

New Testament Studies

Letters to Timothy

(RVS Notes)

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1 Timothy—Guard What Has Been Entrusted to Your Care

Introduction to the Pastoral Epistles—Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus are commonly known as the Pastoral Epistles, as they focus on Paul's guidance to his younger colleagues about their pastoral responsibilities in the churches where they served. There is nothing to indicate that the three letters were written at the same time, or from the same place, or that the author intended them to be read together. Even the amount of pastoral advice varies between the three letters.

The Pastoral epistles—1-2 Timothy and Titus—are the most frequently debated regarding Paul's authorship, despite strong early church support for their Pauline origin. For two centuries, many have noted how these letters differ in sound and style from Paul's other writings.

Critical attacks—According to critical scholars, the Pastorals were likely composed not by Paul himself, but by some of his followers, possibly one or two generations after his death. Their arguments for asserting this are fourfold:

- **Historical**—This stems from the failure of chronological references in the Pastorals to fit comfortably within the historical framework of the Book of Acts. For example, nowhere in Acts do we read of Paul preaching in Crete and leaving Titus there to organize the churches (Titus 1:5). Nor does his leaving Timothy in Ephesus fit into Acts 19 narrative (1 Tim. 1:3). Critical scholars assume that the letters date much later and fictitious references inserted. A better explanation is to accept Eusebius's suggestion that Paul was freed after his initial imprisonment in Rome, journeyed to Spain and other places, and was then arrested again before being executed. See below.
- **Ecclesiastical**—This argument asserts that the church structure and order evidenced in the Pastorals did not emerge until the second century, well after the apostolic age. The discussion of bishops, elders or presbyters, and deacons shows a more advanced church organization than existed in Paul's day. Others contend that the critics' arguments are questionable. In the Pastoral Epistles, the terms "elders" and "bishops" refer to the same role (see Titus 1:5-9). This contrasts with the development in the second century, when bishops became distinct from elders or presbyters and held a higher position in the church hierarchy. The emergence of the offices of deacon and elder had already occurred in Paul's lifetime (see Phil. 1:1), indeed, at his instigation (see Acts 14:23). Nothing about the discussion of these offices in the Pastorals requires a second century dating.
- **Doctrinal**—The doctrinal focus of the Pastoral Epistles differs from Paul's earlier letters (with the exception of Colossians and Ephesians, although critics also dispute the authenticity of those). The concern for "sound doctrine" is considered sub-Pauline. Instead of developing truth, the author is content with merely conserving or guarding it, opting for orthodoxy rather than creative thought. I do not think Paul would have seen the task of conserving truth as being beneath him, but rather as a special stewardship from God.

Another variant of this argument sees the heresy combated in the Pastorals as well-developed Gnosticism, a second century phenomena. However, the full-fledged Gnosticism of the second century was already "incipient" during the first century, including the years of Paul's ministry. On closer inspection, the error addressed in the pastorals may not have been Gnosticism at all. The false teachers described reveal eclectic tendencies, drawing on Jewish influences (1 Tim 1:7; Titus 1:10, 14; 3:9) as well as others.

- **Linguistic and stylistic arguments**— Some critics note that the Pastoral letters contain an unusually large number of words not found in Paul's other writings. They conclude that Paul did not write these letters on the basis of this variance. The reply simply asserts that such word

counting does not support the weight of the critics' contentions. More traditional scholars contend that the entire literary procedure here is unsound because the available samples of literature are far too small for such findings to be statistically valid. In addition, the critics' arguments completely overlook the different subject matter of the Pastorals, differing experiences, advanced age, changes in environment and companions, and different recipients and purposes which could affect a writer's vocabulary.

Traditional alternatives—Bible students supporting a traditional approach attributing these letters to Paul note that a person can write in distinctive styles at different times. In addition, Paul used amanuenses for his letters, and they may have given them greater or lesser liberty at various times. Others have compared the style of the Pastorals to that of Luke-Acts and have concluded that Luke was the author or the amanuensis of the letters. Although it was common for writers to attribute letters to well-known teachers, such documents were seldom created near the time those authors lived and were unlikely to withstand the early church's emphasis on apostolic authority. The many personal allusions in the Pastorals provide a strong argument against the letters being pseudopigraphic epistles.

More traditional scholarships offer two options. According to one perspective, the letters were composed after Paul's time ministering in Ephesus during his third missionary journey, but before he spent three months in Greece as described in Acts 20. That would place the date of writing in the mid to late 50s and from Asia Minor. During this time, Paul also wrote 2 Corinthians and penned the formative concepts in church structure and administration, addressing the needs of the young and developing church.

Another view posits a fourth missionary journey. Acts 13:1-21:16 indicates that Paul made three missionary journeys. Some scholars believe he made a fourth journey after his release from Roman imprisonment in Acts 28. Evidence cited for such a journey includes Paul's mention of his intention to visit Spain (Rom. 15:24, 28), the fourth century historian Eusebius' indication that Paul was indeed released after a first Roman imprisonment, and statements among early Christian writers, including Clement of Rome and the author of the Muratorian Canon, that Paul took the gospel as far as Spain.

Scholars positing this fourth missionary journey have suggested that the subsequent mention of various locales in the Pastorals provide a basis for constructing an itinerary for this journey. They suggest that Paul was released from his first Roman imprisonment recorded in Acts 28 around 62 or 63, after his release and went on a fourth journey concluding in his rearrest after Nero's persecution began in late 64 when he was again imprisoned at Rome and executed near the end of that infamous emperor's reign. Paul's execution is generally dated between 65 and 67. While the exact sequence of Paul's travels is uncertain, it is possible that after his initial release from prison around 62 or 63, and before a second imprisonment in Rome, he visited the following locations:

- Spain (Rom. 15:24, 28)
- Crete (Titus 1:5)
- Miletus (2 Tim. 4:20)
- Colosse (Phm. 22)
- Ephesus (1 Tim. 1:3)
- Philippi (2 Tim. 23-24)
- Nicopolis (Titus 3:12)

During this journey Paul wrote 1 Timothy and Titus. During a second Roman imprisonment, he wrote 2 Timothy. This second imprisonment contrasted with his first one, when he was under house arrest (Acts 28:30) and confident of his eventual release (Phil. 1:25-26). He was in a cold dungeon (2 Tim. 4:13),

chained like a common criminal (2 Tim. 1:16; 2:9), in such a remote locale that Onesiphorus had to search diligently to even find (2 Tim. 1:17). He no longer spoke of release, recognizing that he had completed his work and that his time on earth was ending (2 Tim. 4:6-8).

1 Timothy Introduction—

Recipient—Timothy's father was a Greek (Acts 16:1), but his Jewish mother Eunice and grandmother Lois raised him in the knowledge of the Hebrew Scriptures (1:5; 3:15). Timothy may have been a convert of Paul (see 1 Cor. 4:17; 1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2), possibly when the apostle was in Lystra during his first missionary journey (Acts 14:8-20). When Paul visited Lystra during his second missionary journey, he decided to take Timothy along with him and had him circumcised because of the Jews (Acts 16:1-3), Timothy was ordained to the ministry (1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6) and served as Paul's devoted lieutenant in Troas, Berea, Thessalonica, and Corinth (Acts 16-18; 1 Thess. 3:1-2). During Paul's third missionary journey, Timothy ministered as Paul's apostolic legate at Ephesus, Macedonia, and Corinth. He was with Paul during the apostle's first Roman imprisonment and went to Philippi after Paul's release (Phil. 2:19-24). Paul left him at Ephesus to supervise the ministry there (1 Tim. 1:3) and years later summoned him to Rome (2 Tim. 4:9, 21). Timothy was incarcerated and later set free at an unspecified place. He seems to have been sickly (1 Tim. 5:23), reserved (1:7), and very young while serving with Paul (1 Tim. 4:12). However, he was gifted in the Word, was trustworthy, and diligent.

Date, place, occasion—The probable order of the composition of the Pastorals was 1 Timothy, Titus, and 2 Timothy. Paul's first Roman imprisonment was either from 59-61 or 61-63. Paul was put to death by Nero, who himself died by suicide in June of 68. Paul exhorted Timothy in 2 Timothy to come before winter, so that letter was written in 67 at the latest. It is possible that it was written as early as 65, since Nero's persecution of Christians started in October 64. 1 Timothy and Titus were written anywhere from 62-66. Paul was in Macedonia when he wrote 1 Timothy and Timothy was in Ephesus (see 1:3).

False teachers advocating asceticism (4:3) based on the law (1:7) were undermining Paul's ministry at Ephesus. Central to Paul's response to the situation is the appointment of church leaders prepared to address the spread of false teaching in the churches. For Timothy, it would not have been easy to follow someone like Paul. Paul's letter offers Timothy support and guidance, outlining the proper management of a church, ways to conduct himself, and approaches to asserting his leadership within the congregation.

1 Timothy Summary Outline—Guard What Has Been Entrusted to Your Care

- I. Salutation and ministerial task at Ephesus (1:1-20)
 - A. Salutation (1:1-2)
 - B. Warning against false teachers (1:3-11)
 - C. Thanksgiving and charge to Timothy (1:12-20)
- II. Instructions for public worship (2:1-15)
 - A. Concerning prayer (2:1-7)
 - B. Concerning men and women in worship (2:8-15)
- III. Church organization and order (3:1-16)
 - A. Qualifications of elders (3:1-7)
 - B. Qualifications of deacons (3:8-13)
 - C. Mystery of godliness (3:14-16)

- IV. Personal instructions to Timothy (4:1-16)
 - A. Warning against false teachers (4:1-5)
 - B. Maintaining sound doctrine and good discipline (4:6-16)
- V. Ministry to various groups in the church (5:1-6:2)
 - A. Relating to older and younger men and women (5:1-2)
 - B. Widows in the church (5:3-16)
 - C. Treatment of elders (5:17-20)
 - D. Instructions to slaves (6:1-2)
- VI. Warnings against false teaching and greed born of the love of money (6:3-10)
- VII. Final charge and instructions (6:11-21)

Guiding Concepts and Special Concerns

False teaching—Paul was plagued by Judaizers throughout his ministry. In the Pastorals, there may have been a mixing of Jewish legalism and early gnostic tendencies in the false teaching. Note the mention of “myths and endless genealogies” (1:4; Titus 1:14), being teachers of the law (1:7), and forbidding people to marry and ordering them to abstain from certain foods (4:3).

Women in ministry—1 Timothy 2:9-15 is a primary text for those advocating what has been described as the ontological equality, functional subordination position on women in ministry.

1 Timothy—Guard What Has Been Entrusted to Your Care

I. Salutation and Ministerial Task at Ephesus (1:1-20)—This section contains a salutation (1:1-2), a warning to Timothy regarding false teachers plaguing the church, a thanksgiving by Paul for God's saving grace and for his ministerial call (1:12-17), and a charge to Timothy to fight the good fight, hold onto the faith, and a good conscience (1:18-20).

A. Salutation (1:1-2)—Paul highlights his authority as an apostle, which might seem curious since he is addressing Timothy, his spiritual son and representative at the church in Ephesus. Did Timothy really need to be reminded of Paul's calling and authority? Paul is anticipating that the letter would be read to the congregation. He means to buttress Timothy's authority and facilitate his ministry. The letter functions as an open "letter of recommendation" for his young associate.

1:2—Paul had left Timothy in Ephesus to teach sound doctrine and encourage sound discipline in the churches. Timothy's background was a commendable story of the faith pilgrimage. His father was a Greek (Acts 16:1), but his Jewish mother Eunice and grandmother Lois raised him in the knowledge of the Hebrew Scriptures (1:5; 3:15). Timothy may have been a convert of Paul (see 1 Cor. 4:17; 1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2), possibly when the apostle was in Lystra during his first missionary journey (Acts 14:8-20). When Paul visited Lystra during his second missionary journey, he decided to take Timothy along with him and had him circumcised because of the Jews (Acts 16:1-3), Timothy was ordained to the ministry (1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6) and served as Paul's devoted lieutenant in Troas, Berea, Thessalonica, and Corinth (Acts 16-18; 1 Thess. 3:1-2). During Paul's third missionary journey, Timothy ministered as Paul's apostolic legate at Ephesus, Macedonia, and Corinth. He was with Paul during the apostle's first Roman imprisonment and went to Philippi after Paul's release (Phil. 2:19-24). Paul left him at Ephesus to supervise the ministry there (1 Tim. 1:3) and years later summoned him to Rome (4:9, 21). Timothy served time in prison and was later released at an unspecified location. He seems to have been sickly (1 Tim. 5:23), reserved (1:7), and very young while serving with Paul (1 Tim. 4:12). However, he was gifted in the Word, was trustworthy, and diligent.

B. Warning against false teachers (1:3-11)—After his release from the first imprisonment, Paul went to Ephesus. Discovering things that needed addressing, he left Timothy at Ephesus when he moved on. Timothy's task was to suppress false teaching and promote good discipline (1:3-7). Paul then elaborates on the purpose of law (1:8-11).

1:3-4—The false teachers gave themselves to myths and endless genealogies that promoted controversies rather than the serious work of faith. What was the nature of the false teaching? Opinions vary—

- An early version of what came to be known as Gnosticism, with its endless genealogies and intermediary beings (*aeons*) between God and humanity.
- 1:7 suggests that they were Jewish legalists, caught up in the mythological treatment of Jewish genealogies.
- There is abundant evidence that both features were found in the Judaism of the day and that an admixture of them was very possible, even probable.

1:5—The goal of all instruction and lifestyle exhortation is love from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith.

1:6-7—The false teachers had wandered away from sincere faith to meaningless talk and pontificating on the law without knowledge of it. Their self-assurance was empty pretense.

1:8-11—Paul waxes on about the purpose of law. There is no definite article before "law," so Paul

probably begins by speaking of law in general. Its purpose is to monitor those who act unlawfully, rather than law-abiding individuals. He then starts with a general description of the unrighteous in three pairs:

- Lawbreakers and rebels;
- Ungodly and sinners; and
- Unholy and irreligious

Then he levels more specific charges, producing a vice list akin to those in Romans 1 and Galatians 5. These sins covered by the fifth to the ninth commandments:

- Kill (dishonor) their parents.
- Murders.
- Adulterers and homosexuals (homosexual practices are condemned in both the Old and New Testament);
- Slave traders (could be translated kidnappers) to which rabbis applied the eighth commandment not to steal. Note that Paul's remark about slave traders condemns the vicious slave trade of his day. Many slave traders kidnapped children to make them prostitutes.
- Liars and perjurers.

All these practices are contrary to sound doctrine that displays God's glory, showing forth his moral character and perfections exhibited in the life of the Lord Jesus.

C. Thanksgiving and charge to Timothy (1:12-20)—Paul gives thanks to God for his abundant grace (1:12-14) especially exhibited toward himself, whom his characterizes as the worst of sinners (1:15-17). Formerly, Paul was a blasphemer for what he thought and did with respect to Christ and the Christian community, a persecutor, and a violent man, one who was insolent and viciously ruthless (1:13). Paul was as hard on himself as he was on his age. However, the point was the manifest grace of God in transforming Saul, the persecutor and violent man, to Paul the apostle, herald of the grace of God and of the faith he had once brutally opposed. He concludes the section with a solemn ministerial charge to Timothy (1:18-20).

1:12-17—A passage that seems to be about Paul is actually about God and his grace. Paul uses himself as Exhibit A of the transforming power of the gospel. God took a proud, insolent bully, and blaspheming persecutor and transformed him into a trusted apostle and evangelist. Paul became a pattern or model for the way God reveals his love to the most unlikely recipients and brings them to faith and service.

1:18-20—Paul charged (a military term, meaning an urgent command from a superior officer) Timothy to fight the good fight, holding on to the faith and a good conscience. Conscience is that mysterious little voice that tells us what is right and wrong. For conscience to give consistently true promptings one must come to faith, accepting the gift of new life from God in the power of the Spirit.

Timothy was to teach sound doctrine and promote good discipline. Paul points out two examples of men who had shipwrecked their faith: Hymenaeus (perhaps also mentioned as a false teacher in 2 Tim. 2:17) and Alexander (perhaps the metalworker who did Paul great harm (2 Tim. 4:14)). He charges Timothy to remove them from the congregation. “Handing them over to Satan” was to excommunicate them, simply acknowledging the sphere they had already chosen. Their error seems to have related to the resurrection of believers and to their claim that it had already occurred.

II. Instructions for Public Worship (2:1-15)—This section is quite a controversial one. It speaks first of prayer in worship (2:1-7) before speaking of men and women in the worship and community service (2:8-15).

A. Concerning prayer (2:1-7)—The text speaks of the priority of prayer (2:1), the objects of prayer (2:2), the reasons for prayer (2:3-4), the basis for prayer (2:5-7). We are to pray for everyone beginning with those in authority (2:1) that we might live quiet and peaceful lives in all godliness and holiness which is pleasing to God (2:2-3). Public prayers for the emperor and all provincial officials showed that the believers were good citizens of the State and the communities in which they lived. Paul elaborates on God's desire to redeem humanity, which is grounded in the atoning work of Jesus (2:4-6), and notes that God appointed him as a herald for this message (2:7).

We moderns should take responsibility to pray for people who hold authority in this world to heart. For ordinary people, it is far better to go about one's business, to live at peace, to raise a family, to be allowed to worship as one pleases without the insecurity of unstable governments or regimes that quickly follow one another. When rulers do their job, even if they do not acknowledge God themselves, they create peace and stability which allow us to worship and to go about our lives without being harassed.

2:1— Much prayer, much power. No prayer, no power. Paul uses four different words to describe the prayerful activity with which they were to engage:

- Requests (*deeseis*) carries the idea of deep desire or need.
- Prayers (*proseuche*) describe petitions to God in kinds of situations, both private and public.
- Intercession (*enteuxis*) carries a dual idea—both conversing with the Lord God and making specific petitions to him.
- Thanksgiving (*eucharistia*) clearly instructs that the giving of thanks should always be a part of our praying.

2:2-4—Nero was emperor at the time that Paul wrote this. We should pray for our rulers no matter how unreasonable they may seem to be. This is so we may live peaceful (restfulness not marred by outward disturbance) and quiet (an inner stillness that accompanies such restfulness) lives in all holiness. Such living pleases the Lord God.

2:5-6—This verse affirms that God is one, as underlined in the Old Testament, but adding the phrase focusing on the mediatorial role of the Lord Jesus. A mediator is one who intervenes between two parties, either to make peace and restore relationship, or to form a covenant. Christ's toning death restored harmony between God and those accepting his grace by faith. Paul continues by describing Christ as giving himself as a ransom, which is something given for another as the price of redeeming that other. During that era, this term typically referred to the payment made to secure a slave's freedom.

B. Concerning men and women in worship (2:8-15)—Paul addresses the genders in their participation in worship. Men are to pray piously and live purely (2:8). Effective prayer requires that we be in a right relationship with the God (lifting holy hands) and with our fellow believers (without anger and disputing). Apparently, men were bringing their dissensions (anger and disputing) to worship. Reverent prayer was to be the cure for this contentious behavior. Men get off easy here, especially considering that Ephesus was hardly a locale encouraging piety and moral living.

2:9-15 address women's conduct in worship services. They were instructed to dress modestly (2:9) and maintain appropriate decorum, focusing on propriety and showcasing good deeds rather than wearing costly clothing or jewelry (2:10). Were women trying to turn heads in worship with the way they dressed and adorned themselves? Paul is attacking excess, not ruling out all adornment. Moralists of the day often stressed inner adornment rather than outward display.

Women were to learn quietly and in full submission (2:12). “Submission” means to rank under. Traditionalists emphasize that this has to do with order and authority and not value and ability. Submission is not subjugation but the recognition of God's order in the home and the church. The

insistence on women being silent may suggest that they had been a disruptive influence in worship. They were not to teach or have authority over men, an instruction Paul bases on the creative order and on Eve's deception in the Garden by Satan (2:13-14). The apostle concludes this passage with a difficult verse that women will be saved through childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness with propriety.

1 Timothy 2:9-15 is a passage that moderns find exceedingly difficult. It seems to confirm the patriarchal character of biblical writers, assuming that men should always run things and that women should do what they are told. Women must not be teachers, must not hold authority or any position over men, and must be silent. The best thing for women is to get on with domestic life, have children, manage the homestead, behave themselves, and keep quiet.

But what of elsewhere in the New Testament, where women are the first witnesses of the resurrection, or what Paul describes women as deacons (Rom. 16:1, which refers to Phoebe as a servant (*diakonos*) of the church? Paul speaks of women praying and prophesying in the assembly in 1 Corinthians 11:5, 13. What of Galatians 3:28 where there is "neither Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female"?

Perhaps the essential message of this passage is that women should have the opportunity to study and learn, and must not be prevented from pursuing education. The restrictive tone of the passage is due to the cultural environment. The worship center of Ephesus was the temple of Diana (Artemis to the Greeks). As befitting a female goddess, her priests were all women. Women ruled the show and kept men in their place. In the church women were to be allowed to learn but not presume to run the show.

2:11-12—These verses echo Paul's instruction to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 14:33-35. In that setting women were being disruptive. Was that the case in Ephesus as well? Or was this an instruction to head disruption off? Throughout church history, the restriction on women teaching or holding authority over men has been broadly interpreted, often resulting in women being limited to subordinate roles within church service. In the culture of the day, women were far more likely than men to be illiterate. In addition, the society's cultural expectation was for women to be retiring in mixed associations. Some modern commentators point to these cultural realities and expectations role as the reason for the instruction that women should not be teachers. They were to learn quietly as novices. That was radical and countercultural in the day. Given their lack of training and knowledge they were prime targets for the false teachers. Thus, his short-term solution was they should not teach (they were not ready). His long-term solution was for them to learn. Would the situation and instruction be different if the women were instructed and the problem of false teaching less pressing?

2:13-14—Paul connects this instruction with reasons—the creative order and with Eve's deception in the Garden. He advocates ontological equality but functional subordination for pastoral roles, in a manner similar to his approach to head coverings in the Corinthian church (1 Cor. 11:7-12). Is this instruction an accommodation to culture or a timeless directive? Note that the focus of the Genesis text (2:18) cited by Paul is not on functional subordination, but on a complementary fully functioning partner.

2:15—The apostle concludes this passage with a difficult passage that women will be saved through childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness with propriety. This is indeed a difficult verse. Various interpretations have been suggested:

- There is a definite article before "childbirth" (not common in Greek), leading some authors to suggest that it refers to the birth of the Lord Jesus.
- Some interpreters connect this text with Genesis 3:15, that the seed of the woman would crush the head of the serpent and bring salvation to humankind.
- Others interpret this in a well-meaning, but condescending way, that by begetting children and

fulfilling the design God appointed for women, women will be saved from becoming prey to the social evils of their day and could take part in the local church.

III. Church Organization and Order (3:1-16)—Paul speaks to conduct and order in the church. He lists qualifications for elders (3:1-7), deacons (3:8-13), before waxing eloquent on the mystery of godliness in the Lord Jesus (3:14-16).

A. Qualifications of elders (3:1-7)—Paul gives fifteen qualifications for elders in the church. Compare Titus 3:6-9.

<i>Characteristic</i>	<i>Text</i>	<i>Characteristic</i>	<i>Text</i>
Blameless; above reproach	Tit. 1:6; 1 Tim. 3:2	Husband of one wife	Tit. 1:6; 1 Tim. 3:2
Whose children believe and behave; manages family well	1 Tim. 3:4-5; Tit. 1:6	Not overbearing or quick tempered	Tit. 1:7
Temperate; not given to drunkenness	Tit. 1:7; 1 Tim. 3:2, 3	Not violent, but gentle	Tit. 1:7; 1 Tim. 3:3
Not pursuing dishonest gain	Tit. 1:7	Hospitable	Tit. 1:8; 1 Tim. 3:2
Loves what is good	Tit. 1:8	Self-controlled	Tit. 1:8; 1 Tim. 3:2
Upright, holy, disciplined	Tit. 1:8;	Holding to the truth	Tit. 1:9; 1 Tim. 3:2
Able to teach	Tit. 1:9; 1 Tim. 3:2	Respectable	1 Tim. 3:2
Not quarrelsome	1 Tim. 3:3	Not a lover of money	1 Tim. 3:3
Not a recent convert	1 Tim. 3:6	Good reputation with outsiders	1 Tim. 3:7

This extensive list provides those choosing elders today with helpful guidelines.

3:1—“Sets his heart on” means to aspire to. Anyone who so aspires desires a noble task which places on them a heavy responsibility.

3:2-7—It is apparent that the early churches had multiple elders. The terms “bishop” or “overseer” (*episkopos*) and elder (*presbuteros*) are synonymous in the New Testament. Elders and bishops were mature people with spiritual wisdom and experience. Pastors were shepherds who lead and cared for the people of God. Church organization was quite simple at first. There were a plurality of elders overseeing the work of the church and deacons taking care of the physical needs of the organization and the people. The elders included those “ruling,” those involved in running the organization, and teaching, those instructing the people.

The early church did not think of overseers the way church adhering to episcopal systems of church governance think today. Monarchical bishops only arose in second century and beyond. In addition, Paul refers to elders as men. The rest of the New Testament tends to use the masculine gender when referring to people in general, both men and women.

The upshot of this passage is its focus on the character of the person holding office. They must embody

and represent the message they are called upon to proclaim. The list of qualifications includes:

- “Above reproach” or “blameless” (literally, nothing to take hold of) describes a person against whom no charge of wrongdoing can be brought.
- “Husband of one wife,” a phrase commanding monogamy and to fidelity to your spouse. Does the use of the masculine gender bar women from the eldership? Likewise, does the assumption that people are married bar single people from church office or people who lost a spouse by death or divorce? Traditionalists argue that elders must be men and cannot have been divorced. The argument is that a divorced person opens himself and the church to outside criticism. They ask how likely it is that people with marital issues will seek help from someone who bombed out in marriage.
- Temperate is literally “not mixed with wine” and later came to have the broader sense of sober, sensible, and vigilant.
- Self-controlled or having a sound mind meant being orderly and temperate in thought and lifestyle.
- Respectable is to be modest, orderly, honorable.
- Hospitable is literally “loving strangers.” Hospitality in offering shelter and food to those believers traveling was an important practice in the early church since pagan society lacked public inns and those that existed often doubled as brothels. In addition, hospitality offered a valuable byproduct. Believers in widely scattered areas came to know one another thus cementing lines of fellowship.
- Able to teach implies both readiness and ability.
- Not given to drunkenness, not tipsy or rowdy.
- Not violent or quarrelsome (literally, not a striker, contentious, looking for a fight), but gentle, patient, gracious, reasonable.
- Gentle (*epieikes*) conveys a variety of ideas—gracious, kind, forbearing, considerate, genial, and magnanimous.
- Not quarrelsome, not a brawler or a troublemaker.
- Not a lover of money.
- Manages his own household well with children who are obedient and respectful. This implies a married person, but I think Paul implies that because that was the common situation in his day.
- Not a new believer.
- Good reputation with outsiders.

B. Qualifications of deacons (3:8-13)— From early on, local assemblies appointed people to organize and administer the practical details of daily and weekly life and worship of the people of God. Once again, the focus of this church office is the character of the people called to it. They were to model the kind of character and behavior appropriate for all the members of the church.

Diakonos simply means servant. Various writers of the period used the term for those who waited on tables. The seven chosen to assist the apostles in Acts 6 are often referred to as the first deacons even though the Greek word was not used to refer to those seven individuals. *Diakonos* was first used in a technical sense in Philippians 1:1 and came to refer to those church officers who supervised the material affairs of the church. The qualifications include:

- Worthy of respect, a person whose Christian character is worth imitating.
- Sincere, not double-tongued. Saying one thing to some people, and entirely another thing to others.
- Not indulging in much wine.
- Not pursuing dishonest gain. Deacons were often responsible for money matters in local

churches. They must not steal or use funds in selfish ways.

- Grasp the deep truths of faith. They were to hold to the truth. Paul has a strong emphasis on a pure conscience as well as a sincere faith.
- Tested and proved before chosen.
- Women (deaconesses) must be worthy of respect, not malicious talkers, temperate, and trustworthy.
- Husband of one wife (monogamous and faithful).
- Manage their own households well.

3:11—The Greek language uses the same word for “women” and “wife.” Is 3:11 referring to deaconesses? I think so. However, three interpretations have been suggested:

- These women are the wives of deacons with the word “their” prior to “wives” missing in the original language.
- Paul is speaking of women in general. However, the context is qualifications for church office, not qualifications for being in the church.
- The reference is to deaconesses, of whom Phoebe is an example (see Rom. 16:1).

If this text refers to the wives of deacons, then it is odd that nothing is required of the wives of elders.

C. Mystery of godliness (3:14-16)—The secret of true godliness is made known through the life and presence of the Lord Jesus.

- Eternal Son, manifested in the flesh.
- His identity vindicated by his miracles.
- His earthly ministry witnessed by angels.
- His message preached among the nations.
- His message believed all over the world.
- He was taken up into glory.

IV. Personal Instructions to Timothy (4:1-16)—This section deals with false asceticism (4:1-5), the superiority of the spiritual (4:6-10), and Timothy’s pastoral duties (4:11-16).

A. Warning against false teachers (4:1-5)—Paul begins with the ascetic teachings that were troubling the believers. Instead of focusing on the Word in the power of the Spirit, the false teachers were leading others astray with deceptive and demonic instruction (4:1). They were hypocritical liars whose consciences were hopelessly seared (4:2). The two items of false instruction Paul mentions are forbidding people to marry and abstaining from certain foods (4:3). These ascetic tendencies crept into church practice in the first century and were more widely experienced in the second century under the influence of a growing Gnostic movement. These teachers had forgotten God’s good creation providing marriage as a normal and stabilizing reality in human society (see Gen. 2:24) and that Christ has freed people from the restrictions of the Law (4:4-5; see Gal. 5:1-6).

B. Maintaining sound doctrine and good discipline (4:6-16)—These verses deal with ministerial discipline. For true piety, one needs to go into training as much as an athlete does for athletics. We moderns want spirituality to be the sense of being in God’s presence, being surrounded by his love, sensing a transcendent dimension in the affairs of daily life. Here, Paul is telling us we must work at it. The word “strive” (*agonizo*) suggests a sense of struggle and was used to describe a wrestling match. The new life that God longs to give us in full measure involves an engagement of all our energies in working at it.

4:6-10—Paul now elaborates on Timothy’s agenda in response to these teachers. The good minister should focus on the Word and on prayer. He must teach the people the Word and nourish and immerse

himself in the Word in the power of the Spirit (4:6). He should preach out of what he immerses himself in daily. He was to faithfully espouse the truths of the faith, avoiding empty myths and silly tales (4:7). Instead, he was to give himself to spiritual training (4:7-8) and labor vigorously in the ministry with hope in the God who is there and alive (4:9-10).

Timothy was to pursue what the 19th century preacher Philip Brooks described as “The great purpose of life—the shaping of character by truth.” Spiritual exercises that contribute to this include prayer, study, meditation, self-examination, fellowship, service, sacrifice, submission to others, love and doing good, and witness.

4:7—Paul may be referring to Jewish legends of the day as he does in Titus 1:14.

4:10—Labor (*kopiao*) and strive (*agonizo*) are strong terms. The first conveys the sense of growing weary in the effort of work and the second has the sense of struggling as in intense athletic competition. How is God the “savior of all people and especially of those who believe”? This is not a universal salvation text but asserts that God is potentially the Savior of all people based on Calvary’s sacrifice. Those holding to the view of the unlimited atonement, limited redemption of Christ’s death at Calvary often cite this text in support of that view.

4:11-16—Paul elaborates on Timothy’s pastoral duties. This is something of a checklist for the pastor’s self-watch. Timothy was to teach the truth and be an example of the truth applied—in speech, in life, in love, in faith, and in purity. He was to devote himself to preaching and teaching and give particular attention to the public reading of Scripture. The modern reader must remember that many people in the house churches at the time may have been illiterate.

Paul is counseling Timothy to be aware of himself, of his gifting and of the demands made upon him. He was to remember his calling (4:14) and give himself to his ministry (4:15) and persevere in it (4:16). One of the major problems in the Western church is ministerial burnout, the reality of a combination of physical exhaustion, emotional distress (because they feel that they are letting everyone down), family decline (overworked ministers neglecting their family), the real possibility of losing their job, and the sense of not being the example for the people of God that you are supposed to be.

4:14-16—Paul reminds Timothy of his spiritual gift of proclaiming the Word and urges him to be diligent in these matters. The word for spiritual gift is *charisma*, meaning a gracious gift of God. This term appears sixteen times in Paul’s letters and only once elsewhere in the New Testament (see 1 Pt. 4:10). The term comes from the word for grace and means a free gift of the Spirit working in a person. Timothy’s gift was proclaiming the prophetic message. He was to be devoted to the Lord Jesus and to regularly take spiritual inventory (4:16).

V. Ministry to Various Groups in the Church (5:1-6:2)—Paul now speaks of Timothy’s pastoral duties in relation to specific groups in the church, including older and younger men and women (5:1-2), widows (5:3-16), elders (5:17-25), and slaves (6:1-2).

A. Relating to older and younger men and women (5:1-2)—Timothy was to treat others with gentleness and kindness, older men as fathers, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters. “With absolute purity” provides the cautionary instruction. The pastor who does not heed this, courts disaster.

B. Widows in the church (5:3-16)—The care of widows and orphans has always carried great weight in Scriptural counsel. The early church did its best to live as a kind of extended family. Moderns often see Acts 2:42-47 and 4:32-37 as exceptional examples that failed, and the church reverted to something like we experience in the modern Western church. In a world without any form of state-organized social welfare, the church took upon itself the task of caring for those with no one to look

after them and no means of supporting themselves. That is why 5:3-16 goes into such practical detail with respect to the care of widows truly in need.

Here, Paul provides specific instructions to Timothy for the practice in the early churches. The church should care for widows in need but must be careful not to waste its resources on people who really are not in need. Paul lists qualifications for widows to be supported by the church:

- Desolate, that is without human support (5:5, 8)
- Believer with faithful testimony (5:5-7)
- At least sixty years old (5:9)
- A faithful spouse (5:9)
- Doer of good (5:10).

Those widows with family were to look to family for provision (5:4, 7-8, 16). Widows provided for by the church should comport themselves with piety and be rich in good deeds (5:5-6, 9). This ministry should be properly administered (5:9-10).

5:9-16—This text is practical instruction on drawing lines of how to take care of their own on the limited resources that the churches had.

5:11-12 seems to suggest that widows placed on the list were not to remarry and were obligated to perform church service. Paul advises that the church should not be responsible for supporting younger widows (5:11-15), due to circumstances that evidently existed within the church at that time. That is, that younger widows were given to being gossips and busybodies, potentially subjecting the church and the cause of the Lord Jesus to slander (5:13). Paul's counsel to younger women was to remarry, raise children, and manage their new households. This is not a high-handed command to women about how to organize their lives, but a warning to the whole community that, if it intends to take seriously the project of living as a mutually supportive family, that there are serious issues to face and serious problem areas to avoid.

C. Treatment of elders (5:17-25)—This section returns to elders, addressing issues of pay (5:17-18), discipline (5:19-21), and selecting and ordaining elders (5:22-25). Timothy may have been having trouble with the elders at Ephesus. Following someone like Paul was quite an assignment. In addition, Ephesus would not have been an easy assignment. In addition, Timothy was a young man and that may not have sat well with the older men (see 4:12).

5:17-18 makes a distinction between elders who manage church affairs and those who preach and teach. In addition, it commands that the church pay their workers appropriately, without specifying who should be paid or setting appropriate compensation levels.

5:19-21 provides instruction on entertaining accusations against elders and the requirement that there should not be partiality in church administration. A fair and balanced approach to carrying out Paul's instructions was necessary.

5:22, 24 cautions Timothy not to be hasty in ordaining people to the eldership.

5:23—Paul's concern for Timothy's health is interjected in his instructions concerning elders. Timothy may have had a frail constitution, with multiple health issues.

D. Instructions to slaves (6:1-2)—Slaves made up a significant part of the population of the Roman Empire, with estimates ranging from one quarter to as high as one half the population. Slave revolts had arisen from time to time, with the most infamous and dangerous one led by Spartacus a century earlier. Roman society monitored slave behavior very closely and was ruthless in suppressing any sign of disobedience and revolt. The early church was composed of a significant percentage of slaves. Paul specifically addresses Timothy's pastoral counsel in these verses. They were to obey and

show respect for their masters, be they pagan or believing. To do less would provide occasion for the society at large to slander the church and the cause of Christ.

The modern reader looks askance at this apparently servile instruction. Neither Paul nor the other writers of the New Testament denounced slavery or demanded its immediate overthrow. Slavery was an institution deemed indispensable to society. The ancients could not think of their society without slavery any more than moderns can think of our society without electricity or automobiles. Individuals should surely seek their freedom, but the abolition of the institution seemed impossible, and its advocacy would invite a bloodbath. Given the history and societal norms of the time, open protest would have been suicidal.

VI. Warning Against False Teaching and Greed Born of the Love of Money (6:3-10)—

6:3-5—Warning against false teachers—Paul continues by further describing the false teachers. They were arrogant, sparked disputes, and quarreled over words. These activities resulted in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions, and conflicts. They were people of corrupt minds who bankrupted the truth and used their teaching for financial gain. They were stirring things up with an eye to following the money trail.

6:6-10—Warning about the love of money (6:6-10)—Paul warns against covetousness and encourages contentment. We are going to leave it all behind. Paul's advice here is to live simply (6:6-8), focused on our basic needs. If we have enough, that is sufficient. The desire for riches, the love of money, is a source of all sorts of corruption. Paul warns that many people in that day, and certainly in our day as well, have gone astray for the love of gain. The love of money can lead people to all sorts of evil once it starts to control their lives (6:9-10).

6:6—Wealth does not bring contentment. Contentment means an inner sufficiency that keeps us at peace regardless of outward circumstances. True wealth consists as much in the fewness of our wants as in the abundance of our possessions. The word translated contentment (*autarkeia*) was used in a philosophical sense for a situation in life in which no aid or support was needed. Here, Paul speaks of an attitude that is satisfied and at ease with its situation in life.

VII. Final Charge and Instructions (6:11-21)—This section reads like orders from headquarters—“Fight the good fight” (6:12), “I give charge you keep this command” (6:13), “Command those who are rich (6:17), “Guard what has been entrusted to you: (6:20). Paul charges Timothy to pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patient endurance, and gracious gentleness. He was to fight the good fight and take hold of eternal life with a good confession unto the appearing of the Lord Jesus (6:12-14). Paul then waxes eloquent with a doxology (6:15-16) before closing with another warning for wealthy people to place their hope in the Lord and not in their wealth and to do good and share their wealth as they have opportunity (6:17-19). The letter concludes with Paul again telling Timothy to guard the truth entrusted to him (6:20-21).

6:11-16—The idea of appearing (*epiphaneia*) of an emperor is the backdrop of this passage. Two things were involved: a major state visit and a moment of revelation. Timothy is to keep the commands Paul is giving to him until the epiphany of the Lord Jesus, which Paul anticipates being soon.

6:11—The virtues Paul cites, including practical piety, faithful dependability, sacrificial concern for others, and patient endurance (sticking in there when the going gets tough), do not come by accident. They occur in someone's life because someone has chased after them energetically, has worked at them, and has chosen repeatedly to live in accordance with the dictates of the Lord in the power of the Spirit.

6:17-19—Paul warns the wealthy again. Being wealthy is not sinful. However, wealth presents opportunity and danger. It can make people proud and arrogant, focusing on this life. But believers can be rich in this world and the next. Rich people need to trust God and not their wealth, enjoying what God has given, knowing that it is an entrustment that needs to be employed for Kingdom concerns and the benefit of needy people.

2 Timothy—Guarding, Enduring, Entrusting

Introduction—Also see *Pastorals Introduction* before *1 Timothy Introduction, above*

During the 1988 Olympics, Carl Lewis remarked that the United States men's track relay team was one baton pass from a world record or a disaster. Unfortunately for team USA, the latter situation became reality. The relay team, which was head and shoulders above the rest of the field even by their opponents' reckoning, was disqualified from the competition. Forget world records, gold medals, or any medal at all. The baton was not passed.

2 Timothy is about a baton that was passed in a race infinitely more important than an Olympic track event. As the weary apostle Paul neared certain death, he began to think of a successor and he decided on the young man, Timothy. Initially, it is easy to question Paul's decision. Timothy was passive and retiring by nature (1:7), a person easily intimidated. But he was gifted in the Word, diligent, trustworthy, and loyal. Tradition tells us that Timothy laid down his life thirty years after this letter was written, in Domitian's persecution, in a manner that would have done his apostolic mentor proud.

This is an emotional letter from a spiritual father to son. At times, Paul is cracking the whip, calling on Timothy to step up, to overcome shame and his natural reticence, to stand firm, to hold to the truth. Elsewhere, Paul fondly affirms his diligent, loyal spiritual son. You can almost hear the aged apostle whisper to himself: "O Timothy, I miss your face."

2 Timothy was written by a suffering servant of the Lord at the end of his pilgrimage on earth. It provides rich insight into the heartbeat of the King of kings for his suffering creation. The King's call is to endure and to minister redemptively, undergirded by the confidence that victory will come. There is a crown after the conflict.

Author and recipient—2 Timothy is the most difficult of the *Pastorals* for critics to argue against Pauline authorship because of the abundance of personal notes. Paul wrote 2 Timothy while imprisoned at Rome awaiting execution. Paul was released after the imprisonment recorded in Acts 28, undertook the mission trips presupposed in 2 Timothy, was rearrested, this time amid Nero's massive persecution in 64. He was beheaded sometime thereafter.

Timothy's father was a Greek (Acts 16:1), but his Jewish mother Eunice and grandmother Lois raised him in the knowledge of the Hebrew Scriptures (1:5; 3:15). Timothy may have been a convert of Paul (see 1 Cor. 4:17; 1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2), possibly when the apostle was in Lystra during his first missionary journey (Acts 14:8-20). When Paul visited Lystra during his second missionary journey, he decided to take Timothy along with him and had him circumcised because of the Jews (Acts 16:1-3), Timothy was ordained to the ministry (1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6) and served as Paul's devoted lieutenant in Troas, Berea, Thessalonica, and Corinth (Acts 16-18; 1 Thess. 3:1-2). During Paul's third missionary journey, Timothy ministered as Paul's apostolic legate at Ephesus, Macedonia, and Corinth. He was with Paul during the apostle's first Roman imprisonment and went to Philippi after Paul's release (Phil. 2:19-24). Paul left him at Ephesus to supervise the ministry there (1 Tim. 1:3) and years later summoned him to Rome (4:9, 21). Timothy was imprisoned and released at some undesignated location. He seems to have been sickly (1 Tim. 5:23), somewhat reserved (1:7), and very young while serving with Paul (1 Tim. 4:12). However, he was gifted in the Word, was trustworthy, and diligent.

Purpose—Paul commissions Timothy to faithfully continue the work that the condemned apostle had to relinquish. Timothy was in dire need of encouragement because of the hardship and suffering that he was facing. Paul used this letter to instruct him on how to handle persecution from without and

dissension from within. This letter has provided comfort, encouragement, and motivation for countless Christian workers throughout the centuries.

The letter is dominated by themes of persecution from outside the church and false teaching from within. This is Paul's final exhortation to a young minister to focus on the Scriptures and the sound teaching to be found in them. 2 Timothy resembles Jewish tracts called "testaments", where a dying leader imparts his wisdom to his followers, here Timothy, Paul's young son in the faith.

Distinctives—

- Usefulness is tied to the will of God and his desires. The useful person is faithful (2:2), handles the Word accurately (2:15), is ready for good works (2:21), and follows orders (4:11). A useful ministry is centered on life and grounded in the Word.
- Opposition is related to shame (1:8, 12, 16; 2:15) and suffering (1:8, 12: 2:8; 3:11-12). Opposition occurs both within and without the community of faith (1:15; 2:16-18; 4:14-16). Paul has an extended discussion of the increased intensity of opposition in the last days (3:1-9). The Lord's purposes for allowing opposition are to teach us to endure (2:3, 10, 12:3:10-11; 4:5), to produce good works (2:21; 3:17), and to reveal God's redemption (4:17). Good deeds aim to benefit individuals and ultimately serve to advance the Gospel (2:21; 3:17; 4:5, 7-8).
- Word of God—Central to everything in 2 Timothy is the sure foundation of the Word of God. The letter emphasizes the centrality of the Scriptures and contains the clearest biblical statement of their inspiration (3:16-17). Repeatedly, Paul emphasizes the gospel (1:8, 10-11; 2:8), the truth (2:15, 18, 25; 3:7-8; 4:4), and the necessity of teaching (1:13; 2:2, 17, 24; 3:10, 16; 4:2-3). The charge to Timothy is to preach the Word (4:2), to guard the good deposit (1:14), and to entrust it to faithful people who will be able to teach others (2:2).

Summary Outline: 2 Timothy—Guarding, Enduring, Entrusting

- I. Introduction (1:1-7)
 - A. Salutation (1:1-2)
 - B. Thanksgiving for sincere faith (1:3-5)
 - C. Fan the flame (1:6-7)
- II. Join in Suffering for the Gospel (1:8-18)
 - A. Not ashamed to testify (1:8-11)
 - B. Guarding the good deposit (1:12-14)
 - C. Examples of shame and devotion (1:15-18)
- III. Endure Hardship (2:1-13)
 - A. Faithful entrustment (2:1-2)
 - B. Metaphors of devotion (2:3-7)
 - C. Chained servant; Unchained Word (2:8-10)
 - D. Trustworthy saying: Endurance (2:11-13)
- IV. Approved Worker (2:14-26)
 - A. Warnings against godlessness (2:14-19)
 - B. Be a noble instrument (2:20-21)
 - C. Pursue righteousness; Avoid godlessness (2:22-26)
- V. Godlessness in the Last Days (3:1-17)
 - A. Cesspool of self (3:1-5)
 - B. On predators and bimbos (3:6-9)

- C. Continue in faith (3:10-17)
- VI. A Charge and a Crown (4:1-8)
 - A. A charge to preach the Word (4:1-5)
 - B. A crown at the finish line (4:6-8)
- VII. Personal Remarks and Final Greetings (4:9-23)
 - A. Personal remarks (4:9-18)
 - B. Final greetings (4:19-23)

2 Timothy—Guarding, Enduring, Entrusting

I. Introduction (1:1-7)—This section includes a salutation (1:1-2), Paul giving thanks for Timothy's sincere faith and wonderful heritage (1:3-5), and an exhortation for Timothy to rekindle the gift of God (1:6-7). Paul urges Timothy to rekindle the gift of God and to bring it to a blazing fire. Timothy's gifts dealt with teaching and leadership. If Timothy was to be true to his calling, he must act with a spirit of power, love, and prudence.

A. Salutation (1:1-2)—Paul begins five of his epistles with a declaration of his apostolic office (see 1 Cor. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; Col. 1:1; 2 Tim. 1:1). He was very aware of the authority of his office and cites it here to underscore the solemnity of his charge to Timothy (4:2). Paul was an apostle, not by his own choice, but by the will of God. He was a called man. For Timothy's background see the Introduction.

Three things flow from God—grace, mercy, and peace. Grace (*charis*) is God's unmerited favor; His underserved transforming power to change a life. Mercy (*eleos*) is the outward manifestation of pity. It is God's ability to get under my skin and experience what I feel. Peace (*eirene*) is a total sense of well-being. The focus in this text is the harmonious relationship in Christ between God and human beings. There is peace only after one has received grace and mercy.

B. Thanksgiving for sincere faith (1:3-5)—Paul links his service with a clear conscience back to his forebears and Timothy's sincere faith back to his ancestry. The preciousness of a godly heritage is emphatically underlined.

1:3—Paul refers to his forefathers to draw attention to what he is about to say about Timothy's heritage. He appreciated the value of a godly heritage very much as we should as well.

1:4—The apostle feelings come to the forefront immediately. The verb *epipothon* (long for or yearn) expresses strong emotion. Timothy was a compassionate and sensitive man who was as deeply attached to the apostle as Paul was to him.

1:5—Paul remembers Timothy's sincere (*anhupokritou* = not hypocritical) faith. The text radiates Paul's confidence in the work of God's grace in Timothy's life. That faith was not only very real but deeply rooted in Timothy's heritage. His mother and grandmother were earnest believers. Paul was not only aware of powerful home influences that shaped both himself and Timothy but was particularly impressed with the saintly atmosphere of Timothy's home.

C. Fan the flame (1:6-7)—Timothy is facing challenging times and Paul exhorts him not to cool his heels during times of persecution. He urges Timothy to be faithful, even as his forebears had been. Timothy is to employ his spiritual gifts in God's service not with a spirit of craven fear, but with one of demonstrated power, self-giving, and sympathetic love. He is to cultivate a mindset that yields a disciplined lifestyle.

Power divorced from love becomes destructive, can even be demonic. Love without power can degenerate into wishy-washy sentimentality. The Spirit who pours out power and love also provides prudence. We need to think clearly and incisively about what needs to be done and how best to do it.

1:6—Fan the flame (*anazotupurein*) means “to kindle afresh” or “to stir up or keep in full flame.” Timothy was to stir up the gift (*charisma*) of God. The word means a gift of God's grace, often used of extraordinary operations of the Spirit in the apostolic church, but including all spiritual gifts and endowments. Timothy received gifts from God, not because of his ordination at the hands of Paul and others (1Tim. 4:14). The reference to the laying on of hands here is the recognition by the church of

Timothy's spiritual gifts and he being given a place in which to exercise those gifts.

1:7—Perhaps Timothy's besetting weakness was timidity. Timidity (*deilias*) is cowardice. Sincere faith is not cowardly. It is not afraid of the cost or the embarrassment of going on in truth. God's gift does not issue in cowardice, but in power, love, and discipline. However, that may be taking this language used much too far. Paul is underlining the Spirit's power in shoring up believers in challenging times. Tradition has it that Timothy died a martyr's death in the persecution of Domitian thirty years later.

Quotes: “Courage is fear that has said its prayers.”

“It is only the fear of God that can deliver us from the fear of man.” (Witherspoon)

First, power (*dunamos*) does not convey that every servant of God must be a forceful personality, but that he or she has strength of character to be bold in the exercise of authority. The focus of this term is inherent power which may or may not be immediately demonstrated. Other Greek words focus on other aspects of power. *Exousia* deals with authority, the right to exercise power. *Kratos* focuses on dominion or the arena of power. The gospel packs power; power to conquer self, power to master circumstances, power to go on living when life seems unlivable, power to live faithfully when that seems impossible. God provides the power to cope, to shoulder difficult tasks, to stand tall in the face of a shattering situation, to retain faith in amid soul-searching sorrow and harrowing disappointment. Paul wants Timothy to demonstrate the power that is within. True faith steps up in challenging times.

Quote: “Many Christians estimate difficulties in light of their own resources and thus attempt little and often fail in the little that they attempt. All God's giants have been weak men who did great things for God because they reckoned on His power and presence being with them.” (Hudson Taylor).

Second, God's gift issues forth in love (*agape*). This is unconquerable benevolence. If we regard people with agape love, nothing the person does will make us seek anything other than his or her highest good. Power must be used with compassion or it becomes a bruising, debilitating thing.

Quotes: “Joy is love exalted; peace is love in repose; long-suffering is love enduring; gentleness is love in society; goodness is love in action; faith is love on the battlefield; meekness is love in school; and temperance is love in training.” (Dwight Moody)

The third characteristic of godly gifting is discipline or a sound mind (*sophronismos*). This is a healed or saved mind with the grace to think God's thoughts after Him. It the “control of oneself in the face of panic or passion.” This healed mind yields a disciplined lifestyle, a self-mastery that is a tangible expression of the lordship of Jesus Christ. It keeps us from being swept away or from running away.

Quote: “No person is free who cannot command themselves.”

II. Join in Suffering for the Gospel (1:8-18)—Paul makes three key points about suffering for the Gospel:

- Don't be ashamed to testify for the Lord Jesus or to identify with His servants. If Timothy truly understands the nature of God's power and message, he will line up his sense of honor and shame in relation to God himself and not in society's codes of honor and shame.
- Join in with believers who are suffering. Don't duck. You must bear your share of suffering or lose your testimony.
- Guard the good deposit of the truth that has been entrusted to you.

A. Not ashamed to testify (1:8-12)—Paul tells Timothy not to be ashamed to testify about our Lord. Rather he was to join in suffering for the sake of the Gospel. If we stop short of a faithful witness, we demean both the Gospel and those suffering for the Gospel. On the other hand, a person who stands firm in his testimony becomes an encouragement to others to do likewise (see Phil. 1:12-

14).

“Not ashamed” is a key idea in chapter 1. Paul exhorts Timothy to not be ashamed (1:8), Paul himself was not ashamed (1:12), and Onesiphorus was not ashamed of Paul's chains (1:16).

1:8—Do not be ashamed (*epsaischunthes*) is in the aorist, not the present tense. Paul is not implying that Timothy was guilty of any shameful action but apparently felt that his young associate needed to have his courage strengthened. Inside of shame, Timothy is told to join Paul in suffering (*sugkakopatheson* = suffer bad together) for the Gospel. Paul is telling Timothy to take his share of ill treatment.

1:9-10—The holy calling of Timothy and of all us was born of God's grace and purpose “before times eternal”, an unmistakable emphasis on the sovereign choice of God in bringing into high relief the historic appearance of Christ which destroyed death and brought salvation and immorality through the gospel. This was revealed (*phanerotheisan* = to make visible what was hidden or unknown) in the Lord's first appearing. The text describes Christ has having destroyed (*katargesantos*) death. The word conveys total oblivion. The whole range of Christ's saving work is envisioned as an accomplished fact. While Christians are not absolved from physical death, Christ's work has removed death's dread (Heb. 2:14-15) and its sting (1 Cor. 15:55).

1:11—Paul was a herald, an apostle, and a teacher. Herald (*kerux*) was a messenger with authority who conveyed official messages or public summons. William Barclay suggests that *kerux* has three lines of meaning, each with something to suggest about our Christian duty. First, a *kerux* was a herald with an announcement from a king. Second, a *kerux* was an emissary when two armies opposed each other, bringing terms of or request for a truce. Third, a *kerux* was an agent of a merchant who promoted the merchant's wares and invited people to come and buy. So too a Christian is a person who brings a royal message of salvation to his or her fellows, brings tidings of a truce with God, and who calls on his or her fellows to accept God's rich offer of faith in Christ's atoning work.

Apostle (*apostolos*) was Christ's authoritative representative and leader in the church, one who was sent forth. Apostles did not speak for themselves but for the Lord Jesus who sent them out. The word is used of the Twelve and of Paul. It also had a wider reference. It was used of Barnabas (Acts 14:4-14), Andronicus and Junia[s] (Rom. 16:7), Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:25), and Timothy, and Silas together (1 Thess. 1:6). These latter references use the term in a nontechnical sense of one who is sent forth.

Teacher (*didaskalos*) is the normal word for teacher. It may well be that people drift away from the faith for the simple, yet fundamental reason that they have not been taught the substance and meaning of the Christian faith in an engaging fashion.

B. Guarding the good deposit (1:12-14)—Paul relates suffering unashamedly for the gospel to God's ability to guard what he has entrusted to the apostle. Suffering and shame do not block God's redemptive power. This confidence is the basis of Paul's exhortation to Timothy to guard the good deposit. The “entrusted deposit” is a monetary image here applied to teaching. One was responsible to safeguard money deposited with them. Teaching came to be seen in a similar way. They were passing on a sacred deposit to their disciples. Timothy is to guard gospel he taught with the strong support of the Holy Spirit within him.

1:12—“I know whom I have believed” expresses Paul assurance in the faith, begun in the past and continuing into the present. The deposit (*paratheke*) includes the entirety of his ministry. The word was used in situations where one took a long journey and deposited his money and valuables with a trusted friend who would restore the property upon return. In the ancient world, safeguarding such a deposit was a most solemn duty. How interesting that what was first God's deposit in us would become our deposit with God.

1:13-14—Timothy was to keep the pattern (*hypotuposin*) of sound teaching received from Paul. The word translated “pattern” was used of an outline sketch such as an architect might make before being down to detailed plans for a building. It conveys the responsibility of tracing accurately, not adding to the pattern but keeping it whole. Timothy was to guard the deposit with faith and love in the power of the Spirit, ever true to the Lord Jesus and seeing people as the Lord sees them. It means to seek their highest good, meeting bitterness with forgiveness, disdain with love, and indifference with constancy and concern. That kind of love comes from God. It is not naturally resident in us.

C. Examples of shame and devotion (1:15-18)—There is pathos behind “everyone in Asia [the Roman province of Asia Minor, now central Turkey] has deserted me.” It seems that believers may have turned away from him upon his new arrest. Phygelus and Hermogenes may have been singled out because they were conspicuous examples of disloyalty, doubtless because of fear. These were lonely hours for the apostle, facing certain death and abandoned by his comrades. It is difficult to understand why one of God’s servants who gave himself so self-sacrificially to others should suffer like this at the end of life.

In contrast, Onesiphorus is a model of human kindness. In the apocryphal “Acts of Paul and Thecla”, Onesiphorus is spoken of as a convert of Paul who extended hospitality to Paul during his stay at Iconium while on his first missionary journey. His name means “help-bringer”, and he lived up to his name when he scoured vast recesses of Rome to find the aged apostle (1:17). No doubt he risked his life when he sought Paul out and visited him repeatedly. Onesiphorus was used to brace Paul up, a kindness that was in keeping with Onesiphorus’ general character. Paul reminds Timothy of how Onesiphorus had been so helpful when the apostle was at Ephesus (1:18). Onesiphorus is described as “often refreshed me”, using a term that means “to cool again”. He was a breath of fresh air for Paul in his hour of need. His help was grounded and practical. His refreshment of Paul probably meant bringing food and drink and other necessities and money to buy more when Onesiphorus had to leave. God’s Spirit was at work in Onesiphorus’ life, enabling him to live the life of generous, Christ-like love. His final acts of charity towards Paul were only the climax of a consistent, demonstrated fidelity.

III. Endure Hardship (2:1-13)—Paul elaborates on a faithful entrustment (2:1-2), speaks of metaphors of devotion (2:3-7), on how the Word remained unchained even though the servant was chained (2:8-10), and concludes with some trustworthy sayings about endurance (2:11-13). Things to remember when suffering for the gospel:

- Your source of power (2:1);
- Your message and its faithful entrustment (2:2);
- Your attitude when going through difficult times (2:3-7).

A. Faithful entrustment (2:1-2)—The keys here are faithfulness and entrustment. We are to be true to the gospel and true to our commission to pass it on. Timothy was to be strong (*endunamou*). The verb is in the passive voice, meaning the subject (Timothy) was acted on by the grace in the Lord Jesus. As to his mode of ministry, Timothy was to take what he heard from Paul and pass that on to faithful people. He was not responsible for feeding people who did not want to eat. The word entrust (*parathou*) conveys the idea of leaving something of value with another person for safekeeping. A person who is faithful is believing, loyal, and dependable. Two qualifications are required:

- Proven loyalty to the truth;
- An aptitude to teach.

A teacher should remain steadfast despite threats of persecution and should not be swayed by the intellectual allure of false doctrines. He or she must be steadfast in life and thought. A high calling is only truly fulfilled in the gracious power of the Holy Spirit. Note that the message was not transmitted

in a corner, but among many witnesses.

B. Metaphors of devotion (2:3-7)—Paul uses the soldier, the athlete, and the farmer as metaphors for enduring hardship. Wandering philosophers (common in the first two centuries in the Empire) often compared their task of imparting wisdom to that of soldiers waging war and athletes running a race. Paul takes this up with Timothy. From the soldier, Timothy must learn dedication and devotion; from the athlete discipline; and from the farmer diligence. The apostle used these same similes in 1 Corinthians 9:6-7, 24-27.

2:3-4—Soldier—The characteristics of a good soldier parallel those of a faithful minister. He endures hardship (2:3), avoids extracurricular entanglements (2:4), thinks in terms of his entire unit (2:10), and trusts and obeys his commanding officer (2:11-13). Loyalty to the Lord Jesus and lifting him up is focal (2:8).

A soldier's service must be focused, sacrificial, and loyal. Once someone enlisted in the army, they could no longer involve themselves in the ordinary business of making a living. Their agenda was a military one. One also had to be obedient. The soldier was to obey instinctively. Instinctive obedience might save his life as well as those of others. Soldiers laid their lives on the line regularly. In preparing for that, there was rigorous discipline, involving much personal sacrifice. Finally, a soldier must be loyal. When a Roman soldier joined the army, he took the sacramentum, the oath of loyalty to the emperor. Good service began with deep-seeded loyalty. So too the believer. A concentrated, sacrificial service, an obedient life, and a heart-felt loyalty to the Lord constitutes the believer's badge of honor.

2:5—Athlete—“Competes as an athlete” only appears twice in the New Testament, both references in the writings of Paul (here and in 1 Corinthians 9:25). In the Greek games, the athletes had to state on oath that they had fulfilled ten months of training before they were eligible to enter the contest. Anyone who had not subjected themselves to the necessary discipline would have no chance of winning and would lower the standards of the competition that people had come to expect. This metaphor is about discipline, purposeful endeavor, and necessary self-denial.

Illustration—Bear Bryant at halftime in a game Alabama was losing to a significant underdog: “If I were you, I’d give my soul to the good Lord, because next week, your body is mine.”

“Receive the victor’s crown” is *stephanoutai*. The Greek language has two words for crown: *diadema*, the royal crown, and *stephanos*, the victor’s wreath in an athletic contest. There is an important proviso in this metaphor of the athlete’s wreath and its application in Christian service. Only one athlete can receive the victor’s wreath, but every Christian who loyally strives to serve the Master will be crowned (see 4:8).

2:6—Farmer—The hardworking farmer is a metaphor highlighting diligence. Diligence frames the lifestyle of a successful farmer. When it is time to plant, you plant. When it is time to harvest, you harvest. Indeed, at harvest time, farmers know no regular hours. There is no such thing as quick results. Farmers must be patient. So too believers. We must learn to work hard, wait patiently, and trust the Lord.

C. Chained servant; unchained Word (2:8-10)—Paul’s chains were bearable in the power of God and in the realization that the Word could never be chained. The apostle could endure hardship in the knowledge that the Kingdom was advancing. A person may be chained, but God’s Word cannot be. The persecution of Christian leaders may hamper the progress of the gospel, but it cannot prevent its spread.

When it comes to Christian witness in a hostile world, we are to believe in the power of the Word, a power greater than prison walls, chains of iron, and attempts at silencing the message. Confidence in

God's Word and energizing message should sustain believers when we are suffering and give us fresh courage and hope when oppressed.

2:9—Paul was treated as a common criminal (*kakopatho*). The year may have been in the mid-60s, shortly after the great fire of Rome and Nero's terrible persecution of believers after blaming the Christians for the fire to get himself off the hook. Christians were, in effect, an illegal association explicitly accused of a massive arson destroying ten of the fourteen sections of Rome by the emperor himself. Paul, as an outspoken leader of this association, was in a very precarious position.

Illustration—Andrew Melville was one of the earliest heralds of the Scottish Reformation. The English regent sent for Melville, denounced his writings, and threatened him with death or banishment. Melville told the regent that he could exile a man, but not the truth, he could imprison a preacher, but not the Word. The message is always greater than the messenger, the truth is always mightier than the bearer.

2:10—Endure translates *hupomeno*, meaning to remain or abide under. Paul was certain that what he was enduring would in the end help other people. When anyone suffers for the faith, often his or her suffering makes the road to faith easier for someone else. The “elect” in this text refers to those yet to come to the Lord.

2:11-13—The trustworthy saying may have been an early creed or hymn. Our redemptive reality tracks that of the career of the Lord Jesus. The hymn urges our faithfulness but also provides the encouragement of his fidelity to us despite our weakness.

IV. Approved Worker (2:14-26)—Paul issues warnings against godlessness (2:14-19), exhorts Timothy to be a noble instrument in the hand of God (2:20-21), to pursue righteousness, and to avoid quarrels (2:22-26).

A. Warnings against godlessness (2:14-19)—Paul emphasizes the necessity of maintaining sound doctrine (2:14-15), instructs Timothy to avoid godless chatter and teaching (2:16-18), and concludes by invoking two quotes reminding his young associate that the Lord is able to differentiate between the good and the bad, between true and false (2:19). An approved worker cuts a straight path with God's Word, dedicates his life to God's noble use, and focuses on godly instruction while avoiding wrangling over words.

2:14—Wrangling over words is a useless exercise that often damages the hearers. Never forget your responsibility to those who listen. Understanding often comes by doing rather than talking. The best way to probe the deep things of the faith is to embark on the unmistakable duties of the Christian life.

2:15—Instead of wrangling over words, the teacher is to be an approved worker in the Word who has no cause for shame when the work is reviewed. Do your best (take pains and make every effort) to present yourself to God to handle Word accurately. It is one thing to solemnly charge others and quite another to take yourself to the anvil and let the Spirit work on you.

Approved (*dokimon*) means tried and true, the genuine article. The word was used of the procedure to establish the genuineness of coins and precious metals. Handling accurately (*orthotomonta*) means to cut a straight path, a straight direction to an intended destination. The word was applied to various tasks, plowing a straight furrow, cutting a straight board, sewing a straight seam. Timothy was to be a diligent, zealous worker in the Word, avoiding godless chatter.

2:16-18—These verses describe the false teachers. Paul recommends distancing oneself from such individuals and refraining from engaging in overly detailed or contentious debates, as these can be divisive and potentially harmful. These teachers were senseless talkers whose chatter progressed them

further in ungodliness. Philetus and Hymenaeus are named. This is the only reference to Philetus. 1 Timothy 1"20 mentions Hymenaeus, where he is excommunicated to learn not to blaspheme. Their error was not inconsequential; it related to the resurrection of the body. They treated the resurrection as a spiritual experience only, undermining the faith of some. Christianity without a physical resurrection ceases to be a dynamic, living faith (see 1 Cor. 15:12-19).

The Greek scorn of physicality in spiritual things was probably the source of this error. It denies the goodness of the physical creation and God's promise to renew it. It also implicitly denies God's justice and judgment and God's promise to put the world to rights. This was may have been a proto-gnostic spirit which spawned endless speculations, imaginative genealogies, and wranglings about words.

2:19—In this text, Paul alludes to the ancient practice of engraving inscriptions on buildings to indicate their purpose or to provide a sense of authentication. The first inscription is from Numbers 16:5, an account of Korah's revolt against Moses. The Lord is able to differentiate between the true and the false. The second inscription is either from Number 26:26 (the same context as Numbers 16:5) or Isaiah 52:11 (a call for purity for those who preach the Word). Paul is alluding that the Church has a certain inscription on it, a seal which proves genuineness or ownership by the Lord.

B. Be a noble instrument (2:20-21)—This passage continues comparing true and false teachers using the imagery of honorable and dishonorable vessels. The point of this contrast is between honorable and dishonorable endeavors. Timothy's aim was to be to attain the most honorable usefulness.

C. Pursue righteousness; Avoid quarrels (2:22-26)—The passage contrasts righteous and kindly people with those who are quarrelsome. Paul instructs Timothy to flee youthful lusts (2:22), avoid quarrelsome and silly arguments (2:23-24), and patiently instruct people in the Word in the hope that they would come to their senses and that God would grant repentance (2:25-26).

2:22—Youthful lusts include both the faults of passion and of idealism. Certainly, it includes sexual lust. Others that can be added to this list include impatience, that too much hurry can do more harm than good, self-assertion, an intolerance of others' opinions and an arrogance in asserting one's own opinion, love of argument, a trait the disputes endlessly and acts seldomly, and a fondness for novelty, which grossly underrates the value of experience.

2:24—Positive traits of the Lord's servant who refuses to engage in silly quarrels include:

- Gentleness, that is an overall quality of kindness and deference;
- Aptitude to teach employed with the grace of gentle ministerial instruction;
- Not being resentful, an attitude of patient forbearance towards opposition or bearing with adversity or even evil without resentment.

2:26—That they may come to their senses (*ananepsosin*), meaning to return to soberness. The metaphor implies a previous duping by evil influences, which numb the conscience, confuse the senses, and paralyze the will.

V. Godlessness in the Last Days (3:1-17)—Paul describes what a cesspool of self the last days will be, spelling out nineteen characteristics of people in those days (3:1-5), elaborates on the predatory sexuality that will be evident (3:6-9), before exhorting Timothy to continue on in faith (3:10-17).

A. Cesspool of self (3:1-5)—The last days will be dangerous, stressful, troublesome times, made difficult by difficult people. Nineteen characteristics of these people are described in this passage. The problems stem from false loves—lovers of self, lovers of money, and lovers of pleasure rather than

lovers of God. The heart of every one of these problems is a problem of the heart.

3:1—“In the last days” is a phrase that comes from the Old Testament (see Isa. 2:2; Mic. 4:1). Peter’s use of Joel 2:28 on the day of Pentecost (see Acts 2:17) makes it clear that this phrase can refer to the entire Messianic age. The conditions described in this passage have been and will be present throughout the age. However, it seems more natural to take this somber passage as particularly applicable to the time just prior to the Lord Jesus’ return. These times will be terrible (*chalepoi*), a word used to describe menace and danger.

3:2-4—This passage lists nineteen characteristics of people in the last days. The first two—lovers of self (*philautoi*) and lovers of money (*philarguroi*)—supply the key to the rest of the list. Moral corruption flows from love falsely directed. Self-centeredness and material advantage, when they become the chief objects of affection, destroy all moral values and the subsequent list of vices is their natural fruit. It is significant that this list concludes with a similar pair of compound words, lovers of pleasure (*philedonai*) rather than lovers of God (*philotheoi*). Pleasure becomes a substitute for God. Materialism and the sensuality that flows from it are opposed to piety and true religion.

3:2—**Lovers of self** conveys a sense of cherishing oneself. Church people can be obsessed with self-esteem. The truth is that our proper self-identification begins with our death with Christ (Gal. 2:20). **Lovers of money** can lose their souls in material things. There is peril in assessing your well-being by material things.

A clear connection exists between **boastful** (*alazones*) and **proud** (*huperephanoi*=an overweening estimate of one’s own merit, despising others or treating them with contempt, haughty). *Alazones* includes the idea of swagger. Plato described this as “the claim to good things which a man does not really possess.” Aristotle further elaborated “the man who pretends to creditable qualities he does not possess or possesses in a lesser degree than he makes out.” **Abusive** (*blasphemoi*) is a word from which we get the English word “blasphemy.” This is evil speaking directed at other people as well as God. This fault naturally follows bragging and arrogance since it is pride that so often begets insults.

Disobedient to parents (*goneusin apeitheis*) is symptomatic of an attitude to authority that will submit to no one. It is a sign of a decadent society when youth lose all respect for their elders and fail to recognize an unpayable debt and basic duty they owe to those who gave them life. **Ungrateful** (*acharistoi*) is literally “not grace.” A lack of gratitude signals a person’s refusal to acknowledge the grace of God. **Unholy** (*anosioi*) is that which is without righteousness. This person is inwardly indecent. The unholy person is one who offends the fundamental decencies of our common humanity.

3:3—**Without love** (*astorgoi*) is one who is without family or natural affection. In the last days, love of self will override love of family and all sense of natural belonging. In those terrible times, people will be so set on themselves that even their closest kin will mean nothing to them. **Unforgiving** (*aspondoi*) may be expressed as irreconcilable. These people are so bitter and lost in hatred that they cannot make a truce, or so dishonorable that they break their truces at the first convenient moment. There is a certain harshness of mind which separates a person from others in unrelenting bitterness.

Slanderous (*diaboli*) is literally “to cast in between.” A gossip usually colors the facts, robbing people of their reputation by insinuating things. People who would never dream of stealing property often think nothing of passing on a story which ruins someone’s good name. It is no accident that we get our English word “devil” from the Greek word for slanderer (*diabolos*).

Quote: Good name in man and woman. Dear my lord,

Is the immediate jewel of their souls;

He who steals my purse steals trash: ‘tis something, nothing;

‘Twas mine, ‘tis his, and has been salve to thousands;

But he that filches from me my good name,
 Robs me of that which not enriches him,
 Makes me poor indeed. (Shakespeare, Merchant of Venice).

Without self-control (*akrateis*) describes a person moved by impulse or passion. The person does not think sensibly and wounds others by his moral abandonment. **Brutal** (*anemeroi*) is a word that describes a wild beast. The term denotes savagery devoid of sensitivity or sympathy. **Not lovers of the good** (*aphilagathoi*) is to be without affection for the benefits that good brings to other people. The company of good people and the presence of good things are an embarrassment to these people.

3:4—Treacherous (*prodotai*) means a traitor. The term was applied to Judas. When Paul warns Timothy of Alexander (4:14-15), was treachery in the background? **Rash** (*propeteis*) means moved by impulse or passion. Literally, the word means falling forward, headlong. It conveys the idea of people swept along and acting on imprudent impulse. **Conceited** (*tetuphomenoi*) is swell-headed or puffed up; people unduly inflated with their own importance. **Lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God** is a play on words—*philedonai* ... *philotheoi*. The phrase speaks of one who has put self and selfish pleasure in place of God as the center of their affections.

3:5—This text speaks to the type of religion that retains its outward form but amounts to nothing more than an empty shell. It is more than organized religion that has ceased to function, but religion that is not intended to function.

B. On predators and bimbos (3:6-9)—In 3:1-5, Paul points out characteristics of self-oriented living. The tense he uses is future. While these characteristics are seen in people of every age, they will be most evident at the culmination of the age. In 3:6-9, the apostle shifts to the present tense and excoriates self-centered opponents of the truth for their depraved thinking and living. These people were—

- Deceptive;
- Obsessed with self;
- Opposed to the truth and to preachers of the truth; and
- Eventually be exposed as frauds.

3:6—These opponents of the truth prey on vulnerable people, whose past and muddled present make them easy targets for predators. They worm their way into (*endunontes*) homes. They creep in, they insinuate themselves into other people's lives, they come in disguise. They gain control (*aichmalotizontes*=take captive). Apparently, these false teachers exercised the kind of control over others that their captives actually lost their freedom of thought. Their target was weak-willed, silly women (*gunaikaria*). Our modern equivalent is bimbos. These women lacked moral substance, loaded down with sins, overwhelmed in their conscience. Women easily deceived because they were driven by various impulses.

3:7—“Always learning but never coming to a knowledge of the truth.” There is great danger in intellectual curiosity without moral earnestness. We are not meant to titillate our minds with the latest crazes; we are meant to strengthen ourselves for the moral and spiritual battle which rages all around us.

3:8—Old Testament examples of these kinds of predators were Jannes and Jambres, two of Pharaoh's magicians who opposed Moses at the time of the Exodus. Their names do not appear in the Old Testament text but are referred to in a targum (an Aramaic paraphrase of the Hebrew text) on Exodus 7:11. Their names mean “the rebel” and “the opponent,” respectively. These men and those like them have depraved minds. Their thinking was completely corrupt, totally lacking in spiritual content. The point Paul is making is that whenever the gospel is going forth in power there will be people opposing

it by whatever means they can.

3:9—Paul predicts that such men will not get extremely far, they will be tracked down and their folly (*anoia*=without mind) will be apparent to all.

C. Continue in faith (3:10-17)—Paul points Timothy to his own example (3:10-11), assures him that persecution is entirely normal for those who would live godly lives (3:12), and urges him to continue in the faith that was his rich heritage (3:14-15) and which was grounded on the Word (3:16-17). These are characteristics of good and faithful leadership: their lives are open books for all to see, they hold to the truth, they practice what they preach, they are willing to suffer, and they continue in God’s Word.

3:10-11—This text focused on Paul’s teaching and way of life has the flavor of “follow as a rule”, “trace out as an example”, or “follow alongside”. The idea is to be a disciple, to follow someone, sticking to him thick and thin, attending diligently to his teaching. This text entails the unwavering devotion of a true comrade, the full understanding of a diligent pupil, and the complete obedience of a dedicated servant. Paul points to himself in a variety of ways:

- His purpose (*protesei*=chief aim). The word has the sense of presetting something (see 1:9). Paul’s purpose followed God’s purpose. He received a ministry; he did not make one up.
- Patience (*maruthumia*=far passion). This is long-suffering, usually referring to an enduring patience with people.
- His love (*agape*) was an unselfish one, love not based on what you get out of it. The goal of our instruction in faith is this kind of love.
- His endurance (*hupomone*=remain under). This is the stout persistence with which believers contend against various hindrances, persecution, and trials that befall them.

3:11—Paul’s appeal to what happened at Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra, rather than his current sufferings, may have been prompted by Timothy’s vivid recollection of these events in his early association with the apostle.

3:12-13—Timothy was to expect opposition. The world is topsy-turvy, with virtues often labelled as faults and wrongdoing praised as if it were noble. Paul warns Timothy that false teachers and evil imitators will not learn from their waywardness but be confirmed in it, growing in their deceptiveness.

3:14-15—Timothy had a wonderful heritage. From an early age he learned the Scriptures. In pious Jewish homes, boys were taught the sacred writings at age five. The Old Testament commanded that children be taught the Scriptures (Deut. 6:7; Ps. 71:17, 78:5-7). This good foundation produced twofold confidence; knowledge of the ways and outcome of his teachers and knowledge of the Scriptures themselves.

3:16—This text and 2 Peter 1:21 are two outstanding texts on the divine inspiration of Scripture. All Scripture (*pasa graphe*) is literally “every writing.” The term *graphe* was used of the Old Testament Scriptures primarily and of the whole Scripture generally. God-breathed (*theopneustos*) is the word rendered literally. Old English translations rendered the term “inspired.” Paul is reminding Timothy that the basis of the Bible’s profitableness (*ophelimos*=beneficial, advantageous) lies in its inspired character.

Scripture is profitable in a fourfold way:

- For teaching (*didaskalian*) what is right. Scripture is to be the subject taught, not cited in support of some other agenda.
- For reproof (*elegmon*=conviction) of what is wrong. Hebrew 4:12 speaks of the Word as capable of dividing soul and spirit, joint and marrow. The Scripture, handled properly, brings

conviction.

- For correction (*epanorthosin*), that is, how to get right. An improvement of life and character; a restoration to an upright condition.
- For training (*paideian*) in righteousness, that is, how to stay right. The Scripture rears us in the purpose and mind of God, as loving parent rears their children.

It is true that Christianity is not founded on a printed book but on a living person. However, the only place where we find a first-hand account of that awesome person and of his teaching is in the book we call the Bible. We would do well to attend to the book.

3:17—The result is a thoroughly equipped servant of God. The Bible student has in his or her hands a God-breathed instrument designed to equip them to be useful in God's work and to God's people. Do we believe that?

Quote: As the rain and snow come down from heaven,
and do not return to it without watering the earth
and making it bud and flourish,
so that it yields seed to the sower and bread for the eater
so my word that goes from my mouth, will not return to me empty,
but will accomplish what I desire
and achieve the purpose for which I sent it. (Isaiah 55:10-11).

VI. A Charge and a Crown (4:1-8)—Paul charges Timothy to preach the Word and gives him reasons for doing so—

- Because there is going to be a judgment (4:1);
- Because of the crisis of the day (4:2-5);
- Because it was Timothy's turn to step up (4:6-8).

A. A charge to preach the Word (4:1-5)—Paul solemnly charges Timothy to preach the Word in the backdrop of the Lord's appearing and judgment (4:1), to preach it robustly (4:2), for such a time as it was (4:3-5). Timothy might have been a shy and anxious personality. Paul wants him to keep his head, keep on mission, and discharge the duties of his ministry.

4:1—If we were to view our tasks in the backdrop of the Lord's return and assessment, it would help save us from a touchy spirit that is easily offended by criticism, from self-importance concerned with kudos and prestige, from self-centeredness which requires thanks and praise for every act, and from hurt occasioned by ingratitude. The Lord's appearing (*epiphaneian*) appears here and with respect to the crown of righteousness in 4:8. The term referred to two different events: either a god's intervention or an emperor rising to power. What Paul is saying to Timothy: "You know what happens when a town is expecting an appearance of an emperor; you are expecting an appearance of the King of kings and Lord of Lords. Do you work in such a way that everything will be ready when he appears."

4:2—These exhortations apply to Christian ministers and workers in all ages:

- Preach (*keruxon*) the Word, in season and out, in fit times and in inopportune times. Take every opportunity to serve up the Word.
- Correct (*elegxon*) or reprove as necessary. "The road to completion lies through a series of disgusts." We must learn to be sick of our sin.

Illustration: Alcibiades, the brilliant but spoiled darling of ancient Athens, used to say to Socrates: "Socrates, I hate you, because every time I meet you, you make me see what I am."

- Rebuke (*epitimeson*) entails the idea of censure. This involves the earnest desire for others to

turn away from their sin.

- Encourage (*parakaleson*=to call alongside). This may mean encourage or exhort. Both meanings describe aspects of the Christian worker's labor.
- With patience (*makrothumia*=long-suffering) and careful instruction (*didache*). Practical instruction readily applicable to life and continuously and patiently taught. A patient spirit that does not get upset or lose hope, always believing that no one is beyond redemption.

4:3-5—Paul describes an increasingly difficult audience. There will be a time when there will be open opposition to the gospel, people will gather around them (*episoreusousin* = heap up) teachers who will appeal to people's desire to satisfy their lusts. The instruction will lack serious purpose, its audience will have itching ears, desiring whatever will satisfy their carnal, self-willed hearts. Timothy is to stay morally alert and to have presence of mind. He is to cultivate an unruffled alertness to all aspects of his ministry.

4:4—Paul tells Timothy that people will turn away from the truth, deliberately refusing to even hear it. Myths will be more fascinating. People will eagerly wander after counterfeits, oblivious to the fact that they are leaving truth behind.

4:5—Timothy was to do the work of an evangelist (*euangelistou*), a word used elsewhere in Acts 21:8, referring to Philip, distinguishing him from the apostle by the same name, and in Ephesians 4:11, denoting Christian workers other than apostles and prophets on one hand and pastors-teachers on the other. They were itinerant preachers who heralded the gospel.

B. A crown at the finish line (4:6-8)—In this verse and in Philippians 2:17, Paul speaks of pouring out (*spendomai*) his life. The word picture is that of a drink offering poured on a lamb of sacrifice to sweeten it just before the lamb was offered on the altar (see Num. 28:24). In Philippians, Paul expected to be released soon and revisit Philippi (2:24). Now, the case is quite different. He is nearing the end, his fate is sealed, and he knows that the time has come for his departure.

Departure (*analuseos*) comes from a verb that means to unloose. It was used of unyoking an animal from the shafts of a cart or a plow, for loosing the ropes of a tent, and for loosing a vessel from its moorings. Death for Paul was a rest from toil, a time strike camp, an occasion to launch a vessel out into the deep waters. It was time for the final voyage into the presence of God; time to go home.

Illustration—The Christian view of death is captured by this word, departure, in stark contrast to our society's notions. The word suggests that what seems to be the end of the journey is really the dawn of a glorious new era when we will be released from all present restrictions. J.R.R. Tolkien portrays this beautifully at the end of *The Return of the King* in his classic, *The Lord of the Rings*. Bilbo, Frodo, Elmond, and several high elves meet Gandalf at the Grey Havens to set sail for the West and leave Middle Earth forever. There is sadness of departure but that sadness lifts as the expectation of the arrival on the other side rises with the sun at the dawn of a new day. Blessed hope!

Quote—It is not what we do that matters, but what a sovereign God chooses to do through us. God does not want our success; he wants us. He does not demand our achievements; he demands our obedience. The Kingdom of God is a kingdom of paradox, where through the ugly defeat of a cross a holy God is utterly glorified. Victory comes through defeat; healing through brokenness; finding yourself through losing yourself. (Chuck Colson).

4:7-8—Paul speaks of fighting the good fight, finishing the race, keeping the faith. He uses three figures of speech, one military, one athletic, and one religious to say that his day is over; it is Timothy's turn now. The athletic metaphor fits perfectly with his reference to the victor's wreath in 4:8. God provides a crown rewarding faithful service. Paul makes it clear that he has no special reservation on crowns. This is immediate encouragement to Timothy, for a similar reward awaits all who faithfully

serve. We do not run against each other but with each other.

Several types of crowns are referenced in Scripture as rewards for faithful believers:

- Crown that will last forever (1 Cor. 9: 25)—Given to those who master, by God's grace, the old nature.
- Crown of life (Jas. 1:12; Rev. 2:10)—given to those who faithfully endure trials.
- Crown of righteousness (2 Tim. 4:8)—Given to those who long for, and are motivated by, the Lord's realized and completed triumph.
- Crown of glory (1 Pt. 5:4)—Given to faithful elders.
- Crown of rejoicing (1 Thess. 2:19)—Given to those who win others to Christ.

VII. Personal Remarks and Final Greetings (4:9-23)—

A. Personal remarks—These remarks are poignant. In between the lines the aged apostle is telling his spiritual to come to him quickly (4:9, 21) because he was cold (4:13), lonely (4:10-11, 16), and bored (4:13). This section describes Paul's situation (4:9-19), including his needs, companions, opponents, legal proceedings, and his confidence in the Lord God, before the apostle conveyed his final greetings (4:19-23). We glean information on the apostolic circle in these verses as well as about Paul's personal suffering. Paul wrote frequently about suffering and about expecting to suffer for the Lord Jesus and the gospel. Suffer he did, prior to receiving his crown from the Lord of glory.

4:9—Timothy is exhorted to come to Paul ASAP. Paul wanted to be with his spiritual son before he died, He reiterates this in 4:21. The sea was closed to traffic in the winter. From early November until early March, all shipping operations were suspended. Indeed, from March to the end of May, it could be touch and go as well. If Timothy did not come right away, he might have to wait until late spring and Paul might not be alive.

4:10—The term deserted seems to suggest that Paul regarded Demas' action as a personal abandonment. However, tradition has it that Demas did become apostate. In contrast to those who love the Lord's appearing, Demas loved this present world. His story would seem to be one of spiritual degeneration. In Philemon 24, he is among a group Paul calls his fellow-laborers. In Colossians 4:14, he is mentioned without any comment. Here he forsakes Paul and the ministry for this present world.

William Barclay holds out hope for Demas. The name Demas is a shortened for Demetrius. There was a Demetrius who led a riot of silversmiths at Ephesus because of the effectiveness of Paul's preaching had taken much of their trade in idols away (Acts 19:25). There was also a Demetrius who had a good report among all the brethren as cited in one of John's letters (3 Jn. 12). Could these references be the beginning and end of Demas' story? Could Demas really be the Demetrius of the Ephesian riots? Could he have converted to Christianity, served with the apostle Paul, and fallen away? Could he return and become a good servant of the truth again? Demetrius is a common name, and this scenario entails speculation, but would not it be wonderful if it was true!

This verse contains the only New Testament reference to Crescens. Tradition connects him to churches in Gaul, possibly a mistaken reference to Galatia.

Titus went to Dalmatia, near modern-day Croatia. He must have joined Paul in Rome after completing his Cretan assignment where he organized the churches there at Paul's instruction (Titus 1:5).

4:11—“Only Luke is with me.” What a story of devotion, loyalty, and kindness is compressed into these few words. How Paul needed the care of Luke, a trained physician. We know that Luke accompanied Paul to Rome and to prison. Acts 27 records Paul setting out to Rome under arrest and the story is told in the first-person plural, one of the “we” passages in Acts. This strongly suggests author Luke's presence. However, from Luke's presence, we may be able to deduce something else. An

arrested prisoner without private means on his way to Rome for trial on a capital charge did not command state funds to ensure the presence of an entourage. According to tradition, a prisoner in this situation could be accompanied by no more than two of their own slaves. Did Luke enroll himself as Paul's slave to accompany the aged apostle to a Roman prison? In Colossians 4:14, Paul calls Luke the beloved physician and so he was. How often Paul must have thanked God for this kind, skillful, and loyal friend. How often Luke's presence and skill relieved Paul's pain from his thorn in the flesh (2 Cor. 12:7-9), the limitations of old age, or the conditions of a dank prison cell. Kindness and loyalty are qualities that lift a person out of the ruck of ordinary people. Eloquence is forgotten; mental acuity only lives on the printed page; but kindness lives enthroned in the hearts of people.

Mark had a checkered career. We initially met him in Acts 12:12. After Peter was miraculously freed from prison, he went to Mark's mother's house where people were praying for him. Paul and Barnabas took Mark to Antioch (Acts 12:25) and then as their assistant on their first missionary journey (Acts 13:5). Mark "jumped ship," returning to Jerusalem while the team was still in Crete (Acts 13:13). This desertion became the focus of an argument between Paul and Barnabas as they made plans for the second missionary journey and caused the team to split up. Paul took Silas with him and Barnabas took Mark (Acts 15:35-40). Tradition has it that Mark went to Egypt and that he was the founder of the church in that country. Whatever he did, he most certainly redeemed himself. When Paul writes Colossians from a Roman prison, Mark is with him, and Paul commends him to the Colossian church. Now, when the end is near, one of the people Paul wants around him is Mark because he is a useful (*euchrestos*) guy in the pinch. One commentator paraphrased this: "he can turn his hand to anything." The quitter had become capable and loyal assistant.

The liberal preacher, Harry Emerson Fosdick, once preached a sermon with the uplifting title: "No [one] need stay the way [they are]". Mark is proof of that. He is a wonderful encouragement to believers who have failed in their service in the past. Mark failed initially, but did good in the end. Still to this day, Jesus Christ can make the coward spirit brave and nerve the feeble arm for the fight. He can release the sleeping hero in the soul of every person. He can turn the shame of failure into the joy of faithful service.

4:12—Tychicus was the bearer of this letter. Paul sent him to take Timothy's place at Ephesus. The many references to Tychicus in Paul's letters (see Eph. 6:21-22; Col. 4:7-8; 2 Tim. 4:21; Titus 3:12) indicate that Tychicus accompanied Paul on his third missionary journey (Acts 20:4), bore the letters to the Ephesians, Colossians, and 2 Timothy, was with Paul during both of his Roman imprisonments, and served as Paul's apostolic legate in Crete (Titus 3:12) and in Ephesus (2 Tim. 4:12).

4:13—The cloak was a heavy outer garment, circular in shape with a hole in the middle for a person's head. It is impossible to say what the books (*biblia*) and parchments (*membranas*) were. *Biblia* meant papers, letters, and written documents commonly written on scrolls of papyrus. We get our English word "Bible" from this term. The Greek word for parchment indicates that they were vellum (e.g. animal skin) and must have been valuable documents since vellum was too expensive for general use. Suggestions abound for their content, ranging from Paul's certificate of Roman citizenship to parts of Scripture.

Paul is telling Timothy that he was lonely (4:11), cold, and bored (4:13). He was such a giant of a man that it is easy to forget that he was a man with needs. His situation was parallel to that of William Tyndale, the person who translated the New Testament into English, when imprisoned in Vilvorde Castle near Brussels in Belgium. Shortly before his execution in 1536, Tyndale wrote to the governor begging for warmer clothing and above all for his Hebrew Bible, grammar, and dictionary.

4:14-15—Paul warns Timothy of a man named Alexander. There are two other New Testament references to someone named Alexander. Alexander, along with Hymenaeus, is noted in 1 Timothy 1:20

as having been excommunicated. In Acts 19:33-34, Alexander attempts to make a speech in defense of Paul before an Ephesian mob. However, since Alexander was a common name these three references may not refer to the same individual.

The specific harm involved is not mentioned. The word used for “did harm” is *enedeixato*, a verb meaning to display, and was often used for providing information against a person in a legal proceeding. For believers, informers were one of the great curses of Rome at the time of Nero’s persecution and its aftermath. Was Alexander a renegade Christian severely embarrassed by an Ephesian mob, blamed Paul for his humiliation, and years later got even by going to the Roman magistrates with information about Paul seeking to ruin him in a most dishonorable way? Just speculation for sure, but clearly Alexander opposed the gospel that Paul preached.

4:16-18—Paul’s first defense (*apologia*) is possibly a reference to the primo action, the first hearing in a court case. A Roman trial began with a preliminary examination to formulate the precise charges against a defendant. At Paul’s preliminary hearing, he had no one there to support him. It was too dangerous to identify yourself with a person on trial for his life. Eusebius, the fourth century historian, believed that this hearing was in connection with Paul’s first Roman imprisonment and resulted in Paul’s release. Most modern commentators who accept the Pauline authorship of the Pastoral Epistles think that the situation in 2 Timothy is too dire to suppose so happy a result. Paul is facing the end, and while round one went well, the gravity of the situation remained unchanged, and any respite was temporary.

The noun defense (*apologia*) is the source of our English word “apology.” In English, the word conveys a sense of being in the wrong and acknowledging that to be the case. In Greek, however, the term referred to a positive defense, where someone explained why they were innocent or justified in their actions. This sense of the word survives in English in the term “apologetics”, which involves making a positive defense of what Christians believe.

The Lord infused Paul with strength and made him dynamic at his first hearing. The Lord delivered out of the lion’s (*leontes*) mouth, a reference to deadly peril, whether referring to Nero, Satan himself (see 1 Pt. 5:8), or the situation. “Message being fully proclaimed” refers to Paul’s opportunity to plead the cause of Christ in the center of the Empire.

B. Final greetings (4:19-23)—Paul’s associates send greetings and Paul updates Timothy on the situation with a couple of them. He concludes with a mini-benediction.

4:19—Priscilla and Aquila figured prominently in Paul’s life. When Paul first came to Corinth, he was short of funds and possibly disappointed at the meager results of his ministry at Athens. At that time, he found employment and lodging with Aquila and Priscilla. Like Paul, they are tentmakers (Acts 18:2-3). When Paul left Corinth, this couple sailed with him to Ephesus and stayed there for a while (Acts 18:18-19). There they performed a useful function by instructing Apollos (Acts 18:26). From Ephesus they, and the church that met in their home, sent greetings to the Christians at Corinth (1 Cor. 16:19). Later, they were in Rome (Rom. 16:3) where Paul sent greetings to them and referred to an occasion when they risked their lives for him (Rom. 16:4). At the time of the writing of 2 Timothy, they were once again in Ephesus. Their moves were due to their missionary concerns rather than business concerns as tentmakers. In four of the six places in the New Testament where Priscilla and Aquila are mentioned, Priscilla’s name comes first. She may have been of higher social rank or the stronger personality of the two, but the facts given in the text are not sufficient to be certain of either assertion.

There is a greeting to the threshold of the gallant Onesiphorus, who had sought out Paul while he was in prison (see 1:16) and who may have paid for his loyalty with his life.

4:20—The name Erastus appears three times in the New Testament. In Romans 16:23, Paul sent

greetings from “Erastus, who is the city’s director of public works.” In Acts 19:22, there was an Erastus who was one of Paul’s assistants in Ephesus and was sent with Timothy as Paul’s emissaries to the churches in Macedonia. This passage explains that Erastus, who was a companion of the elderly apostle, remained in Corinth. We have no way of knowing whether these three passages refer to the same person. If they do, Erastus was a Christian servant of ability and commitment.

Paul left Trophimus sick in Miletus. It is evident from Acts 20:4, that Trophimus was with Paul when he went to Miletus during the closing stages of the apostle’s third missionary journey, and from Acts 21:29, that he went with Paul to Jerusalem where he unintentionally became the cause of Paul’s being robbed and arrested. That Paul left Trophimus sick at Miletus only presents a problem if we assume that the two of them were only together in Miletus once (described in Acts 20:4). But Trophimus was from Ephesus, a city close to Miletus, and it is possible that on Paul’s last journey from Asia to Rome, that Trophimus accompanied the apostle and got sick in Miletus, something of which Timothy would have been unaware.

4:21—Paul repeats the urgent request of 4:9. If Timothy was to come to Rome, he had to come soon since the Adriatic would be closed for shipping through the winter. Finally, there are greetings from Eubulus, Linus, Pudens, and Claudia. In later lists, Linus stands as one of the bishops of Rome.

William Barclay tells of a romance woven around the names of Pudens and Claudia. Martial was a famous Roman poet in the first century. Two of his epigrams celebrate the marriage of a highborn and distinguished Roman named Pudens to a lady named Claudia. According to the second account, Claudia is described as a foreigner in Rome, originating from Britain, which had recently been conquered. Another Roman writer, the historian Tacitus, tells us that in 52, in the reign of the Emperor Claudius (41-54), certain territories in southeast Britain were entrusted to a British king/chieftain named Cogidubnus, for his loyalty to Rome. In 1723, a marble tablet was uncovered in southeast Britain commemorating the erection of a pagan temple by Cogidubnus, which gives his full name as Tiberius Caludius Cogidubnus. That was no doubt in honor of the Emperor Claudius. If Cogidubnus had a daughter, her name may well have been Claudia, in honor of Claudius, and would have been sent to Rome to ensure the fidelity of her father to the Roman emperor. Such de facto political hostage arrangements were common. If Claudia was sent to Rome, she may have been a ward of a Roman named Aulus Plautius, who had been governor of Britain from 43-52, and to whom Cogidubnus would have owed his service. The wife of Aulus Plautius was a lady named Pomponia. We learn from Tacitus that she was arraigned before the Roman courts in 57 because she was “tainted with foreign superstition”. That “foreign superstition” may well have been Christianity. Pomponia may have been a Christian, and from her Claudia, a young heathen British princess, may well have learned of the Lord Jesus.

A longshot speculation, no doubt. Would not it be wonderful to discover in glory that this Claudia was one and the same with a young frightened British princess who came from the back side of the world of that day to its megalopolis, the hostage of a political deal, and that this was God’s providential plan to draw her to Christ, introduce her to an earnest believer (Pudens) who became her life’s partner, and that together they would be associates of the great apostle Paul.

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