

THE FIRST LETTER OF PAUL TO TIMOTHY

-- Notes by G. Batson

(Based on the NIV text unless otherwise stated)

INTRODUCTION

The general theme of the epistle is the conduct, function, characteristics and qualification of effective Christian leadership within the assembly or local church as given by the Apostle Paul to his young protégé, Timothy. Less directly (although nonetheless important) is the response of the members of the local church to such God-given instruction and leadership. The importance of an obedient response is underlined by the fact that believers constitute “*God’s household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth*” (3:15b).

After the introduction and the setting out of the purpose of the letter in chapter 1, it divides into two sections: Chapters 2 and 3 major on instruction to Timothy regarding the assembly and its conduct and chapters 4 to 6 centre on specific instructions in his pastoral role and thereby carries instruction for all those in assembly leadership showing their appropriate behaviour and attitude to those under their care.

Timothy was serving the Lord in the Church in Ephesus where Paul had urged him to remain in order to deal with false teaching (1:3) and further establish and strengthen the church there (3:15). This subsequent letter from Paul to Timothy, his beloved son in the faith, was to instruct him both in his ministry and personal conduct (1:18-19, 4:12, 16) as he laboured in that difficult situation surrounded by paganism without and new, immature believers within. It is nonetheless applicable to the church today.

Paul refers to him as “his true son in the faith” (1:2, 18, 2 Tim. 1:2, 1 Cor. 4:17), a positive reference to the fact that Paul had been instrumental in his conversion. Timothy had then followed Paul’s instruction and example, responding to his discipleship and had developed a God-given passion for God’s Word and His people.

Timothy’s name means “he who honours God” and he was taught to do so by a godly grandmother and mother from his early childhood in Lystra (Acts 16:1-3, 2 Tim. 1:5, 3:15). His father, who was a Greek, may have died before Timothy met Paul. It says a lot for Timothy’s spiritual growth and calibre that Paul could entrust him with such a responsibility and shows that he was indeed living up to his name. He remained a valued and trusted co-worker of Paul throughout the remainder of the apostle’s life.

CHAPTER ONE

Verse 1: The introduction to this letter is somewhat unique in that Paul refers to himself, firstly, as an apostle of Jesus Christ *by the command of God our Saviour*. As an apostle of Jesus Christ he was one of those original men personally chosen and commissioned by Christ Himself to lay the foundational teaching for the Church by receiving revelation directly from Christ, communicating and recording it for successive generations (Gal. 1:12, Jude v. 3). Such a commission was not only according to the will of God for Paul, it was by *the command of God*. Although Paul willingly and obediently served the Lord in the capacity of an apostle, describing himself as a bond slave, in reality he had no option: His ministry was the direct result of the commandment of God.

Here God is described as *our Saviour*, for the whole concept of salvation was devised by the eternal counsels of the Godhead in eternity prior to creation itself (Titus 1:3, Rev. 13:8b). It was put in place through the redemptive sacrifice of Christ, the Son of God and, subsequently, He is our hope. As the risen One who is alive for ever more (Rev. 1:18) He is the assurance and the means of the completion of all that God has promised for the believer. Furthermore, during this age of grace, God’s chief characteristic towards the world is

that of Saviour for it is His desire that *all men should be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth* (1 Tim. 2:4).

Verse 2: The letter is addressed primarily to Timothy, Paul's young protégé whom he describes as "his true son in the faith", reference to the fact that Paul had been instrumental in his conversion. Subsequently Paul had mentored him as his spiritual son and Timothy had followed Paul's example, responding to his discipleship, and had developed a God-given passion for God's Word and a God-given care for His people. (See Phil. 2:19-22.)

Paul's introductory prayer for Timothy is that he might know *grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord*. It is completely through grace (God's unmerited favour) that salvation is available and, along with every other believer, it was through grace that Timothy was saved (Ephesians 2:8). But every day of his life, as a servant of the Lord, Timothy would need the enabling grace of God in order to be effective for Him. As a result of saving grace there is divine mercy and peace – peace *with* God through the exercise of saving faith (Romans 5:1) and the peace *of* God through trust, obedience and thankfulness to God (Phil. 4:6-7). Because, like every believer, Timothy was still sinful and subject to failure, he would also need divine mercy and this too is available from God through Christ Jesus our Lord. The word translated "mercy" here has a further meaning of *help in time of need* and denotes *God's active intervention to help*. It is the Almighty God entering into those times of special need with all His divine resources.

Verses 3-4: Timothy's physical location at the time Paul wrote this letter to him was Ephesus and here we see why he was there. Paul had originally spent over two years in Ephesus preaching the Word and seeking to establish the church and had suffered much opposition in the process (Acts 19). The time came when he had to leave and travel into the region of Macedonia, but there was unfinished business in Ephesus. Timothy was the man Paul chose to carry on the work there and in Paul's absence he needed this specific instruction from the apostle (3:14-15).

A large part of Timothy's responsibility would be dealing with false teachers – those who taught doctrines contrary to the divine teaching that the apostle had already laid down during his time in Ephesus. Paul had been aware that after his departure "savage (grievous) wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:29-30). Timothy was to *command* or *charge* such teachers to stop their propagation of erroneous doctrines and not to *devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies*.

One form of serious error threatening the Church in those early days was that of Gnosticism and Paul deals with the problem in many of his letters, particularly in that to the Colossians. But it was also prevalent in Ephesus and Paul alludes to it here outlining some of its characteristics and difficulties. Barclay describes Gnosticism as follows:-

Gnosticism was entirely speculative. It began with the problem of the origin of evil, of sin and of suffering. Where did these things come from? If God is altogether good, He could not have created them. How then did they get into the world? The Gnostic answer was that in the beginning creation was not creation out of nothing; that before time began matter existed. They believed that this matter was essentially flawed, that it was imperfect, that it was an evil thing; and they believed that out of this flawed and essentially evil matter the world was created. Thereby they explained the sin and the suffering and the imperfection of the world.

But no sooner had they got this length than they ran into another difficulty. If matter is essentially evil and God is essentially good, then God could not Himself have touched and handled and molded and formed things out of this matter. So they began on another set of speculations. They said that God put out an emanation, and that this emanation put out another emanation, and the third emanation put out a fourth emanation and so on and on until there came into being an emanation who was so distant from God that he could touch and handle matter, and that it was not God but this emanation who created the world.

They went even further than that. They held that each successive emanation knew less and less about God; that you came to a stage in the series of emanations at which the emanations were completely ignorant of God; more, that you came to a final stage in the series when the emanations were not only ignorant of God but actively hostile to Him. So they arrived at the thought that the god who created the world was actually quite ignorant of and completely hostile to the real and the true God.

Later on they went even further, and they identified the God of the Old Testament with the ignorant and the hostile creating god, and the God of the New Testament with the true and the real God. They further provided each one of the

emanations with a complete biography. And so they built up an elaborate mythology of gods and emanations, each with his story and his biography and his genealogy.

There is no doubt at all that the ancient world was riddled with that kind of thinking; and that it even entered the Church itself. When it entered the Church it made Jesus the greatest of the emanations, the emanation closest to God. It classed Him as the highest link in the endless chain between God and man. It made Him no longer unique, but only a link in a chain.

Now this Gnostic line of thought had certain characteristics, and these characteristics appear all through the Pastoral Epistles as the characteristics of the heretics whose heresies are threatening the Church and the purity of the faith: --

(i) This Gnosticism is obviously highly speculative, and because it was highly speculative, it was intensely intellectually snobbish. It believed that all this intellectual speculation was quite beyond the mental grasp of ordinary simple people, and that this teaching was for an intellectual aristocracy, a chosen few, the elite of the Church. So Timothy is warned against “profane and vain babblings and oppositions of science falsely so called” (1 Timothy 6: 20). He is warned against a religion of speculative questions instead of humble faith (1 Timothy 1: 4). He is warned against the man who is proud of his intellect, and who yet really knows nothing, but who dotes about questions and about strifes of words (1 Timothy 6: 4). He is told to shun “profane and vain babblings,” for they can only produce ungodliness (2 Timothy 2: 16). He is told to avoid “foolish and unlearned questions” which in the end can only engender strife (2 Timothy 2: 23).

Further, the Pastoral Epistles go out of their way to stress the fact that this idea of an intellectual aristocracy, a chosen elite is quite wrong, for God’s love is a universal love. God wants all men to be saved and all men to come to a knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2: 4). God is the Saviour of all men, especially those who believe (1 Timothy 4: 10).

(ii) This Gnosticism was concerned with this long series of emanations. It gave to each of them a biography and a pedigree; it gave to each of them a place and a stage on the way to God, and an importance in the chain between God and men. These Gnostics were concerned with “endless genealogies” (1 Timothy 1: 4). They went in for “old wives” fables about them (1 Timothy 4: 7). They turned their ears away from the truth to fables (2 Timothy 4: 4). They dealt in fables like the Jewish fables (Titus 1: 14). Worst of all, they thought in terms of two gods, and they thought of Jesus as one of a whole series of mediators between God and man; whereas in truth “there is one God, and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2: 5). There is only one King eternal, immortal, invisible, there is only one God (1 Timothy 1: 17).

Verse 5: The whole purpose of Paul’s command to Timothy regarding false teachers (verse 3) was to promote the true work of God (verse 4) “which is by faith” – dependence upon, and obedience to, God, rather than vain human philosophy. Of highest priority in this purpose is love – love for God, for fellow believers and for the unsaved rather than the promotion of controversies, arguments and divisions as the false teachers were doing.

Thus the goal of preaching the truth and dealing with error is to promote first of all love for God from a pure or undivided heart -- a heart and conscience purified and cleansed by the precious blood of Christ resulting in a sincere or genuine faith where there is no hypocrisy. Such faith is not just an outward form, but an inward reality revealed in a godly lifestyle (see James 2:14-19).

Love for God is the very heart of practical Christian living. It always results in love of the truth and selfless love for His people (John 13:35) and for the unsaved as it becomes the motivating force in the life of a believer (1 Cor. 13, Eph. 5:1-2). It rejects all that is false and gives a true perspective of reality. This saves the believer from arrogance and pride, from an unwarranted judgmental attitude and from destructive thinking and speaking. The one who argues or acts in love does so not to defeat his opponent but to win him.

Verses 6-7: Because the love of some had grown cold they had *wandered away from these* – that is from a good conscience and a sincere faith based upon the truth of God’s Word. The word “wandered” indicates a gradual process, an undermining of faith through a lack of watchfulness (4:16) resulting in the deceptive introduction of false teaching and practice. As a result they had turned from the truth to *meaningless talk*.

Verse 7: In their self-styled piety they desired to be teachers of the law. But because this was largely an ego feeding exercise, the proclamation of truth ceased to be the issue. Instead, in order to gain personal prestige and a following, they propounded false doctrines with a confidence born of arrogance and deception. But, as Paul points out, in reality they did not know what they were talking about. Prayerful research and study was something they were strangers to and an absence of genuine enlightenment by the Holy Spirit can only lead to error.

Verses 8-11: Among the vagaries of their deceptive doctrines the false teachers were using the law wrongly and here Paul seeks to correct this anomaly. There is nothing wrong with the law: It is good if it is used correctly otherwise it becomes a hindrance to a right relationship with God for it can never be the means of justification.

First and foremost, salvation can never be obtained through the law (Gal. 2:21). Its main function is to give us an awareness of all that is contrary to God's holy requirements. It is that which diagnoses sin (Romans 7:7) and beyond that all it can ever do is condemn.

Verses 9-11: Paul makes it plain that "good men" (those made righteous through receiving Christ and imputed divine righteousness and are living a life in conformity to the will of God) have nothing to fear from the Law. He then gives a sample list of those for whom the Law was designed and the various evils mentioned here present an insight into the type of society of his day. In comparison we find that the sinful heart of man has never changed right down to the days in which we are living. The Law highlights everything that is contrary to the holy standard of God and the "sound (Gk *hugiainein* health giving) doctrine" – or the practical objectives -- of His "glorious gospel". Thus it reveals the utter depravity of the human heart and, subsequently, the need for God's mercy, grace and life-changing power (Romans 5:20).

Having spoken of the correct use of the Law which reveals the need for God's mercy and grace, Paul now embarks on a section dealing with his own personal experience of God's grace and how it had completely changed the motivation and direction of his life. It concludes in verse 17 on an appropriate note of praise.

Verses 12-14: Here Paul expresses his thanks to Christ for appointing him to His service, giving him the enabling strength and seeing the potential in him to fulfill the ministry to which He had called him. The point is made that it is Christ Himself who both appoints His servants and equips them for service (John 15:16). God condemned self-appointed false prophets whom He had not called who came with a spurious message (Jer. 23:21-22, 25-29). Such people do not further the work of God; rather they undermine it.

Verse 13: This verse gives a view of the tremendous contrast wrought in Paul's life through the grace of God. He was once a blasphemer -- one who despised and dishonoured the Name of Christ and sought to abolish His gospel. He was also a persecutor and a violent man: His driving passion was not only to abolish the Gospel, but to eradicate Christ's followers in any way he could – through imprisonment and even murder. But God, rather than destroying Paul as He well could have done, instead saved him and redirected him. God turned him into a preacher of the very gospel he once tried to destroy.

Paul gives as the reason for God's mercy to him his own personal ignorance and unbelief as to the truth of God. But once he comprehended through divine enlightenment the enormity of his error, he responded to the truth and God saved and redirected him (Acts 9:1-15). This is an example showing the importance of obeying the truth once it is understood and that no sin or sinful lifestyle is beyond the reach of the gospel of God's grace and mercy.

Verse 14: Although Paul's sin may have been great, God's grace was greater: It has a greater capacity for construction than sin has for destruction. Through Christ it was poured out on him *abundantly*. Along with God's grace through Christ and in place of the unbelief of a skeptic he was given faith. In place of the hatred and violence of a persecutor he was given love. The source of both of these virtues which were the indication of Paul's changed life and personality was Christ Jesus Himself. Salvation is more than just forgiveness of sin as tremendous as this may be; it is that which has the capacity to totally renovate and redirect the whole person.

Verses 15-17: In the light of God's gracious dealings with Paul, despite his blasphemous behaviour and murderous treatment of God's people, with the fullest conviction, based on his own personal experience, he was able to say, "Here is a trustworthy (or faithful) saying that deserves full acceptance . . ." In contrast to the spurious utterances of the false teachers, here was something that could be fully depended upon -- "*Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners . . .*" When he considered the damage and suffering he had previously inflicted on the people of God and to the cause of Christ itself, he added "of whom I am the worst".

Verse 16: But because he was the worst of sinners, for this very reason, Christ extended His mercy to Paul to show that none are beyond the reach of His grace and love. Paul was a prime example of what Christ can do even with the worst of sinners. His conversion rather than his demise was further example of Christ's unlimited patience and longsuffering so that none might despair that his/her sin is too great to be forgiven.

Verse 17: In realization of God’s unfathomable mercy and grace, Paul here renders to Him full credit and praise. He acknowledges His sovereignty, the eternal, indestructible nature of His being and the fact that He is “the only God” (Isaiah 43:10-11, 44:6, 45:5-6, 14, 22). All others are false and are either a figment of depraved human imagination and conception or the product of demonic activity. Paul concludes this section dealing with his own personal experience of God’s mercy and grace by ascribing to the one true eternal God honour and glory for ever and ever.

Verses 18-20: Paul now returns his attention to his young protégé, Timothy, with a sacred charge -- which was the basic purpose of his letter. It is a charge “in keeping with the prophecies once made about” him to fulfill the instruction given to him when he was initially recognized and selected by Godly elders and commissioned for the ministry of the Gospel. By accepting the charge and obeying such instruction he would effectively fight the good fight, being able to hold on to faith and a good conscience.

Fighting the good fight implies that Christian ministry and living involves warfare. It is warfare against sin and Satan under the banner and in the strength of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Captain of our salvation with the full armoury He has provided (Eph. 6:10-18, Heb. 2:10).

Verse 19: Two of the necessities of this warfare are faith and a good conscience (Eph. 6:16, Prov. 3:5-6). Faith always involves both trust and obedience and is the key to victory. It is that which trusts the Lord in all situations with obedience to His Word. A good conscience is one cleansed by the precious blood of Christ, enlightened by the Holy Spirit and conformed and sensitive to the Word of God. Where its dictates are not followed, it becomes dulled or even seared (4:2), and faith is quickly shipwrecked. Paul was well aware of some who had entered this category.

Verse 20: Hymanaeus and Alexander were two examples of shipwrecked faith. They had failed to trust the Lord and had disobeyed His Word to the extent that either their doctrine or behaviour, or both, had degenerated into blasphemy. In all probability their Christian profession was not genuine and instead of honouring God they were dishonouring Him and bringing the Christian testimony into disrepute. Paul had therefore “handed them over to Satan” in order that through the harshness of his mastery they might learn their lesson and be repentant and truly converted (1 Cor. 5:5). This involved removing them from the protection of the fellowship of believers so that they could no longer be a corrupting influence there. Thus they were excluded from the sphere of God’s blessing and under the control of Satan. As with all such discipline it was not Paul’s desire that they be destroyed and perish, but that they genuinely repent, forsake their evil ways and be truly converted or restored.

CHAPTER TWO

Having reminded Timothy of the reason Paul left him in Macedonia (1:3-7) and having issued him with the solemn charge of 1:18-20 Paul continues with appropriate instruction to accompany such a charge. In these next two chapters he gives Timothy directions concerning the Assembly and its conduct and this chapter has specific instruction for both men and women.

Verse 1: It is notable that the very first exhortation given is an urgent encouragement to pray (1 Chron. 7:14). Such prayer should involve “requests” or “supplication” – a term which in the Greek implies need as the result of one’s insufficiency and this indeed is the case when it comes to human sinfulness and the universal need for salvation. Intercession is also involved – drawing near to God on behalf of the need of others. All prayer should be pervaded by an attitude of thanksgiving – appreciation expressed for the grace of God that is available to meet the deepest human need (Eph. 6:18).

The object of prayer here is *all* people – Jews and Gentiles alike. No race or class is excluded. The reason is given in verse 4: God “wants *all* to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth”. Further, in verse 6, Christ “gave Himself a ransom for *all* men”.

Verse 2: Specifically Paul mentions that supplication and intercession be made “for kings and all those in authority” (even although those in authority at the time were mainly enemies of the Christian faith). Prayer for those in authority is important because of the influence they have on the whole of society. If they are godless and corrupt, their corruption eventually filters down and adversely affects the community under them by way of example and legislation. Conversely, if they are honourable and virtuous, that too filters down through the community with subsequent wholesome results allowing God’s people to “live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness”. Living peaceful and quiet lives does not mean giving way to complacency and materialism, but rather that they should be free to worship and witness and be characterized by godliness and holiness.

Verses 3-4: This is pleasing to God for it creates a spiritual atmosphere conducive to the free course of His Word and the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts and lives of people so that “they will be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth”. It is God’s will that *all* men (all people everywhere) be saved. It is not His will that any should perish, but that *all* should come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9). The Gospel is not limited to the Jew or any other race or class; it is available to all. Christ’s commission to His disciples was that they should “go and make disciples of *all* nations ...” There are only two alternatives: People are either saved eternally or they will perish eternally. Heaven or Hell are the only two eternal destinies.

Verses 5-6: The truth alluded to in verse 4 is set out here. First of all it consists of the fact that there is only one God as has already been emphasised in 1:17. Then there is only one Mediator between God and men – the Man Christ Jesus. There is only One who can bring together sinful mankind with the Holy, sinless God and that is the Lord Jesus Christ, by His vicarious, redemptive sacrifice at Calvary. Here He is referred to as “the Man Christ Jesus” indicative of the fact that He took upon Himself the human form (John 1:14) and entered the human race in order to become “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29, 36).

Verse 6: He willingly “gave Himself a ransom for *all* men” (Mark 10:45). He Himself was the payment for the sin of *all* men that *all* might be set free. When we appreciate that *God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son so that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life* (John 3:16) we gain a measure of understanding of the strength of God’s will that “*all* should be saved” and we can never doubt His love for us. The tragedy is that while “He gave Himself a ransom for *all* men” and subsequently there is salvation for all, not all will be saved (John 3:18, 36). Once again the fact that salvation is for “all men” is emphasised – a truth testified to and revealed in God’s appointed time by both Christ Himself and His apostles (Acts 11:18).

Verse 7: To proclaim the foregoing truths concerning the One true God, the one Mediator between God and men and the fact that salvation is for *all* men was the very purpose for which Paul was divinely appointed. For this reason Paul refers to himself as “a herald”. In NT times the word referred to an official messenger and representative of a king or leader. He was not lying concerning his appointment but was genuinely raised up by the Lord as His messenger for this very purpose (in contrast to the false teachers), and that the main thrust of his ministry was to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15).

Verse 8: Paul now reverts to the theme of prayer and here he is referring to public meetings of the local church – 3:15. He emphasizes that it is to be engaged in by men *everywhere* (particularly where there are Christian congregations) not just within the bounds of Judaism. Alford points out that by use of the definite article the Greek indicates “men” as opposed to women because God intends men to be the leaders when the church meets for corporate worship. “Lifting up holy hands” is, first of all, symbolic of the elevation of the heart in prayer to

God and such must be characterized by a life of practical holiness without which prayer is of little avail (James 4:3, 5:16b). “Hands” are symbolic of the activities of life and these are not to be polluted or stained with evil.

“Anger” or “wrath” here does not refer to righteous anger or indignation which is directed against evil or sin, but human anger involving pride, selfishness, hatred, animosity and bitterness as referred to in James 1:20 which do not achieve the purposes of God. “Disputing” can also be translated “dissension” or “doubting” and refers to “a hesitant reluctance to be committed to prayer” (McArthur). Vincent says, “Prayer, according to our writer, is to be without the element of skeptical and destructive criticism, whether of God’s character and dealings, or of the character and behaviour of those for whom prayer is offered.”

Verses 9-10: Having dealt with the conduct of men in public meetings of the local church, Paul now refers to the conduct of women in public meetings of the church in the remainder of the chapter. Since the worship of God is central to the life of the church, women are not to conduct themselves in such a way, either by dress or deportment, that causes a distraction and draws attention away from the Lord to themselves. (Braided hair where costly jewellery was woven into the hair was a custom of the day). Instead they are to conduct themselves appropriately, showing reverence, decency and submission thereby helping to promote the right attitude in other members of the congregation.

There should be a greater concentration on the inward spiritual condition rather than outward physical attraction. Such an attitude should apply not only in public meetings of the local church, but on all occasions. A godly, prayerful attitude on the part of the women has a tremendous effect on the men and the whole congregation.

Verse 10: Instead of attracting attention with outward and unnatural adornment, they should be noticeable by their good deeds and righteous behaviour which is appropriate for women professing to worship God. The greater emphasis should be on inward character rather than keeping pace with the fashions of the day, most of which are anything but God-honouring (see also 1 Peter 3:3-5).

Verses 11-15: First of all, along with the men she is to be a learner. Discipleship for her is just as important as for the men and she is to grow in the faith and become spiritually mature. But to teach in the public meetings of the church is not her role. She is to learn “in quietness and full submission” -- submission first and foremost to the Lord and His Word (see 1 Cor. 14:33b-35*). God has ordained that only men fulfill this role as head of the woman (1 Cor. 11:3). As man’s God-given prerogative it is indeed an extremely responsible role and those qualified to fulfill it should do so “as one speaking the very words of God” (1 Peter 4:11). Its purpose is the setting forth of the decrees, truths and thoughts of God, not his own or anyone else’s (Acts 20:27).

Verse 13: Here the reason is given for the woman’s silent submission and it is notable that it has nothing to do with the culture of the day but rather the reason given applies to all generations. It is firstly because of God’s creatorial order. It is because of the priority (not the superiority) of the man in creation. He (Adam) was created first and woman was created after him as his “suitable helper” (Gen. 2:20b) and was not designed to assume the role of ultimate responsibility.

Verse 14: Secondly, the woman was first in transgression because she allowed herself to be deceived. By leaving Adam’s protection and usurping his headship through acting in her own volition, she became vulnerable and succumbed to Satan’s temptation. Adam then willingly violated his leadership role and knowingly followed Eve in transgression, plunging the human race into sin. Thus ultimate responsibility rests with him (Romans 5:12-14).

Verse 15: This is a controversial text to which various explanations have been given. (The words “kept safe” in the NIV are better translated as “saved”.) Barclay says that “it is just faintly possible that this may be a reference to the fact that Mary, a woman, was the mother of Jesus. It may be that it means that women will be saved – as all others will – by this supreme act of child-bearing by which the Son of God was born into the world”.

But it is more likely that the verse refers to women in general, and includes in child-bearing that of motherhood. The woman will be saved from the stigma of original deception and find her true vocation through bearing children and bringing them up to be God-honouring members of His family and useful citizens whose

lives testify to God’s saving grace. No-one can have the same spiritual influence on her children as a godly mother as she continues “in faith, love and holiness”. She has the capacity to make a mark for the Kingdom of Heaven that is beyond measure. Timothy, himself, had known such influence, having had a godly mother and grandmother and his life now bore witness to the value of their nurture (2 Tim. 1:5, 3:14-15).

* The word “speak” in 1 Cor. 14:33b-35 has the same sense as in verses 2, 3-6, 9, 11, 13, 18-19, 21, 23, 27-29, 39 of the same passage and also 1 Peter 4:11, and therefore cannot be translated as “chatter” as some endeavour to do.

CHAPTER THREE

This chapter deals specifically with the qualifications of those involved in local church leadership. It shows there are two main capacities in leadership – the elder or overseer and the deacon. Paul also outlines his reason for writing to Timothy and concludes the chapter with reference to the mystery of godliness.

Verse 1: The chapter begins with a statement that is trustworthy – it is absolutely reliable: “If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer (*episkopos*) or elder (*presbuteros*), he desires a noble task”. There are two offices within the church – the major one being that of elder and the minor that of deacon. Elder (*presbuteros*) describes the man (the spiritually mature, respected and more experienced men of the Assembly), while overseer (*episkopos*) describes their function. They are to “be shepherds of the church of God which He bought with His own blood” (Acts 20:28b).

There were those in the early church, as it is today who, for various reasons, desired such a task. Paul is quick to acknowledge that it is a noble or good work. But it should also be remembered that it is a work carrying great responsibility, wisdom and integrity and, accordingly, there are appropriate qualifications involved. It should ever be remembered that all Christian leadership must be first and foremost by personal example. Gift and ability are important but are outweighed by moral qualities. (See also Titus 1:6-9. In this passage we see that those involved in leadership must be blameless domestically – verse 6, personally – verses 7-8, and doctrinally – verse 9).

Verses 2-4: Paul’s words to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:28a were, “Guard (take heed to) yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers”. Those in Christian leadership must first of all take heed to themselves if they are ever going to be effective leaders (see also 4:16). Here in this passage (verses 2-7) in the qualifications for such leadership we see what is involved in taking heed to oneself.

An elder must be “above reproach” or “blameless”. There must be no just cause for anyone within the church or without to point the finger of rebuke at him or to accuse him of wrong-doing in any way (verse 7). This, of course is incumbent on all believers, but particularly those in leadership.

The remainder of these qualifications show what it means to be **above reproach or blameless**. “The husband of one wife” is not referring to marital status but moral purity. If he is married his faithfulness and devotion to his wife must be flawless. He must be an example of what God intends in marriage – *one man* is to

be united to *one woman* and become *one flesh* (unit) for life (Gen. 2:24, Eph. 5:25-28). This qualification in no way prohibits a single man from eldership (see 1 Cor. 7:8 where such a prohibition would exclude even Paul).

“Temperate” means not given to excesses or not going beyond due bounds – those bounds appropriate to his profession both as a Christian and an elder.

“Self-controlled” or “sober minded” (*nephalios*): He needs to be disciplined in all he does, says and thinks. He must also know how to properly order his priorities and have a serious attitude toward spiritual matters. The Greek word also involves being watchful and alert; perceptive to that which would mar his testimony and example to others. Self-discipline is closely related to self-control.

“Respectable” involves a correct attitude toward God and other people which affects his appearance and behaviour. He does not belittle others even when their ideas or actions are wrong and he needs to correct them.

“Hospitable” is translated from a compound Greek word meaning “love of strangers” (Rom. 12:13, Heb. 13:2, 1 Peter 4:9). His life and home must be open to others. He must be approachable and available.

“Able to teach”: This is the only qualification that separates elders from deacons. The emphasis here seems to be upon the public teaching of the Scriptures in the local church setting. He is to be experienced in the Word, knowing what it is to be diligent in study, presenting himself to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, who correctly handles the Word of Truth (2 Tim. 2:15). Alongside of this he needs to have the God-given ability to communicate the truth of the Word to others and should be able to make it relevant.

Verse 3: “Not given to much wine”: The Greek, *paronoiis*, means addicted to wine (Titus 1:7): In a culture where alcohol is a serious problem, he needs to be an example particularly in this area and ensure he is not a stumbling block to anyone. (See Proverbs 23:29-35). Rather than being controlled by alcohol he should be controlled by the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18). Although wine was in common use in Paul’s day mainly because of inadequate water supply, it was normally considerably diluted and to become drunk was considered shameful even in pagan society, let alone in the church.

Violence and quarrelsome are two evils that stem from being “given to much wine” as indicated by *paronoiis* and prohibit a man from eldership. He should avoid all forms of bullying, irritableness, bad-tempered speech (Psalm 141:3) or action and he should not be argumentative (2 Tim. 2:24). Instead he must be gentle and approachable even to those who oppose him.

“Not a lover of money” (see 6:6-10): The lust of money has been described as the devil’s bait. This evil will destroy God-given motivation, perception to God’s guidance and dependence and trust in Him (Phil. 4:19). In place of these virtues will be selfishness, covetousness, underhanded conniving, lack of integrity and spiritual ruin. The effective Christian leader will concentrate on those values that are beyond the price of money.

Verses 4-5: He must **manage the affairs of his family in a way that honours God** and is a good example to others. A man who cannot manage his own household and gain the obedient respect of his children is certainly not going to be able to manage God’s Household and indeed is not fit to do so. Furthermore, if his family is unruly and his home life disorganized it is a negative reflection on him and a poor example to those within the church and a slur on the Christian faith to those without (see verse 7). Therefore an elder must first be proved in the privacy of his own home by his example and his ability to lead others to saving faith and Christian development before he is given a public place within the leadership of the local church.

Verse 6: He should not be a recent convert or a novice. This is a responsibility for spiritually mature men of experience, who have proved themselves capable and worthy of such a task. For a person to be thrust into leadership prematurely is to risk them falling into the same judgment or condemnation as the devil, and become lifted up with self-importance and pride (see Isaiah 14:13-15, Ezekiel 28:11-19).

Verse 7: Finally in this list of qualifications for Christian leadership in the church, the overseer must have a **good reputation from those outside the church**. Returning to the first qualification, he must be above reproach or blameless. He is not only to shepherd those within the church and be a good example as a leader, he

is to seek to bring others to a saving knowledge of Christ, and anything short of a blameless lifestyle will be of great hindrance to both.

Verses 8-10: We turn our attention now to the minor office within the church – that of the deacon. The words *deacon* and *deaconess* are derived from the Greek word *diakonos* which is often translated *servant* or *waiter*. It is generally believed that the office of deacon originated in the selection of seven men, among them Stephen, to assist with the practical or material work of the early church as recorded in Acts 6:1-4. Although not indicated in this passage the role is not limited to men as Romans 16:1 indicates where Phoebe is referred to as “a servant of the church in Cenchrea.” (See also Phil. 4:3).

It is notable that the qualifications for the office are similar to those of the elder apart from the prerequisite of being able to teach. They are to be people of dignified and honourable character who have been proved fit for the task. Because their focus is the business and material area of the local church they need to have some business acumen and be completely honest, realizing the importance of their task and taking it seriously. They should be worthy of respect and show respect for others. They should also be sincere and not hypocritical in speech or action, and have a good grasp of the deep truths of the faith – “with a clear conscience”. In other words, their lives should correspond with these truths.

Verses 11-12: Their wives (and other women called to the role) are also to be living appropriately, with decency, avoiding the trap of gossip or slander and anything else that would bring the office and Christian witness into disrepute. They, too, need to be trustworthy in every way.

Verse 12: The same marital requirements apply to the deacon as to the elder. As examples, they must be devoted and faithful to their marriage partner and see to it that their household is well organized. Anything short of this disqualifies a person for the office.

Verse 13: Those who serve well in this role, displaying the moral qualities required, “gain an excellent standing” – become well respected and are role models for other believers. They earn for themselves promotion in the Lord’s service. In the process their personal faith in Christ is strengthened as they see the principles of His word working out in their lives through their obedience. Such spiritual growth and strengthening, of course, is not limited to deacons alone, but is for all who are faithful and obedient.

Verses 14-15: Paul had apparently anticipated being delayed in Macedonia and therefore, in the event that he could not be with Timothy as soon as he would have liked, he sent him this letter of instruction. (A comparison with 6:3 implies that such instruction comes from Christ Himself).

Verse 15 gives the reason for his writing and forms the key to the theme of the letter. Paul wrote to his young protégé so that he might “know how people ought to conduct themselves [as members] in God’s household, which is the church of the living God.” Here God is described as “the *living* God” – in contrast to the many false dead gods in the pagan world particularly in Ephesus where Timothy was serving (Acts 19:23-35). The church is shown to be His household with redeemed believers being His children, indicating family relationship. Just as there must be a proper code of orderly conduct for the smooth running of a household, so God’s household also requires the same and such is set out in this letter. Timothy’s responsibility was not only to be familiar with this code of conduct but to see that it was in place.

The motivation for living a God-honouring life should come from an appreciation and love for God and what He has achieved for the believer through Christ, rather than it being just a legalistic expectation of what is required of him/her. Such correct motivation ensures that the Christian life is vibrant, meaningful and Holy Spirit directed and energized, rather than dry and formalistic with little direction or sense of purpose.

The word “church” in the New Testament is translated from the Greek word *ekklesia* which comes from two words *ek* meaning “out” and *kaleo* meaning “call”. It consists of all those who have responded to the call of God and have been called out from among the world to belong to Him.

Not only is the church described as “God’s household” (indicating also that it belongs to Him – Acts 20:28b), as a called out body of believers, it is also described as “the pillar and foundation of the truth”. It is the only entity on earth that possesses, upholds and propagates the truth of the Word of God. (See 2 Tim. 1:13-14).

Verse 16: Specifically, the truth which the church is to uphold and propagate is contained within the mystery -- the unfolding of the NT revelation of the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ -- as this verse indicates (see also Col. 1:25-27). It is beyond all question that such revelation is great – it is amazing, tremendous and wonderful – beyond all human conception. Its facts are summarized here in what is alleged to have been part of an early church hymn.

God was revealed in human form (John 1:14). In the Person of Jesus Christ He took upon Himself perfect humanity and revealed Himself to man in a form man could comprehend. The Almighty Agent of creation limited Himself to a human body (Phil. 2:6-8). Notice that Christ’s deity is emphasised here as well – “*God was revealed in human form*”.

Was vindicated by the Spirit as to His true identity as God -- at His baptism (Matt. 3:16-17, John 1:32-34), through miracles wrought in the power of the Spirit (Matt. 12:28, John 20:30-31), and ultimately in His resurrection (Romans 1:4, 8:11).

Was seen of Angels: Angels watched every aspect of His mission on earth from the time He left His rightful place in the splendours of Glory until He was received back as the mighty Conqueror. They announced and were witnesses to His humble birth in Bethlehem. They ministered to Him during His earthly life (Matt. 4:11). They no doubt watched in absolute amazed horror as He allowed Himself to be taken by the creatures He had created and subjected to all that was involved in His shameful death of crucifixion (see Matt. 26:53). They were also the first witnesses to His resurrection. Finally they were present at His ascension and joyously welcomed Him back to His place in glory.

Was preached among the nations: This statement shows that the content of the message is Christ Himself (Romans 1:2-3, 1 Cor. 1:23, 2:2) and that it is for all people – all nations. In obedience to His command His disciples took the Gospel message (the Good News concerning Christ) to the nations of the then known world even though it cost the majority of them their own lives. Down through the years the true Church has continued its propagation often in times of persecution and hardship (Matt. 28:18-20, Acts 1:8).

Was believed on in the world: Although there were those who rejected Christ when He was here on earth, there were many who believed on Him. Such has been the case ever since – there are those who reject His claims, but there are also those who believe and enter into all the blessings of redemption. The two classes that God is primarily concerned with are those who receive and those who reject His offer of mercy through Christ. This is not referring to those who believe *about* Him but those who put their trust in Him and commit their lives to Him.

Was received up into glory: In ultimate triumph, having defeated the forces of Satan and having paid the penalty for sin, He ascended to the place that was His by right and was exalted to the highest place (Psalm 24:7-10, Phil. 2:9-11). We cannot think of His going without remembering His coming again according to His own promise and that of the Heavenly messengers at His ascension (John 14:1-3, Acts 1:10-11).

CHAPTER FOUR

This chapter begins the second section of the epistle dealing with specific instructions to Timothy in his pastoral role.

In contrast to the glorious mystery of Godliness (3:14-16), another of the issues Paul deals with in writing to Timothy, his son in the faith, is that of false teachers and their teaching (see 1:3-7, 18-20. In 1:20 he names two of the proponents). As has been pointed out, Timothy was ministering in Ephesus and some years earlier Paul had issued a warning to the Ephesian elders concerning this very subject (Acts 20:28-31. See also Jude vs. 3-4).

The first five verses deal specifically with the problem of false teachers in latter times showing the characteristics of their methods and teaching.

Verse 1: The warning concerning false teachers and their teaching originates with the Holy Spirit Himself who not only clearly revealed the problem to Paul in order to warn Timothy and succeeding generations of believers, but emphasizes it throughout Scripture. The OT prophets warned of false prophets and the NT apostles of false teachers not only from outside the Church, but actually coming from within the Church as well (Acts 20:30, 2 Peter 2:1-3). Scripture seems to indicate that the problem would be continuous throughout the church age but more extreme in latter times – those close to the return of Christ.

The false teachers referred to here would arise as a result of some professors of the Christian faith abandoning “the faith” (1:3, Jude 3) and allowing themselves to be seduced or deceived. Such deceptive doctrine emanates from evil spirits and demons. They, in turn, would seduce or deceive others. The word translated “abandon” in the NIV is the Greek word from which we get the word “apostatize” and refers to someone moving away from an original position.

Verse 2: The characteristics of these false teachers and their teaching to whom Paul refers is outlined here. (It is not difficult to see why he calls them “savage wolves” in Acts 20:29).

- **Demonic (verse 1b):**
Any doctrine that deviates from the plain teaching of Scripture, particularly concerning the Person and work of Christ, has its origin in the demonic realm and is both deceptive and spiritually destructive. It leads away from God and ultimately to Hell itself. It is notable that while false teaching comes *from* demons, it comes *through* men – men who have allowed themselves to become servants of Satan.
- **Hypocritical:**
They are not what they appear to be. They profess to be true believers, but are not. They are not only deceitful in their speech but also in their identity and because of their seemingly plausible outward appearance they worm their way in among God’s people (2 Tim. 3:6).
- **Deceitful:**
Through its pious appearance and presentation, their doctrine claims to lead to God and deeper spiritual experience, but it is in fact destructive and instead leads to spiritual ruin. Those not well grounded in the Word are particularly vulnerable.
- **Have seared consciences:**
They have deliberately dealt in falsehood both in doctrine and manner of life to the extent that their “consciences have been seared (or branded) as with a hot iron”. They have become calloused or desensitized. Once they would have shrunk in horror from evil deeds, evil speaking and false doctrine, but now they can propagate such without a qualm. (See 1:19. “Faith” here implies continual adherence to and application of the truth, and results in a “good conscience” that is responsive to truth and has not been desensitized).

Verse 3: One of the elements of the false gnostic teaching in Ephesus was asceticism – the practice of self-mortification and physical self-denial. This doctrine places great emphasis upon formal ritual and human effort

in order to gain favour with God. The extent of the deception is realized in the claim that these ascetic practices were necessary for salvation and sanctification. It is man seeking to gain favour with God through his own efforts – a distinguishing mark of all false religion.

The situation in Ephesus that Paul was writing to Timothy about concerned the abstinence of marriage and certain foods. The false teachers were saying that people could not find approval with God unless they complied with their doctrine. But, in fact, neither celibacy nor any form of diet either saves or sanctifies. The seriousness of the problem was that this teaching was depreciating the redemptive work of Christ and substituting it with a form of human effort (see Gal. 2:21).

Verses 4-5: The doctrine is flawed in that, because God created both marriage and food, they are intrinsically good and both are to be enjoyed with gratitude by believers. God has decreed this in His Word (see Mark 7:14-19, Acts 10:15, Col. 2:16-17). Food and marriage are essential for life and procreation. There may be times when God calls a person to a life of celibacy because of a particular ministry and He prepares that person accordingly, but such is never the means of salvation or sanctification.

Regarding thanksgiving Vincent says, “Thanksgiving to God has a sanctifying effect. The food itself has no moral quality (Rom. 14:14), but acquires a holy quality by its consecration to God; by being acknowledged as God’s gift, and partaken of as nourishing the life for God’s service.”

Verse 6: An important aspect of Timothy’s ministry as a leader in the Church was the instruction in the Word of God of those under his pastoral care. The NIV is rather weak here because Timothy was to do more than just “point out” these matters mentioned; he was to continually and consistently *instruct* those under his care in the Word of God concerning these and other matters dealt with in the epistle (verse 13), and to see that it was clearly understood.

In order to do so, he needed to have a consistent and continual intake of the Word of God himself and apply it to his own life first (2 Tim. 2:15). Doing this, he would be spiritually nourished enabling him to “be a good minister (servant) of Jesus Christ”, being true to the truths and faith he had received from a Godly grandmother and mother (2 Tim. 1:5), able to build up the believers and counteract the false teaching originating from the demonic realm.

Verses 7-9: Timothy should not waste his time becoming involved in arguments concerning empty and vain philosophy such as that arising out of the prevailing gnostic false teaching or any other false teaching for that matter. Paul labels it as “godless myths (1:4) and old wives’ tales” (or the worthless chatter of imbeciles – those who are mentally impaired) because such was without substance – empty and futile. It would only detract from his personal study, spiritual nourishment and comprehension of the Word, and result in confusion (Col. 2:8) which would seriously hinder his ministry.

Rather, he should discipline himself to be godly (having a proper attitude and response toward God) – to concentrate on his personal life, his relationship with the Lord, building into his life those principles which would make him effective for God (verse 12).

Verse 8: It is true that “physical training” (NIV) or “bodily exercise” (NKJ) has some value. It is necessary for good physical health and a fit body with which to serve God, but it is only for this life. Godliness, however, has value not only in this life but for the next as well. It affects every area of our lives and beings for time and eternity. The fitness of the body is important, but far more important is the fitness of the soul.

Verse 9: Paul assures Timothy that the saying concerning the supremacy of spiritual training and its benefit for the present life and the life to come “is reliable and worthy of complete acceptance by everybody” (Amplified NT).

Verses 10-11: It is with this in mind that Paul says “we labour and strive”, and even suffer reproach, because “we have put (fixed) our hope in the living God”. Again He is referred to as “the living God” in contrast to the false demonic gods of paganism or various figments of corrupted human imagination (3:15). The word “hope” here is not to be confused with the common use of the word which involves uncertainty; rather it is resting on the assurance of all that God has promised. Vincent points out that in classical Greek it has the general signification of “expectancy”. It means trusting God in all things and therefore labouring and striving for Him.

The description of God as “the Saviour of all men” refers to the fact that He would have all to be saved and has made full and perfect provision for their salvation. The statement does not teach universal salvation, regardless of repentance and committal to Christ, which contradicts the teaching of the NT, but emphasizes the fact that within the divine plan of redemption there is capacity for all to be saved. Of the phrase “especially of those who believe” Alford comments, “in these alone does that universal salvation, which God has provided, become actual” -- because only these appropriate His salvation.

Verse 11: Again Paul stresses the need for Timothy to teach the things he has brought before him. It is emphasised that he is to do so not as suggestions, but as commandments from the Lord. (See verse 6 and notes).

Verse 12: Because of his youth Timothy needed to earn the respect of those to whom he ministered. His instruction needed to be not just verbal, but also demonstrated by his Godly behaviour and good example. Good Christian character and integrity would counteract the disadvantage of his youth, gain him the respect and attention of other believers and make him an effective leader. Two distinct areas are dealt with in this passage: -

PERSONAL LIFE

Here we see the necessary qualities of a Godly personal life. It applies to all believers but especially to those involved in leadership. Paul outlines the following areas in which Timothy was to be a good example to the believers:

- **Speech:** Writing to the Ephesians (the assembly in which Timothy was ministering) Paul said, “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen” (Eph. 4:25, 29). Believers are to be characterized by wholesome speech that is edifying to others. It is easy to give vent to hurt feelings in a destructive way, but it is not easy to overcome the results of such.
- **Life or Behaviour:** His manner of life needed to be upright, honest, showing integrity and Godliness, thereby reinforcing his profession and ministry and being a good example to others (Titus 2:10-12, 1 Peter 1:15, 2:12, 3:16).
- **Love:** The quality of putting the good of others first. As a minister of Jesus Christ he needed to show the way in self-sacrificing love and compassion (1 Cor. 13).
- **Faith:** Being characterized by faithfulness, steadfastness and commitment is a necessary quality in an effective Christian leader (Eph. 6:16). Trusting the Lord in all situations is necessary to know divine guidance (Proverbs 3:5-6).
- **Purity or Practical Holiness:** In a world pervaded by impurity and corruption believers (especially those in leadership) must stand out by their purity in thought, speech, motive and action (3:2). This is governed to a large extent by what is allowed into the mind (Col. 3:1-2, Romans 12:2). A conscious effort needs to be made to avoid the world’s moral pollution.

PUBLIC MINISTRY

Verses 13-15: Having seen the necessary qualities for personal life, these verses outline the necessary qualities for effective public ministry.

- **Public reading of Scripture:** It is the written Word of God and must be given its rightful place in the life of the Church for effective worship, witnessing and practical living. It is the source of all authority, doctrine and practice. (See Nehemiah 8:1-3, 8).
- **Preaching or Exhortation:** Accurate Spirit inspired exposition of the passage, application to personal life, direction, rebuke, encouragement and challenge to obedience.
- **Teaching:** Careful and prayerful instruction and explanation of Biblical doctrine and principles, which are the basis for all Christian worship and practice.
- **Continual exercise of God-given gifts (verse 14):** The particular gift the Lord had given to Timothy is outlined in verse 13. All gifts are given for the mutual benefit and building up of the Church and every believer has at least one (Eph. 4:12).
- **Diligence and commitment (verse 15).** Such calls for wholeheartedness, discipline, perseverance and self-sacrifice. (See 1 Cor. 15:58, 2 Tim. 2:15).

Verse 16: The chapter ends with an exhortation to Timothy regarding the two areas dealt with in verses 12-15 -- his personal life and his public ministry. He was not only to pay *close* attention to them, he was also to pay *continual* attention to them, as implied by the word *persevere*. His personal life had to correspond with his public preaching and teaching in order to be effective.

In doing so he would both save himself and his hearers. The main thrust of the chapter is the combating of false teaching. The diligent and systematic teaching of the Word of God and its application to the life is the greatest safeguard not only for the preacher, but also for his hearers. It will save them from becoming involved in false teaching and its destructive consequences.

CHAPTER FIVE

This chapter continues with specific instructions to Timothy, showing first of all what his attitude as a younger person was to be toward the various age groups in the Assembly in his pastoral role. It thereby carries specific instruction for all those in assembly leadership. In the course of this instruction it deals with both the aged and the young, with widows and the responsibility of their families, and also with elders.

Verses 1-2: Four different groups of believers are referred to here: Older men, younger men, older women and younger women. All are to be treated as members of God's household or family (3:15) and healthy family relationship is to be maintained. (See also Titus 2:1-8).

Many of those under Timothy's pastoral care were new converts needing instruction, including some older people. As a young person, what was to be his attitude in instructing or correcting them? Titus 2:1-8 gives the content of such instruction, while this passage gives the correct attitude. These passages do not include those who, while professing to be Christians, pose a definite threat to the Assembly and Christian witness (see Acts 20:29-31, 2 Tim. 3:5, Titus 1:13, 3:10).

Here, as the NIV indicates, the text is not necessarily referring to someone occupying the office of elder (as KJV), but rather a man of advanced years. An older man who has fallen into sin or doctrinal error is not to be rebuked harshly but treated with respect and entreated as one would a father. The word translated *exhort* implies "coming alongside of" particularly with the idea of strengthening and encouraging to do better, reminding us of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in regard to the believer. Whenever the need arises to rebuke it must always be done with the motivation of love and the desire to help rather than to hurt. The restoration and maintenance of spiritual health and welfare must always be the priority.

Young men are to be treated as brothers, not as inferiors. They should be allowed to view their opinions without being belittled when they are wrong and encouraged when they are right. One of their greatest needs is for good role models – leaders that they can respect and look up to, whose example is worth emulating.

As with older men, older women should be treated with respect and affection as mothers. They should be given all the help and esteem that the maternal relationship deserves.

Younger women should always be treated as sisters “with absolute purity” – especially by those in leadership and not be the object of unholy desire. Barclay says, “. . . it is a fearful thing when physical things dominate the relationship between the sexes, and when a man cannot see a woman without thinking in terms of the body. There must be a fellowship of mind and heart between God’s people which is cleansed of lust and rendered secure by the highest kind of mutual Christian love”. All sexual activity is to be confined solely to marriage.

HOW WIDOWS ARE TO BE TREATED (verses 3-16)

This passage supports the mandate of Scripture that women who have lost the support of their husbands are to be cared for (Ex. 22:22-24, Deut. 27:19, Is. 1:17). There are three different categories of widows mentioned here: --

- Those who are really in need (verses 3, 5, 16b).
- Those who have families to care for them (verses 4, 16a).
- Those who are living for sensual pleasure (verse 6).

Verse 3: Here we have mention of those widows who were really in need. They were those who, apart from the Church, were destitute. They had no families in the Church and no means of income. Timothy was instructed to see that they were especially recognized and their needs met by the Church. There were no welfare organizations in those days, and unless the church cared for these people many would be left alone and homeless to starve.

Verse 4: But where a widow had children or other family members who were believers in the church, these family members were to recognize their responsibility and put their faith into practice by making provision for them (verse 16). In this way children and grandchildren can repay their parents and grand parents for their sacrificial nurture and input into their own lives, and by such practical application of their faith demonstrate the honour and esteem their parents and grand parents deserve. Furthermore, such reciprocation of love is pleasing to God.

However, Barclay makes this proviso: *“This very passage goes on to lay down certain of the qualities of the people whom the Church is called upon to support. What is true of the Church is true within the family. If a person is to be supported, that person must be supportable. If a parent is taken into a home and then by thoughtless, inconsiderate, unkind, unwise conduct causes nothing but trouble, then another situation arises. There is a double duty here; it is the duty of the child to support the parent, but it is the duty of the parent to be such that support is possible within the structure of the home”.*

Verses 5-6: A contrast is shown here between the widow who qualified for the Church’s support and the one who didn’t. It was the Godly woman who was alone and who put her hope in God, who looked to Him and whose lifestyle was fashioned accordingly who was deserving of such support.

Verse 6: The one who had turned to the world for sensual pleasure and gratification forfeited such qualification and, although physically alive, was spiritually dead. That which she considered life was far short of the quality God intended for her.

Verses 7-8: Paul here instructs Timothy to give the believers these instructions “so that no one may be open to blame” particularly concerning the responsibility of providing and caring for those in need among the members of one’s own family or relatives.

Verse 8: Anyone professing to be a believer who neglects this responsibility is considered to have denied the faith for, as Vincent quoting Bengel points out, “Faith does not abolish natural duties, but perfects and strengthens them”. Such a person is referred to as being “worse than an unbeliever” for even unbelievers who have not accepted God’s grace and strength, as have believers, fulfill this duty and care for their own. He or she has “denied the faith” by virtue of the fact that they have denied the principle of compassionate Christian love which is at the very heart of Biblical Christianity (Romans 5:8).

Verses 9-10: It appears that in the early Church there was a distinctive order of widows chosen for special service. After suffering the bereavement of her loved one, if a widow fulfilled the necessary spiritual qualifications, she need not feel she was of no further use as far as ministry was concerned, but her remaining years could be put to good use. After all, at her time of life, through practical experience, she should have a lot to offer other younger believers, especially younger women. Apparently, if she fulfilled the qualifications, including taking a special pledge to Christ, she would be put on the list pertaining to this order as mentioned in this passage.

According to McArthur, “in the NT 60 was considered retirement age. By that age older women would have completed child rearing and would have the time, maturity and character to devote their lives in service to God and the Church. They would also not be likely to remarry and become involved in that commitment”.

Paul gave to Timothy the following additional qualifications for a widow to be included in this particular list: --

- Marital faithfulness. That she had been true to her husband at all times.
- A reputation for good deeds such as --
 - Experience in child rearing. If she is a mother, that she has the respect of her children and grand children, having sought to bring them up “in the training and instruction of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4b).
 - Hospitality. Her home is a place of Christian welcome and a sanctuary for others (Heb. 13:2).
 - “Washing the feet of the saints” refers to the menial duty of slaves and implies a servant’s heart in relation to fellow believers.
 - Compassion for those in need and a willingness to help where needed.

Verses 11-15: Paul now gives instruction concerning widows who did not qualify for the distinctive order as shown above. Those who are under 60 should not be put on such a list because of the likelihood of their breaking that special pledge to Christ in order to be committed to another marriage. By breaking their first pledge they would bring judgment upon themselves. Vincent says that this refers to a burden of guilt or self-condemnation that they would carry about with them in their new married life.

Verse 13: Furthermore, they are more likely than older women to become idle and restless and, exploiting their position as they visit from house to house as occasions for gossip, pry into things that are none of their concern and spread rumours they should not. Thus the ministry they should be involved in would degenerate into an empty social round undermining the ministry of the Church and bring disgrace on Christian witness.

Verses 14-15: Paul counsels that they should therefore remarry and become involved as a homemaker, a vital and noble task with great potential to further Christian witness. In this way the enemy (those who oppose the Christian faith – Titus 2:8) would be given no opportunity for criticism and slander. His counsel was well founded for some had already fallen prey to the devil’s trap and abandoned or made shipwreck of their faith (4:1).

Verse 16: The exhortation of verse 4 is restated with the addition that any believer (the text is more accurately rendered *men or women*) should make provision for any widows (not just parents or grand parents) in their

wider family circles so that the Church would not be burdened with their support. The Church would then have greater resources available to assist those who really were in need (verse 3).

SOME RULES CONCERNING THOSE IN LEADERSHIP

Verses 17-18: Reference is made to those in leadership as elders who serve the local church well. They are those who have a God-given care for fellow believers and a passion for unbelievers to be saved. They are known as astute and practical in the administration of the assembly and wise in counsel. Much of their time is spent in preparation for teaching and preaching. They do so in the energy and direction of the Holy Spirit and those under their ministry are edified and built up in the faith. These, Paul points out to Timothy, are worthy of double honour.

Verse 18: What is meant by “honour” is illustrated in this verse by reference to Deut. 25:4 where oxen were used to thresh the grain. The sheaves of corn were laid on the threshing floor and oxen in pairs were either driven repeatedly across them or tethered to a centre post and made to walk round and round on the grain. Sometimes a threshing sledge was harnessed to them. Whatever method was used, however, they were not to be muzzled, but left free to eat as much of the grain as they wished as reward for the work they were doing.

Applying this to elders as described in verse 17, they should have the greater acknowledgement from their assemblies. Such should be in the form of respect and, where appropriate, monetary remuneration as indicated by the statement, “The worker deserves his wages” (a reference to Christ’s own words in Luke 10:7. See also 1 Cor. 9:14). At the very least his expenses in relation to his ministry should be generously met and any other legitimate needs he may have.

Verses 19-20: Because those in leadership are more vulnerable to Satanic attack that comes in various ways (sometimes in the form of false rumour through disgruntled believers), great care needs to be taken by other members of the assembly regarding accusations against them. Their ministry, reputation and example can easily be compromised by such false rumour. Even where genuine problems do arise and wrongs have been committed they need to be dealt with in a Scriptural manner and should never become the object of idle, irresponsible gossip. “Serious accusations must be investigated and confirmed by the same process as established in Matthew 18:15-20” (McArthur).

It is vital that the accuracy of such matters be established and this cannot be achieved without the personal testimony of “two or three witnesses” (Deut. 19:15). The first step is that the person in question needs to have been approached by at least one other believer who has become aware of the problem. If it is proved that wrong has been committed and the matter is able to be dealt with satisfactorily at that point through repentance and restoration, it should be carried no further. But if not, two or three other believers (appropriately other elders in this case) should be called upon to make a further approach. If, on this occasion, the matter is dealt with satisfactorily, no further action needs to be taken.

Verse 20: But if the matter is still not resolved at this point and the wrong has been proven, the assembly needs to be informed by way of public rebuke concerning the person in question and that person should be stood down from leadership. If considered serious enough, the person should also be excluded from assembly fellowship until the matter *is* satisfactorily dealt with (1 Cor. 5:1-5). Such procedure acts as a warning and deterrent to others. “The Church should never give the impression to the world that it is condoning sin” (Barclay). Sin condoned is a hindrance to the testimony, spiritual life and growth of the local assembly.

Verse 21: Paul gives to Timothy a solemn charge, the seriousness of which is emphasised by the phrase “in the sight of God, Jesus Christ and the elect angels”. Angels are God’s chosen attendants and ministers, always ready to do His bidding. Guy King says, “If they rejoice at the conversion of sinners, they must weep at the

confusion of saints”. Timothy was to follow their example and see to it that these God-given instructions were carried out implicitly without showing any partiality or favouritism in dealing with any matter that Paul had set before him. In particular, if a wrong had been committed, it was to be dealt with as prescribed above, no matter who the person was. Accusers and accused were to be heard and treated in an unbiased manner and any subsequent action was to be carried out in the same way.

Verse 22: Neither should favouritism be shown in admitting others to the role of leadership in the local assembly. Thus the exhortation, “Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands...” Some commentators suggest that this refers to receiving people back into fellowship after wrongdoing and repentance. While there may be some merit in this interpretation, the context seems to suggest it refers to the choosing of suitable persons for leadership.

Great care needs to be exercised in this area also so that unfit persons are not admitted. If Timothy lacked due care in this vital matter and chose someone who brought discredit to the assembly through sinful behaviour, he would thereby be “sharing in the sins of others” and linked with the offender in responsibility for the outcome. Instead Timothy was to keep himself pure – specifically, free from the situation just mentioned.

Verse 23: This verse seems to be inserted by way of parenthesis and refers to Timothy’s physical health. Perhaps the matters in hand reminded Paul of the stresses involved in ministry. Whatever, physical health is an important factor that needs to be taken into consideration in the work of the Lord. Paul’s reference to his stomach gives the impression that Timothy was of nervous disposition and thus more vulnerable to the effects of stress. Paul’s advice to him was to not just drink only water, but to “use a *little* wine because of your stomach and frequent illnesses”. This was purely in a medicinal capacity as implied by the words *use a little wine* and the reference to his stomach and his frequent illnesses. Notice, it was a *little* wine. He was to *use* it; not *abuse* it. Scripture is emphatic concerning the wrong use of strong drink and this verse in no way condones it (see Proverbs 23:29-35, Eph. 5:18a, 1 Tim. 3:3, 8).

Verses 24-25: Paul now returns to the theme of the passage – the vitally important subject of choosing the right men for leadership in the local assembly. In exercising this strategic duty it seems he is reminding Timothy that outward appearances can be misleading. He would therefore need to be much in prayer (James 1:5) and endowed with divine wisdom and spiritual discernment.

Some are obviously unfit for leadership as seen by their sinful behaviour and it is easy to make a judgment call regarding them. The unfitness of others, however, is not so easy to detect and their weaknesses tend to reveal themselves after they have been placed in a position of responsibility. Hence, “the sins of others trail behind them”. In either case they will not escape God’s ultimate judgment.

Verse 25: Conversely, some are obviously fit for leadership because of their consistent Godly lifestyles and testimony, while others do not reveal the full extent of their strengths until they are placed in a position of responsibility for many of their good deeds are done behind the scenes. However, whether good or bad they are all known to God if not to man and He will reward accordingly.

CHAPTER SIX

Paul continues his instruction to Timothy, dealing with the slave/master relationship, false teachers and the evils of materialism. He concludes on a personal note, mentioning things that Timothy needed to avoid and things he needed to build into his life.

Verses 1-2: The slave/master relationship was a common part of normal life in the days of Paul, the modern counterpart being the employee/employer relationship. Believers in the subservient position were to have a good work ethic and treat their masters with full respect which included both their attitude to their masters and also to the work assigned them. In so doing God's name and the teaching of the Gospel of Christ would be honoured by being demonstrated in this practical way rather than dishonoured or "slandered" or evil spoken of. For this reason the Christian employee should be the most reliable, hardworking and honest of all employees, putting the Kingdom of God before all else. His or her quality of service should be an expression of his or her commitment to Christ. Such integrity prepares the way for effective witnessing as to the truth of the Gospel. (See Eph. 6:5-8).

Verse 2: Those having believing masters were not to show less respect for them by over familiarization but were to maintain a proper submissive attitude without expecting favouritism. While there is equality between believers concerning their relationship in Christ, this does not override employer/employee relationships or civil distinctions. Therefore, believers with believing masters should serve them equally as well if not better. Serving a believing master should produce more loyalty and diligent service out of Christian love for them and other believers who benefit from their employment.

Verses 3-5: Here Paul resumes his warning concerning false teachers. There is strong implication in verse 3 to the fact that the instruction he is giving in this epistle did not originate with Paul, but is the instruction "of our Lord Jesus Christ" and thereby constitutes "godly teaching" – that which conforms to the will and character of God (1:18, 3:14-15). All who disagree with such are false teachers and are to be treated accordingly (1:3).

Verses 4-5: These two verses declare plainly the characteristics of the false teachers to whom Paul is referring and such individuals still plague the church today: --

Pride or conceit: Their primary aim was to promote self rather than to promote Christ and His Word. False teachers covet the praise of men rather than the praise of God. They are more concerned with their personal reputation than Christ's honour and glory, and gaining a following for themselves.

Ignorance and delusion: In their pride they are destitute of the truth of God and ignorant of the things that matter most. They are given over to much oratory but little if any spiritual understanding (1:7). To those weak in the faith they have the ability to sound as if they know what they are talking about when in reality they don't.

Argumentative: They love to initiate arguments on controversial subjects devoid of spiritual benefit and stir up quarrelling that leads to bitterness and malicious talk, evil suspicions and friction. They are much more interested in winning their point than winning souls for Christ or edifying believers.

Divisive: Their methods create division within the church rather than promoting Biblically based, Christ-centred unity. They appeal particularly to like-minded individuals and those weak in the faith whom they lead further astray.

Materialistic: Not only are they driven by an attitude of self-importance, but also by an unhealthy desire for financial gain and they endeavour to manipulate their hearers accordingly. They are strangers to self-sacrificial service for the Lord and to others because their aim is to advance their own interests. They equate godliness with financial gain and spread the false philosophy that to be godly is to be materially wealthy. Such gives rise to the propagation of the so-called "prosperity gospel" with its self-serving doctrine declaring that if you are not materially wealthy you are outside the will of God. This teaching is completely false because it misrepresents true godliness. (See Matt. 8:19-20, Luke 9:58).

Verse 6: In contrast to what has just been said regarding false teachers and their doctrine, Paul states the genuine Christian attitude -- “*Godliness with contentment is great gain*”. Living a life in conformity to the will of God and being content with the situation and circumstances into which God has placed us is indeed *great gain*. It is great gain because: --

- It is freedom from the bondage of a persistent self-centred grasping materialistic mentality that is never satisfied.
- It is freedom to appreciate and enjoy the blessings of God that we would otherwise take for granted.
- It is freedom to worship and serve God with a thankful heart without the distraction of coveting and wasting time and effort trying to attain that which we do not have or need. (See Matt. 6:33).
- It is the key to true Christian joy and God’s direction and blessing in life, and ultimate eternal reward.

Verses 7-8: Here is a good reason for cultivating the attitude of “godliness and contentment”: We brought nothing of material value into the world, and when we finally leave everything of materialistic worth will be left behind. The tragedy of a materialistically focused life is emphasised by the case of the rich fool in Luke 12:13-21 where the man had prepared himself for a life of physical comfort and ease, but when his time came to leave this world he had failed to prepare his soul for eternity and was “not rich toward God”. In the words of God Himself, such a person is indeed “a fool!” for he had amassed much material wealth but lost his own soul (Mark 8:36-37).

Verse 8: Having the necessities of life, the godly attitude is one that is content and thankful to God for His provision, secure in the knowledge that He has promised that if we seek first His Kingdom and righteousness He knows what we have need of and will provide accordingly (see Matt. 6:28-34, Phil. 4:11).

Verses 9-10: A warning is given here against the *desire* to be rich. It is a warning not necessarily to those who *are* rich (concerning whom Paul speaks in verses 17-19) but to those whose priority and focus is material wealth. They spend their time and energy in a futile effort seeking to attain riches that mostly continue to elude them. It matters not to them whether they do it honestly or dishonestly or who gets hurt in the process. They leave God out of their schemes and fall pray to sinful temptations and lose their integrity and self-respect; they make foolish decisions which end in bitter disappointment, ruin and ultimate eternal destruction.

Verse 10: Money or wealth in itself is not evil and can be used for either good or bad purposes. It is a neutral thing of which we need a certain amount to live in this world, but we should always remember God is the One who gives the ability to acquire it (Deut. 8:18). It is the unhealthy all-consuming passion or love for money that Paul warns of and this grasping, insatiable lust is the ground for all kinds of sin.

There are those people who, as a result, have wandered from the faith and from the things that really matter in life. They have lived to bitterly regret their bad decisions and are left with nothing but remorse and grief. To their dismay they find there are more valuable things than money and material wealth, but because in their selfishness they have alienated themselves from others and rejected God, those things are largely beyond their reach.

Verses 11-12: As he nears the conclusion of the letter Paul issues a further challenge to Timothy. In so doing he refers to him as a “man of God”, reminding him of whom he served and his spiritual character and calling. If he was to maintain these effectively he needed to heed the challenge and “flee from all this”. Specifically, as the immediate context shows, he should avoid the pursuit of self-interest, covetousness and materialism. Instead he should “pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness”.

- Righteousness: He should concentrate on right living before an unrighteous world. Barclay describes righteousness (Gk *dikaioisune*) as “giving both to men and God their due”. The righteous person is the one who does his duty both to God and his fellow men.
- Godliness indicates particularly a consistent reverent attitude toward God. The man of God pursues a strong relationship with God characterized by faith, love, endurance and gentleness.

- Faith here is translated from *pistis* and means *fidelity*. The person characterized by *pistis* is the person who is loyal, faithful and reliable.
- Love is translated from *agape* and is that quality of love that puts God first in appreciation for His grace and blessings; it puts others second and self last.
- Endurance (Gk. *hupomone*) is faithful consistency even under trial. It does not easily give in but gains the victory through God's enabling grace.
- Gentleness or meekness according to both Barclay and Vincent is here translated from *paupatheia*. (The more common word is *praotes*. See Gal. 5:23 for example). He says "it is one of those untranslatable words. It describes the spirit which never blazes into anger for its own wrongs, but which can be purely and devastatingly angry for the wrongs of others. It describes the spirit which knows how to forgive and yet knows how to wage the battle of righteousness. It walks in humility and yet in pride of its high calling from God." It is mindful of the shame of being a sinner on the one hand and the glory of being a child of God on the other. It has a right attitude toward others and a right perspective of self.

Verse 12: Having outlined what the man of God is to avoid, we are now informed of what he must do. He must "fight the good fight of the faith" meaning the cause of Christ. Paul often uses the metaphor of the soldier to describe the Christian (see Ephesians 6:10-18 and my notes, also 1 Tim. 1:18, 2 Tim. 2:3-4). The fight is for the Kingdom of God against the evil powers of Satan. Ample weaponry is provided by God's grace to defeat the enemy but the Christian must put it on (Eph. 6:11, 13).

"Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called . . ." Timothy is encouraged to draw upon the resources of the life to which he was called at his conversion and to which he testified "in the presence of many witnesses", a phrase alluding to either his baptism or his public ordination (2 Tim. 2:2). There is not only ample weaponry to "fight the good fight of the faith" but also ample resources in Christ for daily strength, guidance and enabling.

Verses 13-16: Paul continues to remind Timothy of the pledge he had taken and of the gravity of the ministry to which he was called. In the sight of Almighty God, who is the source and sustainer of all life, and of Jesus Christ, who unflinchingly witnessed before Pontius Pilate, testifying as to the truth of His identity (John 18:37, Rev. 1:5, 3:14) regardless of the consequences, Paul charges Timothy to follow His example and "keep this commandment without spot or blame. . ." The context indicates that the commandment was to "fight the good fight of the faith" (verse 12) acknowledging by word and deed the sovereignty of Christ and all that it involved. He was to do so with purity, integrity and consistency until "the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ" (or throughout his time on earth until he went to be with Christ).

Verse 15a: The great consummating event which is the sure hope of every believer who is truly walking with the Lord is the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ and it will be brought about in God's own time (1 John 3:2-3). Two main points are made here: --

- It is not for us to know the actual time (Acts 1:7) but it is our responsibility to "abide in Him, so that when He appears we may be confident and unashamed before Him at His coming" (1 John 2:28).
- As with all else, God is sovereign and nothing will prevent His purposes from being fulfilled. He had a specific time for Christ to enter the world the first time (Gal. 4:4); He had a specific time for Christ to die and rise again; He had a specific time for the Holy Spirit to be given (Acts 2:1-4) and He has a specific time for Christ's second advent. Beyond this He has a specific time in which He will judge the world in righteousness "for He has appointed a day . . ." (Acts 17:31).

Verses 15b-16: God's sovereignty and majesty are again emphasised here. He is the only God (1:17) and, ultimately He is the only Ruler – the King of kings and Lord of lords. All other rulers are so only because of His directive or permissive will (Daniel 4:25b-26, 32, 35).

Another of His attributes is that of immortality. This is implied in His name "Jehovah" or "Yahweh", transliterated from the Hebrew of Exodus 3:14 where it is rendered "I AM" in the English. He is the eternal,

unchanging self-existing Supreme Being. As such He derives His existence from none and is dependent upon none. Psalm 90:2b says, “From everlasting to everlasting You are God”. This reference takes the perspective of time, looks back before time and declares that God always was there. Then it looks forward beyond time and declares that God will continue to be always there. Such can only ever apply to God for all of His creation whether human or angel had a beginning. God dwells in the eternal present – a totally different dimension from that in which we live. He will always be what He has been and what He is -- unchangeable.

The attribute that sets God apart from His creation more than any other is that of holiness and this is implied by the statement that he “dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see”. Charles Hodge explains holiness as “*a general term for the moral excellence of God. Holiness, on the one hand implies entire freedom from moral evil and, on the other, absolute moral perfection. Freedom from impurity is the primary idea of the word. To sanctify is to cleanse; to be holy is to be clean.*” God possesses absolute and infinite purity – purity that expresses itself in perfect light, consuming all that is contrary to His character (1 John 1:5, Heb. 12:29) yet radiating the warmth of His perfect love to all who come to Him in true repentance and faith. To this One who is totally separate from all that is impure Paul appropriately ascribes all honour and might forever.

Verses 17-19: Here there is further instruction concerning material wealth. This time it is directed not at those who *desire* to get rich (verse 9) but at those believers who are *actually* rich. They are not criticized for having wealth for material wealth in itself is not evil, neither is possession of it if it is obtained honourably. The problem arises when the acquisition of material wealth becomes the priority. Rather, they are told what their attitude should be towards it.

- They should not allow it to make them proud or arrogant. They must not think themselves superior to others, but be mindful of the fact that God is the One who gives the ability to acquire it (Deut. 8:18, James 1:10) and that He has a specific purpose in doing so (Romans 8:28).
- They should not put their hope in it, but realise its uncertainty – that it can be here today and gone tomorrow. Furthermore, it is only of use in this present life (verse 7). Instead they should put their hope and trust in the One who has given them wealth (James 1:17).
- They should realise that with wealth comes responsibility and should use it for the furtherance of God’s Kingdom by being generous, willing to share and rich in good deeds. In so doing they would store up treasure for themselves in Heaven (Matt. 6:19-21) and meanwhile enjoy the satisfying quality of life that is only found in honouring God. Such is “*the life which is life indeed or that which is truly life*” (Vincent).

Verses 20-21: In bringing the epistle to a conclusion, Paul issues Timothy a final heartfelt two-part challenge.

- The first part is to guard that which had been entrusted to his care. The challenge has particular reference to the deposit of truth committed to him (1 Thes. 2:4, 2 Tim. 1:14). The positive response to such a charge would not only preserve his own spiritual welfare, but that of other believers of his day and also that of generations to come down through the centuries to our present day. The use of his name here, “Timothy – he who honours God” -- would surely remind him of the central purpose of his calling and urge him to be true to it.
- The second part of the challenge is to “turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge”. One of the hallmarks of false teachers is the claim to possess superior knowledge such as seen in gnosticism which was prevalent in the early church and in the false cults of today. Through adherence to such “knowledge” some had “wandered from the faith”. Timothy was not to allow himself to be sidetracked by engaging in argument with false teachers but rather to get on with the task of teaching the believers and evangelizing the lost. The greatest weapon against the propagation

of error is the faithful and consistent proclamation of the truth and by this the deposit of truth is preserved. Guy King makes the point that we are not to waste time arguing about the seed but to sow it.

Paul concludes the epistle with the prayer “Grace be with you”. The word “you” is in the plural and includes not just Timothy but all the believers in the Ephesian church and beyond. Thus he ends on the same note with which he began – the “unmerited favour of God” that saves, enables and keeps those who belong to Him.

Notes:

