was revealed in a human body.’ Christ’s existence prior to the incarnation is assumed. John’s Gospel begins in a similar way: ‘In the beginning was the Word, ... and the Word was God ... The Word became human (John 1:1, 14a, NLT). The Son gave up his divine privileges and took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being (Phil. 2:6-7). Christ ‘was revealed in a human body’ or literally ‘enfleshed.’ It was not a guise or costume that he could put on and off at will. This was very God of very God and very man of very man (cf. the Chalcedonian Creed). Nor was his humanity something hidden in the past but now revealed (1 Pet. 1:20). It is more the idea that at a specific point in history God sent his Son to be born of a woman (‘when the right time came,’ Gal. 4:4).

The theological pendulum swings in the next strophe from the Incarnation to the Resurrection, as is indicated by the expression, ‘vindicated by the Spirit’ (or ‘vindicated in the realm of the Spirit’, Romans 1:3-4).

The third strophe is translated as ‘he was seen by angels,’ but it is better rendered as ‘he appeared to angels’ ... A similar idea is found in Paul’s letter to the Colossians, where, ‘having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross’ (Col 2:15, NIV).

The fourth strophe is ‘announced to the nations,’ which has in mind Jesus’ mandate to go and make disciples of all nations (Matt 28:19). Israel was to be God’s light to the nations. When it failed to do so, the church took up the task.

⁶⁸ Acts 3:12

⁶⁹ KJV, NKJV

The fifth strophe is 'he was believed in throughout the world.' This sums up the final stage of Jesus' mandate, 'you will be my witnesses ... in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth' (Acts 1:8). It includes the end result of making disciples of all nations, that is a global kingdom.

The sixth and final stanza, 'taken to heaven in glory' pictures Christ's elevation to God's right hand. The key word is 'glory.' The hymn begins with a divesting of the honor and status due the Son of God and ends with Christ's reinvestment ... ascended to the right hand and made Lord and Christ (Acts 2:33). It is a thought that appears in Philippians: 'God elevated him to the place of highest honor and gave him the name above all other names, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father' (Phil 2:9-11). It also surfaces in Ephesians: "[God] raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand in the heavenly realms' (Eph 1:20). His heavenly enthronement is with a view to 'fill[ing] the entire universe with himself' (Eph 4:10)."

Warnings against False Teachers (4:1-5)

1 The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.

2 Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron.

3 They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and who know the truth.

4 For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving,

5 because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer.

Paul does not indicate when and to whom the Holy Spirit revealed that there would be a movement of apostasy. *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary* states: "Gnosticism, one of whose characteristics was the asceticism here described, flooded the church in the second century, and no doubt was in evidence at the time Paul wrote." And that may, in fact, be the movement Paul refers to here.

The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia states about Gnosticism: "Gnosticism accordingly comprehends in itself many previously existing tendencies; it is an amalgam into which quite a number of different elements have been fused. A heretical system of thought, at once subtle, speculative and elaborate, it endeavored to introduce into Christianity a so-called higher knowledge, which was grounded partly on the philosophic creed in which Greeks and Romans had taken refuge consequent on the gradual decay and breaking-up of their own religions, partly, as will be shown, on the philosophies of Plato and of Philo, and still more on the philosophies and theosophies and religions of the East, especially those of Persia and of India.

Gnosticism, though usually regarded as a heresy, was not really such: it was not the perverting of Christian truth; it came, rather, from outside. Having worked its way into the Christian church, it was then heretical." Quoting an outside source, the Commentary continues: "Although it became a corrupting influence within the church, it was an alien by birth. While the church yet sojourned within the pale of Judaism, it enjoyed immunity from this plague; but as soon as it broke through these narrow bounds, it found itself in a world where the decaying religions and philosophies of the West were in acute fermentation under the influence of a new and powerful leaven from the East; while the infusion of Christianity itself into this fermenting mass only added to the bewildering multiplicity of Gnostic sects and systems it brought forth"

Paul sees in the birth of Gnosticism an effort by Satan to undermine the preaching of the Gospel message. It is an obvious phenomenon that, where the Gospel is preached to people who have never heard about Jesus, there is sometimes a trend toward syncretism; a tendency of mixing the message with existing beliefs and theological concepts. According to many Protestant theologians, the practice in the Roman Catholic Church to worship "the virgin Mary" and address prayers to her is the result of an effort to incorporate certain heathen beliefs into Christianity.

Paul ascribes the false teachings of the false prophets of his time to the fact that their conscience had been seared as with a hot iron. That phrase is the translation of the single Greek verb *kausteriazō*, of which the English verb “to cauterize” is derived. Cauterization may be used by medical science to remove cancer from the human skin. But cauterization of the conscience points to becoming totally insensitive to normal emotions or sensations. In the context of Paul’s argumentation, it may be seen as becoming insensitive to the influence of the Holy Spirit. In Jesus’ Parable of the Sower, it is referred to as “the trodden path” on which the seed fell that was immediately picked up by the birds.⁷⁰ “The birds” being an image of Satan who wanted to prevent any growth of the Gospel message in the human heart.⁷¹

Jeremiah faced the same kind of false prophets. We read: “Then the Lord said to me, ‘The prophets are prophesying lies in my name. I have not sent them or appointed them or spoken to them. They are prophesying to you false visions, divinations, idolatries and the delusions of their own minds. Therefore, this is what the Lord says about the prophets who are prophesying in my name: I did not send them, yet they are saying, ‘No sword or famine will touch this land.’ Those same prophets will perish by sword and famine.”⁷²

The prophets Paul refers to knew the source of their inspiration. They were aware of the fact that they were in league with Satan, and yet they acted as if they were inspired by the Holy Spirit. That is why Paul calls them “hypocrites.”

The Pulpit Commentary observes: “The application of the image is somewhat uncertain. If the idea is that of ‘a brand,’ a mark burnt in upon the forehead of a slave or criminal, then the meaning is that these men have their own infamy stamped upon their own consciences. It is not patent only to others, but to themselves also. But if the metaphor is from the cauterizing a wound, as the A.V. takes it, then the idea is that these men’s consciences are become as insensible to the touch as the skin that has been cauterized is. The metaphor, in this case, is somewhat similar to that of *poroo pórosis* (... Mark 3:5; 6:52; ... John 12:40, etc.). The latter interpretation seems to suit the general context best, and the medical use of the term, which St. Paul might have learnt from Luke. The emphasis of *tes idías*, ‘their own conscience,’ implies that they were not merely deceivers of others, but were self-deceived.”

Linda Belleville, in *1 Timothy*, observes: “The Spirit’s warning in 1 Timothy is about ‘the last times’ when ‘some will turn away from the true faith.’ The ‘last times’ is the final epoch of world history. It is during the last times that some claiming the name of Christ will apostatize (*apostēsontai*) or ‘turn away from’ their orthodox profession. The word’s meaning is comparable to treason or defection. In the Greek Old Testament it is used of Israel’s turning from worship of Yahweh to worship of Canaanite idols. In the New Testament, ‘to apostatize’ is to disavow the faith, which is the common confession of the early church regarding Christ’s incarnation, death and resurrection, vindication, good news of salvation, kingdom expansion, and glorification to the status of ‘Lord and Messiah’ (3:16; cf. Acts 2:22-36). The idea that God’s people can turn their back on him is explicit in Jesus’ calling the Pharisees ‘children of your father the devil’ because they ‘love to do the evil things he does’ (John 8:44).”

Paul’s definition of the false teaching inspired by demons consists of two points of abstention: sex and food. There are two problems to consider in connection with Paul’s statement.

The older Bible commentators focus particularly to the regulations of the Roman Catholic Church regarding priesthood and celibacy. *Barnes’ Notes* reads: “The tenth article of the decree of the Council of Trent, in relation to marriage, will show the general view of the papacy on that subject. ‘Whosoever shall say that the married state is to be preferred to a state of virginity, or celibacy, and that it is not better and more blessed to remain in virginity, or celibacy, than to be joined in marriage; let him be accursed!’”

One of the complications is Jesus’ remark to the disciples about celibacy. In connection with the topic of divorce, we read that Jesus said: “‘I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery.’ The disciples said to him, ‘If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry.’ Jesus replied, ‘Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given. For some are eunuchs because they were born that way;

⁷⁰ Matt. 13:14

⁷¹ Matt. 13:19

⁷² Jer. 14:14,15

others were made that way by men; and others have renounced marriage because of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it.”⁷³ Jesus seems to be saying that celibacy in the service of the kingdom of heaven is a valid option.

But that is not what the false teachers of Paul’s time were teaching. They taught that sexual relations, even in marriage, were degrading and sinful, disregarding the fact that God created the human body and ordered that “a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.”⁷⁴

Regarding food, the matter is more complicated. The first human couple was obviously vegetarian. Before death entered creation, no living creature died or could be killed, whether for food or otherwise. It was not until after the flood that God said to Noah: “Everything that lives and moves will be food for you. Just as I gave you the green plants, I now give you everything.”⁷⁵ But God ordered the Israelites to observe strict dietary law regarding food that was clean and unclean.⁷⁶

But Jesus changed the Old Testament food restrictions by saying: “Nothing that enters a man from the outside can make him ‘unclean.’ For it doesn’t go into his heart but into his stomach, and then out of his body.” Mark adds: “(In saying this, Jesus declared all foods ‘clean.’)”⁷⁷ What Paul is saying is that we may eat everything that our stomach can digest as long as we ask God’s blessing upon it. Elsewhere he wrote: “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.”⁷⁸

Linda Belleville, in *1 Timothy*, comments: “Paul gives no restrictions or qualifications on what can be eaten except one: The food must be eaten ‘with thanks’ by people who believe and recognize the truth through God’s word and prayer (4:5). A word of thanks was commonplace at the first-century Jewish, Greek, and Roman dinner table. However, ‘made acceptable [or holy] by the word of God and prayer’ places Paul’s words in the context of Judaism. It was Jewish practice to read Scripture and offer a prayer of blessing at mealtime (4:5). Jesus himself reflected this custom. At the feeding of the 5,000, he ‘took the five loaves and two fish, looked up toward heaven, and blessed them’ (Mark 6:41), and at the Last Supper, he ‘took some bread and blessed it’ (Mark 14:22).

In placing an emphasis on ‘everything God created is good’ (4:3-4), Paul may also have been thinking of God’s pronouncement of ‘very good’ on the sixth day of creation: ‘Then God looked over all he had made, and he saw that it was very good’ (Gen. 1:31 ...). Gratitude to God as creator puts food squarely in the real of all things made ‘very good.’ To Grecian believers, Paul said: ‘If I can thank God for the food and enjoy it, why should I be condemned for eating it?’ (1 Cor 10:30) To Jewish believers Paul said: ‘Those who eat any kind of food do so to honor the Lord, since they give thanks to God before eating. And those who refuse to eat certain foods also want to please the Lord and give thanks to God’ (Rom 14:6). This makes gratitude more than a perfunctory blessing; it is an attitude toward life and all its blessings.’

A Good Servant of Christ Jesus (4:6-16)

6 If you point these things out to the brothers, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, brought up in the truths of the faith and of the good teaching that you have followed.

7 Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives’ tales; rather, train yourself to be godly.

8 For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.

9 This is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance

10 (and for this we labor and strive), that we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, and especially of those who believe.

⁷³ Matt. 19:9-12

⁷⁴ Gen. 2:24

⁷⁵ Gen. 9:3

⁷⁶ Lev. 14-20

⁷⁷ Mark 7:18,19

⁷⁸ I Cor. 10:31

11 Command and teach these things.

12 Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.

13 Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching.

14 Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you.

15 Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress.

16 Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.

Paul wanted Timothy to teach the doctrines that refuted Gnosticism to the congregation to which he had been appointed as the pastor. Paul's definition of being "a good minister of Christ Jesus" is to adhere to one's spiritual heritage, to follow the teaching one has received and to teach others the same principles.

"Point out these things" is the NIV's rendering of the Greek verb *hupotithemi*, which literally means: "to place underneath." It suggests laying down a foundation. Elsewhere, Paul uses the verb in the sense of laying down one's life. Writing about Priscilla and Aquila, he wrote to the church in Rome: "They *risks* their lives for me."⁷⁹

Again referring to the erroneous teachings of Gnosticism, Paul calls them "godless myths and old wives' tales." The latter term is not very complimentary to the female part of society. Linda Belleville, in *1 Timothy*, considers it to be an "idiomatic expression."

The Greek for this idiom is *graodes muthos*, which could be rendered "silly myths." The Greek word for "old wives'" is only found here in the New Testament. Peter uses the word for "fable" in "We did not follow cleverly invented *stories* when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty."⁸⁰

The Greek verb, rendered "train yourself" is *gumnazo*, which seems to refer to training for the games. *The Adam Clarke's Commentary* comments: "To understand this expression it is necessary to know that the apostle alludes here to the gymnastic exercises among the Greeks, which were intended as a preparation for their contests at the public games. They did this in order to obtain a corruptible or fading crown, i.e. a chaplet of leaves, which was the reward of those who conquered in those games; Timothy was to exercise himself unto godliness, that he might be prepared for the kingdom of heaven, and there receive a crown that fades not away."

In practical terms this means that Paul advised Timothy to take time daily for personal devotions. Trying to serve God without daily spending time with Him in reading the Bible, meditating upon what is read and responding in prayer, one cannot be a valid servant. Jesus' observation about Mary, who had chosen to sit at Jesus' feet listening to what He said,⁸¹ is valid for all who daily spend time with the Lord.

Paul uses the Greek word *eusebeia*, "piety," which can also be rendered "holiness." The repeated demand in Leviticus is "be holy, because I am holy."⁸² That sounds like an impossible requirement, until we read in the same book: "I am the Lord, who makes you holy."⁸³

Linda Belleville, in *1 Timothy*, comments on Paul's advice: "To be effective in ministry one must also develop self-discipline. 'Train yourself to be godly' is Paul's command ... Pastoral ministry is pictured as a daily workout in the gymnasium (*gumnaze* ...) and as training for an athletic contest (*gumnasia* ...). Body building and weight lifting exercises are in vogue today. The benefits of such activities are not achieved overnight; it takes months of working out to build up the muscles of the body (*agonizomai* ..., 'agony') produce muscles that become an established part of our spiritual physique (4:10). So physical training is

⁷⁹ Rom. 16:4

⁸⁰ II Peter 1:16

⁸¹ See Luke 10:39.

⁸² Lev. 11:44, 45

⁸³ Lev. 20:8

good and promises benefit for the present. 'But training for godliness is much better, promising benefits in this life and in the life to come' (4:8). Physical training is valuable for our earthly tenure, but a daily routine of spiritual exercise is something we can take with us into eternity."

The Greek word Paul uses for "promise" is *epaggelian*, which is the word from which the English word "evangelical" is derived. It stands for both the message and the promise.

Paul states that godliness or holiness is required for both life on earth and life in heaven. It is one of the features we take with us when we die. It is obvious that we will experience a tremendous transformation in our moving from life below to life above, but the principle that governs our relationship with God will be the same. The author of Hebrews states the same by reminding us to "make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord."⁸⁴ It is our fellowship with God that makes life eternal. What is also eternal is the Gospel message itself. This is clear from what John writes in Revelation: "Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth — to every nation, tribe, language and people."⁸⁵

The Greek text of v.9 reads literally: "This [is] a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance." The Greek word, which is rendered "faithful" is *pistos*, "trustworthy." Peter uses it to express faith, as in the verse: "Through him you *believe* in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God."⁸⁶

The "trustworthy saying" refers to the Gospel message, not to the above paragraph of Paul's letter. It is the true Gospel message that the false teachers were twisting and misrepresenting. It is the message Paul preached and for which he endured suffering and hardship. In his first epistle to the Corinthians, Paul gives some of the details of the hardships he endured in his life as an apostle. We read: "To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are in rags, we are brutally treated, we are homeless. We work hard with our own hands."⁸⁷

There is in the last part of v.10 a turn of phrase that might lead to misunderstanding about salvation. Paul states about God that He is "Savior of all men, especially of those that believe." This could be interpreted that every human being will eventually end up in heaven, even those who do not believe in God or in Jesus Christ as Savior. That kind of statement would, of course, contradict to the whole message of the Bible.

Barnes' Notes gives the following, and probably clearest, comment on this statement: "This must be understood as denoting that he is the Savior of all people in some sense which differs from what is immediately affirmed - 'especially of those that believe.' There is something pertaining to 'them' in regard to salvation which does not pertain to 'all men.' It cannot mean that he brings all people to heaven, 'especially' those who believe—for this would be nonsense. And if he brings all people actually to heaven, how can it be 'especially' true that he does this in regard to those who believe? Does it mean that he saves others 'without' believing? But this would be contrary to the uniform doctrine of the Scriptures; see Mark 16:16. When, therefore, it is said that he 'is the Savior of "all" people, "especially" of those who believe,' it must mean that there is a sense in which it is true that he may be called the Savior of all people, while, at the same time, it is 'actually' true that those only are saved who believe. This may be true in two respects:

- (1) As he is the "Preserver" of people (Job 7:20), for in this sense he may be said to "save" them from famine, and war, and peril—keeping them from day to day; compare Ps 107:28;
- (2) As he has "provided" salvation for all people. He is thus their Savior—and may be called the common Savior of all; that is, he has confined the offer of salvation to no one class of people; he has not limited the atonement to one division of the human race; and he actually saves all who are willing to be saved by him."

We saw earlier in this epistle that Paul wrote about God, "who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth."⁸⁸ Peter expresses the same truth, stating that God is "not wanting anyone to perish,

⁸⁴ Heb. 12:14

⁸⁵ Rev. 14:6

⁸⁶ I Peter 1:21

⁸⁷ I Cor. 4:11,12

⁸⁸ I Tim. 2:4

but everyone to come to repentance.”⁸⁹ But this does not mean that salvation is forced upon anyone. Every human being is required to make a personal choice in the matter.

Linda Belleville, in *1 Timothy*, comments: “The statement that God is the ‘Savior of all people’ on the face of it sounds like universalism, but it is not. Throughout the Pastorals, Paul is at pains to address the heretical teaching that claimed salvation is for only the chosen few who possess certain spiritual knowledge. Over against this few, Paul asserted that ‘all people’ have access to ‘the living God’ and hence to salvation (4:10). The emphasis is not on the whole of humanity being saved (*pas* ... with the article) but on salvation’s availability to each and every person (*pas* without the article ...). There are no exclusions. He is savior for ‘each and every person’ who receives him, whether Jew or non-Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbaric or civilized, slave or free, male or female (Gal 3:28; Col 3:11).

It is the inclusivity of God’s salvation that motivated Paul to ‘work hard and continue to struggle’ (4:10). The verbiage ‘work hard’ (*kopiaō* ...) compares the life of a missionary to that of a day laborer, whose strenuous work leaves him or her utterly exhausted at the end of the day. ‘Struggle’ (*agōnizomai* ...) compares missionary life to the disciplined training of an athlete, while preparing for the Olympics.”

Paul’s exhortation to Timothy to “command and teach these things” pertains to Timothy’s ministry and to the content of his teaching. Timothy must model the Christian life to those whose shepherd he is. The features that exemplify a Christian lifestyle are detailed as “in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.”

About Paul’s admonition “Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young,” the question is what Timothy could do about this. Older people often assume that they know more because they have lived longer. It is difficult for them to accept that the younger ones can be above them in their relationship with the Lord and in the knowledge that comes from that relationship. Wisdom and age are not identical. Wisdom is the fruit of the fear of the Lord and that can come at any age. The psalmist states: “Your commands make me wiser than my enemies, for they are ever with me. I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes. I have more understanding than the elders, for I obey your precepts.”⁹⁰

The only way Timothy could gain the respect of the elderly is by exercising his fellowship with the Lord and allowing the Lord to bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit in his life.

Another problem for young people is that arrogance can widen the generational gap. And humility is not a typical attribute of youth. It is assumed that Timothy was in his early thirties at this point.

Paul mentions five features in which he wants Timothy to shine among the believers in his church: “speech, life, love, faith and purity.” “Life” obviously refers to lifestyle. We may assume that, even if Timothy received support from the church he served, he would exhibit simplicity and ~~self-disciple~~ self-discipline. “Love” governs his relationship with the church members. He would show interest in their daily activities and show sympathy at their sufferings. “Faith” would demonstrate that he trusted God for his supplies and for all else he needed for his ministry to the church. “Purity” would govern his relationships with the opposite sex. We assume that Timothy was not married at this point.

Linda Belleville, in *1 Timothy*, observes: “Paul identifies five areas where youth are often deficient: (1) ‘In what you say’ is one’s daily conversation. (2) ‘In the way you live’ includes not only a person’s general conduct but also the habits of the heart—good judgment, patience, even-temperament, dignity, and consideration.’ (3) ‘In your love’ consists of charity toward others as well as personal sacrifices. (4) ‘In your faith’ in this context denotes faithfulness or trustworthiness. (5) ‘In your purity’ includes sexual control in addition to innocence and integrity.”

Speech may have been the most difficult part of the task. For some people speech is a natural gift that needs little or no exercise or admonition. For others it takes time and effort to put thoughts into a logical sequence and express them clearly.

Sometimes the Lord calls people to do things for which they have no natural inclination. Moses is a clear example. When God called him to go to Pharaoh, Moses answered: ‘O Lord, I have never been eloquent,

⁸⁹ II Peter 3:9

⁹⁰ Ps. 119:98-100

neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue.⁹¹ Some Bible scholars conclude from this that Moses may have had a speech impediment. Maybe he stuttered. Yet, throughout the ages Moses has come through as one of the most eloquent men who ever lived. If God calls us to a certain task we may believe that He will endue us with the gifts needed to perform that task.

Paul mentions that, at Timothy's dedication to the ministry, he was prayed for and the elders laid hands on him, while one of them uttered a prophecy the Holy Spirit gave at that moment. We are not told what the content of that prophecy was, but Timothy must have remembered it well. We are not told either what specific spiritual gift Timothy received. It is obvious, though, that when God set Timothy apart as one of His soldiers, He armed him well for the task that was given him.

The Greek text of v.15 reads literally: "Meditate upon these things ...". The Greek verb used, *meletao*, is a powerful word, which can mean "meditate," or "imagine." It is used in the Greek translation of a verse in the Second Psalm: "Why do the nations rage and the peoples *plot* in vain?"⁹² Evidently, Paul wanted Timothy to pay close attention to the admonition Paul had given him and keep in mind that fact that he had been dedicated to the specific task ahead of him.

Linda Belleville, in *1 Timothy*, comments on Paul's admonition in v.16: "The language is that of athletes who completely immerse themselves in their training until it becomes second nature to them. The result for Timothy will be that 'everyone will see your progress' ... and forget about his physical youth.

Paul concludes this section with a command: 'Keep a close watch on how you live and on your teaching. Stay true to what is right' (4:16). Paul undoubtedly had in mind the ways in which unhealthy teaching can insinuate itself into the fabric of our thinking and behaving. Paul commanded Timothy 'to keep a close watch' – much as one would instruct a sentry to stay alert for the enemy. The result would be to affirm Timothy's salvation and the salvation of those who heard him (v. 16; lit., 'you will save yourself and your hearers'). This is not salvation by works. Paul was merely emphasizing the need for ministerial responsibility and accountability. Elsewhere Paul told believers to 'work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear' (Phil. 2:12). To this end Paul says: 'I discipline my body like an athlete; training it to do what it should. Otherwise, I fear that after preaching to others I myself might be disqualified' (1 Cor 9:27)."

Advice about the Old, the Young and Widows (5:1-16)

1 Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. Treat younger men as brothers,

2 older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity.

3 Give proper recognition to those widows who are really in need.

4 But if a widow has children or grandchildren, these should learn first of all to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family and so repaying their parents and grandparents, for this is pleasing to God.

5 The widow who is really in need and left all alone puts her hope in God and continues night and day to pray and to ask God for help.

6 But the widow who lives for pleasure is dead even while she lives.

7 Give the people these instructions, too, so that no one may be open to blame.

8 If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

9 No widow may be put on the list of widows unless she is over sixty, has been faithful to her husband, 10 and is well known for her good deeds, such as bringing up children, showing hospitality, washing the feet of the saints, helping those in trouble and devoting herself to all kinds of good deeds.

⁹¹ Ex. 4:10

⁹² Acts 4:25

11 As for younger widows, do not put them on such a list. For when their sensual desires overcome their dedication to Christ, they want to marry.

12 Thus they bring judgment on themselves, because they have broken their first pledge.

13 Besides, they get into the habit of being idle and going about from house to house. And not only do they become idlers, but also gossips and busybodies, saying things they ought not to.

14 So I counsel younger widows to marry, to have children, to manage their homes and to give the enemy no opportunity for slander.

15 Some have in fact already turned away to follow Satan.

16 If any woman who is a believer has widows in her family, she should help them and not let the church be burdened with them, so that the church can help those widows who are really in need.

Paul distinguishes four categories of people Timothy had to deal with in his ministry: the older and younger men and the older and younger women. The Greek word used for “older man” is *presbuteros*, which, in most cases in the New Testament is used for a person who fulfills the function of “an elder,” that is someone who has leadership. In many instances they are grouped together with the priests and teachers of the law. In this letter, Paul probably only refers to a man who would be Timothy’s senior in years.

A person’s seniority does not shield him from rebuke. As age is no guarantee for wisdom, so it is no warrantee against mistakes in conduct. Older people, both men and women, may lack judgment in certain areas or do things that could endanger their reputation. Timothy’s task is particularly to guard the doctrinal purity in their thinking and consequent results in their conduct.

It has been suggested that Timothy was shy and Paul’s exhortation may seem unwarranted. But shy people sometimes tend to overreact and blurt out where they ought to be soft spoken.

The Greek verb Paul uses is *epiplesso*, which only occurs here in the New Testament. According to *The Pulpit Commentary*, “In classical Greek it expresses a sharp castigation with words.” Linda Belleville, in *1 Timothy*, comments on the word: “The Greek verb *epiplēssō* literally means to physically strike someone. The metaphorical sense is to strike out verbally at someone. In this instance it would be a severe verbal reprimand.” *The New Living Translation* renders the phrase: “Never speak harshly to an older man.” But whatever the translation, Timothy is given the authority to address older people in cases in which they have strayed from the small and narrow path of truth.

If, in his relationship with older men, the age difference created a gap that had to be bridged, in his relationship with those of his own age the lack of age difference must also be taken into account. The fact that some of Timothy’s church members may have been his peers does not mean that Timothy ought not to admonish and teach them. As in both relationships, it was the position he had been put in by the laying on of hands by the elders that gave him the authority to teach and model the truth.

The second verse draws the attention to the opposite sex, both younger and older women. *Barnes’ Notes* comments on Paul’s recommendation regarding Timothy’s attitude towards the older women: “No son who had proper feelings would rebuke his own mother with severity. Let the minister of religion evince the same feelings if he is called to address a ‘mother in Israel’ who has erred.”

In advising Timothy how to behave toward the different age groups in both sexes that made up the church, Paul tells him to consider them as one family: older men and women were to be treated as fathers and mothers, the younger ones as brothers and sisters. The most sensitive relationship in any church is between the pastor and the younger women. In cases of sexual misconduct that is where most of the problems in churches occur. Paul assumes that Timothy would not be protected against temptation. Being young and unmarried, this would be a particular area in his life in which Satan would tempt him. Keeping in mind the picture of a family relation would be a helpful model for Timothy to keep himself pure in mind and in act.

The Greek word for purity is *hagneia*, which can be rendered “chastity.” It is the same word that is used in 4:12: “Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.”

Verses 3-16 deal particularly with the care for widows in the church. From the very beginning of church history, the care for widows had been a point of concern. It almost caused a church split in the mother church in Jerusalem. It made the apostles decide to appoint deacons to take care of the problem and see to it that aid was distributed fairly, regardless of ethnicity.⁹³ Even in the early church there were some who tried to sponge off the church when they were not really in need of help.

But the topic is not only financial support to women who have lost their husband. Evidently, there was in the early church a group of women who had dedicated themselves to the Lord's service by making a vow of widowhood in the same way as there is a group of nuns, organized into an order, in the Roman Catholic Church. Paul seems to be dealing with both women who lost their husbands and were consequently in need of support and women who had made a vow of widowhood and were paid by the church for certain services performed.

The group must be considered in the light of the economic conditions of that time in which breadwinning was exclusively a male responsibility.

Linda Belleville, in *1 Timothy*, comments: "Where widows had close relatives, it was their relatives' responsibility and not the church's to provide financial support. This was the case at Ephesus since most widows had children or grandchildren there ... The believer's 'first responsibility is to show godliness at home' (5:4). 'Godliness' is putting one's religion into practice. There was no higher obligation in Jewish or Greco-Roman society than to family. For believers to fail to provide for their own was to fail to present an authentic Christian witness. It was tantamount to denying the true faith (5:8). It was something the false teachers did (1:5-6, 19; 4:1; 6:21). To fail to support a widowed family member was to exhibit a morality lower than that found in society as a whole. Roman law provided for widows and local laws protected them. This made such believers 'worse than unbelievers' and left the believers 'open to criticism' (5:7-8). Paul was concerned throughout his letters that a believer's words and behaviors be above reproach of unbelievers (cf. 1 Cor 5:1). The primary concern is not believers criticizing other believers but believers acting or speaking in such a fashion before unbelievers that the name of Christ is defamed in the process. The same concern is behind Paul's command to Titus that he teach in such a way that the gospel would be free of criticism (Titus 2:8). The rich are likewise expected to be above reproach in how they use their money (6:4)."

James concurs with Paul's instructions to Timothy, stating: "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world."⁹⁴

Elsewhere, Paul writes: "After all, children should not have to save up for their parents, but parents for their children."⁹⁵ That does not contradict what is written here. There are stages in life where parents prepare for their children's future and there are times when aged parents are no longer able to provide for themselves and become their children's responsibility.

For those widows who have no close relatives that can offer support, Paul's first advice is, not to put her hope in the church for support, but in God.

David, in one of his Psalms, writes: "A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling." Even if God delegates responsibility to the church to care for orphans and widows, He is the ultimate provider and a widow's trust should be in God, not in a congregation of human beings. What Paul is saying is that a woman's loss of her husband ought to draw her closer to God for support, not merely materially, but also, and primarily, spiritually and emotionally.

The Greek text of v.6 reads literally: "But she who lives in pleasure is dead while she lives." The Greek verb for "to live in pleasure" is *spatalao*, which means "to be voluptuous" or "wanting to satisfy oneself sensually."

Linda Belleville, in *1 Timothy*, comments: "Sexual temptation for the younger widows was a reality at Ephesus. Some were living 'only for pleasure' (5:6). Their lifestyle was one of self-indulgence

⁹³ Act 6:1-5

⁹⁴ James 1:27

⁹⁵ II Cor. 12:14

(cf. Jas 5:5). Self-indulgence may make a person feel physically alive, but it leaves one dead to spiritual things. The end result for the widow is to be ‘spiritually dead even while she lives’ (5:6). By contrast, the widow to be enlisted is the one who is God-indulgent—who ‘prays night and day; asking God for his help’ (5:5). There are a number of female prayer warriors in Scripture. Hannah prayed, pouring out her heart to the Lord (1 Sam 1:15). Anna ‘never left the Temple but stayed there day and night, worshipping God with fasting and prayer’ (Luke 2:37). For the ‘true widow,’ prayer becomes a vocation, engaging in it to a degree that others do not (5:5). ‘A woman who is no longer married or has never been married can be devoted to the Lord and holy in body and in spirit’ (1 Cor 7:34).”

The Greek text of verses 9 and 10 reads literally: “Let be taken into the number a widow not under three score years old, having been the wife of one man, well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints’ feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work.” In some cases the Greek uses a single verb to express an action that takes several words in English. For instance “let be taken into the number” is the rendering of the Greek verb *catalegéstho*. “Well reported of” is the translation of the verb *marturoménee*. And “she have been brought up children” is *eteknotrófeesen*.

Linda Belleville, in *1 Timothy*, sees similarity between Paul’s list of requirements for widows who could be put on the church’s list for support and the requirements for elders and deacons. And in fact, it seems that what Paul speaks about is not merely providing for the needs of any female church member who had lost her husband, but about a certain group of women who had dedicated themselves to certain services in the church and were consequently put on the list to receive compensation in the same way as the elders of the church did.

The Wycliffe Bible Commentary comments: “Calvin gives two reasons why Paul does not wish any to be admitted under sixty years of age. First, ‘Being supported at the public expense, it was proper that they should have already reached old age.’ Second, there was a mutual obligation between the church and these widows: the church was to relieve their poverty, they were to consecrate themselves to the ministry of the church ‘which would have been altogether intolerable, if there were still a likelihood to there being married.’ *Having been the wife of one husband*. ‘It may be regarded as a sort of pledge of continence and chastity, when a woman has arrived at that age, satisfied with having had but one husband. Not that (Paul) disapproves of a second marriage, or affixes a mark of ignominy of those who have been twice married; (for, on the contrary, he advises younger widows to marry;) but because he wished carefully to guard against laying any females under a necessity of remaining unmarried, who felt it to be necessary to have husbands’ (Calvin).”

The Pulpit Commentary states: “It follows that the word ‘widow’ here is used in a slightly different sense from that in the preceding verses, viz. in the technical sense of one belonging to the *order of widows*, of which it appears from the word *katalegéstho* there was a regular roll kept in the Church. We do not know enough of the Church institutions of the apostolic age to enable us to say positively what their status or their functions were, but doubtless they were the germ from which the later development ... took its rise. We may gather, however, from the passage before us that their lives were specially consecrated to the service of God and the Church; that they were expected to be instant and constant in prayer, and to devote themselves to works of charity; that the apostle did not approve of their marrying again after their having embraced this life of widowhood, and therefore would have none enrolled under sixty years of age; and generally that, once on the roll, they would continue there for their life.”

The NIV’s rendering “has been faithful to her husband” makes more sense than the NKJV’s reading: “has been the wife of one man.” Paul doesn’t seem to ever have objected to a younger widow remarrying. As a matter of fact he suggests as much in this epistle. The Greek text merely states: “having been of one man.”

About this phrase, Linda Belleville, in *1 Timothy*, observes: “... it is difficult to determine what exactly Paul means by ‘faithful.’ Literally, it is ‘the wife of one husband.’ Polygamy was not an accepted practice among the Greeks and Romans to whom Paul ministered—except perhaps for some elite males who could write their own social ticket. ‘Not divorced’ is a better fit. Divorce was rampant in Paul’s day as in ours. Yet Paul counseled believing women to let their unbelieving spouse go if they wanted to leave (1 Cor 7:12-16). He also counseled those previously married to remain unmarried for full-time service to the Lord.

‘Married only once’ fits the Greco-Roman ideal of *univera* or ‘once married.’ The inscription was a common one on tombstones.

Another expectation was that an enlisted widow ‘brought up her children well’ (5:10). In Paul’s culture this involved raising a child from birth to maturity. Raising children does not come naturally. For this reason, the older Cretan women were called to ‘train the younger women to love their husbands and their children, to live wisely and be pure [and] to work in their homes’ (Titus 2:4-5). Such training may well be the work Paul envisioned for enlisted widows.

Paul additionally required that enlisted widows be hospitable (NLT, ‘been kind to strangers,’ 5:10). It included accommodations similar to our bed and breakfast establishments today. Hospitality was a recognized spiritual gift (Rom 12:13; 1 Pet 4:9). It was one that the church cultivated early on to distinguish it from the rugged individualism and popular Stoic philosophy of the surrounding culture. The shortage of housing for travelers (which Mary and Joseph experienced firsthand) served to distinguish the believers, who excelled in this gifting. This is why hospitality surfaces in the list of qualifications for overseers in the 10-year-old church (3:2) and in the newly planted Cretan church (Titus 1:8). Donor’s records show that wealthy women were on the increase in the early centuries. Households were large and diverse back then. Women consequently ended up acting as managers and patrons.”

It is obvious from v.11 that the early church knew a vow of chastity which probably included celibacy and/or widowhood, pledged in connection with certain ministries in the church. It would be wrong to put Paul’s remarks here against a background of condemnation of sexual relationships, as if chastity would be God’s ultimate ideal for all of mankind and that sex was only allowed because of the hardness of the human heart. As God created male and female, He also created the desire for one to the other. The Song of Solomon, which is as much inspired by the Holy Spirit as all other Scripture, is proof of this.

The point in Paul’s admonition about young widows is not their sexual desires, but the breaking of their vows. They had pledged themselves voluntarily to celibacy and then broke their promise. Their sin was in principle the same as the sin of infidelity in a marriage relationship. The Greek word used in this context is *katastreniao*, which can be rendered “to become voluptuous.” This is the only place in Scripture where this word is found.

The Pulpit Commentary states: “This word only occurs here, but the simple *streviáo* is found in ... Revelation 18:7, 9, and is used by the Greek poets of the new comedy in the sense of *truphân*, to be luxurious. Trench comparing this word with *truphân* and *spatalân*, ascribes to it the sense of ‘petulance’ from fullness, like the state of Jeshurun, who waxed fat and kicked ... (Deuteronomy 32:15); and so Liddell and Scott give the sense of ‘to be over-strong.’ The sense, therefore, is that these young widows, in the wantonness and un-subdued worldliness of their hearts, reject the yoke of Christ, and kick against the widow’s life of prayer and supplication day and night. And so they return to the world and its pleasures, which they had renounced.”

In reading vv.13-15, our first impression may be that Paul generalizes and overreacts on the topic of young widows. Linda Belleville, in *1 Timothy*, observes: “The NLT makes it sound as if women with too much time on their hands will inevitably become meddling busybodies. ‘They will learn to be lazy and will spend their time gossiping from house to house, meddling in other people’s business.’ However, Paul’s very next statement that ‘some [widows] have already gone astray and now follow Satan’ points to a much more serious course of events (5:15). Ties to the false teachers provide a ready explanation. Paul handed Alexander and Hymenaeus over to Satan as chastisement for their association with the false teachers (1:20). Younger widows were an easy target for those who wormed their way into homes and gained control over them (2 Tim 3:6). They in turn, became eager itinerant evangelists, going house to house ‘talking without understanding’ (*phluareō*, L&N; cf. Acts 19:19, ‘practicing sorcery.’

In the process some widows were neglecting their household duties (*argai* ... ‘lazy’). One of their duties was to teach newly married women about being a good wife, mother and household manager (Titus 2:3-4). The difficulty is that the false teachers were saying that marriage was wrong (1 Tim 4:3). Widows over 60 were deemed mature enough to handle remaining unmarried, but the physical desires of younger widows ‘overpower their devotion to Christ’ and they ‘want to remarry’ (*thelousin gamein*, 5:11). The terms Paul uses are strong ones: ‘When they experience strong physical desires of a sexual nature’ (‘passion,’ ‘lust’; L&N), they want to marry and thereby ‘incur judgment’ (*echousai krima*; 5:12). In part

Paul is simply being realistic about sexual desires in a promiscuous culture. He said to the unmarried at Corinth that ‘it’s better to stay unmarried [for full-time ministry] ... But if they can’t control themselves, they should go ahead and marry’ (1 Cor 7:8-9), since marriage is the proper sphere for sexual intimacy.”

The Greek text of v.16 reads literally: “If any man [or] woman that believes have widows, let them relieve them, and let the church not be charged; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed.” Evidently, some manuscripts do not have the word “man.” The Greek text only has the words *ei tis*, “if any,” without gender indication. And since the subject of the sections is widows, the NIV’s rendering makes sense.

Linda Belleville, in *1 Timothy*, observes: “The Greek conditional *ei* ... plus the indicative denotes a condition of fact. ‘Since she has widows under her roof’ speaks to the actual situation at Ephesus. This could be a church member who had opened her home to a number of widows and was receiving church funds to do so.”

The Pulpit Commentary states: “If the R.V. is right, the woman only is mentioned as being the person who has the management of the house. The precept here seems to be an extension of that in ver. 4, which relates only to children and grandchildren, and to be given, moreover, with special reference to Christian widows who had no believing relations to care for them, and so were necessarily cast upon the Church.

M. The Selection and Discipline of elders (5:17-25)

17 The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.

18 For the Scripture says, "Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain," and "The worker deserves his wages."

19 Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses.

20 Those who sin are to be rebuked publicly, so that the others may take warning.

21 I charge you, in the sight of God and Christ Jesus and the elect angels, to keep these instructions without partiality, and to do nothing out of favoritism.

22 Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, and do not share in the sins of others. Keep yourself pure.

23 Stop drinking only water, and use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses.

24 The sins of some men are obvious, reaching the place of judgment ahead of them; the sins of others trail behind them.

25 In the same way, good deeds are obvious, and even those that are not cannot be hidden.

From the fact that Paul mentions “double honor” in connection with the office of church elders, we assume that the office is more than what is presently known to be the function of an elder in our churches of today.

The word “honor” in the New Testament seems to have a financial connotation. For instance, in replying to an accusation by the Pharisees and scribes Jesus said: “And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition? For God said, ‘Honor your father and mother’ and ‘Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.’ But you say that if a man says to his father or mother, ‘Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is a gift devoted to God,’ he is not to ‘honor his father’ with it.”⁹⁶

At least some of the elders in the church in Ephesus must have been the pastors of the church who received remuneration for their service.

Linda Belleville, in *1 Timothy*, writes about the “elders”: “Elders are not uniformly noted in the early churches. The leadership of the Jerusalem church consisted of ‘the apostles and the elders’ (Acts 15:2-6, 22-23; 16:4). James instructed Diaspora Jewish churches to call ‘the elders of the church’ to the bedside of the critically ill (Jas 5:14). The early chapters of Acts do not mention elders. The apostles seem to have been the sole leaders. When the needs became burdensome, seven were chosen to help with the day-to-day needs of the members (Acts 6). It was when James took the helm of the Jerusalem church that elders as a distinct group first appear (Acts 11:30; 15:1-6, 22ff; 16:4; 21:18). Among the predominately Gentile church plants, elders appear only in the Asia Minor churches. Elders are found in the well-

⁹⁶ Matt. 15:3-6

established Ephesian church (5:17-20; Acts 20:17-38) and the newly established Cretan church (Titus 1:5). Paul appointed elders in the Galatian church plants (Acts 14:23). Peter appealed to the elders of the churches of Asia Minor as a fellow elder (1 Peter 5:1). One looks in vain for the mention of ‘elders’ in the church plants in Greece or Italy. ‘Overseers’ and ‘deacons’ were greeted at Philippi, and Phoebe was named as a ‘deacon’ at the church in Cenchrea. The church at Thessalonica had generic ‘leaders’ (1 Thess 5:12), and the Corinthian church had those who ‘serve with such devotion (1 Cor 16:15-18). The Roman church was addressed as a whole, and a church in Italy is instructed to ‘remember’ their ‘leaders’ (Heb 13:7, 24).”

According to *The Pulpit Commentary*, “double honor”: “means simply increased honor, not exactly twice as much as some one else, or with arithmetical exactness. So the word *diploūs* is used in ... Matthew 23:15; ... Revelation 18:6; and by the LXX in ... Isaiah 40:2; ... Jeremiah 16:18; and elsewhere also in classical Greek. And so we say, ‘twice as good,’ ‘twice as much,’ with the same indefinite meaning.”

The Wycliffe Bible Commentary observes: “Honor has two meanings: ‘Honor’ and ‘honorarium’ or ‘compensation.’ Both meanings are doubtless intended here. In the case of those who labor in preaching and teaching, their whole time is thus devoted, and they are deserving of compensation from the church (see 1 Tim 5:18). The word double seems to argue for a sufficient or appropriate recompense, rather than a double amount. In the LXX, in Isa 40:2, the same word is used, and it carries in context the idea of ‘full equivalent.’”

The verse about muzzling oxen is a quotation from Deuteronomy.⁹⁷ Paul uses the same quotation in First Corinthians, where we read: “For it is written in the Law of Moses: ‘Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain.’ Is it about oxen that God is concerned? Surely he says this for us, doesn’t he? Yes, this was written for us, because when the plowman plows and the thresher threshes, they ought to do so in the hope of sharing in the harvest. If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you? If others have this right of support from you, shouldn’t we have it all the more?”

Vv.19 and 20 probably both deal with accusations against church elders. The rule that an accusation against an elder by a single person ought not to be taken into consideration is also based upon the law as stated in Deuteronomy. We read there: “One witness is not enough to convict a man accused of any crime or offense he may have committed. A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.”⁹⁸

Paul does not make any reference to Jesus’ words about the various stages in which church discipline ought to be applied.⁹⁹ Jesus recommended that a personal confrontation, followed by a visit by two or three persons ought to precede bringing an accusation against any church member to the attention of the whole church.

Linda Belleville, in *1 Timothy*, writes about Paul’s charge in v.21: “Paul reinforced the need for due process with a solemn oath: ‘I solemnly command you in the presence of God and Christ Jesus and the highest angels’ (5:21). Paul’s invoking ‘God and Christ Jesus’ is in light of the fact that all church leaders will eventually need to give an account of their earthly ministry. A final accounting of leaders is a common thread in the New Testament. ‘We must all stand before Christ to be judged,’ Paul states (2 Cor 5:10). On that day ‘fire will reveal what kind of work each building has done’ (1 Cor 3:13).

Paul adds ‘and [before] the highest angels.’ The concept of standing before God’s ‘highest angels’ is only found here in the New Testament. The Greek word *eklektos* ... is better rendered ‘chosen’ than the NLT’s ‘highest.’ ‘Chosen’ is in contrast with Satan and other ‘rejected’ angels. Angels play a role elsewhere in Paul’s theology. Angels are observers of worship (1 Cor 11:10; Eph 3:10), and when Christ returns, he will come ‘with his mighty angels, in flaming fire’ (2 Thess 1:7-8a). Satan disguises himself as an angel of light (2 Cor 11:14) and the false teaching at Colosse involved the worship of angels (Col 2:18). Ultimately, believers will judge angels (1 Cor 6:3).”

V.22 obviously deals with, at least two topics, if not three. There is the “laying on of hands” and sharing in the sins of others. “Keep yourself pure” may be seen in connection with sharing in other people’s sin.

⁹⁷ Deut. 25:4

⁹⁸ Deut. 19:15

⁹⁹ Matt. 18:15-17

The Pulpit Commentary states about the phrase “the laying on of hands”: “Surely if we are guided by St. Paul’s own use of the phrase, *epithesis cheiron*, in the only two places in his writings where it occurs (... 1 Timothy 4:14 and ... 2 Timothy 1:6), we must abide by the ancient interpretation of these words, that they mean the laying on of hands in ordination. So also in ... Acts 6:6 and 13:3, *epitithenai cheiras* is ‘to ordain.’ And the context here requires the same sense. The solemn injunction in the preceding verse, to deal impartially in judging even the most influential elder, naturally suggests the caution not to be hasty in ordaining any one to be an elder. Great care and previous inquiry were necessary before admitting any man, whatever might be his pretensions or position, to a holy office.”

The Wycliffe Bible Commentary, however, understands these verses to have a different meaning. We read: “This is often understood as forbidding hasty ordination. However, qualifications and ordination were discussed earlier. [One Bible scholar] suggests ... that it refers to the overhasty receiving of an offender back into communion. Hands (plural) may also mean ‘violent measures,’ ‘force.’ Here it would be another caution regarding Timothy’s dealing with men who were to be rebuked. He should use no partiality, no violent measures, or unnecessary severity, nor, on the other hand, undue leniency, so as to be a partaker of their sins.”

Sharing in other people’s sin can hardly be understood to mean that Timothy would purposely and knowingly commit sinful acts or yield to peer-pressure. A case in point may be that Timothy would get involved in the financial problems of some of the people in his church and get himself in trouble on their account. In Proverbs, the father gives his son the advice: “My son, if you have put up security for your neighbor, if you have struck hands in pledge for another, if you have been trapped by what you said, ensnared by the words of your mouth, then do this, my son, to free yourself, since you have fallen into your neighbor’s hands: Go and humble yourself; press your plea with your neighbor! Allow no sleep to your eyes, no slumber to your eyelids. Free yourself, like a gazelle from the hand of the hunter, like a bird from the snare of the fowler.”¹⁰⁰ “Keep yourself pure” probably has no sexual connotation in this context.

V.23 gives an interesting vignette of the young man Timothy. He may have pledged himself to ceremonial purity by abstaining from certain food and drinks, like Daniel and his friends had done. This may have involved a pledge to be a teetotaler. *The Pulpit Commentary* suggests that Luke was present when Paul wrote this and that this advice came from “the beloved physician.”¹⁰¹

Much has been written about Paul’s advice to Timothy to “use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses.” The Greek uses a single word *hudropótei* for “water-drinker.” Whether this ascetic drinking habit was cause of Timothy’s physical weakness cannot be concluded from this. But evidently he did have some health problems, particularly in regard to his stomach, which may mean his digestion.

This advice seems strange in the context of this chapter. We find it right in the middle of matters pertaining to church organization and the general spiritual health (or lack of it) of the congregation in Ephesus. Some Bible scholars believe that Paul may have scribbled the text in the margin.

About the last verse of this chapter, Linda Belleville, in *1 Timothy*, observes: “In the light of the need to rebuke (5:21) and even excommunicate (1:20) leaders, it is reasonable to think that Paul was now setting forth guidelines for replacing elders at Ephesus. The Greek is more pointed than the NLT’s ‘never be in a hurry.’ Timothy was commanded to ‘stop laying hands on new recruits too quickly’ ... In circumstance such as false teaching it becomes even more important to do a thorough background check and to have a period of testing. To do otherwise is to give the appearance of being a partner in crime, rather than being above reproach (5:22). The reasons for care versus haste are simple: Some people’s sins run ahead of them. They are obvious to the observer. Others’ sin trail behind. They are not immediately apparent but will eventually catch up with the person, given sufficient time (5:24-25; NLT, ‘until later’).”

N. Advice to Slaves (6:1-2a)

1 All who are under the yoke of slavery should consider their masters worthy of full respect, so that God’s name and our teaching may not be slandered.

2 Those who have believing masters are not to show less respect for them because they are brothers. Instead, they are to serve them even better, because those who benefit from their service are believers, and dear to them.

¹⁰⁰ Prov. 6:1-5

¹⁰¹ Col. 4:14 - NKJV

In all of his epistles Paul touches three times upon the matter of slavery, which was a common social issue in his day. We cannot judge the subject from our present-day perspective and condemn Paul for not opposing it. It is obvious that God did not create man to be the slave of others. Yet, slavery was known in Israel, although not in the same way as among other nations. An Israelite could even be a slave of a fellow Israelite, but only in the context of paying off indebtedness. In such a case, a person could not be forced to serve longer than six years.¹⁰²

In New Testament times slavery existed in the Roman Empire and that was the condition Paul dealt with in writing about the subject. We read, for instance: “Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ.”¹⁰³ And: “Were you a slave when you were called? Don’t let it trouble you — although if you can gain your freedom, do so.”¹⁰⁴

The Adam Clarke’s Commentary comments: “Civil rights are never abolished by any communications from God’s Spirit. The civil state in which a man was before his conversion is not altered by that conversion; nor does the grace of God absolve him from any claims which either the state or his neighbor may have on him. All these outward things continue unaltered.”

Linda Belleville, in *1 Timothy*, writes: “Slavery in non-Jewish circles was a different institution than that among Jews. The Jewish slave was an indentured Israelite who had rights protected by Mosaic law and whose debt was remitted in the seventh year (Exod 21:2; Lev 25:40-41; Deut 15:12). The Gentile slave had no rights and was looked upon as property to be bought and sold at will.”

Paul’s concern was about the testimony of slaves who had responded to the Gospel message and had sold themselves to Jesus Christ. Having experienced the inner freedom that was the result of their spiritual surrender, they could have concluded that their worldly master had no longer any rights upon them. Although this was literally correct, rebellion of a Christian slave to a pagan master could seriously damage the testimony of the Gospel.

In writing to Philemon, whose slave Onesimus had escaped and had been converted through Paul’s testimony, Paul did not insist that Philemon set his slave free, since both had become brothers in Christ.¹⁰⁵

We could jump to the conclusion that what Paul wrote to Philemon contradicts what he writes to Timothy. The difference is in the fact that in *Philemon* Paul addresses the slave owner; here he focuses on the slaves.

In the same way as Paul taught that Christians ought to respect the civil government, which at that time was under Emperor Nero, Paul emphasizes here that slaves owe respect to their masters, regardless of their owners’ religion. And as we see in *Philemon*, Paul believed that Christian slave owners would do well to set their believing slaves free.

In connection with slavery Paul uses the Greek word *zugos*, “yoke.” It is the same word in Jesus’ statement: “Take my *yoke* upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”¹⁰⁶ A yoke is what couples two animals-of-burden together, making the carrying of the burden lighter. Paul may have had Jesus’ words in mind when he wrote this, which suggests that Jesus carries the other part of the slave’s burden.

V.2 of this chapter is generally considered to be difficult Greek. The text reads literally: “And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them because they are brethren, but rather do them service, because faithful and beloved partakers of the benefit.”

Linda Belleville, in *1 Timothy*, comments: “The economic poor in first-century Greco-Roman culture were primarily slaves. In some urban areas they constituted upwards of 60 percent of the population. So it is not remarkable that directives for slaves come up in almost every New Testament letter written to Gentile churches (6:1-2; 1 Cor 7:21-23; Gal 3:28; Eph 6:5-9; Col 3:22-4:1; Titus 2:9-10; Phlm 1:1; 1 Pet 2:18-25). What is surprising is that masters are not similarly addressed. Three years earlier, in a circular letter to the Lycus Valley church ... Paul addressed both masters and slaves (Eph 6:5-9; cf. Col 3:22-4:1). Now he instructs only slaves. It is not for lack of Christian masters at Ephesus. Paul

¹⁰² See Ex. 21:2-5.

¹⁰³ Eph. 6:5

¹⁰⁴ I Cor. 7:21

¹⁰⁵ Philem. 1:10

¹⁰⁶ Matt. 11:29,30

acknowledges masters who are believers in verse 2 and includes Christian masters among the rich in need of correction, when it comes to the master-slave relationship.

Culture sheds some light on this. The Greco-Roman slave population was a wholly disenfranchised group with no legal rights or freedoms. Class distinctions were strictly enforced by Roman authorities. Any group that cut across class lines was held in suspicion and labeled subversive. Because of the inseparability of Roman religion, life and government, imported religions (such as Christianity and Egypt's cult of Isis) were kept under close scrutiny.

In the church, however, 'there is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female;' all are 'one in Christ Jesus' (Gal 3:28). To have full rights in God's kingdom and no rights in Caesar's kingdom must have been difficult for Christian slaves to handle. It had to have been particularly oppressive for female slaves. While women of standing had benefited legally and socially from the Greco-Roman 'feminist' movement of the first and second centuries BC, female slaves had not. The disparity between life inside and outside the church was especially problematic for those serving under believing masters. Female slaves were seen as possessions to be used however the master saw fit. This included satisfying their master's sexual whims. ...

Paul's first corrective is startling in the light of the abolition in Christ of social distinctions such as slave and free (Gal 3:28). Paul does acknowledge that slavery is an oppressive 'yoke,' but then goes on to say that masters are worthy of every form of respect ... Paul does not use the word 'obey.' 'Honor' (NLT, 'respect') is what slaves are called to do. Honor was also due to God (6:16; Rom 2:7, 10; 2 Tim 2:20-21) and parents (Matt 15:4; 19:19; Mark 7:10; 10:19; Luke 18:29; Eph 6:1-3). And Paul called all believers to give respect and honor to those who were in authority (Rom 13:7)."

O. Advice on False Teaching and True Riches (6:2b-10)

2 *These are the things you are to teach and urge on them.*

3 *If anyone teaches false doctrines and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching,*

4 *he is conceited and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions*

5 *and constant friction between men of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain.*

6 *But godliness with contentment is great gain.*

7 *For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it.*

8 *But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that.*

9 *People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction.*

10 *For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.*

Verses 2 and 3 contrast what Timothy had been ordained to teach with the teaching of false doctrines taught by some in the church in Ephesus. The Greek text doesn't mention false doctrines; it simply reads: "If any man teaches otherwise." The Greek only uses one verb *heterodidaskaleo*, "to instruct differently." Paul used the same verb in the opening of this epistle.¹⁰⁷ We gather from v.5 that the topic of false teaching was that God would bless financially those who obey Him. The Greek word *porismos* simply means "gain," without particular reference to finances. That Paul speak about "green power" is clear from the context.

To the Hebrew mind God's blessings were expressed particularly in material benefits. The Gospel message was, however, that God's riches were spiritual and not necessarily financial. This is clear from Paul's statement elsewhere: "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich."¹⁰⁸

In vv.4 and 5 Paul gives an interesting list of characteristics that distinguish a teacher of false doctrines. The Greek text reads literally: "He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about strifes of words,

¹⁰⁷ 1 Tim. 1:3

¹⁰⁸ II Cor. 8:9

whereof comes envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of corrupt minds of men, and destitute of the truth, supposing that godliness is gain ...”

Linda Belleville, in *1 Timothy*, observes: “The false teachers did make ‘a show of godliness’ (6:5). In Jesus’ day, the Pharisees liked to make public demonstrations of their piety. The false teachers at Ephesus did the same. Like the Pharisees of Jesus’ day, they turned godliness into a sideshow with public prayers, visible fasting, and widely broadcasted acts of charity. The Pharisees did it for fame. The false teachers at Ephesus did it for fortune. To them, a show of godliness was ‘just a way to become wealthy’ (6:5). True godliness, however, is not a matter of outward show. It is a matter of training (4:7), education (6:3), and vigorous pursuit (6:11).” It sounds as if Paul were describing some modern-day TV-evangelists.

Paul’s recipe for happiness in life is contentment. The Greek word *autarkeia* “self-satisfaction,” is only used here and in the verse: “And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, *having all that you need*, you will abound in every good work.”¹⁰⁹ Contentment is a rare entity in human life. John D. Rockefeller’s, the billionaire, definition of “enough” was “just a little more!”

The author of Hebrews writes: “Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, ‘Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.’”¹¹⁰

In writing v.7, Paul may have thought of Job’s statement, after he lost everything in life: “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised.”¹¹¹ Contentment can only be achieved if we recognize the Lord as the source of all we have.

V.10 is one of the classic statements in the Bible. The Greek word for “love of money” is *philarguria*, which is derived from a word meaning “avarice.” This is the only place in Scripture where this word is found. Paul may have quoted an existing proverb.

The Adam Clarke’s Commentary observes correctly: “This text has been often very incautiously quoted; for how often do we hear, ‘The Scripture says, Money is the root of all evil!’ No, the Scripture says no such thing. Money is the root of no evil, nor is it an evil of any kind; but the love of it is the root of all the evils mentioned here.”

It is true that love of money is not the original sin that introduced death into God’s creation. The original sin is the desire of independence from God. In a way, that is what love of money stands for. In the quotation from Hebrew, given above, the reason for love of money is the desire for security apart from God. Those who believe God’s promise never to leave or forsake us, have no need of security, financial or other.

The Wycliffe Bible Commentary states: “Love of money is idolatry (Col 3:5; Eph 5:5; 1 John 2:15) and leads away from the true hope of the Christian.”

Linda Belleville, in *1 Timothy*, writes: “It is the love of money and not money per se that is the issue. The dangers of avarice were a common theme in the ethical writing of the day. The Greek moralist Diogenes Laertius taught that ‘the love of money is the mother-city of all evils.’ ... It is not the rich person per se that set their heart on material wealth. It is true that Jesus taught that the rich have greater difficulty entering God’s kingdom (Mark 10:23-25). But the fool is the person who put his or her trust in riches—such as the farmer who invests in bigger barns and silos rather than storing up treasure with God (Luke 12:16-20).

Desire for wealth is not *the* source of *all* evil. The lack of an article in Greek points to the desire for wealth as ‘a source of *every sort of evil*’ rather than the source of evil in its entirety. The desire for riches brings with it great peril. First, there is enticement. People who long to be rich ‘fall into temptation’ (6:9). Jesus himself was tempted by Satan for 40 days in the wilderness—but without yielding (Mark 1:12-13). He then taught his disciples to pray to their heavenly Father ‘don’t let us yield to temptation, but rescue us from the evil one.’ (Matt. 6:13). Second, there is entrapment. Those who succumb become like an animal ‘trapped’ in the snare of ‘many foolish and harmful desires’ (6:9).”

P. Paul’s Final instructions (6:11-21)

11 But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness.

¹⁰⁹ II Cor. 9:8

¹¹⁰ Heb. 13:5

¹¹¹ Job 1:21

12 Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

13 In the sight of God, who gives life to everything, and of Christ Jesus, who while testifying before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you

14 to keep this command without spot or blame until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ,

15 which God will bring about in his own time — God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords,

16 who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honor and might forever. Amen.

17 Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.

18 Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.

19 In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

20 Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to your care. Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge,

21 which some have professed and in so doing have wandered from the faith. Grace be with you.

In this charge to Timothy Paul uses several verbs that are foundational: “flee, pursue, fight, take hold, keep this command, command, guard, and turn away.”

The first important thing to observe is that Paul calls Timothy a “man of God.” Timothy was enlisted in the Lord’s army. But the term also describes his character.

The Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary states: “Man of God - who hast God as thy riches (Gen 15:1; Ps 16:5; Lam 3:24): primarily Timothy as a minister (cf. 2 Peter 1:21), just as Moses (Deut 33:1, Samuel (1 Sam 9:6), Elijah, and Elisha; but as the exhortation is as to duties incumbent on all Christians, the term applies secondarily to him (so 2 Tim 3:17) as a Christian born of God (James 1:18; 1 John 5:1), no longer a man of the world: raised above earthly things; therefore God’s property, not his own, bought with a price, so having parted with all right in himself: Christ’s work is his great work: he is Christ’s living representative.”

The things Timothy is advised to flee are catalogued particularly in vv.4 and 5. Serving the Lord for the purpose of making money would be one of the foremost things to avoid. The things to pursue are “righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness.”

The Greek word rendered “pursue” is *dioko*. Linda Belleville, *1 Timothy*, writes: “‘Pursue’ is used of an animal stalking its prey. The sense is to have a single-minded focus.” In *The Sermon on the Mount* the same verb is used passive voice in: “Blessed are those who are *persecuted* because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”¹¹²

On the one hand Timothy had to be like the hunted animal; on the other hand he was to be the hunter. The implication is that righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness are not characteristics that come naturally to a person. It takes determination and perseverance to obtain them. God expects us to work on the development of the spiritual character that the Holy Spirit wants to build within us. It is true that we cannot bring about our own sanctification, but by surrendering to the work of the Spirit in us, we can contribute to it. This is what Peter meant when he wrote: “For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins.”¹¹³

A few years later, in his second letter to Timothy, Paul would write: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day — and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.”¹¹⁴

¹¹² Matt. 5:10

¹¹³ II Peter 1:5-9

¹¹⁴ II Tim. 4:7,8

We must not interpret Paul's advice as if one must have doubts about one's faith, or be insecure about one's salvation. That would contradict Jesus' statement: "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life."¹¹⁵ As the Apostle John wrote, we can have assurance of salvation and eternal life: "I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life."¹¹⁶

Linda Belleville, in 1 Timothy, writes about "fight the good fight": "Paul charges Timothy to 'fight the good fight for the true faith' (6:12). Fighting the good fight is a metaphor for competing in an athletic contest against a strong opponent. 'Faith' is pictured as a sponsor or patron. Spiritual self-discipline and training are critical to making it across the finish line. Paul tells the Corinthians at 'all athletes are disciplined in their training. They do it to win a prize that will fade away, but we do it for an eternal prize' (1 Cor 9:25). ... The prize for the athlete in the hippodrome was a crown of olive branches. The prize for the believer is eternal life. As Paul affirms, 'Now the prize awaits me—the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me on the day of his return. And the prize is not just for me but for all who eagerly look forward to his appearing (2 Tim 4:8).'"

The Greek verb used in "Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called" is *epilambanomai* can be rendered "to seize for help." The same verb is used in the verse: "He *took* the blind man *by the hand* and led him outside the village."¹¹⁷ The emphasis may be more on Timothy's call than on his salvation.

Timothy's "good confession" probably refers to the meeting in which he was ordained to the ministry, at which time the elders laid their hands on him and he gave his testimony about his conversion and his call to the ministry. None of this is referred to in Acts. All we read there is that when Paul and Silas traveled to Lystra, which is in what is now modern Turkey, Paul found Timothy, and took him with him on his journey, after circumcising him, because he was the child of a Jewish mother and a Greek father.¹¹⁸

The charge in vv. 13-16 may be a quotation of the words Paul had used at Timothy's ordination service. The emphasis in this charge is upon God as Creator and Jesus as Lord. We would have expected a reference to Jesus as being Savior. But in most of Paul's preaching of the Gospel, as in Peter's, we find that the Lordship of Jesus received the emphasis. When Peter addressed the crowd at the house of Cornelius, he proclaimed that Jesus is "Lord of all."¹¹⁹

We read the story of Jesus' testimony to Pilate in John's Gospel: "Jesus said, 'My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place.' 'You are a king, then!' said Pilate. Jesus answered, 'You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.'"¹²⁰

Although this is not elaborated on, Paul, evidently, told Timothy that the Lordship of Jesus Christ ought to have preeminence in his personal life as well as in his preaching. Often when the Gospel is preached nowadays, Jesus is only presented as the Savior, who forgives sins. Omitting the mention of His lordship suggests that obedience is not a necessary part of salvation.

Paul charges Timothy "to keep this command without spot or blame." The Greek word rendered "blame" is *anepileptos*, which means "unrebukeable." It appears only in this epistle and that three times. The other two times it refers to a person's personal life.¹²¹ In this case also Paul may be saying to Timothy that his message must be backed up by the testimony of his personal life.

Barnes' Notes observes: "Nothing can be better fitted to preserve our minds steadfast in the faith, and to enable us to maintain our sacred vows in this world when allured by temptation, or when ridiculed for our religion, than to remember the example of the Lord Jesus; Let us place him before us as he stood at the bar of Pilate-threatened with death in its most appalling form, and ridiculed for the principles which he maintained; let us look on him, friendless and alone, and see with what seriousness, and sincerity, and boldness he stated the simple truth about himself, and we shall have one of the best securities that we can have, that we shall not dishonor our profession. A clear view of the example of Christ our Savior, in those

¹¹⁵ John 5:24

¹¹⁶ I John 5:13

¹¹⁷ Mark 8:23

¹¹⁸ Acts 16:1-3

¹¹⁹ Acts 10:36

¹²⁰ John 18:36,7

¹²¹ I Tim. 3:5; 5:7

circumstances, and a deep conviction that his eye is upon us to discern whether we are steadfast as he was, will do more than all abstract precepts to make us faithful to our Christian calling.”

The reference to Christ’s return is a reminder of our accountability. If we keep on remembering that there will come a moment in our life when we will be called upon to give account of what we did with the talent God entrusted to us, we will do well.

The mention of God the Father brings Paul to an outburst of praise and worship. We will live eternally in the light of His glory. The purpose of all Jesus Christ did in this world was to introduce us to the Father and to allow us to live in the presence of Him, who “is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light.”

The Greek text of v.17 reads literally: “Charge them [that are] rich in this world, [that they be] not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in [the living] God, who gives us all things richly to enjoy;”

Linda Belleville, in *1 Timothy*, writes about the word “charge”: “This is actually the military word for ‘command.’ This is the fifth time Paul uses this term. See 1:3; 4:11; 5:7; 6:13.”

The Greek word for “high-minded” is *hupselophroneo*, “arrogant,” which is only found here in the New Testament. There is a tendency to value persons, not by who they are, but what they possess. Jesus warned against this kind of evaluation when He said: “Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.”¹²² Our soul is worth more than all earthly possessions. This is clear from another of Jesus’ statement: “What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?”¹²³ We learn from Jesus’ parable of the rich man and Lazarus¹²⁴ that Lazarus was in reality the richer of the two. But spiritual riches excludes arrogance.

Paul does not condemn riches, but arrogance. If God makes a person rich, it must be considered to be God’s gift, not man’s achievement. *The Pulpit Commentary* observes: “The gifts are God’s. Trust, therefore, in the Giver, not in the gift. The gift is uncertain; the Giver lives forever.”

Paul states that God gives “everything for our enjoyment.” At the same time, he tells Timothy that he must teach the rich “to be generous and willing to share.” The enjoyment of riches is, evidently, in the sharing thereof, not in the gratification of personal desires. We read in Acts that Paul told the elders of Ephesus, who he met briefly at the beach of Miletus: “It is more blessed to give than to receive.”¹²⁵

V.19 is obviously a reference to Jesus’ statement in *The Sermon on the Mount*: “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”¹²⁶

Linda Belleville, in *1 Timothy*, comments: “Although Paul does not denounce riches per se, he does take issue with attitudes that wealth commonly spawns. He begins with two temptations to which the rich are particularly prone. The first is the temptation to become proud and assume that the success is their accomplishment rather than God’s provision (6:17). The second is the temptation to ‘trust in their money’ (6:17). But it is a misplaced trust, for wealth is completely unreliable. Those to whom God has entrusted the world’s wealth have a threefold duty to ‘use their money to do good,’ to ‘be rich in good works,’ and to be ‘generous to those in need’ (6:18). In sum, as God has graciously given to us, so we, in turn, should give to others—always being ready to share with others.”

Giving does not make us poorer but actually richer. For as believers give, they store up their treasure ‘as a good foundation for the future, so that they may experience true life’ (6:19). Paul began his charge with an athletic metaphor. Now he concludes it with advice from the financial sector. A good foundation is not the concrete slab of a building but a substantial nest egg or retirement account (e.g. Luke 12:33; 18:22). The Corinthians were instructed, ‘On the first day of each week, you should each put aside a portion of the money you have earned’ for believers in need (1 Cor 16:2). The nest egg in this case is spiritual, not material. Jesus told his disciples, ‘Don’t store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in, and steal. Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be’ (Matt 6:19-21). Financial giving stores up spiritual wealth, which in turn

¹²² Luke 12:15

¹²³ Matt. 16:26

¹²⁴ Luke 16:19-31

¹²⁵ Acts 20:35

¹²⁶ Matt. 6:19-21

pays eternal dividends. The dividends received from this investment are heavenly: ‘so that they may experience true life’ (6:19).”

In v.18 Paul uses two Greek words that are only found here in the New Testament: *eumetadotos*, “good at imparting,” or “liberal,” and *koinonikos*, which also means “liberal,” or “communicative.”

Paul’s last word to Timothy is another charge. The Greek text of v.20 reads literally: “O Timothy, keep that which is committed to your trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and opposition of falsely so called science.” The latter could be called “pseudo science.”

“What has been entrusted to your care” is basically one Greek noun *paratheke*, “a trust.” The word is typically “Pauline” and is only found in Paul’s letters to Timothy.¹²⁷

Bible scholars present different interpretations of Paul’s final charge to Timothy to “guard what has been entrusted to your care.” *The Pulpit Commentary* states: “The precept to Timothy here is to keep diligent and watchful guard over the faith committed to his trust; to preserve it unaltered and uncorrupt, so as to hand it down to his successors exactly the same as he had received it.” *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary* believes it to be “the Gospel tradition,” which is to be guarded “by life and sound teaching.” *The Adam Clarke’s Commentary* reads: “Carefully preserve that doctrine which I have delivered to thee.” *Barnes’ Notes* calls it “The honor of the gospel, and the interests of religion.” Linda Belleville, in *1 Timothy*, writes: “The idea is that of placing one’s valuables into another’s hands for safekeeping. Today we might think in terms of a safe-deposit box or a bank safe. Paul repeats this charge in his second letter: ‘Through the power of the Holy Spirit who lives within us, carefully guard the precious truth that has been entrusted to you’ (2 Tim 1;14). We are called to do nothing less than what God himself does.”

It is important, both for those who preach the message and those that hear it, to understand that the Gospel is God’s Word of life. In John’s Gospel, Jesus links the Word to faith, saying: “I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.”¹²⁸

It is this Word that the author of Hebrews compares to a sword that penetrates the human soul, cutting away what hinders and saving the life of the hearer. We read: “For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”¹²⁹ The Word of God is like a healing scalpel.

Paul’s last word is: “The grace be with you!” In the Greek “you” is in plural. Some manuscripts have “Amen” added to it. Linda Belleville, in *1 Timothy*, observes: “This brings the reader full circle to the opening of the letter (1:6). Paul’s final word is to the congregation as a whole. ‘Grace be with you all.’ The plural (‘you all’) shows that Paul expected this letter to be read to the entire church. At the end of the public reading, he wanted them to have the blessing of God’s grace. Virtually every one of Paul’s letters concludes with a blessing of God’s grace.”

¹²⁷ See II Tim. 1:12,14.

¹²⁸ John 5:24

¹²⁹ Heb. 4:12