

Study of 1 Timothy

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Introductory to 1 Timothy

I. Background

The Book of Acts closes with Paul a prisoner in Rome (28:30–31). While the NT does not give us a clear picture of Paul's later years, the following chronology is agreed upon by most students: Paul was acquitted before Caesar and forced to leave Rome after his two years of imprisonment. This would be about the spring of a.d. 62. With Luke and Timothy, he visited Ephesus, where he discovered that his prophecy about the "wolves" (Acts 20:29–30) had been fulfilled, for the church at Ephesus had been invaded by false teachers. His warnings in 1 Timothy suggest that this false teaching was similar to the gnosticism he had attacked at Colosse. Paul ministered there himself for a short time, then left to go to Philippi. He left Timothy behind as his special assistant to oversee the Ephesian church and get rid of the false teachers. Their parting was a sorrowful one, according to 2 Tim. 1:4.

II. The Letter

It is likely that Paul was at Colosse, enjoying his promised visit to Philemon, when he wrote this first letter to young Timothy (Phile. 22). Paul was planning to return to Ephesus shortly (1 Tim. 3:14), but matters in the Ephesian church were so urgent that he dared not delay advising his associate. This letter is filled with encouragement for a youthful Christian worker who was facing many difficult problems in a "big city church." We may summarize these problems as follows:

(1) Timothy was a young man seeking to pastor older people (4:12; 5:1–2), and this was not easy to do.

(2) Timothy greatly missed Paul and wanted to quit (1:3; 2 Tim. 1:4).

(3) Timothy was prone to neglect his pastoral duties and his own personal devotional life as a Christian leader (4:11–16).

(4) Timothy had made some hasty decisions, especially about church officers, that had caused some difficulties (5:17–22).

(5) Timothy had a tendency toward asceticism and bodily discipline that was actually hurting him physically (4:7–8, 5:23).

(6) Timothy had admitted to Paul that "youthful temptations" plagued him (2 Tim. 2:22), no surprise in godless Ephesus.

(7) There were false teachers there who needed to be silenced (1:3ff).

(8) Timothy needed counsel on managing the affairs of the church, especially with reference to officers and widows (3:1ff; 5:3ff).

One of the key words in 1 Timothy is “charge,” sometimes translated “commandment” (1:3, 5, 18; 4:11; 5:7; 6:13, 17). It was a military term, referring to an order to be passed down the line. God had entrusted the Gospel to Paul (1:11), who had passed it along to Timothy (1:18–19; 6:20). Timothy was “charged” to guard this treasure (2 Tim. 1:13–14) and pass it along to faithful people who would, in turn, entrust it to others (2 Tim. 2:2). Military language is woven throughout both epistles to Timothy: 1:18; 5:14 (where “occasion” means “a base of operations”); 2 Tim. 2:3; 3:6.

The basic theme of 1 Timothy is summarized in 3:15—that people (not “thou”) might know how to conduct themselves as members of the local church. It is a book of “know-how” for the young pastor and the church member. The local church is “the pillar and ground (foundation) of truth,” yet people neglect it and abuse it by disobeying the Word of God. As we study 1 Timothy, let us pray that it will make us better Christians and therefore better church members.

1 Timothy 1

Timothy wanted to resign, and Paul’s first burden was to encourage him to stay on and finish the task. Almost every Christian worker has wanted to quit at one time or another, but, as Dr. V. Raymond Edman, former president of Wheaton College, used to say, “It is always too soon to quit!” Paul encourages young Timothy in this chapter by reminding him of his position before God and of the fact that God would see him through to victory.

I. God Has Entrusted You with a Ministry (1:1–11)

Timothy was not at Ephesus because Paul put him there. It was *God* who entrusted him with ministry in that important city. Just as God had committed a ministry to Paul’s trust (1:11), He had given Timothy a special stewardship, and He expected him to be faithful. “Godly edifying” in v. 4 should read “a stewardship of God.” The false teachers at Ephesus were ministering their own program, not a stewardship that God had given them. A steward’s first responsibility is to be faithful to his master (1 Cor. 4:1–7). There were false teachers at Ephesus who were trying to make a name for themselves as teachers of the Law but who did not know what they were talking about. They had turned away from the truth of the Word and were listening to fables (myths, v. 4) and endless genealogies, raising more questions than they could answer. What a picture of some teachers today! Their “ministries” do not build up Christians or the local church, but instead foster arguments and divisions. In v. 5, Paul contrasts the false teachers and their ministry with that of the true steward of God’s grace. The object of God’s steward is to see people love one another with a love that comes from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith. But these false teachers were promoting endless divisions and empty talk!

Paul explains to Timothy the significance of the Law. “God did not give the Law to save people,” he points out, “but to show people how much they need to be saved.” There must be a lawful use of the Law (see Rom. 7:16). In vv. 9–10, Paul lists the

sinner who are convicted and condemned by the Law, and if you will compare this list with Ex. 20, you will see that practically all the Ten Commandments are included.

God had entrusted Paul and Timothy with a glorious Gospel, not a system of laws (2 Cor. 3–4). “Sound doctrine” (v. 10) literally means “healthy teaching,” that is, teaching that promotes spiritual health. Our word “hygiene” comes from this Gk. word. Note 2 Tim. 1:13 and 4:3, as well as Titus 1:9, 13, and 2:1–2, 8. In 2 Tim. 2:17, Paul warns that false teachings eat “as a gangrene.” (Dr. Luke must have appreciated Paul’s many references to medical science!)

II. God Will Enable You to Do Your Work (1:12–17)

Paul refers to himself as an example of one whom God enabled, by grace, to serve effectively. The word “ministry” in v. 12 is *diakonia* in the Gk. from which we get our English word “deacon,” meaning “a servant.”

Timothy was disturbed because he thought he was too young and lacked the necessary qualifications for the ministry. “Look at me!” says the apostle. “I was a blasphemer and murderer before God saved me! If the grace of God can make a missionary out of a murderer, then it can make a success out of you!” Paul was always careful to give God the glory for his life and ministry (1 Cor. 15:10). Anyone who serves the Lord (and all believers ought to be servants) needs to depend on the grace of God. We are saved by grace (Eph. 2:8–9), but we also serve through grace (Rom. 12:3–6). In v. 14, Paul lists the three motivating forces in his life: grace, faith, and love. His love for Christ and for lost sinners constrained him to labor (2 Cor. 5:14ff); his faith in Christ empowered him (Eph. 1:19); and the grace of God worked in his life, enabling him to serve God (Heb. 12:28).

Paul considered his salvation a pattern (example) of what God would do for lost sinners, especially his beloved Israel. Unbelievers today are not saved in just the fashion Paul was, that is, by seeing a light and hearing a voice; but we are saved by grace, through faith, in spite of our sins. The people of Israel will be saved one day in the future as Paul was saved on the Damascus road: they will see Christ, repent, believe, and be changed.

In v. 15, we have the first of several “faithful sayings” that Paul quotes (see 3:1; 4:9; 2 Tim. 2:11; Titus 3:8). These are thought to be sayings of the NT prophets in the early church that summarized important teachings. Early Christians had no written Bible to refer to; they quoted these “sayings” as authoritative statements of the faith.

III. God Has Equipped You for Battle (1:18–20)

The Christian life is not a playground; it is a battleground. Timothy had been enlisted by God as a Christian soldier (2 Tim. 2:3–4). Paul reminds the young pastor of his ordination years ago. Apparently some of the prophets in the local church had been instructed by the Spirit to single Timothy out and ordain him for special service (see Acts 13:1–3; 1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6). “God would not call you without first equipping you!” encourages Paul. “The fact that His Spirit set His seal upon you is proof that God will see you through the battles ahead.” See Phil. 1:6. He was to use the Word of God as a sharp two-edged sword to overcome Satan (Eph. 6:17; Heb. 4:12).

It is not enough, however, to have correct doctrine; the Christian soldier must also have correct living (“faith and a good conscience,” v. 19). Paul mentions the conscience several times in his pastoral letters to Timothy and Titus (see 1 Tim. 1:5, 19; 3:9; 4:2; 2 Tim. 1:3; Titus 1:15). The word “conscience” has a Latin origin and means “to know with.” Conscience is that inward judge that bears witness of our actions (see Rom. 2:15). It is possible for a believer to maintain orthodox doctrine while living in hidden sin; and this is the way to spiritual shipwreck. To “thrust away” conscience is to open the door to sin and Satan. A “pure conscience” becomes a “defiled conscience” and ultimately could become a “seared conscience” without spiritual sensitivity at all.

Paul named two men in Ephesus who might give Timothy trouble: Hymenaeus (2 Tim. 2:17) and Alexander (2 Tim. 4:14). These two men had been a part of the Ephesian church, and Paul had disciplined them because of their blasphemy, probably teaching false doctrine. The word “learn” in v. 20 means “to learn by discipline,” suggesting that Satan would deal with them through adverse circumstances. It was not easy for young Timothy to face these men with God’s truth, but he had to do so to preserve the purity and power of the church. There would be less false doctrine today if Christians had withstood false teachers yesterday.

1 Timothy 2

In chapters 2–3, Paul discusses the public ministry of the church and the roles that different members ought to play. Chapter 1 deals with the ministry of the Word, and in this chapter the emphasis is on prayer. The two main ministries of the pastor are the Word of God and prayer (Acts 6:4). It is sad to see churches robbing their pastors of these important ministries by keeping them “busy” promoting a program, pleasing people, and practicing church politics. If the churches would simplify their organization and purify their motives, the pastors would be able to do a spiritual work for the glory of the Lord.

It is important that the church have a balanced ministry of the Word of God and prayer. The Word instructs the church; prayer inspires the church to obey the Word. The church that has an abundance of Bible teaching but little prayer will have “much light, but no heat.” It will be orthodox but frozen! The other extreme is the church that has much prayer and religious enthusiasm, but little teaching from the Word; this may produce a group of people with zeal but no knowledge.

I. The Place of Prayer in the Local Church (2:1–8)

A. *Its importance.*

Paul lists prayer “first of all.” The local church does not pray because it is the expected thing to do; it prays because prayer is vital to the life of the local church. The Holy Spirit works in the church through prayer and the Word of God (1 Thes. 2:13; Eph. 3:20–21). The church that prays will have power and will make a lasting impact for Christ. Note

how the believers in Acts turned to prayer and overcame their enemies. Paul exhorts us to pray—it is important!

B. Its nature.

The church's praying ought to include: (1) supplications, which means telling God our needs; (2) prayers, meaning worship and adoration; (3) intercessions, which involves requests on the behalf of others; and (4) thanksgiving, or appreciation for what God has done. See Phil. 4:6 and Dan. 6:10–11. We should pray for the church family, of course, but we should not stop there. "All men" (v. 1) need our prayers.

C. Its aims.

Verse 2 suggests that prayer helps to maintain the peace of society. As Christians pray for leaders in government, God overrules and protects His church from wicked men. Verse 3 indicates that, above all else, prayer pleases God and glorifies Christ. If we pray only to have our needs met, we have a low view of prayer. Of course, we ought to pray for the salvation of the lost (vv. 4–7). Christ died for all men, and God would have all men to be saved (see 2 Peter 3:9); therefore, the Spirit directs the believer to pray for lost people.

D. Its conditions.

Verse 8 lays down three conditions for the public praying in the local church: (1) "without wrath"—loving one another; (2) "holy hands," that is, clean, obedient lives; and (3) faith. See Mark 11:20–26. The men are to take the lead in the prayer ministry of the church.

II. The Place of Women in the Local Church (2:9–15)

Christianity, like no other religious faith, elevated the position of women and children. Instead of criticizing Paul for these instructions, women ought to thank God for the blessing the Christian faith has been to women around the world. Paul is emphasizing again the principle of headship (see Eph. 5:22ff; 1 Cor. 11:1–16). The local church that refuses to recognize this principle may create confusion. There is a three-fold headship in the local assembly: (1) the headship of Christ over the body, Col. 1:18; (2) the headship of the pastor over the flock, Acts 20:28; and (3) the headship of the man over the woman, 1 Cor. 11:1–16 and 1 Tim. 2:12.

Paul gives us the characteristics of the ideal Christian woman in the church:

A. Modesty (v. 9).

Paul is not saying that the Christian woman must wear old clothes and be out of style! Rather, he is emphasizing that the inner person is more important than the outer appearance (1 Peter 3:1–6). Modest apparel glorifies Christ; extreme fashions only point to the person and make the Christian look worldly. It is possible for the believer to be modern and still be modest.

B. Purity.

She "professes godliness." Godliness is one of Paul's favorite words; see 2:2, 10; 3:16; 4:7–8; 6:3, 5–6, 11; 2 Tim. 3:5; Titus 1:1. Of course, godliness is simply a shortened form of "god-likeness."

C. Industry.

She practices good works (v. 10). Later in this letter (5:11–14) Paul warns about idle women who wander from house to house and give Satan opportunity to lead them into sin. The best way for a Christian woman to preach is with her life.

D. Humility.

In 1 Cor. 14:34–40, Paul amplifies this commandment. Just as Satan got a footing in Eden through Eve, so he can get a footing in the local church through some sincere, misguided woman. (Misguided men can also be a problem; see 1 Tim. 1:20.) When the local church meets in assembly, the women are instructed to exercise submission. If they have any questions, rather than interrupt the meeting, they should ask their husbands at home. This rule does not prevent a woman from teaching or from leading in ministries assigned by the local assembly.

Paul undergirds this ruling with a solid doctrinal foundation: Adam was created first and had precedence over Eve. (See 1 Cor. 11:8–9.) Headship is written into the very course of nature; when we violate this principle, we invite confusion. The Corinthian church was confused and carnal partly because the women were taking precedence over the men, and neither the men nor the women were submitting to the Word of God.

Paul gives a second reason for this principle: Satan finds it easier to deceive women than men (v. 14, and see 2 Cor. 11:3). Eve was deceived by Satan and sinned. Had Adam been at her side protecting her, she might not have yielded to Satan's lies. Adam sinned with his eyes wide open, choosing rather to be with his wife (now a sinner) than to walk with God.

"Childbearing" in v. 15 probably refers to the curse of Gen. 3:16; in other words, godly women would be delivered in dangerous childbirth. Some take it to mean the birth of Christ, since the original Gk. is "through the childbearing," that is, a very special child. But the first meaning is probably the best; see also 5:14. Mothers-to-be who are in the will of God can claim this promise.

1 Timothy 3

Though the church is an organism, a living and growing body united to Christ, the church is also an organization. In fact, every organism has to be organized or it will die. The human body is a living organism, but it is also a highly organized machine. If the local church is to do its task effectively, it must have leadership, and this implies organization.

I. The New Testament Pastor (3:1–7)

The terms "pastor," "elder," and "bishop" refer to the same office. See Acts 20:17 and 28, and Titus 1:5 and 7. Elder is a translation of the Gk. word *presbuteros* (translated "presbytery" in 4:14). The word simply means an older, mature person. The Jewish elders (Luke 22:66) were the leading adult men, recognized for their maturity. In the early church, pastors were chosen from the mature men of the fellowship. Bishop

comes from the Gk. word *episkopos* and means “overseer.” The Episcopal church gets its name from this word. The local pastor, then, was an elder in terms of spiritual maturity, and an overseer in terms of ministry. Philippians 1:1 gives the makeup of the NT church: saints, bishops, deacons. It was usual for the churches to have more than one elder or pastor.

A. His personal qualifications (vv. 2–3).

“Blameless” does not mean sinless; rather, it means “without reproach.” Literally, the word means “that cannot be laid hold of”; that is, there is nothing in his life that the enemy can lay hold of to hinder the work or ruin the witness. Since moral laxness was a serious problem in those days, the pastor was required to have but one wife; that is, there had to be no question as to his marriage standards. There has been long (and heated) debate over whether Paul meant to attack polygamy (a man having more than one wife at one time) or divorce. “Vigilant” means “temperate,” referring to sober judgment and action. “Sober” indicates seriousness of purpose and self-control. “Good behavior” should be translated “orderly”; it suggests a well-ordered life and testimony. He should be a real gentleman. He should love people and enjoy having them in his home. “Apt to teach” ties in with Eph. 4:11, where “pastor and teacher” are one office. Read 1 and 2 Tim. again to see how much Paul says about teaching the Word. While total abstinence is not explicitly demanded in the Bible, sobriety is certainly stressed; modern problems encourage the church to take a stand against alcohol and drunkenness. A “striker” (v. 3) is one who uses physical force to get people to agree with him, and we know that “the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God” (James 1:20, NKJV). The pastor must not be money-hungry; he must have patience toward the sheep; he must not be contentious (a brawler, given to arguing); and he must be free from covetousness, putting Christ and the church first in his life.

B. His family qualifications (vv. 4–5).

The pastor should be the head of the household, and he should have his children under control. This does not mean that the pastor’s children should not be allowed to be children! It means that they are to respect the Lord and their parents and grow to be examples as all Christians should.

C. His church qualifications (vv. 6–7).

He must not be a new convert; if he is, Satan may puff him up with pride and he will fall into sin. It is dangerous to thrust new converts into Christian leadership. The pastor must have good testimony even among the unsaved (“those who are outside,” v. 7), lest his bad reputation tear down the witness of the church. It is tragic when pastors leave behind bad debts and unfulfilled promises. This hurts the testimony of the church in the community.

II. The New Testament Deacon (3:8–13)

“Likewise” indicates that God has equally important standards for the deacon, for he is to work with the pastor in guiding the affairs of the church. “Grave” means “held in high respect.” A “double-tongued” person is a tale-bearer, one who says one thing to one person and another thing to another person, trying to court the favor of both. Church

leaders must be people who keep their word. The matters of wine and money were discussed in v. 3. There may be the warning in v. 11 against misusing church funds for personal gain. They should be people of clean conscience, living what they profess.

Some translate v. 11 as “deaconesses”; the word is probably “wives.” We have no clear evidence in the NT that the early church had deaconesses as well as deacons. In any event, these standards applied also to the deacons’ wives. Note that both pastors and deacons are to be proved before given the office, that is, allowed to exercise their gifts in other ministries before being made leaders. The deacon’s office is to be used, not just filled. Church officers who are faithful will acquire a good standing (degree) before God and men, and thus are able to further the work of Christ.

III. The New Testament Church (3:14–16)

Much has been written about the “true church” or the “invisible church.” Certainly there is such a concept in the Bible, in that all believers belong to Christ and are one in Him. But the primary NT emphasis is on the local church, and the local church is just as much the “true church” as the “mystical body of Christ” that we hear so much about. In the NT, Christians were expected to unite with local assemblies and go to work for God. In these verses, Paul shows the importance of the local church by describing it under several images:

A. The house of God.

That is, the family or household of God on earth. All believers are children of God, and the church is His family. See Gal. 6:10 and Eph. 2:19. Paul wrote this letter to teach people how to behave as members of God’s family. If the church is God’s family, then certainly it is more important than any other organization on earth.

B. The pillar and ground of truth.

This is architectural language. The church is what holds up God’s truth in this world. The word “ground” means “bulwark” or “foundation”; one translator renders it “basement.” As the local church is faithful to preserve, preach, and practice the truth, God’s work prospers on earth. The unfaithful Christian is weakening the very foundation of God’s truth in the world.

C. The body of Christ.

Verse 16 is perhaps an early Christian hymn, memorized by the saints for their worship services. The mystery of godliness is God’s hidden program to bring godliness into the world. Of course, Christ is God’s great Mystery, and this song exalts Him: His birth; His death and resurrection; His earthly ministry. This is a summary of the Person and work of Christ, and the idea is that the local church now continues the work which He began. The church on earth is the body of Christ on earth (see 1 Cor. 12:12, where Paul is speaking of a local church, not the church universal).

The church is important to God and should be important to us.

1 Timothy 4

This chapter deals with the pastor's spiritual life and labors. It indicates that a true minister will have three qualities. He will be:

I. A Good Minister: Preaching the Word (4:1–6)

A. *The danger (vv. 1–3).*

The Ephesian church had been warned already about the coming of false doctrines (Acts 20:29–30). Throughout Paul's letters, the Spirit speaks "in stated words" (expressly) that the church will see apostasy, a falling away from the true faith (see 2 Thes. 2). The word "depart" in the Gk. gives us our English word "apostasy." He points out too the cause for the apostasy—not the "growing intelligence of scholars" but the satanic influence of demons so that professed believers deny the basic doctrines of the Bible. The problem is not with the head but with the heart!

What are the marks of these false teachers? For one thing, they preach one thing but practice another. They are such hypocrites that they even "brand" their own consciences by their willful disobedience to God's Word! They read the Word but explain it away through their self-serving lies. They teach a false piety—namely, asceticism, that is, abstaining from marriage and certain foods. There are some so-called "Christian" groups that have never studied Colossians 2 to discover that bodily disciplines do not automatically advance spiritual life.

B. *The answer (vv. 4–6).*

"The Word of God and prayer" (v. 5) settle the matter. God, in His Word, has declared that all foods are clean (Gen. 1:29–31; 9:3; Mark 7:14–23; 1 Cor. 10:23–26; Acts 10); and through prayer, the Christian thanks God and dedicates the food to His glory (1 Cor. 10:31). The pastor must teach these things to his people, nourishing them and himself on "healthy" (sound) doctrine; see notes on 1:10. A good minister will feed on the Word that he might be able to feed others.

II. A Godly Minister: Practicing the Word (4:7–12)

Just as "healthy" doctrine will promote spiritual health, so the foolish and silly myths of false teachers will produce spiritual sickness. Spiritual food and spiritual exercise are a happy combination! It is suggested that Timothy was leaning toward asceticism, the disciplining of the body; and that Paul is here teaching him to emphasize spiritual disciplines and exercises more than physical. If some Christians would put as much energy and enthusiasm into spiritual things as they do athletics and body-building, how much stronger they and their churches would be! "Bodily exercise profits for a little time," Paul admits, "but spiritual exercise—practicing the Word of God—is profitable for this life and the life to come" (v. 8). See Heb. 4:14.

The Christian, and especially the pastor, must practice the Word of God and be known for godliness (godlikeness). This may mean carrying burdens and bearing suffering (v. 10), but it is worth it. Even young people can be examples of the faith, as

Paul admonishes in v. 12: in word, in behavior (conversation), in love, in spirit (enthusiasm), in faith (faithfulness), and purity.

III. The Growing Minister: Progressing in the Word (4:13–16)

“That your progress [pioneer advance] may be evident to all” (NKJV) is the goal Paul sets in v. 15. A growing pastor will produce a growing church, for a man cannot lead others where he has not been himself. How could Timothy, or any believer, for that matter, make progress in the Christian life?

A. The Word of God.

“Give attendance to reading” (v. 13), that is, the public reading of the Word of God in the assembly. Of course, the Word should be explained and applied. It is not enough just to know the facts of the Word; believers must know the doctrines of the Word.

B. Spiritual gifts.

Every Christian has some spiritual gift (Rom. 12:3–8; 1 Cor. 12), and far too often these gifts are neglected instead of exercised by faith. When the elders (presbytery) ordained young Timothy, assisted by Paul (2 Tim. 1:6), God gave Timothy some spiritual gifts to equip him for his ministry. But he had been neglecting these gifts and needed to stir them up in the way that a dying fire has to be stoked. Spiritually speaking, what we do not use, we lose; see Heb. 2:1–3.

C. Dedication.

The original Gk. in v. 15 reads “attend to these things, be in these things.” In other words, give yourself to them completely, with no compromise or distraction. Certainly meditation is a part of this, but Paul’s commands are much broader. The Christian who is listless about spiritual matters will never make progress.

D. Examination.

“Take heed to yourself” comes first. Examine yourself, find out where you are spiritually and where you are going. “The unexamined life is not worth living,” said the ancient philosopher Socrates. It is easy to correct doctrine, but much more challenging to live the doctrine. We will never save others if we lose our own spiritual power.

As you review these verses, you can see that Paul expected Timothy to build the church on the Word—to preach it, teach it, and practice it. The Word was to be his personal food and guide, as well as the food for the church. The pastor who spends time in the Word and in prayer will grow himself and will pastor a growing church.

We might conclude by asking, “How can the church member help his pastor grow?” One of the best ways is to protect his time, so that he has opportunity to study and pray. Every pastor wants to be available when there is a need, but no pastor can afford to waste time on trivial matters. Another way is to pray for him daily. A third suggestion is to pay attention when he preaches. What blessing it is to preach to people who want to listen! How discouraged a pastor can become when church members do not apply themselves to follow the messages from the Word. Finally, the church should provide the means needed to build the work of the church. This means faithful stewardship, bringing tithes and offerings to the Lord. Many a godly pastor cannot accomplish what

God wants done because the church is in debt or has a poor financial history. Also, if the church doesn't pay the pastor a living wage, it adds to his burdens and can hinder the work.

1 Timothy 5

These final two chapters deal with the church and its ministry to at least seven kinds of people (see outline on page 617).

I. To Older Saints (5:1–2)

Being a young man, Timothy had to be careful in his relationship to the older believers in the church. The word “elders” here refers to age, not office. The pastor is not to rebuke older saints, but exhort and encourage them. “Look upon them as you would your own parents,” Paul advises. (See Titus 2:1–4.) The church needs to recognize the needs and problems of the older believers and seek to help them. “Senior saints” are important to the church, and the younger people of the church need them more than they may realize. See 1 Peter 5:1–7.

II. To Widows (5:3–16)

Read Acts 6, 9:36–43, and James 1:27. The early church cared for needy widows. The word “honor” in v. 3 means “to fix the value,” as in our word “honorarium,” an amount paid to a speaker for services. Timothy had to be careful not to misuse the church funds by giving money to unworthy widows. In his day, as today, there were deceivers who preyed on people under the masquerade of religion. Such people usually visited churches because they knew that soft-hearted saints would give them a handout “for Jesus’ sake.”

But note that v. 4 says that the family has the first responsibility of caring for their needy. (“Nephews” ought to be translated “grandchildren” here.) Children and grandchildren are to repay (requite) their parents and grandparents, and not expect the church to put them on charity. Any Christian who does not take care of his own is worse than an unbeliever (v. 8). This is why the pastor and deacons must investigate every case of charity, and why individual church members or church groups ought not to do charitable work without first consulting with the spiritual leaders. Too much of God’s money, brought by faithful worshipers, has gone to waste because well-meaning Christians followed their emotions instead of God’s Word.

Paul gives the requirements for widows being “enrolled” (“taken into the number,” v. 9—their name put on the roll); note vv. 5 and 9–10. See also Luke 2:36–37 for an example of this kind of woman. First, she must be a true widow, without family support or care. She must be a godly woman, given to praying and serving others. (It is likely that these widows who were supported by the church served the church in many ways,

perhaps as Dorcas did.) She must be 60 years old or older, and have a good testimony (v. 10), especially in her marriage.

In vv. 11–16, Paul deals with the younger widows and warns Timothy not to enroll them. For one thing, the younger widows would pledge faithfulness to serve Christ and the church (“their first faith” in v. 12 is “their first pledge”), but would then be tempted to start looking for husbands. “They will marry” in v. 11 is “they will to be married,” that is, marriage becomes the consuming passion of their lives. Furthermore, having grown cold spiritually, they will stop serving others and will start getting into trouble (v. 13). This will bring reproach on the name of Christ and the witness of the church. Paul’s commandment is that the younger widows marry, raise godly families, stay at home, and be careful not to give Satan opportunity for accusation. Verse 16 summarizes the matter; let relatives take care of their own needy family members, so that the church is not burdened (charged).

III. To Church Leaders (5:17–25)

Apparently, Timothy was having trouble with some of his officers. Part of the problem may have stemmed from the fact that he had chosen and ordained some of them too quickly (v. 22). Another factor was that he had misjudged some of them (vv. 24–25) and made some hasty decisions. Pastors make mistakes, even if their hearts are right! But then, officers make mistakes too.

As Paul’s personal representative in Ephesus, Timothy was to oversee the work of the various elders in the area. These men were paid by the church, since God’s command is that those who teach the Word should live from the Word (1 Cor. 9:1–14). Elders who were faithful to do their work well should receive double pay (honor, referring to money, as in v. 3). Of course, double recognition would not be out of order, either! Paul supports this principle of Christians paying their ministers by quoting Deut. 25:4 and referring to what Christ said in Luke 10:7.

But what about church leaders who cause trouble? First of all, get the facts. If every church would practice 1 Tim. 5:19, we would have fewer church splits. Every accusation must be supported by at least two witnesses. The matter must be given honest appraisal, and there must not be any partiality shown (v. 21). How easy it is for us to judge other believers, or to draw conclusions from a few facts (or rumors)! Where the accusation is found to be true, and the witnesses and facts point to conviction, then the offending officer must be dealt with publicly. The suggestion here is that the offender confess his sins and ask the congregation for forgiveness. If an officer’s sin is known by at least two people, you can be sure that others know it too; and public sins demand public confession and restitution.

Many a worldly Christian has fled to v. 23 to support his or her bad habits. While the Bible does not demand total abstinence, it does encourage restraint; in any event, this verse applies to a special situation. To begin with, Paul was urging Timothy to take care of his body; and by no stretch of the imagination can we believe that by drinking alcohol, we will better our bodies. The drinker is often the person with the sickest body. The wine that Paul prescribed was to help Timothy’s stomach; it was medicine, not a social beverage. (Some have suggested that Timothy’s problems with his church officers had given him ulcers!) It is not wrong for Christians to use available means to help God

answer their prayers for healing. Paul prayed for Timothy, but he also suggested a practical remedy for his needs. Perhaps Timothy was being swayed by the false teachers who emphasized bodily discipline and asceticism and this had affected his health.

Church officers and leaders are important, because they help the pastor to carry the load. But the pastor must always be the shepherd of the flock. The best thing a church officer can do is to make it possible for the pastor to exercise his spiritual gifts and ministries without hindrance or distraction. Then the church will prosper.

1 Timothy 6

This chapter continues Paul's explanation of the church's ministry to different groups in the fellowship, particularly those that might cause problems.

I. To Slaves (6:1–2)

Slavery was an integral part of ancient life; it is estimated that there were 60 million slaves in the Roman Empire. Many slaves found Christ, but their masters often remained unbelievers; therefore the Christian slaves might be prone to disobey or claim freedom because they were Christians. Paul urges them to be good testimonies to their unsaved masters that their masters might learn to respect the name of God and His Word. Then again slaves who had believing masters would be tempted to take advantage of them, and this behavior Paul prohibits. See Eph. 6:5ff, Col. 3:22ff, and 1 Peter 2:18–25.

II. To Troublemakers (6:3–5)

“Don't worry about doctrine,” some modern preachers say; “the important thing is spiritual unity.” Paul refutes that lie in this section: whenever there is disunity in a church, it is because somebody does not really believe and practice the Word of God. Those who were teaching false doctrine and who would not agree to Paul's teachings were to be noted and dealt with.

The apostle clearly pictures these people who cause trouble in the church. They are proud; they want to be “important people” in the church. Yet they are ignorant, “knowing nothing” (v. 4). Furthermore, they are sick; for the word “doting” actually means “diseased, sickly.” Having rejected the healthy (sound) doctrine, they have made themselves spiritually sick. Instead of feeding on the truths of God's Word, they feed on empty questions and the meanings of words; and all of this leads to envies, strife, constant turmoil, and not to godliness. These people are “deprived” (destitute) of the truth; their only goal is personal profit. If they can use religion to further their own goals, then that is all that concerns them.

Note that Titus 3:10 commands that a troublemaker (“heretic,” meaning one who causes factions and divisions) is not to be permitted membership in the church after he

or she has been warned two times. Troublemakers who move from church to church ought not to be received back into the fellowship after the second offense.

III. To the Rich (6:6–19)

The thought of “gain” in v. 5 leads Paul into a discussion of the Christian and wealth. Using godliness to try to secure gain will never bring contentment; but a godly life, which is a contented life, is certainly great gain to a person. How important it is to have the right values!

It is easy to misinterpret vv. 9 and 10. In v. 9, Paul is warning those who *will* to be rich, that is, who set their whole attention on securing wealth. This kind of person is bound to fall into temptations and snares and will eventually sink into destruction. Think of all that Lot lost when he set his eyes on the rich plains of Sodom! Or all that Haman lost (see the Book of Esther) when he set his heart on riches and honor! What does a man need for contentment? Very little: food and raiment and a godly life. Think of the poverty of Christ, yet He made many rich (2 Cor. 8:9).

Verse 10 does not teach that money is the root of all evil, or even that the love of money is the root of all evil; but that the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Money itself is not neutral; it is basically defiled. Jesus called money “unrighteous mammon” (Luke 16:9, 11), and Paul called it “filthy lucre” (1 Tim. 3:3, 8; Titus 1:7, 11). Money can be invested for eternity by bringing Christ to lost people, or it can send a man to hell by becoming his god. You find both examples in Luke 16. Every one of the Ten Commandments can be broken because of money. Because of a desire for money, people have denied God, blasphemed His name, stolen, lied, murdered, committed adultery, and so on. A lust for material things makes people wander (err) from the faith, and this leads to shipwreck. They look for pleasure but find pain and sorrows.

Paul then injects a warning to Timothy, because Christian leaders can be led astray by false values and a desire for material gain. Demas forsook Paul because he loved the world (2 Tim. 4:10); Judas sold Christ for thirty pieces of silver. Note that Paul called this youthful pastor a “man of God” (v. 11). What an encouragement! Note too the three exhortations: flee, follow, fight. Flee these things—pride, covetousness, false teachings. Sometimes the finest thing the Christian soldier can do is run. In 2 Tim. 2:22, Paul commands him to “Flee youthful lusts.” This is what Joseph did when Potiphar’s wife tempted him (Gen. 39). But it is not enough to flee. We must also follow, and we must also fight. Paul points to the wonderful example of Christ when He made His courageous witness before Pilate. “We serve the King of kings!” writes Paul. “Be faithful until He comes. When He comes, He will honor you for your good work.”

Verses 17–19 form a positive instruction to the rich, telling them how to use their riches for God’s glory. Note that he calls them “rich in this present world.” It is possible to be rich in this world but not rich toward God (see Luke 12:13–21). First, these people must be humble, accepting their wealth as a stewardship from God. They should keep their eyes on the Giver and not put their trust in the gifts. God wants His own to enjoy the blessings of life; the word “enjoy” is in the Bible! In Christ, we have “all things to enjoy” and they are given to us “richly”! But these material blessings are not only for enjoyment, they are also for employment—to be used for the glory of God and the winning of souls. Money should be used for good works; it should be shared

(communicated); it should be invested in things eternal, laying a good foundation for the time to come. “Treasures in heaven” is the way Jesus put it in Matt. 6.

IV. To the “Educated” (6:20–21)

“Science” in v. 20 means “knowledge,” but to Paul it was a false knowledge. He was no doubt referring to the Gnostics (see introduction to Colossians) who claimed to have “full knowledge” about the universe, not too different from some of our philosophers today. These false teachers at Ephesus were disturbing young Timothy with their high-sounding theories and their questions about the Word of God; so Paul warned him not to get involved with this “profane and vain babbling”! The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God (see 1 Cor. 1–2).

What is Timothy’s responsibility? To “guard the deposit” that God committed to him through Paul. God had given the Gospel message, the deposit of truth, to Paul (1:11), who had in turn committed it to Timothy (1:18–19). Timothy was to guard it (6:20) and pass it on to others (2 Tim. 2:2). This is the task of the church today; may we be faithful to guard the deposit and pass it on to others!