

Notes on 1 Timothy

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Introduction

RECIPIENT

Timothy apparently became a Christian as a result of Paul's missionary work in Lystra (Acts 14:6-23). He joined Paul on the second missionary journey when the apostle's evangelistic team passed through that area where Timothy lived (Acts 16:1-3). While on the second journey Timothy helped Paul in Troas, Philippi, Berea, Thessalonica, Athens, and Corinth. During the third journey he worked with Paul in Ephesus. From there Paul sent Timothy on to Macedonia (Acts 19:22). Later he was joined by Paul in Macedonia (2 Cor. 1:1, 19) and apparently traveled with the apostle to Corinth (Rom. 16:21). On the return trip to Ephesus Timothy accompanied Paul through Macedonia as far as Troas (Acts 20:3-6). Still later Timothy was with Paul in Rome (Col. 1:1; Phile. 1; Phil. 1:1), and from there he probably made a trip to Philippi (Phil. 2:19-23).



At the end of the Book of Acts Paul was under house arrest in Rome (Acts 28:30-31). Our knowledge of his activities after that time comes mainly from scanty references in his epistles and conjectures, since we have no history of this part of his work in the New Testament.

DATE

Following his trial before Caesar and his acquittal, Paul evidently left Rome. He made his way eastward and eventually arrived in Ephesus. While in Ephesus Paul doubtless visited other churches in the area and later set out for Macedonia—and probably for other provinces—intending to continue his pioneer missionary work (cf. Rom. 15:24, 28). When Paul departed from Ephesus he left Timothy in charge, as his special representative, to continue the work there (1 Tim. 1:3). Sometime after that Timothy evidently wrote to Paul, probably asking if he could leave Ephesus, perhaps to rejoin Paul. Paul responded with this letter in which he instructed Timothy to remain in Ephesus and to continue his needed ministry there until Paul could rejoin him (3:14; 4:13).¹

If Caesar released Paul from prison in Rome about A.D. 62, he may have written this epistle in the middle 60s, perhaps A.D. 63-66. Paul's reference to his going from Ephesus to Macedonia (1:3) suggests that he may have been in Macedonia when he wrote 1 Timothy. However, since we have no other references to guide us, he could have been in any one of a number of other provinces.

OCCASION

"As the first-century churches increased in number, questions of church order, soundness in the faith, and discipline arose. The apostles themselves dealt with these questions, but the approaching end of the apostolic period made necessary authoritative teaching about faith and order for the future

¹See Charles B. Williams, *A Commentary on the Pauline Epistles*, p. 433, for an itinerary of Paul's possible movements following his release from prison in Rome.

guidance of the churches. This teaching is revealed in the Pastoral Epistles [1 and 2 Timothy and Titus]."¹

Timothy's function in Ephesus was to represent Paul to the church. The church in Ephesus at this time would have consisted of a number of house-churches (cf. 1 Cor. 16:19). Timothy evidently was not an elder in that group of house-churches. Paul spoke of the Ephesian elders in this epistle as individuals who were different from Timothy.

When Paul had met with the Ephesian elders toward the end of his third missionary journey he had warned them about false teachers who would arise in their midst (Acts 20:29-30). This situation had since happened as he predicted (cf. 1:6; 6:21; 2 Tim. 2:18). Evidently Hymenaeus and Alexander were two of those dangerous people (1:20). Paul alluded to others in this epistle as well (1:3-11; 4:1-5; 6:3-10).

WRITER

The authorship of the Pastoral Epistles is a major critical problem in New Testament studies, but I believe the arguments for Pauline authorship are most convincing.² Since the nineteenth century scholars have attacked the Pauline authorship of the Pastoral Epistles more than his authorship of any of the apostle's other writings. This is an introductory problem that may be studied by referring to the major commentaries on the Pastorals and to the more comprehensive New Testament Introductions.³ William Mounce

¹ *The New Scofield Reference Bible*, p. 1297.

² See Donald A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, pp. 554-68; Newport J. D. White, "The First and Second Epistles to Timothy and the Epistle to Titus," in *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, 4:57-82; William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Pastoral Epistles*, pp. 4-33; Homer A. Kent Jr., *The Pastoral Epistles*, pp. 24-71; Kenneth G. Hanna, *From Gospel to Glory*, pp. 331-37; and, for an additional list of ancient attestations to Pauline authorship, see Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary Practical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*, p.1349.

³ See, for example, William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, pp. lxxxiii-cxxix; Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles: An Introduction and Commentary*, pp. 15-53; and Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, p. 3; and A. T. Hanson, *The Pastoral Epistles*, pp. 2-11. A. Duane Litfin, "1 Timothy," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, pp. 727-29; and A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, 4:555-57; wrote good short discussions.

argued for Luke being Paul's secretary in the writing of all three Pastoral Epistles.¹ But that is impossible to prove.

"The majority of modern scholars maintain that the Pastoral Epistles are pseudepigraphical—that is, written pseudonymously (in Paul's name) sometime after Paul's death (so Dibelius and Conzelmann, Brox, Barrett, Hanson, Houlden, Karris, Hultgren). Most today locate these three letters around the turn of the century, suggesting that the author aimed to revive Pauline teaching for his day or to compose a definitive and authoritative Pauline manual for denouncing heresy in the postapostolic church."²

For example, A. T. Hanson believed that the Pastorals were written about A.D. 100-105 (p. 13) from Ephesus (p. 14) by an unknown person "who wished to claim Paul's authority for his material" (p. 11).

"Since the Pastorals cover only 17 of 128 pages of Paul's writings (in Westcott and Hort's Greek Testament), one is suspicious that Harrison's linguistic argument is in the nature of comparing the merchandise of a specialty shop with that of a large department store and assuring the public on the basis of the comparison, which shows the stock to be different, that the two stores could not possibly be owned by the same man or corporation."³

PURPOSE

First and Second Timothy and Titus are called "Pastoral Epistles" because Paul wrote them to pastors (shepherds) of churches outlining their pastoral duties. The term "Pastoral Epistles" first appeared in the eighteenth century, though as early as the second century the letters had been grouped together within the Pauline body of writings.⁴ The addressed

¹Mounce, pp. cxxvii-cxix.

²Philip H. Towner, *1-2 Timothy & Titus*, p. 15.

³Charles C. Ryrie, *Biblical Theology of the New Testament*, p. 165. His reference is to P. N. Harrison, *The Problem of the Pastoral Epistles*, pp. 1-184.

⁴Walter Lock, *The Pastoral Epistles*, p. xiii; Towner, *The Letters ...*, p. 1.

leaders' main pastoral duties were to defend sound doctrine and to maintain sound discipline.¹

"The pastoral Epistles are primarily practical rather than theological. The emphasis lies rather on the defense of doctrine than on its explication or elaboration. The distinctively doctrinal passages comprise only a small part of the whole; Timothy and Titus had already been instructed."²

"It may be time to say farewell to the nomenclature 'the Pastoral Epistles.' This term, which many trace back to Paul Anton in the eighteenth century, has become something of a restraining device. Its use to describe the contents of the letters is benign enough, but the assumptions about the letters and their intention on which it rests already betray a tendency toward restraint."³

"The term PE [Pastoral Epistles] is no longer helpful, even if it is convenient, for what is gained by economy of reference is more than lost by the weight of the baggage the term has accumulated along the way."⁴

Towner believed that by grouping these three epistles together as the Pastoral Epistles, and treating them as a unit, the church has strayed from interpreting each one as an individual epistle. He acknowledged that these three have certain characteristics in common, but he felt that interpreting them together as a unit does more harm than good. Several of Paul's other epistles are equally as pastoral as these three, though these three deal especially with pastoral leadership issues.

"There are ... several reasons that Paul wrote the first epistle to Timothy: (a) to encourage Timothy to stay on at Ephesus and deal with the significant and difficult issues that had arisen; (b) to provide authoritative instruction on how the household of God was to conduct itself in case Paul delayed in

¹Ralph Earle, "1 Timothy," in *Ephesians-Philemon*, vol. 11 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, p. 344.

²*Ibid.*, p. 345.

³Towner, *The Letters ...*, p. 88. His reference is to Paul Anton's *Exegetische Abhandlung der Apostel Geschichten*.

⁴Towner, *The Letters ...*, p. 89.

coming; and (c) to combat directly the opponents and their teaching and to remind Timothy of how he was to conduct himself and what he was to teach. The underlying purpose was then to encourage Timothy in his work but also to transfer Paul's authority to Timothy in his fight against the opponents."¹

EMPHASES

"The chief contribution which the Epistle makes is the picture of the true Teacher and the true Teaching."²

Major themes in the Pastorals are: faith, savior, salvation, good works, rebuke, personal integrity, the gospel, ethics, eschatology (the end times), and church order.³

OUTLINE

- I. Salutation 1:1-2
- II. Timothy's mission in Ephesus 1:3-20
 - A. The task Timothy faced 1:3-11
 - B. Exhortations to be faithful 1:12-20
 1. A positive encouragement 1:12-17
 2. A negative warning 1:18-20
- III. Instructions concerning the life of the local church 2:1—4:5
 - A. The priority of prayer for people's salvation 2:1-7
 - B. The primary responsibilities of the men and the women in church meetings 2:8-15
 - C. The qualifications for church leaders 3:1-13
 1. Qualifications for elders 3:1-7

¹Mounce, p. lix.

²Lock, p. 2.

³Mounce, pp. cxxx-cxxxv; Gordon D. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, pp. 14-23; Towner, *The Letters ...*, pp. 53-62.

- 2. Qualifications for deacons 3:8-13
 - D. The nature of the local church 3:14-16
 - E. The problem of apostasy in the church 4:1-5
- IV. Instructions concerning leadership of the local church 4:6—5:25
 - A. The leader's personal life and public ministry 4:6-16
 - B. Basic principles of effective interpersonal relationships 5:1-2
 - C. How to deal with widows and elders 5:3-25
 - 1. Provisions for widows 5:3-16
 - 2. The discipline and selection of elders 5:17-25
- V. Instructions for groups within the church 6:1-19
 - A. Slaves 6:1-2
 - B. False teachers 6:3-10
 - C. Those committed to Christ 6:11-16
 - D. The wealthy 6:17-19
- VI. Concluding charge and benediction 6:20-21

MESSAGE

All three of the Pastoral Epistles (1 and 2 Timothy and Titus) deal with the same subject: the order of the local church. Paul had already expounded the doctrines of the church universal and the ministry of the saints in Christ's body in his other epistles. In those he also gave some direction concerning life in the local churches. Now, in the Pastorals, he expounded on the effective operation of the local church as a microcosm of the universal church. The word "church" refers to people in the New Testament. The church is a group of people who have been called out from the general population for a special purpose, namely, to proclaim the gospel and glorify God.

First Timothy deals with two aspects of the subject of order in the local church: the life of the church, and the leadership of the church. In his epistle to Titus Paul elaborated on the leadership of the church. In 2 Timothy he elaborated on the life of the church. First Timothy is more general and

fundamental. Titus expounds how to set the church in order, and 2 Timothy expounds the leader's personal responsibility.

In 1 Timothy Paul taught that the function of the local church is to proclaim God's truth in the world. He also taught that the function of the church leaders (Timothy and the church elders) is to expound God's truth in the church. The purpose for which the church exists is the proclamation of God's truth in the world, and the purpose for which the leaders of the church exist is the exposition of God's truth in the church.

These are the same points that Paul made in Ephesians 4:11-12 concerning the universal church. The saints are to do the work of the ministry, and gifted people (apostles, prophets, et al.) are to equip the saints for their work. In 1 Timothy Paul applied the same truth to the local church.

On the one hand then, the purpose of the church is to declare God's truth to the world (3:14-16). The key terms in this central passage are "church" and "mystery of godliness."

The local church is an instrument that God designed to support and display His truth. Every individual believer is a light in a dark world. God has called us to let our light shine among people (Matt. 5:14-16). The local church exists to support and display the light of the testimony of believers, not only individually but also corporately.

The mystery of godliness is essentially Christ. It is more broadly the truth that the church proclaims that centers on Christ, namely, the gospel. It is a mystery in that we know it only by special revelation. Godliness means piety. "Godliness" describes faith in Christ worked out in everyday living. Where does one find godliness? We see it in concrete manifestation in Jesus Christ (3:16). In this verse Paul summarized the three stages of Jesus' ministry in the three couplets of an ancient hymn. These are His past humiliation, His present proclamation, and His future glorification.

The purpose of the local church then is to proclaim godliness. Christians do this by presenting Christ themselves and by demonstrating before the world godlike behavior by the power of the Holy Spirit. Audio witness builds on visual witness.

The purpose of the leaders of the local church, in the second place, is to expound the truth in the church. Church leaders do this by teaching, by exhortation, and by example. The exposition of the truth is not only spoken

or written communication (teaching) followed by intellectual comprehension. It also requires encouragement and sensitivity to the condition of the learners (exhortation). The church leader prepares others to reveal God's truth most importantly by exemplifying the truth and illustrating it in his or her life. Truth must be incarnate in the teacher before the learner can thoroughly grasp it. God did this for us in the incarnation of His Son. Jesus said, "You are the light of the world" (Matt. 5:14), not: You announce the light of the world.¹

Paul drew several implications from these truths. Notice first some implications concerning the purpose of the local church:

First, in view of its purpose, the local church must be careful to present an unchanged gospel. There must be no majoring in the minors, no claim to higher knowledge, and no distortion of the truth. In this epistle Paul warned Timothy about all of these threats to the purity of God's truth. Preachers and teachers take note. We should be creative in delivering the message, but we must not be creative in the content of the message. We are in the delivery business, not in the manufacturing business.

Second, the local church's worship must be unceasing. This was Paul's point when he gave instructions concerning the priority of prayer in church life (2:1-7).

Third, the local church must persevere in its ministry without failing. To achieve this it needs leaders who live out the truth and consistently minister to and motivate the saints. Thus the need for qualified leaders is obvious (3:1-13). Personal example is every bit as important as persuasive explanation.

Note also some implications of the truth that relate to the purpose of the church leader who is to expound God's truth to the saints. These are the same as those already pointed out for the church, but they are true of the leader on a personal level:

First, the leader must be absolutely loyal to the truth. Church leaders must "preach the word." (2 Tim. 4:2).

¹Quotations from the English Bible in these notes are from the *New American Standard Bible* (NASB), 2020 edition, unless otherwise indicated.

Second, the leader's behavior toward others must be consistent. He must have a deep commitment to fulfilling his purpose of being a good example as well as to his purpose of communicating effectively verbally.

Third, in his personal life he must persevere. He must continue to let God's truth sit in judgment on his life. He must continue to be responsive to the truth. He must also continue to behave in harmony with the truth. People who work with their hands often develop calluses on them. People who work with spiritual truth can develop calluses on their hearts.

By way of application let me point out three things that the church needs to watch out for and then three things that the church leader should beware of. They are very similar.

The local church, Paul warns in this epistle, should beware of false doctrine. By this I mean any doctrine that deviates from the essential teaching of the faith as contained in the Bible. This will weaken the church's testimony to the world. Church leaders need to guard the doctrine of their church. The gospel is a central theme in this book.

Second, the church should beware of a failure in prayer. This will hinder both her witness to the world and her own growth in godliness (cf. James 4:2; John 15:5).

Third, the church should beware of feeble government. By feeble government I mean government by leaders who lack godly character. Too often church leaders gain appointment to their offices for other reasons. Church oversight must fulfill the purposes of God's truth by people who live out God's truth. Churches should not appoint elders or deacons too soon, or at all, if they are unqualified. The problem in the Ephesian church, which Paul addressed in this epistle, seems to have been false teaching, specifically, an inappropriate exclusivism by its elders.

The dangers to the church leader correspond to these. There must be no failure in his doctrine, or in his duty, or in his diligence. If church leaders know and respond to God's truth, they will be free from those influences that will hinder them from fulfilling their ministry.

Teaching is life-changing, not only to the extent that people understand it and appreciate its importance, but also to the extent that the life of the teacher illustrates it. Leaders can be completely orthodox and effective in their methods of presentation, but if their lives do not harmonize with what

they say, those who listen will reject what they say. Not only does their preaching then become ineffective, it also becomes blasphemous (insulting to God's person or honor). The life of the preacher can promote the growth of his church as much as his pastoral skill. People will put up with many deficiencies—and we all have many—if they can have a good example of a sincere Christian. Leaders can be effective because they have God's Word, God's Spirit, and God's grace.¹

¹Adapted from G. Campbell Morgan, *Living Messages of the Books of the Bible*, 2:2:47-60.

Exposition

I. SALUTATION 1:1-2

Paul began this very personal letter with a customary salutation to set the tone for what follows. The salutation reveals that this was not only a personal letter, but it was also official. Paul wrote nine epistles to churches and four epistles to individuals. Even though he addressed four of his letters to individuals, he undoubtedly intended that they too should be read to churches.

"The opening and closing sections of the pastoral epistles vary considerably from the standard formulae. This suggests a calculated focus toward certain aspects of the author/reader relationship."¹

1:1 As usual—except in 1 and 2 Thessalonians, Philippians, and Philemon—Paul reminded his readers of his authority as "an apostle." Timothy would have read this letter publicly in the Ephesian church, and others would have read it later in other congregations as well. In this greeting Paul combined our Lord's office ("Christ") and person ("Jesus"). The names "General Washington" and "President Lincoln" likewise combine office and person.

"The difference in the use *Jesus Christ* and *Christ Jesus* seems to be this: in each case the first member of the compound name indicates whether the historical or the notional ideas of the Person is chiefly in the writer's mind. *Jesus Christ* briefly expresses the proposition, 'Jesus is the Christ'; it embodies the first theological assertion concerning Jesus; it represents the conception of the historical Jesus in the minds of those who had seen Him. St. John, St. Peter and St. James employ this name when speaking of our Lord. But in *Christ Jesus*, on the other hand, the theological

¹Tom Thatcher, "The Relational Matrix of the Pastoral Epistles," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 38:1 (March 1995):43.

conception of *the Christ* predominates over that of the actual *Jesus* Who had been seen, felt and heard by human senses. Accordingly we find *Christ Jesus* in every stage of the Pauline Epistles; and, as we should expect, more frequently in the later than in the earlier letters. In almost every instance of the occurrence of *Jesus Christ* in the Pastoral Epistles the thought of the passage concerns the humanity, or historical aspect, of our Lord."¹

Paul wrote here that his calling had come to him "according to the commandment [or commission] of God our Savior." It had not come to him simply by God's will, which is the term that Paul used more often in this connection. Paul received his commission in Damascus (Acts 9:10-18). The stronger word "commandment" is one of many indications that Paul stressed the importance of faithful perseverance in God's calling in this epistle, as he did in 2 Timothy as well.

The idea of God being "our Savior" is a characteristic emphasis in the Pastorals (2:3; 4:10; Titus 1:3; 2:10; 3:4; cf. Ps. 25:5; 27:1, 9; Hab. 3:18; Isa. 12:2). "Christ Jesus" is our "hope" generally in that we have set our hope on Him, and He is our hope specifically in that we look for His appearing when God will complete our salvation.

"The order of the names 'Christ Jesus' is significant. It is likely that whichever name occurs first indicates the idea that was prominent in the writer's mind at that moment."²

By calling God "our Savior" and by calling God the Son "Christ Jesus" our "hope" Paul was not describing the relationship of the Persons in the Godhead to each other but to believers.

"The designation of God as *Savior*, unusual in Paul, is in keeping with the Old Testament presentation

¹White, 4:89.

²Kent, p. 74. See also Guthrie, p. 55.

of God (Deut 32:15; Ps 24:5; 27:1; Is 12:2; 17:10). It described the God who delivered his people from their bondage in Egypt and many times thereafter as the initiator and originator of salvation. In the New Testament, of course, God as the Savior is the initiator of the program of deliverance through Christ."¹

In Ephesus, Artemis of the Ephesians was regarded as a savior, specifically the savior of women. A major cause of death among women in Paul's day was giving birth to children. Artemis was a goddess of childbirth and midwifery. So Paul's reference to God as "Savior" was probably an attack against the belief that Artemis was a savior.²

The salvation of Christians is secure because God is our Savior.

1:2 The name "Timothy" comes from two Greek words: *timan* (honor) and *theos* (God), and it means "He Who Honors God." Paul may have led Timothy to faith in Christ personally, or Timothy may simply have been Paul's child in the faith in the sense that he was Paul's protégé (cf. Acts 14:6; 16:1). This is the first of 19 references to "faith" (Gr. *pistis*) in 1 Timothy. It is a key word in this epistle.

Paul added "mercy" to his customary benediction of "grace" and "peace" both here and in 2 Timothy (cf. 2 John 3). He probably did so because the Jewish blessing "mercy and peace" was one that Paul could more appropriately share with his half-Jewish child in the faith.³ However "mercy" also reminds us that we need God to withhold from us what we deserve, namely, severe chastening. These three words summarize all of the Christian's blessings.

"It is much more natural to think that the keen solicitude of the aged apostle for his young friend in his difficult position led him to insert the

¹Towner, *1-2 Timothy ...*, p. 40.

²See Sandra L. Glahn, "The First-Century Ephesian Artemis: Ramifications of Her Identity," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 172:688 (October-December 2015):450-69.

³See J. N. D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Pauline Epistles*, p. 41.

additional prayer for mercy as springing from his own enlarged experience of divine mercy."¹

"Ministers need more mercy than others. If Timothy needed the increase and continuance of it, how much more do we ministers."²

"'Grace' has reference to the *sins* of men; 'mercy' to their *misery*. God extends His *grace* to men as they are guilty; His *mercy* to them as they are miserable"³

"With these three terms, then, Paul greets Timothy and the church: *charis* ["grace"]—God's ongoing forgiveness and enabling, *eleos* ["mercy"]—God's sympathy and concern, *eirene* ["peace"]—God's tranquility and stability within and among them as individuals and as a Christian community."⁴

The two relationships with God and Christ Jesus that Paul cited, as our "Father" and our "Lord," are especially significant in this letter. Timothy had a tendency to be fearful, so the reminder that God is our Father would have encouraged him. However Paul eliminated the possibility of permissiveness that is implied in the term Father by also using Lord. Timothy needed to remember that the Lord had called him to serve a God who loved him as a Father yet deserved complete obedience as his Lord. We readers share Timothy's need.

"Only fifteen times was God referred to as the Father in the Old Testament. Where it does occur, it is used of the nation Israel or to the king of Israel. Never was God called the Father of an individual or of human beings in general (though isolated instances occur in second temple Judaism, Sirach 51:10). In the New Testament

¹D. Edmond Hiebert, *First Timothy*, p. 24.

²Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, p. 1887.

³Jamieson, et al., p. 1353.

⁴George W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, p. 67.

numerous references to God as Father can be found."¹

II. TIMOTHY'S MISSION IN EPHEBUS 1:3-20

In the rest of chapter 1 Paul charged Timothy to remain faithful to the task with which Paul had entrusted him in Ephesus. He began by reminding Timothy what that task was and how he should carry out his chief duty. Then he exhorted Timothy to be faithful. He reminded his young protégé of God's power to transform lives and warned him of the danger of acting contrary to his own spiritually sensitive conscience.

"The absence of ... [a thanksgiving] here supports the observation ... that 1 Timothy is really for the sake of the church as much as, or more than, for Timothy himself; what is taking place in the church gives no cause for thanksgiving."²

The absence of a thanksgiving also marks Galatians and Titus.

A. THE TASK TIMOTHY FACED 1:3-11

Paul sent these opening words in order to remind Timothy to correct the teachers in the Ephesian church who were majoring on minor matters in their Bible teaching. In so doing he reminded Timothy of his own responsibility as a communicator of God's truth.

"... exposition may be carried on in such way as to leave the hearers devoid of any true spiritual nourishment whatever."³

"That the false teachers were ... probably elders [of the house-churches in Ephesus] is supported by several items from 1 Timothy: their presuming to be 'teachers of the law' (v. 7), a

¹Mark L. Bailey, "A Biblical Theology of Paul's Pastoral Epistles," in *A Biblical Theology of the New Testament*, p. 342. Sirach, also called Ecclesiasticus, is a Jewish work of ethical teaching written by Ben Sira of Jerusalem about 200-175 B.C. Cf. H. F. D. Sparks, "The Doctrine of the Divine Fatherhood of God in the Gospels," in *Studies in the Gospels: Essays in Memory of R. H. Lightfoot*, pp. 241-62; and James Barr, "Abba Isn't Daddy," *Journal of Theological Studies* 39 (1988):28-47.

²Fee, p. 39.

³A. W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God*, p. 9.

responsibility of the elders (5:17; cf. 3:2); the fact that two are named and excommunicated by Paul (1:19-20), not by the church as in 2 Thessalonians 3:14 and 1 Corinthians 5:1-5; and the repeated concern about elders in this letter, both as to their qualifications—with no mention of duties—in 3:1-7 and their discipline and apparent replacement in 5:19-25."¹

1:3-4 Paul's geographical movements, to which he referred here, probably took place between his first Roman imprisonment and the writing of this epistle. We cannot fit them into the chronology of the Book of Acts. Acts concludes with Paul's first Roman imprisonment. The apostle had left Timothy in Ephesus for the general purpose of acting as his special representative. He was under Paul but over the elders of the church in his authority.² As such Timothy occupied a position unique to the apostolic period of church history. The earliest instance of only one elder (bishop, presbyter) being in charge of one local church appears in the middle of the second century.³ Before then the testimony of the New Testament writers and the early church fathers was that local churches typically had more than one elder.⁴

"Paul repeats in writing what he had outlined orally for Timothy in order that Timothy might have it black on white and that he might present it as written evidence to those who objected to Timothy's activities ..."⁵

The error of the "certain people" who were the objects of Paul's criticism seems to have been more in their emphasis than in their content. "Strange doctrines" (Gr. *heterodidaskalein*) is a general term that contrasts their novel teaching with what is edifying. It also suggests that a

¹Fee, p. 40.

²Mounce, p. lvii.

³See F. F. Bruce, *The Spreading Flame*, pp. 203-9.

⁴Cf. Earle, p. 363.

⁵Richard C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Colossians, to the Thessalonians, to Timothy, to Titus, and to Philemon*, p. 498.

recognized standard of Christian doctrine existed when Paul wrote.

"Some see in this ["strange"] teaching the influence of Gentile gnostic philosophy with its speculative views of religious beliefs and practices. Such incipient gnostic elements did circulate in Asia during the latter half of the first century and may have been present here. But that the false teaching combatted in the Pastorals had already become Gnostic in character is doubtful. The Jewish character of the teaching here denounced is obvious."¹

In particular, these teachers seem to have been emphasizing extra-biblical stories that had become part of the traditions of Judaism that grew out of the "genealogies" of the Old Testament (cf. 4:7; 2 Tim. 4:4; Titus 1:14; 3:9).

"...*genealogiai* ["genealogies"] may ... refer to the genealogical matter in the O.T. which is usually skipped by the modern reader; but which by a mystical explanation of the derivations of the nomenclature could be made to justify their inclusion in a sacred book, every syllable of which might be supposed antecedently to contain edification."²

"Myths and [or "even"] endless genealogies" evidently describe two aspects of one aberration rather than two separate problems: "legendary stories about genealogies."³ Certain myths about what Jesus did are also an example of this ear-tickling entertainment, though these specific myths were not the subject of these particular false teachers. One of these was that, when Jesus was a child, He formed a bird out of clay, then blew on it, and it came to life and flew away. This myth

¹Hiebert, p. 30. Cf. Hanson, p. 57; and Titus 1:14.

²White, 4:92.

³Lock, p. 8.

appears in the Quran, which was written several centuries after this epistle.¹

"The lists of bare names in Old Testament genealogies were easily expanded into fictitious histories, supposed to illustrate God's dealings with His people and an example is still preserved to us in the apocalyptic Book of Jubilees. The practice, indeed, was so common that the word 'genealogy' was often used in the sense of mythical history, and this would seem to be its meaning in the present verse."²

This kind of emphasis, Paul warned, simply generated "useless speculation" for which there are no real answers rather than contributing to the spiritual maturation of believers (cf. Eph. 4:11-16). John Bunyan reportedly said, "Some love the meat; some love to pick the bones."³ Growth is God's goal for Christians, and it involves the exercise of our "faith" (cf. Rom. 1:17).

Examples of similar errors in teaching today would be overemphases on typology, numerology, or the details of exegesis along with a failure to emphasize the point of the passage being taught. This failure to emphasize what the writer of Scripture emphasized, and to emphasize something else, seems to be at the heart of the problem that Paul addressed here.⁴

"I am personally of the opinion that one of the causes of weakness in the churches to-day is the virtual disappearance from our pulpits of sound, steady, Scriptural, expository teaching, and that a widespread return to that desirable practice is

¹ *Quran* 5:110.

² E. F. Scott, *The Pastoral Epistles*, p. 8. See also Jerome D. Quinn, *The Letter to Titus: A New Translation with Notes and Commentary and an Introduction to Titus, I and II Timothy, the Pastoral Epistles*, p. 245.

³ Harry A. Ironside, *Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, p. 18.

⁴ See Fee, p. 7.

essential to the solid building-up of our members in the faith."¹

"Paul saw communication of the truth as the top priority in Timothy's ministry."²

1:5 The ultimate aim of a Bible teacher should not be to generate debate and controversy. It should be to cultivate the lives of his or her students so that they demonstrate "love" in their daily living.

"When we share what we know about Christ, people should sense that they're loved, not bullied."³

This love should spring from "a pure heart," "a good conscience" that is devoid of shame, and "a sincere faith" in God. Faith and love often appear linked in the Pastoral Epistles (cf. 1:14; 2:15; 4:12; 6:11; 2 Tim. 1:13; 2:22; 3:10; Titus 2:2).

"For Paul and the ancient Mediterranean culture in general, *conscience* was the internal judgment of one's actions by that one's group—'pain one feels because others consider one's actions inappropriate and dishonorable' (Malina 1981:70). Honor and shame, rather than guilt, were the operative feelings. Therefore, Paul's readers would perceive the conscience as sending internal signals evaluating the rightness or wrongness of behavior (past, present or future) as a member of a group. We, on the other hand, view the conscience as concerned with right and wrong on

¹Guy H. King, *A Leader Led*, p. 19.

²Charles R. Swindoll, *Excellence in Ministry: A Study of 1 Timothy*, p. 11.

³*Ibid.*, p. 12.

an individual basis, not necessarily taking into account what others think and expect about us."¹

"Conscience is 'good' when it functions as it should and approves only what is good in God's sight."²

"A good conscience, then, is nothing but inward integrity of heart."³

"It has been rightly said, that the idea of conscience, as we understand it, was unknown to heathenism. Absolute right did not exist. Might was right."⁴

1:6-7 "The Law" in view here is probably the Mosaic Law, or it could be the whole Old Testament. Paul probably did not mean that these erring teachers failed to understand the letter of the Law, though this may have been true of some of them. He probably meant that they did not understand what the Law was really saying and/or not saying. They missed the point of the Law. These aspiring teachers seem to have wanted to be Bible teachers but did not really understand what they were wanting to teach.

Their "main interest seems to have been to rival contemporary Rabbinical exegesis, rather than to expound the gospel."⁵

"... Paul's description of their 'confidence' implies in this context stubbornness, a refusal to be denied. We might say they are dogmatic, which (along with the claim to authority) Paul regards

¹Towner, *1-2 Timothy ...*, p. 47. See Bruce J. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*, p. 70. See also Towner, *The Letters ...*, pp. 117-19, for an excursus on conscience in the letters to Timothy and Titus.

²Lenski, p. 504.

³John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 3:19:16. See also 4:10:4.

⁴Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, 1:259.

⁵Guthrie, p. 60.

with irony, since they have no real understanding of the matters they teach."¹

"This 'apostasy' on the part of both the erring elders and their followers is the great urgency of 1 Timothy."²

"The false teachers of which Paul is speaking were formerly sound in their doctrine. They taught correctly for a time, but had *strayed* and *turned aside*."³

The teachers that Paul warned about in Colosse, in his epistle to the Colossians, were promoting serious heresy. But the teachers that he warned about in Ephesus, here in 1 Timothy, were majoring in the minors. Bible teachers today also need to avoid riding hobbyhorses, pet emphases, and unique teachings. Instead we should make sure that we give the people whom we teach a balanced diet of the whole Word of God (2 Tim. 4:2). We need to stress the true meaning of a passage rather than drawing out of it something that is not there. Some leaders have used the Bible simply as a springboard to launch off into, and to legitimize, their personal prejudices, convictions, and interests. Some have claimed to see references to their favorite doctrine or subject in virtually every Bible passage.

1:8-11 The "Law" (Gr. *nomos*) is profitable ("good") if one uses it properly, correctly, according to its original intention ("lawfully," Gr. *nomimos*). Paul made a play on words here.

"Here its 'goodness' is related to its being used properly, that is, treated as law (intended for the lawless, v. 9) and not used 'illegitimately' as a

¹Towner, *1-2 Timothy ...*, pp. 48-49. See David A. Mappes, "The Heresy Paul Opposed in 1 Timothy," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 156:624 (October-December 1999):452-58.

²Fee, p. 44. Apostasy refers to departure from a doctrine or position previously held. The word itself does not indicate whether the apostate is a believer or an unbeliever.

³Robert N. Wilkin, "The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to Timothy," in *The Grace New Testament Commentary*, 2:962.

source for myths and endless genealogies, or for ascetic practices."¹

"Thus Paul is saying that the law is not given to apply in some mystical way to people who are already 'righteous,' i.e., those already seeking to conform to the law. It is, rather, given to deal with people who are specifically violating its sanctions and to warn them against their specific sins (as the list in vv. 9b-10 goes on to do)."²

Paul proceeded to explain the proper use of the Law. Laws in general, and the Mosaic Law in particular, are not made for people who do what is right but for people who do wrong. Paul presented his first six types of wrongdoers in pairs (v. 9a). For other Pauline "vice lists," see 6:4-5; Romans 1:29-31; 6:9-10; 13:13; 1 Corinthians 5:10-11; 6:9-10; 2 Corinthians 6:9-10; 12:20; Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 4:31; 5:3-5; Colossians 3:5 and 8; Titus 3:3; and 2 Timothy 3:2-5.³ The leading attitude in each pair precedes the resulting action. There is a progression in these three couplets, from more general to more specific lawlessness. The first two terms are introductory.

"In each case extreme forms of the sin are chosen to emphasize the strength of the evil in the heathen world and the real need of law for those who have not heard of the gospel: cf. Ro 1:21-32."⁴

Homer Kent Jr., among others, saw a correspondence between Paul's list of sins here and the Ten Commandments.⁵ I have noted his connections below.

¹Fee, p. 45.

²Knight, p. 83. See Femi Adeyemi, "Paul's 'Positive' Statements about the Mosaic Law," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 164:653 (January-March 2007):49-58.

³See René A. López, "A Study of Pauline Passages with Vice Lists." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 168:671 (July-September 2011):301-16.

⁴Lock, p. 12.

⁵Kent, pp. 87-88.

The disobedient

- "Lawless" people refuse to recognize law and disregard it.
- "Rebellious" individuals refuse to obey laws. These two types of people may reflect disobedience to the first commandment (Exod. 20:20:3; Deut. 5:7).

The irreverent

- "Ungodly" people have no regard for God.
- "Sinners" live in opposition to God. These types may describe violators of the second commandment (Exod. 20:4-6; Deut. 5:8-10).

The impure

- "Unholy" people are those whose lives are impure. This description may allude to violators of the third commandment (Exod. 20:7; Deut. 5:11).
- "Worldly" persons treat sacred things as common. This description may reflect the fourth commandment (Exod. 20:8-11; Deut. 5:12-15).

The second group of offenders (vv. 9b-10a) provides examples of individuals who break the fifth through the tenth commandments of the Decalogue. They are sinners arrayed against society.

The violent

- "Father-strikers and mother-strikers" is a better translation than "those who kill their fathers or mothers."¹ Such people have no respect or affection for their own parents (cf. Exod. 20:12; Deut. 5:16; the fifth commandment).

¹E. K. Simpson, *The Pastoral Epistles*, p. 31.

- "Murderers" kill people deliberately (cf. Exod. 20:13; Deut. 5:17; the sixth commandment).

The immoral

- "Sexually immoral" people deal perversely with people of the opposite sex (cf. Exod. 20:14; Deut. 5:18; the seventh commandment).
- "Homosexuals" abuse people of their own sex (also the seventh commandment).¹

"Paul ... states that such people are lawless, rebellious, ungodly, sinners, unholy, and profane. They are not simply genetically different or people with an hormonal imbalance."²

The deceitful

- "Slave traders" kidnap and sell other people: people traffickers (cf. Exod. 20:15; Deut. 5:19; the eighth commandment). The Greek word indicates "all who exploit men and women for their own selfish ends."³
- "Liars" and "perjurers" bear false witness (cf. Exod. 20:16; Deut. 5:20; the ninth commandment).
- "Whatever else is contrary to sound teaching" (v. 10) may allude to the tenth commandment (Exod. 20:17; Deut. 5:21).

"Covetousness is hard to detect, and hence Paul does not name a flagrant example."⁴

¹See P. Michael Ukleja, "Homosexuality in the New Testament," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 147:560 (October-December 1983):350-58; Sherwood A. Cole, "Biology, Homosexuality, and Moral Culpability," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 154:615 (July-September 1997):355-66; *The Theological Wordbook*, s.v. "Homosexuality," by Wendell G. Johnston, pp. 166-69; J. Kirby Anderson, *Moral Dilemmas*, ch. 13: "Homosexuality."

²Charles C. Ryrie, *Biblical Answers to Tough Questions*, p. 149.

³Kenneth S. Wuest, *Word Studies in the Greek New Testament*, 2:3:32.

⁴Kent, p. 88.

"Most likely the list is a conscious reflection of the Mosaic Law as law and expresses the kinds of sins such law was given to prohibit."¹

Paul concluded his list (vv. 10b-11) with a general category of anything "contrary to," not only the Law of Moses, but the larger gospel that Paul preached ("sound teaching"). That gospel encompassed the Old Testament. "Sound teaching" does not just describe correct or accurate doctrine but what is healthful and wholesome.²

Paul probably did not refer to violating the fourth commandment, because it is not a part of the moral code of the New Covenant. Perhaps he did not mention violating the tenth commandment because he dealt with that later (cf. 6:9-10) or because violation of it is unobservable.

"Healthy teaching leads to proper Christian behavior, love and good works; the diseased teaching of the heretics leads to controversies, arrogance, abusiveness, and strife (6:4)."³

"Missionaries of one particular cult say that their scriptures are authoritative because they stem from God. Its elders usually insist that the Holy Spirit will 'move in the heart' to confirm the veracity of their teaching. But when their doctrines do not pass the more objective test applied by the church fathers, what does it matter how one 'feels' about their teaching? Such counterclaims to authority are clearly wrong."⁴

"It will be clear from any careful reading that this concern for the gospel is the driving force behind the P[astoral]E[pistles]."⁵

¹Fee, p. 46.

²Hiebert, p. 37.

³Fee, p. 46.

⁴Towner, *1-2 Timothy ...*, p. 52.

⁵Fee, p. 15.

Paul's points in this pericope (section of verses) were the following: When a person teaches the Scriptures he or she should distinguish between speculation that goes beyond what God has revealed and the teaching of God's Word (the method, v. 4). Second, love for others should be primary (the motive, v. 5), not a desire to glorify oneself. Third, the teacher should present a portion of Scripture all the while considering the purpose for which God intended it (the meaning, vv. 8-10). Knowledge of the letter is not enough. A teacher should communicate the spirit of the divine Author as well.

B. EXHORTATIONS TO BE FAITHFUL 1:12-20

Paul proceeded to balance his instruction by giving Timothy a positive encouragement and a negative warning so that he would deal with the false teachers effectively.

1. A positive encouragement 1:12-17

Paul thanked "Christ Jesus our Lord" for putting him into His service. What God had done for Paul made it possible for Timothy to appreciate the fact that God can transform even the worst of sinners and enable His saints to accomplish supernatural feats. What brought about Paul's testimony here was the difficult situation that Timothy faced in Ephesus. This situation was made even harder by Timothy's personal tendency toward timidity and sickness, and his youthfulness (cf. 4:12). The evidence that Timothy tended to be timid and sick, perhaps partly because of the strong opposition that he faced, comes out more clearly later in this epistle (cf. 5:23; 6:12).

"V. 11 with its assertion that the gospel was entrusted to Paul provides the setting for vv. 12-17. Paul demonstrates how this entrusting and his own reception of mercy and grace in Jesus Christ provides an illustration that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation for any sinner, because it has been that to him, a terrible sinner."¹

"This section is a personal digression, dominated by the emphatic *ego* ["I"] ([v.] 11); but it is not a mere digression, it

¹Knight, p. 92.

serves as an encouragement to Timothy ... and it illustrates the main purpose of the gospel, to save sinners and to produce love and faith; cf. 2 Ti 1:12-14."¹

1:12-14 Did God save Paul because He foresaw that Paul would be faithful (v. 12)? No, but God entrusted him with the ministry that he had received at least in part for that reason.

"Not skill or knowledge but faithfulness is the first qualification for a minister of Christ (1 Cor. 4:2)."²

"It is striking that in all Paul's recorded words only here does he give thanks directly to Christ, and only here does he use the eloquent language appropriate to the deep thankfulness he feels as he recalls his own salvation and call."³

Paul had not opposed Jesus Christ and His church because he wanted to dishonor God. Paul believed that he was serving God by persecuting Christians. He was mistaken about who Jesus Christ was. For this reason God had mercy on him. The Old Covenant also distinguished between unwitting and purposeful sinning (cf. Lev. 22:14; Num. 15:22-31; Rom. 10:3; 2 Tim. 1:3). The Greek word translated "violent aggressor" (*hubristes*) means a proud, haughty man. Such a person heaps insulting language on others and often does some shameful act of wrong against them, as Paul had done to many Christians.

"Paul did not shrinkingly conceal his record; he blazoned it abroad, that others might know it and take courage and be filled with hope that the grace which had changed Paul could change them too. Paul's sin was not something which he tried to forget. ... Paul's sin was something which he refused to forget, for every time he remembered the greatness of his sin, he remembered the still

¹Lock, p. 14.

²Hiebert, p. 40.

³Wilbur B. Wallis, "The First Epistle to Timothy," in *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, p. 1371.

greater greatness of Jesus Christ. It was not that he brooded unhealthily over his sin; it was that he remembered his sin to awaken rejoicing in the greatness of the grace of Jesus Christ."¹

God poured out "mercy," "grace" (undeserved favor), "faith" (trust), and "love" on Paul even though Paul had poured out blasphemy, persecution, and aggressive violence on God by attacking Christians. "Faith and love" in Paul were the effects of God's "grace" toward him.² I doubt that these three activities describe a series of stages through which Paul had passed, as some have suggested.³ God's blessings had come to Paul because he was now "in Christ," which was a favorite phrase of Paul's that encapsulated what it meant to him to be a Christian.⁴

"Jesus recognized this principle when He prayed on the cross, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do' (Luke 23:34). Their ignorance did not save them, nor did Christ's prayer save them; but the combination of the two postponed God's judgment, giving them an opportunity to be saved."⁵

1:15 Seven times in the Pastorals Paul evidently alluded to statements that had become proverbial in the early church. They may have been parts of early Christian hymns or catechisms (manuals for the training of new Christians; cf. 2:5-6; 3:16; 2 Tim. 1:9-10; 2:8-13; Titus 2:11-14; 3:3-7).⁶ They may be restatements of what Jesus said about Himself (cf.

¹William Barclay, *The Letters to Timothy, Titus and Philemon*, p. 55. Paragraph division omitted.

²Hendriksen, p. 75.

³E.g., G. Campbell Morgan, *An Exposition of the Whole Bible*, p. 504.

⁴See James S. Stewart, *A Man in Christ*, for a thorough discussion of this determinative concept in Paul's theology.

⁵Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, 2:212.

⁶For a brief discussion of these liturgical passages that outline the essentials of salvation, see Bailey, pp. 349-54; or for a more detailed explanation, see Philip H. Towner, *The Goal of Our Instruction*, pp. 75-119.

Matt. 9:13; Mark 2:17; Luke 5:32; 19:10; John 12:46-47; 16:28; 18:37).¹

Paul probably was alluding to one of these classic statements here, as seems likely from his use of the introductory phrase "It is a trustworthy statement." It may have been "deserving full acceptance" in the sense of deserving whole-hearted acceptance—more than in the sense of deserving acceptance by all.² Here the great truth affirmed is: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." The purpose of Christ's incarnation was the salvation of sinners.

"The repeated formula is always attached to a maxim (relating either to doctrine or practice) on which full reliance can be placed."³

"The author uses the 'faithful saying' formula to give emphasis and solemnity to some statement, no matter what its origin or contents."⁴

Was Paul really the worst ("foremost") sinner of all time (cf. 1 Cor. 15:9; Eph. 3:8)? Obviously many people have lived longer in a more depraved condition than Paul did. Paul became a Christian relatively early in his adult life. Perhaps the apostle meant that he was the "foremost" sinner in the sense that his sin of aggressively tearing down the work that God was building up (His church) was the worst kind of sin. It was much worse than simply ignoring God or going one's own way. Paul probably meant "foremost" in the sense of awfulness.

Note too that Paul still regarded himself as a sinner, though a forgiven one: "I *am* foremost."⁵

"The fact is that it is always the characteristic of a true saint to feel himself a real sinner. The air in

¹Knight, p. 102.

²Hanson, p. 61.

³Earle, p. 355.

⁴Hanson, p. 64.

⁵Italics mine. See Robert L. Saucy, "'Sinners' Who Are Forgiven or 'Saints' Who Sin?" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 152:608 (October-December 1995):400-12.

a room seems to be clear, but when it is penetrated by the sunlight it is seen to be full of dust and other impurities: and so as men draw nearer to God, and are penetrated by the light of God (1 John i. 5), they see more clearly their own infirmities, and begin to feel for sin something of the hatred which God feels for it."¹

"The sinner remains a sinner even if forgiven; the past is always there as a stimulus to deeper penitence and service."²

1:16 God was unusually merciful to Paul because He purposed to make the apostle an example of His "perfect patience" in dealing with sinners. The Lord's greatest enemy became His greatest servant. In the light of Paul's conversion no one should conclude that his or her sin is too great for God to forgive. If God could be patient with Paul, He can be patient with anyone.

1:17 Such grace prompted Paul to glorify God in this brief doxology. God is the sovereign "King" (not Caesar) who is "immortal" (undying), "invisible" (spiritual), and "the only God." To Him belong all "honor and glory forever and ever" (eternally). "Amen" means: So be it. The Christians often uttered this word out loud in their meetings as did the Jews in their synagogues (cf. Deut. 27:15-26; 1 Cor. 14:16).³

The reason that Paul referred to his conversion in this part of his letter (1:12-17) was to encourage Timothy to be faithful in the ministry with which God had entrusted him (1:3-11). In his ministry at Ephesus Timothy would never encounter a more difficult case than Saul of Tarsus had been. The fact that God had completely transformed Paul proves that He can do the same for anyone. This gives hope to everyone who seeks to win people to Christ and to help them grow in Christ.

¹Ernest F. Brown, *The Pastoral Epistles*, p. 10.

²Lock, p. 16.

³Mounce, p. 62.

2. A negative warning 1:18-20

Paul next balanced his positive encouragement, based on God's dealings with himself (vv. 12-17), with a negative warning, based on God's dealings with two unfaithful ministers. He did this to further challenge Timothy to remain faithful to God as he discharged his duties. His thought returned to what he had written in verses 3-7. Towner saw this whole section (1:3-20) as loosely chiasitic.¹

1:18-19 The "command" to which Paul referred here is the one contained in verses 3 and 4. He now returned to the subject that he began there. Sometime in the past someone had given "prophecies" concerning Timothy's effectiveness as a servant of Christ (4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6; cf. Acts 13:2). We have no record of who gave them, when, or where, unless it was at Timothy's ordination (4:14). But Paul referred to them here in order to motivate Timothy to carry on.² Perhaps Paul and/or Silas, who were both prophets, had given these prophecies (cf. Acts 13:1; 15:32).³ Paul had left Timothy in Ephesus (v. 3), but more importantly, the Holy Spirit had placed him there.

"To every one of us there comes God's choosing; and when we are summoned to some work for Him, we dare not refuse it."⁴

"Here the believer is cast in the role of a soldier who is ordered out into battle. The weapons of this soldier, however, are not clever argumentation or inescapable logic, things that we might think best suited to debates with false teachers. On the contrary, Timothy is to avoid debates (2 Tim 2:23-25). Nor is the soldier's objective the destruction of his opponent. Appropriate strategy includes instructing, correcting erroneous views and urging repentance

¹Towner, *The Letters ...*, pp. 104-5. A chiasmus is a rhetorical or literary figure in which words, grammatical constructions, or concepts are repeated in reverse order, in the same or a modified form.

²Mounce, pp. 70-72, wrote an excursus on prophecies about Timothy.

³Lock, p. 18.

⁴Barclay, p. 57.

(see 2 Thess 3:14-15). The minister's weapons for this fight are the gospel and godly concern for the spiritual condition of the opponent. The goal is to protect the faith of those whom the false teachers seek to influence and, if possible, to win back those who have strayed (1:5). Only the gospel is sufficient for such work, as Paul has just taken great care to illustrate (1:11-16)."¹

As Timothy fought "the good fight" he should continue to trust God and maintain a "good conscience" (cf. v. 5; 2 Tim. 1:3). A conscience, like a computer programmed with the will of God, can be a great asset to the Christian soldier. However if one violates his or her conscience so programmed, that person ignores a warning signal. The results can be disastrous: "shipwreck."

"The Christian teacher must be a good soldier and a good sailor too."²

Someone has described conscience as the capacity to feel guilt. One's conscience enables him or her to feel dishonor, shame, and guilt.³

"Let us all take warning, that we treat the dictates of conscience with uttermost care, lest we sear it, and stultify [suppress] it, and eventually silence it. It is a very delicate instrument—not itself the voice of God, but one of His chief means of guiding His children; it is, as Milton puts it, 'the umpire of the soul', giving the 'yea' or 'nay' to this or that."⁴

¹Towner, *1-2 Timothy ...*, p. 58.

²Lock, p. 19.

³See J. B. Philips, *Your God Is Too Small*, pp. 9-13, for a good explanation of the conscience.

⁴King, p. 40.

"In the conflict which we wage outwardly against the enemy, our chief concern is with the inner state and disposition of the heart."¹

"One cannot be on friendly terms with it [a good conscience] and with sin at one and the same time."²

"There is nothing which so hardens the heart as the continual giving out of truth apart from one's own communion and walk."³

"It is not to a *battle* that we are summoned; it is to a *campaign*. Life is one long campaign; life is a service from which there is no release."⁴

"One man said of his hypocritical pastor, 'He is such a good preacher, he should never get out of the pulpit; but he is such a poor Christian, he should never get into the pulpit!'"⁵

"The leader must have the qualities he is going to enforce."⁶

1:20 Paul cited two examples of this type of casualty with which Timothy was apparently familiar: "Hymenaeus" (cf. 2 Tim. 2:17) "and Alexander." Alexander was a common name, so this man may not be the same Alexander as the Jew whom Paul encountered in Ephesus (Acts 19:34-35) or the metal worker who opposed Paul in Rome (2 Tim 4:14-15).⁷ Paul had turned them over to God's discipline because of their determination to continue living in a manner contrary to the will of God. This discipline would come on them through the agency of Satan,

¹J. J. Van Oosterzee, "The Two Epistles of Paul to Timothy," in *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures*, edited by J. P. Lange, 11:25.

²Jamieson, et al., p. 1356.

³William Kelly, *An Exposition of the First Epistle to Timothy*, p. 35.

⁴Barclay, p. 59.

⁵Wiersbe, 2:213.

⁶Lock, p. 19.

⁷Hendriksen, pp. 86-87.

and it was sent so that they would repent and stop blaspheming God by their lives.¹

Handing someone "over to Satan" may mean that Satan is given permission to inflict some illness or disability on the evildoer (cf. Job 2:6).² It may picture life outside the fellowship of the church, namely, in the realm and control of Satan (cf. 1 Cor. 5:5).³ Or it may mean both of these things.⁴ Thus to deliver these men to Satan could mean that Paul had removed them from the church's fellowship and placed them back in Satan's realm where they would experience his malice (cf. Acts 5:1-11; 13:11).⁵ These men appear to have been leaders, teachers, and perhaps even elders in the Ephesian church. It was very rare for Paul to name names when referring to serious sinners. That he did so here indicates that he wanted everyone to know exactly which individuals he was talking about.

"It is certainly a *disciplinary* or *remedial* and not a merely *punitive* penalty ..."⁶

"We should not misunderstand the nature of this process. It was not simply intended to 'cut out a cancer' in order to preserve the rest of the body, as some churches view it today. Neither is it a practice that the church today can afford to ignore, as if it were an aberration belonging to the Inquisition. Taken together, Matthew 18:15-17, 1 Corinthians 5:5, 2 Corinthians 2:5-11 and 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15 reflect the development of a carefully measured process. Each step was designed to bring the erring individual to the point of admission and true change of mind and

¹See Sydney H. T. Page, "Satan: God's Servant," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 50:3 (September 2007):449-65.

²J. N. D. Kelly, p. 59; Mounce, pp. 69, 72. Cf. Matt. 18:15-20.

³See Knight, p. 111.

⁴Hendriksen, p. 87.

⁵Lenski, pp. 534-35; Wallis, p. 1372; Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin Jr., *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, p. 81. Thomas Lea wrote the commentaries on 1 and 2 Timothy in this volume. See also Lock, p. 19.

⁶J. H. Bernard, *The Pastoral Epistles*, p. 36. Cf. Guthrie, p. 69.

behavior. Even if the individual persisted in a stubborn refusal to change (like the two mentioned here), the final step of expulsion from the fellowship back into the hostile world was ultimately intended as a means (desperate and last-ditch though it be) of reclamation. To be handed over to Satan (compare 1 Cor 5:5) is to be exposed, without the protection God promises to his people, to the dangers of sin. For some it takes being cast off into the sea to realize the advantages on board ship [cf. Jonah]."¹

Some expositors believe that delivering someone over to Satan, as Paul did here, was an exercise of apostolic authority and that it should not be done today.²

"Though the apostles had the power of excommunication, accompanied with bodily inflictions, miraculously sent (II Cor. 10:8), it does not follow that fallible ministers now have any power, save that of excluding from church fellowship notorious bad livers."³

Other Bible students have concluded that delivery to Satan, for both excommunication and bodily affliction, can and should be done in similar circumstances today. I believe that this was a uniquely apostolic function.⁴ But I also believe that church leaders should exercise church discipline when necessary.

Hymenaeus and Alexander appear to have been genuine believers, in view of how Paul described them, both here and in his other references to them in 2 Timothy 2:17 and possibly 4:14.⁵ However this is not clear. They may have been only professing Christians. Perseverance in faith and good works is not inevitable for the Christian. The many New Testament

¹Towner, *1-2 Timothy ...*, pp. 59-60. Cf. idem, *The Letters ...*, pp. 161-62.

²E.g., Henry Alford, *The Greek Testament*, 3:2:312; J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible with J. Vernon McGee*, 5:436; Ed Hayes, *The Church*, p. 127.

³Jamieson, et al., p. 1356.

⁴See also William Kelly, pp. 36, 39-40.

⁵See Knight, p. 110; and Joseph C. Dillow, *The Reign of the Servant Kings*, pp. 333-36.

warnings against turning away from the Lord and the truth should make that fact obvious. There are also examples of Old Testament believers who did not remain faithful to the Lord (e.g., Lot, the Israelites in the wilderness, Saul, Solomon, Uzziah, et al.).

"Within the overall context of the PE ... it seems that Paul is saying that the opponents rejected their personal faith and as a result have brought the Christian faith into reproach ..."¹

The Greek word translated "blaspheme" (*blasphemein*) means to "by contemptuous speech intentionally come short of the reverence due to God or to sacred things."²

This first chapter deals with matters of vital importance to every Christian since we are all ministers of Jesus Christ (cf. 1 Pet. 4:10). These matters are especially relevant to church leaders. In the communication of God's Word, which is the primary responsibility of church leaders (2 Tim. 4:2), we should avoid speculation and seek to represent God's intention, in the revelation that He has given, accurately (vv. 3-11). We can face our task optimistically since God has the power to transform even the worst of sinners into the greatest of saints (vv. 12-17). Nevertheless we should be careful not to go against the warnings of our consciences, having informed them with God's Word, as we carry out our ministry.

III. INSTRUCTIONS CONCERNING THE LIFE OF THE LOCAL CHURCH 2:1—4:5

Paul moved on from instructions that were aimed primarily at Timothy personally to those that the young minister needed to heed in his pastoral work.

A. THE PRIORITY OF PRAYER FOR PEOPLE'S SALVATION 2:1-7

The apostle's first positive instruction to Timothy regarding his leadership of the Ephesian church was that believers should offer prayer for all people.

¹Mounce, p. 67.

²*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, s.v. "blaspheme," p. 102.

He gave this directive in order to emphasize its importance, defend its value, and clarify its practice.

"The ministry of prayer is the most important service that the Church of Christ can engage in."¹

"It [prayer] is the most dynamic work which God has entrusted to His saints, but it is also the most neglected ministry open to the believer."²

"The most essential part of public worship is prayer."³

Every aspect of the kind of prayer that Paul urged here touches the church's evangelistic mission. Prayer is not the subject of this section but the context for that subject, which is the salvation of all people.⁴

"The one clear concern that runs through the whole paragraph has to do with the gospel as for everyone ('all people,' vv. 1, 4-6, and 7). ... The best explanation for this emphasis lies with the false teachers, who either through the esoteric, highly speculative nature of their teaching (1:4-6) or through its 'Jewishness' (1:7) or ascetic character (4:3) are promoting an elitist or exclusivist mentality among their followers. The whole paragraph attacks that narrowness."⁵

2:1-2 "First of all" signals that a number of instructions follow. The fact that Paul mentioned prayer first indicates its priority in importance.

"In saying 'first of all' Paul underlined the importance of this Godward aspect of the ministry of the church. Paul did not mean that such praying must be the first thing Christians do whenever they assemble, as the word order in the King James Version might imply, but rather that it is an activity he regarded as of primary importance in

¹D. Edmond Hiebert, *Working With God: Scriptural Studies in Intercession*, p. 44.

²Ibid., p. 19.

³Earle, p. 357.

⁴Mounce, pp. 76-78.

⁵Fee, p. 62.

the total ministry of the church. His use of the present tense throughout these verses indicates that he was setting before them what he hoped would be the practice of those to whom he directed his prayer-exhortation. It is the essential and primary phase of their varied ministries."¹

"Prayer links us with the Eternal, the Omnipotent, the Infinite; and hence it is our chief resort."²

"... providing a peaceful and orderly society was the state's domain, so prayer for it was calculated to ensure that the best possible conditions for spreading the gospel were obtained."³

"Hence the church's prayers for the world and recognition of the authority of the state are fundamental to the church's evangelistic mission."⁴

"All evangelism must begin with prayer."⁵

Though Paul used several synonyms for prayer in urging its practice, the words he chose are not significantly different. This is a Semitic literary device that groups synonyms to enhance the basic concept, namely, that Christians should pray all types of prayers for all people.⁶ "Requests" (Gr. *deeseis*) emphasizes the earnestness with which we should make petitions because we feel a need for what we ask (cf. Luke 18:1-8). "Prayers" (*proseuchas*) is a general word that covers all types of prayer communication with God. The emphasis for all prayer is on a spirit of reverence toward God (cf. Matt. 6:9-10).

¹D. Edmond Hiebert, "The Significance of Christian Intercession," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 149:593 (January-March 1992):16.

²C. H. Spurgeon, *An All Round Ministry*, p. 314.

³Towner, *The Goal ...*, p. 203.

⁴Bailey, p. 356.

⁵Lewis S. Chafer, *True Evangelism or Winning Souls by Prayer*, p. 88.

⁶Mounce, p. 79. Cf. Guthrie, p. 69.

"Intercessions" (*enteuxeis*) are confident requests for others and self (cf. Luke 11:5-13). "Thanksgiving" (*eucharistias*) is the most different word and served as a reminder that we should express gratitude, not just need, in public praying. By using these synonyms Paul was emphasizing the importance of praying all kinds of prayers for all people as well as distinguishing its varieties.¹

Prayer is so very important because it invites God into the situation we are praying about, and it secures His working on behalf of those in need. Paul did not deal here with the reason that God has incorporated prayer into His sovereign control of the universe. He assumed his readers understood this. His point here was that Christians must not fail to take advantage of this supernatural resource at their disposal by neglecting prayer.

"The failure of the church to pray in accordance with this exhortation is one of its great sins today."²

In response to the requests of His people God will do things that He would not ordinarily do if they did not ask (James 4:2).

"If such praying were useless, the apostle would not write what he does write."³

Verse 1 should answer the question of whether we should pray for the unsaved. "All people" certainly includes them. Paul undoubtedly meant all kinds of people rather than every single individual. The "king" at the time Paul wrote this epistle was Nero, who was an unbeliever for whom Paul specifically told his readers to pray. Furthermore the focus of the believers' request was to be not only their own tranquility but the king's salvation (v. 4).

¹See Thomas L. Constable, *Talking to God: What the Bible Teaches about Prayer*, pp. 21-45.

²Earle, p. 51.

³Lenski, p. 539.

Primarily we should pray for governmental leaders ("kings"), and those in positions of lesser authority under them ("all who are in authority") so that we may lead "tranquil" (Gr. *eremos*, outwardly peaceful) and "quiet" (*hesychios*, inwardly peaceful) lives. We should not do so primarily for our personal ease and enjoyment but so that we can carry out our purpose in the world as Christians (cf. 6:1). Our purpose is to bring the message of reconciliation to all people and to glorify God in all of our relationships. Obviously the type of government under which people live influences their lives and affects their spiritual welfare (cf. Ezra 6:9-10; Jer. 29:7).

"I happen to have had the testimony of the Mayor of one town that, on more than one occasion, the prayer at the beginning has made all the difference to the atmosphere when tricky and touchy matters have been on the agenda."¹

"Godliness" (Gr. *eusebeia*, v. 2) refers to an attitude of reverence for God based on knowledge of Him. Paul used this word 10 times in the Pastorals, and this is its first occurrence. "Dignity" (*semnoteti*) refers to the outward manifestation of that attitude in correct behavior.

"Times of political and social upheaval are excellent times in which to die for Christ, but hard times in which to live for Him."²

2:3 Prayers of the type described please "God our Savior": the One who delights to rescue sinners from the wages of their sin. There were other professed saviors in Ephesus at this time.

"Alongside worship of Artemis, the Imperial cult was a dominant religious-political fixture in Ephesus at this time."³

¹King, p. 41.

²Litfin, p. 734.

³Towner, *The Letters ...*, p. 176. See also S. R. F. Price, *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor*, pp 53-100; and P. Trebilco, *Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius*, pp. 30-37.

Though cultures may promote other priorities, for the Christian what is "good and acceptable" in God's sight should take precedence in all things.

2:4 There is nothing in this verse or in any other that would limit the truly universal interpretation of "all people."

"... this noble statement of the universality of God's love runs directly counter to the strict predestinarian tradition in Christianity which Augustine so emphatically championed, and Calvin, eleven hundred years later, reaffirmed. Consequently both Augustine and Calvin had to evade the obvious meaning of these words by saying that it means God chooses his elect from all classes of men."¹

God wants everyone to experience eternal salvation—salvation in the largest sense of spiritual well-being.² People perish because they do not hear the gospel, or, hearing it, they choose to reject it. God has given people freedom to choose: to accept or reject the gospel.³ When people reject the gospel this causes God considerable pain. This is clear in the many references in Scripture to God sorrowing over the fate of those (believers and unbelievers) who choose to spurn Him.⁴

"It's often said that the purpose of prayer is not to get man's will done in heaven, but to get God's will done on earth."⁵

"Even those who will not allow you to speak to them about God, cannot prevent you speaking to God about them. What mighty conquests have been won this way—Hudson, a young schoolboy, reading tracts in his father's study one Sunday

¹Hanson, p. 68. For Calvin's explanation of this verse, see 3:24:16. See also 3:24:17.

²See Wilkin, 2:967-68.

³See R. C. Sproul, *God's Will & the Christian*.

⁴See Thomas L. Constable, "What Prayer Will and Will Not Change," in *Essays in Honor of J. Dwight Pentecost*, pp. 107-9.

⁵Wiersbe, 2:215-16. Cf. Matt. 6:10.

afternoon while his parents were away for the week-end; his mother constrained, where she was, to pray specially for her boy, who was called that very afternoon, miles away, to the Savior, and to become the great Hudson Taylor, of the China Inland Mission. Reuben, a dissolute young man who has left home, has one night got out of bed to commit suicide; his mother, miles away, has that very hour been constrained also to get out of bed, and to pray specially for her erring son, who, instead of suicide, was saved, subsequently to become the famous American evangelist, Dr. R. A. Torrey."¹

"So pray for our leaders, whether they're Christians or not. Pray that they come to faith in Christ. Pray that their decisions honor God and allow for the free spread of the gospel. Pray that God would reach into the souls of our local, state, national, and world leaders who don't know Him. That He would save them, and incline their wills toward His. Our prayers can make a difference."²

2:5-6 Many commentators believed that Paul was citing another common creedal statement in these verses. Another possibility is that God inspired him to form this statement himself as he wrote this epistle. In either case we have here a succinct affirmation of the person and work of Christ. The whole statement supports what Paul just said in verses 3 and 4.

The God-man is the "one" and only "mediator" of the New Covenant "between God and mankind" who provides salvation man-ward and facilitates prayer God-ward. This is something that people have found hard to accept throughout history. In Paul's day the Jews looked to Moses (Gal. 3:19) and/or angels (Heb. 2:5) as mediators, and the Gnostics looked to intermediary deities (aeons). In our own day Roman Catholics

¹King, p. 46.

²Swindoll, p. 28.

and others look to Mary and dead saints for mediatorial benefits, and Buddhists look to their ancestors. Spiritualists look to mediums and spirit guides to connect them to the spirit world. Nevertheless the teaching of verse 5 is clear: the only mediator between God and people is the man Christ Jesus (cf. John 14:6).

"These are the two great truths which form the basis of all true religion. Judaism had already been the revelation and testimony in the world of the first: there was one only God. ... Christianity, while fully revealing the one God, presents the second truth: there is one Mediator between God and men. There is one, and there is but one. It is as true that there is but one Mediator as that there is but one God. This is the great and distinctive truth of Christianity."¹

Note too that our present Mediator is "the man Christ Jesus." He is still a man as well as God. Jesus did not cease to be a man when He ascended into heaven. He will return to the earth as He departed from it: fully human as well as fully divine (Acts 1:11).

"This [v. 5] is one of the most significant verses of the NT."²

"At the proper time" Jesus was born and died, giving His life as payment ("a ransom") in order to free the human race from slavery to sin. Jesus' death made all people savable.³ Those who believe in limited redemption interpret "all" to be all the elect. Universalists interpret "all" to be every human individual. Other passages of Scripture that speak of Christ's death as providing a basis for the salvation of everyone contradict the limited redemption view (e.g., John 3:16, 1 John 2:2; et al.). Passages that indicate that not everyone will be saved refute the universalists (e.g., Matt 25:46; Rev. 20:15; et al.).

¹J. N. Darby, *Synopsis of the Books of the Bible*, 5:160.

²Earle, p. 358.

³See Lewis S. Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 3:184-85; Alford, 3:2:315-16.

A "ransom" (Gr. *antilutron*, used only here in the New Testament) is a ransom price.

"The word *ransom* in Greek is *antilutron* made up of *anti* (signifying substitution) and *lutron* (the word used for the ransom of a slave or prisoner). The *antilutron* is a payment given instead of a slave or prisoner—that is, in substitution for him or her. The person holding the slave accepts the payment as a substitute. According to Gal. 3:13, Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law. The law held us captive in its condemnation, and no one but Christ could pay the price to release us from that bondage."¹

This word "ransom" and this verse clearly set forth the idea that Jesus Christ died as the Substitute for all people (cf. Mark 10:45; Gal. 1:4; 2:20; Eph. 5:2; Titus 2:14). Some benefits of Christ's death do not belong to the elect exclusively: He paid the debt for all. This is proof that He desires all to be saved (v. 4).

2:7 Paul's final support of his command to pray for "all people" was that God had commissioned him to herald the gospel to the Gentile world, not just to the Jews, who were God's favored people in times past. Paul proclaimed the faith faithfully and truthfully ("in faith and truth")—in contrast to the false teachers. His affirmation of truthfulness further emphasized his point (cf. Rom. 9:1).

"Paul uses *preaching* primarily to describe the initial delivery of the gospel message (see Rom. 15:20; 1 Cor. 1:17; 2 Cor. 10:16; Gal. 1:8). *Teaching*, on the other hand, refers to deepening others in Christian doctrine (see 1 Tim. 1:3; 3:2; 4:11). Preaching is the declaration of truth directed at the will. Teaching is the explanation of

¹ *The Nelson Study Bible*, p. 2043. See also Lenski, p. 548.

truth directed at the mind. Both, however, have as their goal a changed life."¹

"Just as Paul regarded his mission as the key to accomplishing God's salvation plan, so too we must see the embodiment of the gospel in our preaching and involvement in the world around us as a requirement of Christian existence."²

The churches of North America generally neglect this exhortation to pray. Most churches spend relatively little time at it and consequently reveal an attitude toward it that is quite different from Paul's. I believe that this neglect arises from an unrealistic view of life. The world system promotes the idea that we do not need God, and many Christians have accepted this lie. In contrast, Paul and all of Scripture teach that we are absolutely dependent on God (cf. John 15:5). The degree to which we believe that will be the degree to which we pray.

"The practice of prayer cannot be forced by an outward command but must be prompted by an inner conviction of its importance and need."³

B. THE PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE MEN AND THE WOMEN IN CHURCH MEETINGS 2:8-15

"In this paragraph Paul continues his instructions on 'prayers' begun in verse 1. But now the concern is for proper demeanor on the part of the 'pray-ers.' But *why* these concerns, and why in this way? And why the inordinate amount of time devoted to the women in comparison with the men? Again, the solution lies with the false teachers. The word to the men is an obvious response to their controversies and strife. The word to the women, therefore, may be assumed also to respond to this conflict."⁴

¹Swindoll, p. 37.

²Towner, *The Letters ...*, p. 190.

³Hiebert, *Working with God ...*, p. 49.

⁴Fee, p. 70. Cf. 5:3-16; 2 Tim. 3:5-9.

"In descriptions of Corinth and Ephesus, which were closely linked in Paul's ministry, flutters of emancipation can sometimes be detected behind the apostles' discourse."¹

"God's Word prescribes role distinctions while also preserving the equal dignity, worth, and spirituality of both sexes."²

2:8 "In every place" probably refers to wherever Christians assemble in congregations, in view of the context. Should we apply these instructions to the meetings of para-church organizations as well as to local church meetings? Paul continued to give directions for the operation of local churches (ch. 3). I take it that his instructions here (ch. 2) are for local church meetings (cf. 3:15). However it seems that what he said has broader application. I think he meant that typically men should take the lead in praying. In such meetings the "men" (Gr. *andras*, lit. males) are to lead in public prayer, assuming there are males present and able to do so. I do not think it would have upset Paul if a woman led in prayer occasionally (cf. 1 Cor. 11:5-16).

"The use of the definite article with men and not with women [v. 10] may suggest that the apostle was laying down the pattern that public worship should be conducted by the men."³

"Paul isn't discouraging women from praying. In fact, he encourages all believers, including women, to pray in his other letters (see 1 Cor. 11:13; Phil. 4:6-7; Col. 4:2; 1 Thess. 5:17). Rather, he's urging men to take the lead in the church."⁴

Paul's instruction on how they should pray follows, with the emphasis on the inner holiness and outward righteous behavior of those who lead. Paul was not commanding the men to pray with physically upraised hands (cf. Luke 18:9-14). He simply was describing public praying as the Christians commonly

¹Towner, *The Letters ...*, p. 192.

²Swindoll, p. 40.

³Earle, p. 360.

⁴Swindoll, p. 42. Paragraph division omitted.

practiced it in his day (cf. 1 Kings 8:22, 54; 2 Chron. 6:13; Ezra 9:5; Ps. 28:2; 63:4; 134:2; 141:2; Lam. 2:19; 3:41; Isa. 1:15).¹

This posture, standing with raised hands, was also common in the pagan mystery religions of the first century.² Pictures on the walls of the catacombs in Rome, and in other early Christian art, show believers praying this way.³ Commonly they raised their palms upward and open to heaven, evidently to symbolize their inner openness to God as well as their desire to offer praise to God and to obtain gifts from Him.

If Paul had meant that the men were simply to lift up their physical hands when they prayed he probably would not have described the hands as "holy." The words "holy," "anger," and "dispute" all point to a metaphorical use of "hands." Our hands symbolize what we do. Paul wanted the men to pray in the same reverent attitude with which they practiced holiness in their everyday lives.⁴ Posture in prayer does not make the prayer more or less effective, but it often reflects the inner attitude of the person praying.⁵

"Broken human relationships affect one's ability to pray (cf. Matt. 5:22-24; 6:12; 1 Peter 3:7), which would include leading others in prayer."⁶

The translation of *dialogismos* as "dispute" implies disagreement with other people. This Greek word means "disputatious reasoning, skeptical questions or criticisms."⁷ So it can include skepticism about God's character and dealings as well as those of other people.

¹See Jamieson, et al., p. 1358.

²Litfin, p. 735.

³The catacombs of Rome are underground galleries that were used for centuries as cemeteries.

⁴See Knight, p. 129.

⁵See Constable, *Talking to ...*, pp. 72, 159-60.

⁶Litfin, p. 735.

⁷Wuest, 2:3:45.

2:9-10

"Having dealt with the disruptive men, Paul turns to the disruptive women; just as the men are to stop fighting, the women are to dress appropriately."¹

"While their dress is an issue, their attitude is Paul's true concern."²

The responsibility of the women in church meetings needed more explanation.³ Paul's point in these verses was that "good works" that express godly character should characterize Christian women more than the way that they dress and groom themselves. The contrast is between works and wardrobe.⁴ Obviously Paul was not saying that external appearance, including good grooming and cleanliness, is unimportant. He did not want the women to dress to make a stunning impression and focus attention on themselves and thus distract attention away from worship.

"Let some say what some will about Paul, he here states that women are to dress in good taste when they prepare to attend church."⁵

"Slovenliness in dress and appearance is unbecoming a Christian woman."⁶

However a Christian woman should be remarkable for her Christ-like behavior more than for her clothes, hairstyle, and the other externals that are of primary importance to many unbelievers (cf. 1 Pet. 3:3). "Modestly" translates *aidos*, which combines modesty with humility. And "discreetly," from *sophrosune*, means with "soundness of mind, self-control."⁷

¹Mounce, pp. 108.

²Ibid., p. 109. Cf. Guthrie, p. 74.

³See Alexander Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*, pp. 60-63.

⁴Bailey, p. 356.

⁵Lenski, pp. 558-59.

⁶Hiebert, *First Timothy*, p. 58.

⁷Wuest, 2:3:46.

"The Christian woman is not to adorn herself with 'gold or pearls or expensive clothes' so as to draw attention to herself. At worst, this is what the prostitutes did. At best, it shows pride and self-centeredness, both of which are contrary to the spirit of Christ. Such dress is especially unbecoming in church."¹

"The reason for Paul's prohibition of elaborate hair styles, ornate jewelry, and extremely expensive clothing becomes clear when one reads in the contemporary literature of the inordinate time, expense, and effort that elaborately braided hair and jewels demanded, not just as ostentatious display, but also as the mode of dress of courtesans and harlots ..."²

"But perhaps the more acute problem was that of insensitive women flaunting their dress, jewelry and hairstyles in a way that hurt the feelings of the poor and disturbed the church. The kinds of adornment mentioned (*braided hair ... gold ... pearls ... expensive clothes*) all belonged to that culture's critical caricature of wealthy women."³

"While today this manner of dress is not nearly as exclusive as it was in Paul's day, nor indeed restricted to women, its effects can be the same. I am reminded of a visit to a large, upper-middle-class church in Dallas (it could have been any large city or suburb). When I entered the sanctuary, the first thing that struck me was the glitter of jewelry, the expensive clothing and the fashionable hairstyles. The craning necks as people sized one another up gave the impression that for many the purpose of gathering together

¹Earle, p. 361.

²Knight, p. 135.

³See Bruce W. Winter, *Roman Wives, Roman Widows: The Appearance of New Women and the Pauline Communities*, pp. 104-5.

that Sunday morning was to display economic status. A newcomer of modest economic means could not help but feel a sense of exclusion."¹

"Paul isn't discouraging tasteful makeup, attractive jewelry, and nicely-arranged fashions and accessories. His concern is that glitter and gaudiness not replace godliness. Character, not clothes, makes the woman."²

Fee wrote a good discussion of how to distinguish cultural expressions of principles from those principles.³

Spiritual qualities should mark a Christian woman always, of course. However Paul's concern was that these qualities be outstanding in the church meetings. There the woman's character and conduct would contribute to the orderly and edifying activities rather than detracting from them (cf. 3:15).

"A woman's adornment, in short, lies not in what she herself puts on, but in the loving service she gives out."⁴

Perhaps Paul gave these counter-intuitive instructions to the men (v. 8) and to the women (vv. 9-10) partially to counteract the naturally carnal tendencies in males and females. Most men tend to be active, so it is important that they give attention to praying, which is more contemplative than active. Women like to look good, so they need to remember that good deeds are more important than good looks.⁵

2:11-12 Regarding their participation in the meetings of the church (3:15) Paul taught that the women were to let the men

¹Towner, *1-2 Timothy ...*, p. 71.

²Swindoll, p. 43.

³Gordon D. Fee, "Issues in Evangelical Hermeneutics: Part III. The Great Watershed, Intentionality and Particularity/Eternality: 1 Timothy 2:8-15 as a Test Case," *Crux* 26 (1990):31-37.

⁴Guthrie, p. 75.

⁵See Knight, p. 136.

provide the public instruction and leadership.¹ He did not mean that women should surrender their minds and consciences to men but that they should voluntarily take the position of learners in church meetings where both men and women were present (cf. Titus 2:3-4).

"This was a radical and liberating departure from the Jewish view that women were not to learn the law."²

"... ancient society rarely allowed teaching roles to women."³

Typically the women should not accept the role of teacher of the congregation or of leader of the whole church ("to teach or to exercise authority over a man").⁴ The verbs translated "teach" and "exercise authority" are in the present tense in the Greek text, which implies a continuing ministry rather than a single instance of ministry.

"*Teach and have authority over a man* (v. 12) may be references to separate activities that Paul restricted to men. Or the first term might represent a specific example of activity that falls under the general rule that follows: women's teaching in the public assembly would violate the given authority structure. In either case, we should notice that Paul did not employ his usual term for 'the normal exercise of authority' (*exousia*). He chose an unusual word (*authenteo*) that could carry negative connotations such as 'to usurp or misappropriate authority' or 'to

¹See Strauch, pp. 51-71; Michael F. Stitzinger, "Cultural Confusion and the Role of Women in the Church: A Study of I Timothy 2:8-14," *Calvary Baptist Theological Journal* 4:2 (Fall 1988):24-42.

²*The NET2 Bible* note on 2:12. *The NET2 Bible* refers to *The NET2 (New English Translation) Bible*, 2019 ed.

³Craig Keener, "Women's Education and Public Speech in Antiquity," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 50:4 (December 2007):759.

⁴See Towner, *The Letters ...*, p. 217; and Harold W. Hoehner, "Can a Woman Be a Pastor-Teacher?" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 50:4 (December 2007):761-71.

domineer.' The unusual term probably signifies an unusual situation. In the Ephesian context at least, women had misappropriated authority by taking upon themselves the role of teacher."¹

Some people get very upset when they read "with entire submissiveness" (v. 11; cf. Eph. 5:21-22; Col. 3:18). The Greek word (*hypotage*) means "to rank under." It is clear in military life that a private, for example, who ranks under a colonel is not necessarily of less value or possesses less ability than his or her superior officer. Rank has to do with order and authority, not personal superiority and inferiority. An example of willing submission is Jesus Christ, who, although superior to all other human beings, nonetheless submitted to other human beings (Luke 2:51; Phil. 2:5-11). God will reward His submission to the Father, and He will reward women who submit to His will as unto the Lord (1 Pet. 5:6-7).

Paul seems to have been speaking here of the whole local congregation. I do not think he would have objected to women teaching or leading some groups within the church that we commonly recognize as sub-groups, provided they do so with the approval of the male leadership of the church (cf. Acts 18:26; 2 Tim. 3:14-15; Titus 2:3). We should also bear in mind that Paul was describing a typical church situation in which there were men who could provide teaching and leadership.

If male leaders were absent, exceptions might be necessary to achieve the higher goals of the church, namely, the building up of the saints to do the work of ministry. In some places in the world today there are few males who can or care to provide the leadership in churches. In these situations, I think female leadership is better than none, at least until males can and will lead.²

Exactly what did Paul prohibit women from doing in verse 12? He did not want them "to teach" a man or "to exercise

¹Towner, *1-2 Timothy ...*, p. 77.

²See Charles C. Ryrie, *The Place of Women in the Church*, pp. 78-79.

authority over a man in the local church meetings (3:15).¹ Teaching the Scriptures is quite clearly assumed. This is more appropriate to the male's function in the church as an intermediary between God and people (cf. Gen. 2) because it involves interpreting God's Word to the church as an authoritative figure (cf. vv. 1-2, 8). In this passage Paul was forbidding women from regularly teaching men in local church corporate worship (3:15).²

"In my opinion, whatever the specific application of 'teaching' it is the kind of 'teaching' that gives women a position of authority over men."³

Paul approved of women teaching women and children (Titus 2:3-5; 2 Tim. 1:5) and instructing men privately (Acts 18:26). Reading a book that a woman has written is one example of private instruction. Watching a video of a woman teaching may be another.

"Paul in 1 Tim 2:12, does not forbid a woman all teaching. Paul is only prohibiting the headship of women in the Christian community."⁴

The Greek word translated "exercise authority" is *authenteo*. It means to act on one's own authority or to act in an autocratic manner.⁵ To exercise authority in this unbiblical way would be to submit to no higher male authority in the church or to not be answerable or accountable to the church's male leadership. If a woman exercised some authority in the church (e.g., as the leader of a ministry), and she did it in submission to the male leadership, she would not be sinning. It is the

¹See David P. Kuske, "An Exegetical Brief on 1 Timothy 2:12: (*oude authentein andros*)," *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* 88:1 (Winter 1991):64-67; and Mounce, p. 130.

²For a broader view, see Jamin Hübner, "Revisiting the Clarity of Scripture in 1 Timothy 2:12," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 59:1 (March 2016):99-117.

³Robert L. Saucy, "Women's Prohibition to Teach Men: An Investigation into Its Meaning and Contemporary Application," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 37:1 (March 1994):91.

⁴Steven B. Clark, *Man and Woman in Christ*, p. 305. See also Gleason L. Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*, pp. 411-15.

⁵*A Greek-English Lexicon ...*, s.v. "*authenteo*," p. 84.

taking of inappropriate authority on herself that Paul prohibited.¹ A woman can have authority over others in the church, provided she is under the authority of the male leadership of the church.

"It is noteworthy ... that Paul does not use 'office' terminology here (bishop/presbyter) but functional terminology (teach/exercise authority). It is thus the activity that he prohibits, not just the office (cf. again 1 Cor. 14:34, 35)."²

How can we resolve the apparent contradiction in Paul's teaching between what he presented here and what he taught in 1 Corinthians? There are two problems: First, in 1 Corinthians 14:34 Paul told the women to remain absolutely silent in the church. He did not permit them to speak. He used a different Greek word (*sigatosan*) there than what we have here (*hesychia*) translated "quiet" (v. 12; cf. v. 2). *Hesychia* does not mean absolutely silent, but settled down, not unruly. Paul wanted the women to express appropriate deference to the teacher or leader.

Perhaps Paul imposed a stricter standard on the Corinthian church than was normal because of the turmoil there, and his instructions in 1 Timothy reflect the normal situation.³ I think in the Corinthian case Paul probably meant that women should not speak out in judging what the prophets had said (1 Cor. 14:29), which was an exercise in ecclesiastical authority. The context of 1 Corinthians 14:34 seems to favor this view.⁴

¹See Al Wolters, "An Early Parallel of *authentēin* in 1 Tim 2:12," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 54:4 (December 2011):673-84.

²Knight, p. 142.

³J. N. Andrews, "May Women Speak in Meeting?" *Review and Herald* (January 2, 1879), reprinted in *Adventist Review* 165:5 (February 4, 1988):17; Ryrie, *The Place ...*, pp. 78-79.

⁴See James B. Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective*, p. 188-94, which is, in my opinion, one of the best books on the subject of the biblical teaching on the relationships of men and women. See Appendix 1 in these notes, "Women and Ministry," for a brief summary of this book. Other fine books on this subject are by Susan Foh, *Women and the Word of God*; Clark; and George W. Knight III, *The New Testament Teaching on the Role Relationship of Men and Women*. For an evaluation of six views on 1 Cor. 14:34-35, see

"Paul does not mean that women are to be absolutely silent during the service (compare 1 Cor. 11:5). Rather, he instructs them to exhibit *quietness* (in spirit) instead of taking the lead, or to 'be silent' in the sense of not teaching."¹

"This verse is no gag rule for women to observe the moment they walk into the [church] building. Rather, in the preaching service women should focus on listening instead of preaching."²

This silence is a concrete expression of the principle of submission that Paul advocated.³

The second problem is with 1 Corinthians 11:2-16. There Paul permitted women to pray and prophesy in church, but he insisted that they have their heads covered when doing so. This concession seems to contradict both 1 Timothy 2:11-12 and 1 Corinthians 14:34.

One way to resolve this difficulty is to say that in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 the women in view were either single women or married women whose husbands were not present. In 1 Corinthians 14:34 and 1 Timothy 2:11-12 those in view seem to have been married women whose husbands were present.⁴ However there is nothing in the text or context that justifies these assumptions.

Another solution—the one that I prefer—is that Paul permitted women to pray and prophesy in Corinth and elsewhere because these activities did not involve exercising as much authority in the church as teaching and ruling did. Teaching involved

Anne B. Blampied, "Paul and Silence for 'The Women' in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35," *Studia Biblica et Theologica* 13:2 (October 1983):143-65. Stanley J. Grenz, "Anticipating God's New Community: Theological Foundations for Women in Ministry," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 38:4 (December 1995):595-611, advocated female participation in church leadership.

¹Towner, *1-2 Timothy ...*, p. 77.

²Swindoll, p. 44.

³Knight, p. 139.

⁴See David Lowery, "1 Corinthians," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, pp. 528-30, 540-41.

providing authoritative instruction from Scripture, whereas prophesying, in New Testament times, involved only sharing something that God had brought to mind: speaking forth a word from the Lord. In some cases this was new revelation, but usually it was not.¹ In every case the prophet was to subject his or her prophecy to what God had inspired previously (1 Cor. 14:29).

2:13 Paul gave two reasons why women should conduct themselves in church meetings as he just specified: First, from the Creation onward it was God's intention that the male should provide leadership for the female. Paul reminded his readers that God made Adam first, and then he made a suitable companion for him in Eve (Gen. 2:7-25). He could have made them at the same time. God made Eve for Adam. He did not make Adam for Eve. This, however, implies no essential superiority of the male over the female. God created Adam and Eve equals in the sense that they needed and complemented one another. However God entrusted Adam with leadership responsibility over his wife. Eve was not responsible to God for Adam in the same sense that Adam was responsible for Eve.²

"This is an implied reference to the privileges that a firstborn received in ancient history."³

"... the woman was *made of a rib out of the side of Adam*; not made out of his head to rule over

¹See Wayne Grudem, "Prophecy—Yes, But Teaching—No; Paul's Consistent Advocacy of Women's Participation Without Governing Authority," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 30:1 (March 1987):11-23. Cf. Charles C. Ryrie, *You Mean the Bible Teaches That ...*, pp. 39-40; *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, s.v. "prophetes, et al.," by Helmut Krämer, et al., 6(1968):854; Harold W. Hoehner, "The Purpose of Tongues in 1 Corinthians 14:20-25," in *Walwood: A Tribute*, pp. 56-57; and H. Wayne House, "Should a Woman Prophecy or Preach Before Men?" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 145:578 (April-June 1988):149-54. See also "Women in the Church: Biblical Data Report" that I have included in these notes as Appendix 2.

²See Benjamin L. Merkle, "Paul's Arguments from Creation in 1 Corinthians 11:8-9 and 1 Timothy 2:13-14: An Apparent Inconsistency Answered," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 49:3 (September 2006):527-48; and Andrew B. Spurgeon, "1 Timothy 2:13-15: Paul's Retelling of Genesis 2:4—4:1," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 56:3 (September 2013):543-56.

³*The Nelson ...*, p. 2044.

him, nor out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved."¹

2:14 The second reason why women should conduct themselves in church meetings as Paul just specified was that, as part of the judgment on Eve at the Fall, God confirmed (i.e., made permanent) the leadership of the male over the female (Gen. 3:16). It was a result of her deception by the serpent that Eve fell.

"The chief weapon which the deceiver-prince of darkness relies upon to keep the world in his power is *deception*, and deception planned to beguile men at every stage of life; deception (1) of the unregenerate who are already deceived by sin; (2) deception suited to the carnal Christian; (3) and deception fitted to the spiritual believer, who has passed out of the preceding stages into a realm where he will be open to meet more subtle wiles."²

I do not believe that God confirmed Eve and all women as followers because they are congenitally more susceptible to deception than males. Adequate evidence to support such a sweeping generalization is lacking (cf. 2 Tim. 1:5; Titus 2:4). Rather it was evidently because Eve on that one occasion was deceived that God confirmed her and her daughters in their position as followers. Some writers believed that Paul argued only from the Creation and that he used the Fall simply to illustrate his argument.³ But it has seemed to most scholars that he used two separate arguments.

In the Ephesian church some of the women had been led astray by false teachers (5:15) who were themselves misled by Satan (cf. 4:1).

¹Henry, p. 7.

²Jessie Penn-Lewis, *War on the Saints*, p. 8.

³E.g., Knight, p. 144.

"Verse 14 is almost certainly a local reference to the deception of some women in the Ephesian church ... [cf. 2 Tim. 3:6-7]."¹

That is, one of the reasons that Paul referred to the Fall here was that some women in the Ephesian church were in danger of doing what Eve did, namely, being deceived by false teachers.²

"Paul's point [in verse 14] is that this role reversal that caused such devastation at the beginning must not be repeated in the church. The woman must not be the one who leads the man in obedience to her. Thus when the teaching of the Word of God in the assembly occurs, a qualified male elder should fill the role of teacher."³

Some people conclude that women are to be under male authority in all areas of life, not just in church meetings, since Paul appealed to Creation and the Fall. They believe that a man should not submit himself to female authority at all, even in the workplace. I do not think that this is what Paul meant. He cited God's intention for male/female relationships specifically in a marriage context, not in general social situations. Christian men and women should bring their proper relationship to one another in marriage over into church life and apply it in the "household of God" (cf. 3:15) as well as in the household of the family. In the larger context of these verses Paul was dealing with life in the church.

2:15 Perhaps the best explanation of this difficult verse is that God promised women a life of fulfillment as mothers in the home,

¹Towner, *1-2 Timothy ...*, p. 79.

²See Royce Gordon Gruenler, "The Mission-Lifestyle Setting of 1 Tim 2:8-15," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 41:2 (June 1998):215-38, for defense of the view that Paul addressed only those women in Ephesus who considered themselves "liberated."

³Ann L. Bowman, "Women in Ministry: An Exegetical Study of 1 Timothy 2:11-15," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 149:594 (April-June 1992):206.

provided they walk with the Lord, rather than as teachers and leaders in the church.¹

"The meaning of *sozo* ["to save"] in this passage is once again something like 'spiritual health,' a full and meaningful life. This fits the context quite well. Paul has just excluded women from positions of teaching authority in the church (1 Tim. 2:9-14). What then is their primary destiny? They will find life through fulfilling their role as a mother IF they continue in faith, love, and holiness with propriety. A salvation which comes only to mothers who persist in faithful service is not the faith alone salvation taught elsewhere."²

I believe this interpretation has fewer problems than the others. It balances Paul's argument in this section (vv. 8-15), and it stays on the subject rather than switching to a discussion of a subject further removed from the context. Some of these possible subjects are: how women experience eternal salvation, or how they experience physical deliverance when giving birth,³ or how they experience spiritual deliverance from moral corruption. Some interpreters have even suggested that Paul was alluding to the saving effect of Jesus Christ's birth.⁴ Paul also may have wanted his female readers, who seem to have been under the influence of feministic teaching, to value the privilege of bearing and rearing children.⁵ One writer believed Paul meant that childbearing will save the human race if a couple continues "in faith, love, sanctity, with moderation."⁶

One significant problem with the view that I prefer is this: If this is the true interpretation, then can a woman who does not

¹See Kent, pp. 115-20, for a discussion of four interpretations of this verse.

²Dillow, p. 126. Cf. Hanson, p. 74; Bailey, p. 357.

³Simpson, p. 48.

⁴E.g., Lock, pp. 32-33; Wallis, p. 1373; Knight, pp. 146-48; McGee, 5:440.

⁵Towner, *The Letters ...*, p. 235; Winter, pp. 109-12.

⁶G. Gregory Jenks, "Eve as Savior of Humanity? From the Genesis Narrative to Paul's Comments on Childbearing in 1 Timothy 2:15," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 66:1 (March 2023):133-161.

bear children ever find fulfillment in life? I believe that Paul would have responded that a single woman, or a married woman who is not a mother, can certainly find fulfillment as a woman of God. However usually women find their greatest fulfillment as mothers. Perhaps we underestimate home influence and overestimate pulpit influence (cf. 2 Tim. 1:5). William Ross Wallace wrote a poem entitled "The Hand that Rocks the Cradle Is the Hand that Rules the World." This poem's refrain became a commonly quoted proverb in praise of motherhood.

I believe Paul was again assuming a typical situation (cf. vv. 11-12): most women bear children. Even though a woman may not be able to bear physical children, she may reproduce spiritual children and thus find great fulfillment (cf. 1:2; 5:10-11, 14). Of course every human being—male or female, married or single—finds his or her greatest fulfillment in life through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.¹

"Paul employed the term 'childbirth' as a synecdoche for that part of the woman's work that describes the whole."²

A synecdoche is a figure of speech in which a part represents the whole or the whole stands for a part.

Paul balanced what women should not do with what they can do. In popular presentations of what the Bible teaches about women's ministries this balance is frequently absent. After the presentation is over women often leave feeling that they can do either anything or nothing, depending on the presentation. One must be careful to maintain balance in the exposition of this subject, as Paul did.

¹See Douglas J. Moo, "1 Timothy 2:11-15: Meaning and Significance," *Trinity Journal* 1NS:1 (Spring 1980):62-83; Jack Buckley, "Paul, Women, and the Church: How fifteen modern interpreters understand five key passages," *Eternity*, December 1980, pp. 30-35; and Moyer Hubbard, "Kept Safe through Childbearing: Maternal Mortality, Justification by Faith, and the Social Setting of 1 Timothy 2:15," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 55:4 (December 2012):743-62.

²Lea, p. 102.

To summarize, I believe that Paul exhorted the males in the household of God (i.e., the local church, 3:15) to function as mediators between Jesus Christ, humankind's Mediator with God, and His people. They should do this by praying, teaching, and leading the church. The women should concentrate on facilitating godliness in the church family as well as in their homes by learning, by cultivating good works, and by living godly lives. This is the hierarchical view of the passage. The egalitarian view is that there is nothing in this passage that limits the role of women in the church.¹

Women who try to minister in traditionally male roles have faced, and will continue to face, difficulties because of psychological factors involving themselves and those to whom they seek to minister.²

C. THE QUALIFICATIONS FOR CHURCH LEADERS 3:1-13

Paul proceeded from his instructions concerning worship in the church to lay out qualifications for leaders of the church. He did so in order to give Timothy guidance in selecting these important individuals. He discussed women and leadership in 2:11-15, and now he turned to men and leadership, specifically, the personal qualities necessary for effective church leaders.

"The PE do not give institutional *authority* to the overseers and deacons. They describe the type of person who may serve the church in a certain role: one whose character is above reproach, who has illustrated management skills at home; who can teach (in the case of the overseers), etc. This person will teach what is true and will refute what is false. While some authority may be *implicit* in the title and the nature of the position, nowhere does the text *explicitly* say what is so often asserted by modern writers (e.g., Young, *Theology*, 22; cf. 120), that the author's solution to the rise of heresy was to force a structure onto the house of God ... and appoint authoritative leaders who could combat the error because of

¹See Alan Padgett, "Wealthy Women at Ephesus," *Interpretation* 41:1 (January 1987):19-31, for this view. Ronald W. Pierce, "Evangelicals and Gender Roles in the 1990s: 1 Tim 2:8-15: A Test Case," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 36:3 (September 1993):343-55, gave reasons he changed from the hierarchical to the egalitarian view.

²See Andrew D. Lester, "Some Observations on the Psychological Effects of Women in Ministry," *Review and Expositor* 83:1 (Winter 1986):63-70.

their institutional position. There is no explicit institutional authority promoted in the PE."¹

"The nature of the qualifications set out and the broad concern for the leaders' reputations suggest that respectability of the sort that would sustain or establish the church's credibility in society was uppermost in mind."²

While Paul did not define the duties of an elder, Lock believed that he implied several duties: presiding (exercising discipline [v. 5] and leading worship [context]), teaching (v. 2), control of finances (v. 8), and representing the church to Christians elsewhere (v. 2) and to the unsaved world (v. 7).³

1. Qualifications for elders 3:1-7

The Ephesian church already had elders long before Paul wrote this letter (Acts 20:17-35).

"If our identification of the false teachers as elders is correct, then Paul's reason for this set of instructions is that Timothy must see to it that elders are living according to their appointment, that is, by these standards. At the same time, of course, the whole church will be listening in and will thus be given the grounds for discipline of erring elders as well as for their replacement (cf. 5:22, 24-25)."⁴

3:1 Paul cited another well-known saying (a "trustworthy statement"; cf. 1:15) in order to introduce and give support to what he was about to teach.

"Overseer" (Gr. *episkopes*) is a term that emphasizes this leader's leadership and management responsibilities, and it is evidently synonymous with "elder" (*presbuteros*; 5:17; 1 Pet. 5:1) and "pastor" (shepherd, *poimen*; Eph. 4:11). Paul used the term "elder" more frequently, so I have chosen to use it in

¹Mounce, p. lxxxi. His reference is to F. Young, *The Theology of the Pastoral Epistles*.

²Towner, *The Letters ...*, p. 240.

³Lock, p. 35.

⁴Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy ...*, p. 79.

commenting on this pericope. At the time Paul wrote the Pastorals the office of elder was common in the churches because he had appointed many elders in the churches that he had founded (Acts 14:23). The history of the elder office in the church goes back to the elder office in ancient Israel. The Jews had continued this organization in their synagogues, which they began during the Babylonian Captivity.¹

"... while the synagogal eldership did influence church eldership, the influence was of a general nature."²

"The word ["overseer," *episkopos*] came originally from secular life, referring to the foreman of a construction gang, or the supervisor of building construction, for instance."³

Paul did not say that each congregation of Christians required at least one elder to be a church. Moreover there appears to have been more than one elder in some churches (e.g., Acts 20:17; Phil. 1:1) but not necessarily in all. Elder was an official position of leadership in the church that carried with it pastoral responsibility (1 Pet. 5:1-2). "Elder" also describes the maturity of those who normally hold this position, primarily spiritual maturity. "Overseer" describes the major responsibility inherent in the position, namely, oversight of the church. "Pastor" describes the gift and work necessary to fulfill this position: the gift and work of a shepherd.

A person can aspire to hold an office out of good or bad motives. The "trustworthy statement" that Paul cited assumed good motives: the desire to do a worthy work, not the desire for personal power and/or status. Church congregations should be careful to investigate the motivation of men who aspire to become elders. Such an aspiration can lead a young man to study, labor, and sacrifice in order to

¹See Strauch, pp. 137-52.

²David A. Mappes, "The 'Elder' in the Old and New Testaments," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 154:613 (January-March 1997):92. See also Gene A. Getz, *The Measure of a Man*.

³Wuest, 2:3:52.

prepare for leadership in a church. Some do this by enrolling in a Bible college or seminary.

"The saying in fact focuses less on the *person* than on the *position*. Thus Paul is not commending people who have a great desire to become leaders; rather, he is saying that the position of overseer is such a significant matter, a noble task, that it should indeed be the kind of task to which a person might aspire. Thus, despite the activities of some, he does not for that reason negate the position itself."¹

"... the sad truth is that because of selfishness and irresponsibility few men really desire the work of oversight (Philippians 2:21). This is a matter of grave concern, for many able men dedicate their lives to other endeavors and have no time or energy to serve Jesus Christ. Our churches desperately need more dedicated elders, so we should pray earnestly that many more would desire to shepherd God's people."²

3:2-7 Paul listed 15 characteristics here that should distinguish the life of a man who aspired to serve as an elder.³

1. The description "above reproach" (irreproachable, Gr. *anepilempton*, v. 2; cf. 5:7; 6:14; Titus 1:6) means that he should possess no observable flaw in his character or conduct. That is, there should be no cause for justifiable criticism now or in his past (cf. v. 10) that anyone could use to discredit him and bring reproach on the name of Christ and the church. The Greek word means "not to be laid hold of." This is the main quality that the following ones make clearer or unpack. No one is perfect, but an elder should be a person that no one can legitimately criticize for the way he lives. He should be free of guilt

¹Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy ...*, p. 79.

²Strauch, p. 214.

³See David A. Mappes, "Moral Virtues Associated with Eldership," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 160:638 (April-June 2003):202-18.

even though he might be accused of something inappropriate or sinful. Job was "blameless" (i.e., above reproach; Job 1:1, 8) as were Zacharias and Elizabeth (Luke 1:6).

2. There have been many interpretations of the phrase "husband of one wife" (Gr. *mias gunaikos andra*, v. 2).¹ There are four major views as to what Paul had in mind: First, the elder must be married. Second, he must be married only once. Third, he must be monogamous. Fourth, he must be a moral husband. All the other qualifications are character traits. This may be a clue as to how we should interpret this one too.

We need to answer three related questions before we can arrive at a proper interpretation of this qualification: First, was Paul looking at the potential elder in his present condition, since his conversion, or over his entire lifetime. What do the other qualifications suggest in this regard? It seems that the man's present condition is in view primarily.²

Second, what conditions, if any, result in the dissolution of the marriage relationship besides death (cf. Matt. 5:31-32; 19:3-12; Mark 10:2-12; Luke 16:18; and 1 Cor. 7:8-16, 25-28)? I believe, on the basis of the passages just cited, that remarriage after a divorce does. Divorce does not necessarily end a marriage in the sight of God.

Third, under what conditions, if any, does God permit Christians to remarry (cf. Matt. 5:31-32; 19:2-12; and 1 Cor. 7:15, 25-28)? I believe that God permits remarriage if the divorced person's mate has died or has remarried someone else, thus terminating the former marriage.

¹Kent, pp. 126-30, discussed five views.

²See Jay E. Smith, "Can Fallen Leaders Be Restored to Leadership?" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 151:604 (October-December 1994):461-65, 478.

I have listed below some of the arguments pro and con for the various interpretations of this qualification:

View 1: He must be married.

This view sees as disqualified all unmarried men.¹ Those who hold this view usually appeal mainly to the context of the passage for support.

Pro

If a man is going to oversee a local church, he must have successful experience overseeing a family household (v. 5).

Con

The emphasis on "one" in the Greek text suggests a contrast between one or more wives rather than one or no wives.

Paul could simply have said the elder needed to be married if that is what he meant.

In order to be consistent, verse 4 would require that the elder have children (plural) too.²

Jesus put no stigma on a man remaining single to serve the Lord (Matt. 19:12), and Paul said that it is possible for a single person to serve the Lord more effectively than a married person can (1 Cor. 7:7-8).

View 2: He must be married only once.

This view sees as disqualified men who remarry for any reason, such as remarried widowers and remarried divorcees.³ Those who hold this view

¹See Ironside, p. 78; McGee, 5:441.

²See Knight, p. 157.

³White, 4:111; Alford, 3:2:322; J. N. D. Kelly, pp. 75-76; King, p. 58; H. P. Liddon, *Explanatory Analysis of St. Paul's First Epistle to Timothy*, p. 26; Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic*

often put much emphasis on church history, specifically that the early church, according to the writings of some church fathers, discouraged remarriage.

Pro

Paul urged the unmarried and widows to remain unmarried (1 Cor. 7:8).

The early church looked down on remarriage for any reason.¹

If a man does not remarry, he provides a better example for the church of what it means to be Spirit-controlled and totally dependent on God's grace.

The phrase "wife of one man" (5:9), which is identical to "husband of one wife" in Greek, except for the switch in sexes, in its context seems to mean married only once.

A variation of this view that some interpreters prefer is that divorcees who remarry are disqualified, but widowers who remarry are not.²

Pro

There is nothing morally culpable about being a widower, but there may be about being a divorcee.

Con

Paul urged the younger widows to remarry (5:14; cf. 1 Cor. 7:28).

Remarrying did not disqualify widows from receiving regular support from the church (5:9).

There is nothing essentially sinful about remarrying when the marriage bond has been broken (1 Cor. 7:9; cf. Rom. 7:2-3).

Since this appears to be the only moral qualification for the elder office, it is unlikely that Paul viewed remarriage as the worst possible moral offense that would disqualify a man.

Con

Not every case of divorce renders a man morally culpable (blameworthy).

Theology, p. 416; *ibid*, *You Mean ...*, p. 55; Wuest, 2:3:53-55; Litfin, pp. 736-77; Wilkin, 2:971.

¹J. N. D. Kelly, p. 76; Barclay, p. 88.

²Lock, p. 37; Hanson, pp. 75, 78, 98; Wiersbe, 2:220.

View 3: He must be monogamous.

This view sees as disqualified any man who is married to more than one woman at a time. This would include bigamists, polygamists, and perhaps remarried divorcees, depending on the circumstances of their divorce.¹ Advocates often emphasize the syntax of the passage in Greek to support their view.

Pro

The emphasis on "one" wife in the Greek text contrasts with more than one wife. Jewish, Greek, and Roman cultures practiced polygamy at this time.²

Con

If this is all that Paul meant, he hardly needed to mention it, since polygamy was inappropriate for all Christians, not just elders (cf. 1 Cor. 7:2).³

View 4: He must be a moral husband.

This view sees as disqualified any man who is or has been morally unfaithful to his wife (or wives if he has remarried).⁴ Some interpreters view any divorce as infidelity, others regard only divorce in which the husband has been unfaithful as infidelity. Those who argue for this view often emphasize the theological issue that God requires high standards for leaders.

Pro

This is an idiomatic use of the phrase "husband of one wife." It means a one-woman man. One paraphrase reads "committed to his wife."⁵

Con

Paul could have said something like "faithful to his wife," if that is all that he meant.

¹Hiebert, *First Timothy*, p. 65; Robertson, 4:572; Williams, p. 447; Simpson, p. 50. See also William Kelly, p. 90; Arno C. Gaebelein, *The Annotated Bible*, 4:1:162.

²Barclay, pp. 87-90.

³See Knight, p. 158.

⁴Towner, *The Letters ...*, pp. 250-51; Strauch, pp. 219-23.

⁵Eugene Peterson, *The Message*, p. 1641.

Paul seems to use "wife of one man" in the same way in 5:9 to describe a faithful wife.

Since God commanded all Christians to be morally pure, Paul must have meant more than that here.

Since this is the only moral qualification for an elder, we should probably interpret it broadly as forbidding immorality.

One variation of this view is that the man must be a faithful husband presently, even though he may have been unfaithful in the past (before and/or after his conversion).¹

Pro

Con

This interpretation is consistent with the other qualifications for elders all of which deal with the man's present condition.

All the other qualifications for elders view the man's total record of behavior, not just his present condition.

God forgives all sin and so should the church.

A presently faithful husband may have established a record of previous unfaithfulness that would make him a bad example as an elder.

The consequences of sin usually follow, even though God does forgive the guilt of all sin. For this reason immorality in marriage disqualifies a man.

¹Towner, *The Letters ...*, pp. 250-51; Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, p. 80; Hendriksen, p. 121; Lenski, pp. 580-82; Getz, pp. 28-31; Knight, p. 159; Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy ...*, p. 81; myself.

A second variation of this view is that the man must have proved himself faithful in the past (either all his life or since his conversion) as well as in the present.¹

Pro

Paul must have had the man's record of behavior in view since the other qualifications require that we take the past into consideration.

If Paul had meant that God wipes away the consequences of sin, as well as its guilt, he did not need to give any qualifications. Almost any Christian presently walking in fellowship with God could qualify.

Con

The church should forgive all sin completely since God does.

The qualification "the husband of one wife" seems to preclude the possibility of women holding this office. Paul could have said "the partner (or mate) of one spouse." The fact that all the qualification words in verses 2 through 7 are masculine in gender supports this conclusion.

3. "Temperate" (Gr. *nethalion*, v. 2) means sober, vigilant, clear-headed, and well-balanced (cf. 3:11; Titus 2:3).
4. "Self-controlled" (Gr. *sothron*, v. 2; cf. Titus 2:5) means prudent. The same Greek word has been translated "sensible" in Titus 1:8 (HCSB).²

"Such a man, such a bishop, will not speak rashly, will be a person of sound judgment,

¹See Kent, pp 129-30, for the view that he has to have been faithful all his life; and Robert L. Saucy, "The Husband of One Wife," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 131:523 (July-September 1974):229-40, for the view that faithfulness since conversion is all that Paul required.

²HCSB refers to *The Holy Bible: Holman Christian Standard Bible*.

will be master of himself, and of his situation."¹

"This does not mean an elder cannot have a sense of humor, but he should be serious about the office which he holds."²

5. "Respectable" (Gr. *kosmios*, v. 2) means orderly, of good behavior, dignified and decent in his conduct. Some translators rendered the same Greek word "modest" in 2:9 (e.g., NJKV, HCSB).³
6. "Hospitable" (Gr. *philoxenos*, v. 2) means one who opens his home to others. This was an especially essential quality in the early church since there were few public accommodations for traveling ministers and much need to take in needy Christians temporarily (cf. Acts 16:15, 40). Hospitality is also very important today (cf. Rom. 12:13; Titus 1:8). The Greek word means "loving the stranger." An elder should be a person who reaches out to strangers, the unsaved as well as believers, and makes them feel at home in his house.
7. The Greek word translated "skillful in teaching" (*didaktikos*, v. 2) means apt, qualified, and competent to explain and defend the truth of God. The elder must therefore have a knowledge of Scripture, readiness to teach, and the ability to communicate.⁴

"... not merely *given to* teaching, but able and skilled in it."⁵

This is the only qualification that involves ministry skill or gift. Some elders evidently gave more time to this ministry than others did (5:17), but all had to be competent in the Scriptures (cf. Titus 1:9). The style of

¹King, p. 59.

²McGee, 5:442.

³NKJV refers to *The Holy Bible: New King James Version*.

⁴Strauch, p. 226. See also Lenski, p. 584.

⁵Alford, 3:2:323.

communication undoubtedly varied according to individual gifts (mass communication, small group teaching, personal instruction, etc.). All prospective candidates would have been expected to teach only after prayerful meditation on the Word and practical application of the Word to their own lives.

"The PE make it clear that the primary leadership is in the hands of the teachers. ... Paul sees the church led by its teachers, those who can preach the truth and refute error; its primary leadership does not lie in the hands of administrators."¹

Neither does it lie in the hands of "worship leaders."

8. "Not overindulging in wine" (Gr. *me paroinon*, v. 3) means not a brawler, playboy, slave of drink, or drunkard (cf. Titus 1:7; 1 Cor. 11:21). While Paul specified wine, what he said applies to any enslaving substance. We are probably correct in extending its meaning to include any destructive addiction (drugs, gambling, pornography, etc.).

The larger issue of the Christian's drinking of wine and other intoxicating beverages has been the subject of extensive teaching. Most scholars have concluded that moderation rather than abstinence is what God commanded (cf. 5:23). However some base a case for abstinence on the fact that in Bible times the alcoholic content of wine was much less than it is in modern times.² Many modern alcoholic beverages fall into the category of strong drink.³

9. "Not a bully" (Gr. *me plekten*, v. 3; Titus 1:7; lit. a giver of blows) describes a person who resorts to physical or

¹Mounce, pp. 185-86.

²E.g., McGee, 5:443.

³See Robert Stein, "Wine-Drinking in New Testament Times," *Christianity Today* 19:19 (June 20, 1975):9-11; and Norman Geisler, "A Christian Perspective on Wine-Drinking," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 139:553 (January-March 1982):46-56.

verbal violence in order exercise control, to vent his anger, and/or to settle disputes.

"One who often yells at people is combative even if he never hits anyone."¹

"The word describes a person who does not go about with a chip on his shoulder."²

10. "Gentle" (Gr. *epieikes*, v. 3) means patient and holding oneself back (Titus 3:2; 2 Cor. 10:2).
11. "Not contentious" (Gr. *amachos*, v. 3; Titus 1:7) describes a person who is not quarrelsome. He is not a verbal fighter or a brawler (cf. James 3:7).
12. The meaning of "free from the love of money" (Gr. *aphilarguros*, v. 3) should be obvious (cf. Titus 1:7; 1 Pet. 5:2). Note that it is the love of money, rather than the possession of it, that is the disqualifying factor. Poor people as well as the rich may love money. Moreover, not all rich people love it. The opposite attitude is contentment (cf. Phil. 4:11).

"This means the candidate's attitude toward material wealth ought to be one of healthy detachment, but certainly not irresponsibility."³

"One who finds that he can make big money in part-time secular work is apt to be diverted from an effective ministry."⁴

13. "Manages his own household well" (Gr. *tou idiou oikou kalos proistamenon*, v. 4; Titus 1:6) means that he has control of his family. Family members submit to his leadership out of respect for him (cf. Prov. 24:3-4;

¹Wilkin, 2:972.

²Wuest, 2:3:57.

³Towner, *1-2 Timothy ...*, p. 87.

⁴Earle, p. 365.

27:23; Eph. 6:4). The elder's responsibilities in the church are quite parental, so he should have proved his parenting ability in the home before he receives larger parental responsibility in the church (cf. Matt. 23:14-30). The home is the proving ground for church leadership (v. 5). Again Paul assumed children in the home but did not require them, I believe.¹

"A word of caution, though: nobody's home is going to be perfect twenty-four hours a day. Even the preacher's kid is going to run down the aisle of the grocery store now and then. So what we need to look for is the general tenor of the home. Are the kids respectful, the home well-ordered? Are the parents attentive, involved, and supportive of each other and their children? How is the communication? Is an atmosphere of spiritual development being fostered? Is Jesus Christ openly discussed and revered? Is the Word studied?"²

14. "Not a new convert" (Gr. *neophutos*, v. 6) also requires a judgment call. How new? There should be evidence that he can function as an elder (teaching, leading, defending the faith, etc.) without becoming conceited. Inherent in the idea of conceit is the notion of being blinded or beclouded.³ Some interpreters believe that Paul meant that conceit is what put Satan where he is: under God's judgment.⁴ So the church should guard new converts from it by keeping them back from premature appointment as elders.

A literal rendering of the last part of verse 6 is "condemnation of the devil." This translation opens up the possibility that what Paul meant is that the elder

¹Cf. White, 4:113; Lenski, p. 586; Lea, p. 112; Mounce, pp. 158, 177, 185.

²Swindoll, p. 63.

³Hanson, p. 76.

⁴Alford, 3:2:324-25.

might fall into the condemnation that the devil contrived for him (cf. "the snare of the devil," v. 7).¹

"The young convert has not yet been disciplined and matured by afflictions and temptations."²

The elders whom Paul appointed soon after he planted churches evidently had backgrounds in the Old Testament.

"The new believer is more likely to see such a position of leadership as an opportunity for personal advancement and to fail to understand the gravity of the task."³

15. "A good reputation with those outside the church" (Gr. *marturian kalen echein apo ton exothen*, v. 7) is essential so that the elder will not bring reproach on the name of Christ and the church. Paul saw this as falling into "disgrace and the snare of the devil."

"Does he pay his bills? Does he have a good reputation among unsaved people with whom he does business? (See Col. 4:5 and 1 Thes. 4:12.)"⁴

As we study the qualifications of an elder it becomes clear that two things were important to Paul: (1) The man could not be guilty of doing something seriously wrong, and (2) other people had to regard his conduct as proper for a Christian.

"To sum up, only those [elders] are to be chosen who are of sound doctrine and of holy life, not notorious in any fault which might both deprive them of authority and disgrace the ministry

¹Hanson, p. 76.

²Jamieson, et al., p. 1360.

³Towner, *1-2 Timothy ...*, pp. 88-89.

⁴Wiersbe, 2:221.

[I Tim. 3:2-3; Titus 1:7-8]. The very same requirements apply to deacons and presbyters [I Tim. 3:8-13]."¹

"Are some of the qualifications merely optional based on one's particular context? If so, does that open the door to dismiss other qualifications if one finds them outdated or overly restrictive?"²

The writer of the above quotation concluded that all of these qualifications are non-negotiable and that they should be used in evaluating potential elders today. I agree.³

Why should elders meet these qualifications? Why should churches not just appoint their best men as elders? The effective operation of each church depends on its leadership. The New Testament does not legislate the details of church operations. So it is important that the men making these decisions be spiritual men who set a good example and have the respect and confidence of the other church members and non-believers.⁴

The elder was to be an "overseer" (cf. Acts 20:17, 28; Phil. 1:1; Titus 1:5,7; 1 Pet. 5:1-2).⁵ This implies that he was to be over any other local church officials (e.g., deacons) as well as the other Christians in the church. There is no evidence in the New Testament that God intended overseers to govern groups of churches. A hierarchy did exist as long as the apostles were alive, but the New Testament reveals no provisions for the maintenance of such a hierarchy. However the absence of prohibitions concerning a hierarchy can also be an argument for it. I would conclude, therefore, that God neither condemned nor commanded organizations of local churches. It is a matter of choice whether churches want to band together in denominations or fellowships and submit themselves to overseeing officials.

"In light of the woman's place of subordination in the family and church, which is plainly expressed by Paul's direct

¹Calvin, 4:3:12.

²Benjamin L. Merkle, "Are the Qualifications for Elders or Overseers Negotiable?" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 171:682 (April-June 2014):172.

³For the opposite view, see Bernard, p. 53.

⁴See Mounce, p. lix; and especially Ed Glasscock, "The Biblical Concept of Elder," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 144:573 (March-May 1987):66-78, for a fine summary of this subject.

⁵See Strauch, pp. 205-8.

statement that she must not exercise authority over a man, it is simply not possible for a woman to be an elder because such a position involves authority and teaching in the church. God has clearly commissioned men to do that job, not women. Thus, the appointment of women elders is in direct disobedience to God's Word and will generate further male irresponsibility, which is already a monstrous problem in the family and Christian community."¹

2. Qualifications for deacons 3:8-13

Paul continued his instructions concerning order in the life of the local church by setting forth qualifications for the deacons. He did this in order to ensure Spirit-controlled assistants for the elders.

"... this passage does not spell out the functions of a deacon but simply clarifies the type of person who qualifies to be a deacon. Overseers and deacons are distinct in function but similar in character."²

3:8-10 "Likewise" (v. 8) indicates that Paul was describing an office different from that of elder when he spoke of deacons. "Deacon" (Gr. *diakonos*, v. 8; lit. servant) is a word that the New Testament writers used frequently. In time the churches recognized official servants of the churches, and these people held office as deacons. A list of 12 qualifications follows:

1. "Men of dignity" (Gr. *semnos*, v. 8) means men who are worthy of respect.
2. "Not insincere" (Gr. *me dilogous*, v. 8) means not two-faced, saying one thing or living one way part of the time and another at other times. Such a person is honest, not hypocritical, sincere, a man of integrity.

¹Ibid., p. 71.

²Mounce, p. 196.

3. "Not prone to drink much wine" (Gr. *me oino pollo prosechontas*, v. 8; cf. elder qualification #8) means not over indulging and certainly not an addict.
4. "Not greedy for money" (Gr. *me aischrokerdeis*, v. 8; cf. elder qualification #12) is self-explanatory.
5. "Holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience" (Gr. *echontas to mysterion tes pisteos en kathara syneidesei*, v. 9) describes a man of conviction who behaves in harmony with his beliefs. "The mystery of the faith" is the body of doctrine that God has given us by special revelation (cf. 1 Cor. 4:1). In today's world, the word "mystery" implies knowledge withheld, but in the Bible it often means knowledge previously withheld but now revealed (cf. v. 16).
6. "Beyond reproach" (Gr. *anegkletoi*, v. 10; cf. elder qualification #1) means without reasonable grounds for accusation: blameless. This was to be true of him in the past as well as in the present, having passed the test of time. Paul was not referring to some type of ordination examination in his reference to being "tested."¹

"The meaning is not that they should be given a trial appointment as deacon, but rather that the church should constantly be examining and testing the members of the congregation, so that whenever the need for selecting deacons arises, they will know what members are qualified for appointment."²

"We may conclude that what is required of deacons is a combination of correct doctrine and pure life."³

¹See Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy ...*, p. 87. Cf. Lock, p. 40.

²D. Edmond Hiebert, "Behind the Word 'Deacon:' A New Testament Study," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 140:558 (April-June 1983):154.

³Hanson, p. 80.

3:11 Does this verse refer to female deacons? Historically most interpreters have said yes.¹ Others believe that it refers to the wives of male deacons.² Another option is that it refers to unmarried women who assist the deacons. Exegetically it is very hard to decide exactly whom Paul had in mind.³ I think it probably refers to female deacons for the following reasons: First, there is nothing about the office as such that would exclude a woman. Second, it would be unusual for Paul to prescribe qualifications for wives of deacons but not for wives of elders. Third, the fact that he inserted special qualifications for women in the middle of his list of deacon qualifications seems to indicate that he considered these women to be deacons (i.e., deaconesses).

Paul described Phoebe as a deaconess ("servant," Gr. *diakonon*) of the church in Cenchrea in Romans 16:1. This may mean that she was simply a servant of the church. However the term he used allows for the possibility that she occupied the office of deaconess in her church.

"The *office* of deaconess is not certain in the New Testament church, but the preponderance of evidence suggests that women had this *ministry*, for it is certainly seen in the postapostolic period."⁴

The apostle cited four special qualifications for these women:

¹E.g., White, 4:115-16; Alford, 3:2:328; Lock, p. 40; Simpson, p. 56; Lenski, p. 599; Robertson, 4:575; Williams, p. 448; Towner, *The Letters ...*, p. 265; Swindoll, p. 72; Wilkin, 2:974; Wuest, 2:3:61; idem, *The Pastoral ...*, p. 61; Kent, p. 140; Mounce, pp. 203, 207-12. Cf. *The Nelson ...*, p. 2046.

²Liddon, p. 33; Darby, 5:164-65; William Kelly, p. 90; Gaebelien, 4:1:163; Knight, pp. 171-72; Hanson, pp. 80-81; Mounce, p. 204; Ryrie, *Biblical Theology ...*, p. 199; idem, *The Place ...*, pp. 90-91; Donald L. Norbie, *New Testament Church Organization*, pp. 50, 52-56.

³See Robert M. Lewis, "The 'Women' of 1 Timothy 3:11," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 136:542 (April-June 1970):167-75; Ryrie, *The Place ...*, pp. 85-91; and Herbert Frohnhofen, "Women Deacons in the Early Church," *Theology Digest* 34:2 (Summer 1987):149-53.

⁴H. Wayne House, "The Ministry of Women in the Apostolic and Postapostolic Periods," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 145:580 (October-December 1988):390. Cf. Hendriksen, pp. 132-33; and Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy ...*, p. 88.

7. "Dignified" means worthy of respect (Gr. *semnas*, cf. v. 8).
8. "Not malicious gossips" (Gr. *diabolos*) describes those who do not slander others.
9. "Temperate" (Gr. *nephalious*) means well-balanced (elder qualification #3, v. 2; cf. Titus 2:2).
10. "Faithful in all things" (Gr. *pistas en pasin*) means completely trustworthy.

(Calvin understood two kinds of deacons: deacons who distribute alms to the poor, and deacons who devote themselves to the care of the poor and sick. He believed that women could serve as the second type, but that women could fulfill no other public office in the church than this.¹)

3:12 Returning to the male deacons, to finish his list, Paul added two more qualifications:

11. They must be the "husbands of one wife" (Gr. *mias gunaikos andres*) (elder qualification #2, v. 2).
12. They must also be "good managers of their children and their own households" (Gr. *teknon kalos proistameno kai ton idion oikon*; cf. elder qualification #13, vv. 4-5).

3:13 The rewards for faithful service as a deacon are two: a good reputation ("high standing") and increased ("great") "confidence" in dealing with other people and with God (cf. Matt. 20:26-28; Mark 10:43-45). Presumably this confidence builds on a clear conscience.

Paul said nothing about the duties of deacons. This suggests that he did not associate specific tasks with the office. He seems to have intended that deacons should function as official servants of the church in whatever

¹Calvin, 4:3:9.

capacity the elders may see a need for them. They were in effect the elders' assistants.¹

"1 Tim. 3:1-13 thus presents a twofold pattern for the official ministry of the church, that of oversight (*episkopos*) and that of service (*diakonos*)."²

Whereas the elder office apparently arose out of Jewish religious life, the deacon office seems to have developed from an incident in the early history of the church (i.e., Acts 6:1-6). Luke did not call the men who were appointed to assist the apostles in Acts 6 "deacons" in that passage. Nevertheless that event apparently led to the official appointment of deacons as assistants to the elders, and the deacons served especially in the realm of physical and material needs.³

"An analysis of the data seems ... to indicate the existence of oversight by a plurality of church leaders throughout the NT church in virtually every known area and acknowledged or commended by virtually every NT writer who writes about church leadership."⁴

D. THE NATURE OF THE LOCAL CHURCH 3:14-16

Paul explained his reason for writing this epistle and, in particular, what he had just written. He also prepared for what he would say in this group of verses. He did so in order to impress on Timothy a view of the church that was foundational to all his instructions in this letter.

"It is now generally recognized that this paragraph is the heart of the Pastoral corpus [body of writings] ... which puts the instructions of the corpus into proper perspective."⁵

¹See Benjamin L. Merkle, "The Authority of Deacons in Pauline Churches," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 64:2 (June 2021):309-25.

²Knight, p. 175.

³See Strauch, pp. 367-72.

⁴Knight, pp. 176-77.

⁵Mounce, p. 214. Cf. Guthrie, p. 87.

Hanson suggested that we could regard what follows in 3:14—4:10 as a commentary on Colossians 1:24-29.¹

3:14-15 Paul wrote that he hoped to join Timothy soon.

"A pseudonymous writer would hardly have put in this phrase. Paul's hopes were not to be realized, but he did not know that."²

In view of the context, Paul evidently was thinking of the local church when he spoke of it as a "household" and as a pedestal ("pillar and support").³ The first domestic figure is common in Paul's writings (2 Tim. 1:16; Titus 1:11; cf. vv. 5, 12). The local church is a family or household of believers (cf. 5:1-2). It should, therefore, conduct its corporate life like a family rather than like a business, a country club, an entertainment center, a military group, or some other organization.⁴

"This metaphor served to elevate the community of believers as the 'location' of God's presence on earth. The church has become His base of operation in the world."⁵

The second, architectural figure is of a pedestal that supports something set on top of it. "Pillar and support" is a hendiadys meaning supporting pillar or foundation or, as Alford put it: "basement."⁶ Each local church supports the witness of each believer in it, and it holds that testimony up before the world—in which falsehood abounds. Paul did not elaborate on how it does this here, though the models suggested by the terms

¹Hanson, p. 91.

²Robertson, 4:575.

³Lock, p. 42. See Robert A. Carlson, "An Evaluation of 1 Timothy 3:15 as a Pauline Description of the Nature and Task of the Local Church" (Th.M. thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 2002).

⁴See Strauch, pp. 7-11.

⁵Bailey, p. 354.

⁶Alford, 3:2:330. A hendiadys is the expression of a single idea by two words connected with "and," when one could be used to modify the other.

shepherd (pastor), elder, overseer, and deacon provide some clues.¹

What the believer proclaims is "the truth," namely, the whole truth that God has revealed in His Word—but especially God's redemptive plan centered on Jesus Christ. Does "the truth" refer here specifically to Christ ("The Truth," John 14:6) or more generally to the truth of God's redemptive plan? Since what follows is a hymn about Christ, He could be the primary referent. In His career, from incarnation to ascension, He clarified "the mystery of godliness" (v. 16).

3:16 Paul's mention of "the truth" led him to glorify it. By common confession among Christians, "the mystery of godliness," previously unknown but now revealed, is "great." Jesus' life and ministry clarified this mystery by showing what godliness looks like in flesh and blood (John 14:9). God has made His plan known to us only by special revelation in the New Testament (cf. Eph. 3). God's mystery plan of redemption is a mystery in that it leads to and results in "godliness" in those who accept it. It is "great" in its preeminent importance and in its worldwide scope, as well as in its incomprehensibility apart from divine revelation. In general "the mystery of godliness" is very close in meaning to the content of the Christian faith.²

Paul evidently was quoting a fragment of a hymn, or a statement of the apostolic church, that summarized the content of this mystery. It appears to have been such in view of its concise rhythmic parallelism and assonance (similar sounding words) in Greek. Each of the words translated "revealed," "vindicated," "seen," "proclaimed," "believed on," and "taken up" ends with *the* in the Greek text. And the preposition *en* follows each verb (except "seen," which has no following preposition). Three couplets depict Jesus Christ as the essence of this mystery and view His work as completed. Other views are that the hymn consists of one stanza with six

¹See A. Duane Litfin, "The Nature of the Pastoral Role: The Leader as Completer," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 139:553 (January-March 1982):57-66.

²Hanson, p. 86.

lines, or two stanzas with three lines, or three stanzas with two lines.¹

"... this phrase *the mystery of godliness* forms a connection between the appearance of Christ, which the hymn celebrates, and Christian living: *the mystery* is the essence of *godliness*."²

The six strophes probably describe Christ's (1) incarnation, (2) resurrection, (3) post-resurrection sightings (probably by angelic messengers), (4) proclamation by the disciples (between His resurrection and ascension), (5) regeneration of those who heard and believed this witness, and (6) ascension.³ This interpretation has in its favor the chronological sequence of Christ's entire earthly ministry.

Other interpreters view these descriptions as follows: (1) God revealed Jesus Christ in the flesh (human nature) in His incarnation, and (2) the Holy Spirit vindicated His claims in His resurrection. (3) Human messengers (human "angels") saw and worshipped Him following His resurrection and ascension into heaven, and (4) His disciples proclaimed Him to all people ("among the nations") through the worldwide preaching of the gospel. (5) Those who accept the gospel on earth ("in the world") believed on Him, and (6) God received and exalted Him ("taken up") in glory following His ascension.⁴

Some who follow this basic interpretation see the hymn as containing two stanzas: the first three lines describing the life of the incarnate Lord, and the second three lines describing the life of the ascended Lord.⁵

This saying presents the work of Christ as comprehensive in time. From His incarnation on, Jesus Christ is the most important figure in human history. Notice also that two realms are in view in this hymn: the earthly and the heavenly. There

¹See Towner, *The Letters ...*, pp. 277-85.

²Idem, *1-2 Timothy ...*, p. 99.

³Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 3:21-23.

⁴See Kent, pp. 145-46, for a non-chronological interpretation.

⁵E.g., Lock, p. 45.

are three references to the earthly realm in lines 1, 4, and 5. Likewise there are three references to the heavenly realm in lines 2, 3, and 6. Thus the movement of thought is alternately from the earthly realm to the heavenly, back to the earthly, and finally back to the heavenly. This structure emphasizes the comprehensive nature of Christ's work in space. He has brought together the earthly and heavenly spheres of existence. He has reconciled human beings to God. He is Lord of all.

Specifically, He has bridged the gap between things that have always been poles apart. These are flesh (the physical) and spirit (the spiritual), angels (those closest to God) and Gentiles (those farthest from God), and the world (the present sphere of existence) and heaven (the future sphere of existence).

"The first of the three couplets presents Christ's work accomplished, the second his work made known [announced], and the third his work acknowledged [awarded by God]."¹

E. THE PROBLEM OF APOSTASY IN THE CHURCH 4:1-5

In this pericope Paul reminded Timothy of the apostasy that Jesus Christ had foretold in order to equip him to identify and deal with it.²

"1 Tim 4:1-5 does not begin a new topic. Paul, who has given his instructions on the true understanding of law, grace, and salvation (1:3—2:7) and on church behavior and leadership (2:8—3:13) and has paused to put his instructions into proper perspective (3:14-16), now concludes by pointing out that these types of problems should have been expected because the Holy Spirit had clearly prophesied their occurrence ..."³

4:1-3 In contrast to the true revelation of God ("the mystery of godliness," 3:16), false teaching would arise as time passed.

¹Knight, p. 183.

²See Barth Campbell, "Rhetorical Design in 1 Timothy 4," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 154:614 (April-June 1997):189-204.

³Mounce, p. 233.

Paul had written and would write more about "the mystery of lawlessness" elsewhere (2 Thess. 2:7; cf. 2 Tim. 3:1-7). "In later times" does not refer to the end times but to the whole time between the two advents of Jesus.¹ Whether Paul referred to a special revelation that he had received by the Holy Spirit, or simply to previously revealed revelation, we cannot determine for sure. Nevertheless God had revealed through Jesus that, as time passed, some who held the truth would reject it (Matt. 13:21; 24:10-11; Mark 4:17; 13:22; Luke 8:13; cf. Acts 20:29; 2 Thess. 2:1-12; 2 Tim. 3:1-13; 2 Pet. 3:1-18; Dan. 7:25; 8:23). This would come about as a result of people listening to persuasive arguments put forth by God's spiritual enemies ("deceitful spirits and teachings of demons").²

"Such 'doctrines of demons' honeycomb man-concocted religions and influence the false cults of Christianity."³

"... one of Paul's concerns here is almost certainly to arrest any doubts about the permanence of God's church."⁴

Are these people who "fall away from the faith" believers or unbelievers? The Greek words that Paul used to describe their activity do not enable us to answer this question. Either believers or unbelievers could be in view. The context must determine whether the one departing is a believer or an unbeliever. In some passages the context argues for Christian apostates (called backsliders by some Christians; Luke 8:13; 1 Tim. 1:18-20; 4:1; 6:20-21; Heb. 3:12; cf. 2 Tim. 2:12b, 16-18; 3:13; 4:3-4). A Christian who follows the impulses of his or her sinful human nature, rather than those of the Holy Spirit, is a "fleshly" (carnal) believer (1 Cor. 3:3).

¹Lenski, p. 618.

²See Gregory H. Harris, "Satan's Work as a Deceiver," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 156:622 (April-June 1999):190-202; Merrill F. Unger, *Demons in the World Today*, pp. 101-121, 147-173.

³*Ibid.*, p. 154.

⁴Towner, *1-2 Timothy ...*, p. 102. Cf. Matt. 16:18.

"It comes as a shock to some people that Satan uses professed Christians *in the church* to accomplish his work. But Satan once used Peter to try to lead Jesus on a wrong path (Matt. 16:21-23), and he used Ananias and Sapphira to try to deceive the church at Jerusalem (Acts 5). Paul warned that false teachers would arise *from within the church* (Acts 20:30)."¹

In other passages the context points to non-Christian apostates (Luke 13:27; cf. 2 Thess. 2:11). In still other passages either or both may be in view; there is not sufficient information in the context to say (2 Thess. 2:3; cf. Titus 1:14). It seems quite clear that Christians can stop believing God (Matt. 10:33; Mark 8:32; 2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 3:8).² This does not mean, however, that they will lose their salvation, since salvation is God's work, not man's (John 10:28; Rom. 8:31-39; 2 Tim. 2:13). One of my professors at Dallas Seminary used to say, correctly I think: "I believe in the perseverance of the Savior, but I do not believe in the perseverance of the saints."³

These apostates had developed cauterized ("seared") consciences by refusing to respond positively to the truth that they knew. Now they called lies the truth, and that is "hypocrisy" (v. 2).

"The false teachers are liars; they deliberately deceive, because they have managed to anaesthetise [*sic*] their consciences, no doubt by means of their constant habit of deceit. This means that they do not believe their own ideology, but propagate it from the lowest motives."⁴

¹Wiersbe, 2:224. Cf. Lenski, p. 619; Dillow, p. 338-39.

²See *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, s.v. "*aphistemi, et al.*," by Heinrich Schlier, 1(1964):512-13.

³S. Lewis Johnson Jr.

⁴Hanson, p. 87.

"Bad consciences always have recourse to hypocrisy."¹

Yet those who teach false doctrine often believe very strongly in what they promote.

The demonic doctrine of Spiritualism, that living people can communicate with the dead, is deceitful in that the dead do not communicate with the living. It is demons that pretend to be the spirits of the dead that communicate with the living.²

The apostates that Paul warned Timothy and the Ephesians to watch out for also promoted asceticism (cf. Col. 2:20-23). Asceticism is the teaching that abstinence from physical things is essential for spiritual purity. Specifically, these teachers forbade "marriage" and the eating of some foods. Probably Gnostic teaching, which later achieved its most influential strength in the second century A.D., had influenced them.³ Gnosticism taught that matter was evil, and people should try to live with as little attachment to physical things (like physical intimacy in marriage) as possible.

Judaism appears to have been another root influence on these teachers since it taught that some foods were fit (Heb. *kosher*) and others unclean (cf. Col. 2:16-17). There may be physical reasons for not eating certain foods (e.g., allergies, too high fat content, etc.), but there are no spiritual reasons (Mark 7:19). Likewise there may be physical reasons why in individual cases marrying may not be wise or desirable (e.g., passing on genetic defects, the demands of a particular ministry, etc.). Nevertheless God has approved the institution of marriage (Matt. 19:3-5).

Paul reminded his readers that God created marriage and food for us to enjoy (v. 3). Since the first coming of Christ, the distinction between clean and unclean foods is one that

¹Jamieson, et al., p. 1362.

²See Raphael Gasson, *The Challenging Counterfeit*, for an exposé of Spiritualism by a former Spiritualist minister and medium.

³See William Kelly, p. 110.

Christians need not maintain (Mark 7:19; Acts 10:15; Rom. 14:14; 1 Cor. 10:23-33).

"Fasting is admirable in its own place and for special reasons from time to time as the grace of God may direct."¹

4:4-5 Everything that God has created is "good" (v. 4; Gen. 1:31). We can abuse God's good gifts (e.g., fornication and gluttony), but marriage and food are essentially good, and we should enjoy them—with thankfulness to God for giving them. "Gratitude" is the only condition connected to their use. This verse is not saying that everything is good for us (poisons, pornography, etc.)—only that all things that God has created for human enjoyment are essentially good (Gen. 1:31).

When we thank God for His good gifts, and do not treat them as our rights, we remember that they come from Him. Consequently we treat them as set apart ("sanctified") for our benefit. We recognize that He has "sanctified" (set apart) them when we pray (give thanks) for them and reflect on the Scriptures that tell us that they come from our heavenly Father for our benefit.² Paul's idea was not that through a ritual of Scripture recitation and praying marriages and food become acceptable for God's people. We learn that God has set apart what He has created for our enjoyment through "the Word of God," and we acknowledge that through "prayer."³

The Greek word translated "prayer" in verse 5 (*enteuxis*) means petition (cf. 2:1), but in this context it serves as a generic term for prayer and clearly refers to thanksgiving (cf. v. 4).⁴ Alternatively, with his reference to the Word of God, Paul may have been thinking of specific biblical expressions that the early Christians, and the Jews, used (as prayers) when they gave thanks for their food.⁵ I do not think that Paul had

¹Ibid., p. 114.

²Cf. Lea, p. 132.

³See Michael Haykin, "'Sanctified by the Word of God and Prayer,'" *Banner of Truth* 275-76 (August-September 1986):55-58.

⁴See Towner, *The Letters ...*, p. 299.

⁵Idem, *1-2 Timothy ...*, p. 104.

the Eucharist (Holy Communion, the Lord's Supper) in mind, because he was speaking about everyday food.

"Paul's words certainly sanction the Christian practice of grace before meals. To eat without giving thanks is base ingratitude. But the scope of the passage is much wider than that."¹

To give thanks for a meal, or our marriage, and then complain about it is inconsistent.

Advocates of asceticism are still with us today, as Paul wrote they would be. Roman Catholicism, Seventh-Day Adventism, as well as some cults, to name a few advocates, have promoted this false teaching.

IV. INSTRUCTIONS CONCERNING LEADERSHIP OF THE LOCAL CHURCH **4:6—5:25**

Paul proceeded to give some specific instructions about leadership of the church. This included direction concerning the leader's personal life and public ministry, basic principles of effective interpersonal relationships, and the proper treatment of widows and elders.

A. THE LEADER'S PERSONAL LIFE AND PUBLIC MINISTRY 4:6-16

Having reminded Timothy that the apostasy that he was witnessing in Ephesus was not unexpected but prophesied (4:1-5), the apostle next clarified Timothy's responsibility in dealing with it (cf. 1:3). Paul wrote these positive directions in order to enable Timothy to overcome the influences of the ascetic apostates that threatened the church at Ephesus. He also wrote to remind him of the importance of his personal life and public ministry so that he would not fall into the same errors.

"Just as a skillful coach will often return to the basics of the sport to pull the team or a player out of a slump, Paul returns to the basics to keep this church on track."²

¹Hiebert, *First Timothy*, p. 80. Cf. 1 Sam 9:13; Matt. 14:19; Acts 27:35.

²Towner, *1-2 Timothy ...*, p. 105.

The apostle selected three essential spiritual priorities, out of many that he could have chosen, in verses 6 through 10.

4:6 Timothy was to point out—which is a very mild approach—the truth about God's good gifts that Paul had just mentioned. Paul considered the Ephesian Christians "brothers and sisters," not enemies or antagonists.

"It is always true that men can be led when they will refuse to be driven."¹

"A good servant of Christ" must pass along the truth that God has revealed without distorting it. In order to be a good servant Timothy would have to continue to nourish himself on the truths of the faith that were contained in his Bible. Sometimes ministers are so busy finding spiritual food for their people that they fail to feed themselves.

"... the tense of the verb 'nourished' suggests that it is not by one outstanding banquet, nor by an occasional feast, but by a regular diet of everyday feeding on good solid fare ..."²

"The Bible is not an end in itself, but a means to bring men to an intimate and satisfying knowledge of God, that they may enter into Him, that they may delight in His Presence, may taste and know the inner sweetness of the very God Himself in the core and center of their hearts"³

Timothy would also have to abide in the sound doctrine that he had received from the Lord and His apostles, as he had been doing so far (cf. 2 Tim. 3:14-17), rather than apostatizing.

4:7-8 Timothy should not become embroiled in refuting the fables of these false teachers ("stories that are typical of old women,"

¹Barclay, p. 111.

²King, p. 74.

³Tozer, p. 10.

cf. 1:4), which have a certain appeal, but only as curiosities. These fables are "worthless."

Instead he should train himself in godliness. This requires rigorous self-discipline. By allowing normal marriages (man/woman) and the eating of all kinds of food, Paul was not advocating undisciplined Christian living. Timothy should direct his discipline at the development of spiritual more than physical strength (cf. 1 Cor. 9:24-27). Physical self-discipline ("bodily training") has a very limited value compared with spiritual self-discipline ("godliness"). The latter results in both present and future improvements ("for the present life and also for the life to come").

"The Prodigal Son lost a great deal by going to the far country, and any Christian who lives a careless life rather than a godly life will find that even in eternity he will pay for it. Are you as anxious about godliness as you are about physical exercise, about athletic events?"¹

In view of the context (v. 3), Paul may have had the asceticism that the false teachers advocated in mind when he referred to physical exercise ("bodily training," v. 8).² The Greek word translated "life" (v. 8) is *zoe*, the higher principle of life, which is the perfect antithesis to death (cf. vv. 1-3), rather than *bios*, which is the physical aspect of life.³

"A consistent Christian walk possesses, does not forfeit, that which this life promises; in a very real sense 'it makes the best of both worlds'. ... That which is given by life to Christians is the best thing that life has to give."⁴

4:9 The "trustworthy statement" that Paul referred to here seems to have been the one that he had just cited (v. 8). Several schools of philosophy in Paul's day belittled the excessive

¹McGee, 5:449.

²Wuest, 2:3:71.

³Richard C. Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament*, pp. 86-90.

⁴White, 4:124.

physical conditioning that many Greek young men practiced.¹ They believed that the development of the inner man was more important. So perhaps this trustworthy statement was one that they had popularized. Paul agreed with this viewpoint, whatever its source may have been.

4:10 It is for "godliness" (v. 8) that the believer should labor and strive and discipline himself or herself to develop primarily (cf. 2 Pet. 1:1-11). The incentive for this striving toward godliness is that we look forward to a genuine "hope" beyond this life.

"The greatness of the goal makes the toil of the struggle worth while."²

That "hope" rests in the living God (3:15) who is "the Savior of all mankind" (2:2, 4, 6). God is the Savior of all people in the sense that He has provided a salvation that is available to all and in the sense that He has preserved their earthly lives. He is the Savior "of believers" in a special sense since they are those who have accepted His provision of eternal salvation.³ Salvation is *sufficient* for all but *efficient* only for those who believe.⁴

"They say that a plane leaves the Los Angeles International Airport every minute, and I could get on any one of them (if I had the courage!). All I need to do is get a ticket and get on the plane. It's a plane for everybody, you see, but not everybody will take it. Christ is the Savior of all men, but only those who believe will be saved (see John 3:16; 1 John 2:2)."⁵

Some strong Calvinists say that God is the Savior of "all mankind" only in the sense that He saves all people from

¹J. N. D. Kelly, p. 100.

²Barclay, p. 112.

³See Kent, pp. 158-60.

⁴Wuest, 2:3:72. See Alford, 3:2:340-41; Gary L. Schultz Jr., "God's Purposes in the Atonement for the Nonelect," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 165:658 (April-June 2008):145-63.

⁵McGee, 5:449.

temporary disasters.¹ While it is true that God does this, Paul's use of the title "Savior" has led most interpreters to conclude that here he was describing God's work of providing eternal salvation, as in 2:4 (cf. 1:1; 2:3).

"He [God] is the Saviour of all men *potentially* (ch. 1:15); of believers alone *effectually*."²

"Paul advises his readers to concentrate on the basics: steady nourishment from the Word of God, pursuit of the godly life in the Spirit and the priority of mission."³

4:11 Paul charged Timothy to insist regularly on these things that he had just been saying and to teach them to the Ephesians (cf. 5:7; 6:2; 2 Tim. 2:2, 14; Titus 2:15). The verbs are in the present tense in Greek suggesting continuing action. These are the first two of 10 imperatives in verses 11 through 16. Evidently Timothy needed some prodding to make him more assertive.

"He who has ceased to learn has ceased to teach. He who no longer sows in the study will no more reap in the pulpit."⁴

As Christians who continue to "prescribe and teach these things" we need to approach confrontation carefully (cf. Gal. 6:1). Is our motivation to help or to hurt the other person? Is our attitude loving, and does this come through in our non-verbal as well as verbal communication? Loving confrontation expresses care and respect for the other person. It communicates that we want the other person to respect us and understand how we feel. The timing, location, and setting are all very important in confrontation. We need to be sensitive to other pressures that may be on the other person. We should

¹E.g., Hendriksen, p. 156.

²Jamieson, et al., p. 1364.

³Towner, *1-2 Timothy ...*, p. 108.

⁴C. H. Spurgeon, p. 236.

also give help with an openness to accept confrontation from the other person as well.

Church leaders need to relate to others in the church as if they were members of their own families. One's attitude toward the fellow members of the church will affect his or her actions. Too often a pastor sees himself as a general (a military model), as the president of a company (a business model), or even as a shepherd (which may be a babysitter model)—though the shepherd model is a good one if it is properly followed. Leaders should deal with people in their churches as they would their own flesh and blood. This will shape their whole ministry. If they adopt this viewpoint they will probably have close personal friends in their church. Having close personal friends in the congregation only becomes a problem if pastors give these friends preferential treatment.

4:12 The Greek word translated "youthfulness" described people up to 40 years of age in ancient Greek literature.¹ As a comparatively young man Timothy may have felt reluctant to instruct the elders in the Ephesian congregation who were probably older than he.² Most people regarded older people with great respect in his culture. Paul promised that no one in the church would discredit his teaching ministry if he backed it up with a godly lifestyle. In his words as well as by his actions, by his love for people and his trust in God, and by his moral purity, he should provide an "example" of what believers should be. "Purity" includes both sexual purity and integrity of heart.

"... Timothy is to off-set the fewness of his years by the richness of his character, so that his flock will quickly forget how young he is by their recognition of how godly he is ..."³

¹Lea, pp. 137-38; Knight, p. 205.

²Guthrie, p. 97.

³King, p. 78.

"It is the first duty of a minister to display in his own life that which he wishes his people to be."¹

"How well I see now that He is wanting to do something in me! So many missionaries, intent on doing something, forget that His main work is to make something of them, not just to do a work by their stiff and bungling fingers."²

4:13 Timothy had other responsibilities as an apostolic representative in the Ephesian church. He should "give attention" to his public ministry as well as to his private life. Three duties were crucial: First, he should continue to make sure that the church leaders publicly read the Scriptures in the meetings of the church. This practice, which was carried over from temple and synagogue worship, was central in the corporate worship of God's people (cf. Exod. 24:7; Deut. 31:11; 2 Kings 23:2; Neh. 8:7-8; Luke 4:16; Acts 13:15; 15:21; 2 Cor. 3:14; 1 Thess. 5:27).³

Second, "exhortation" should continue to accompany the "public reading" of the Word. "Exhortation" describes the explanation and application of the text that the preacher reads (i.e., the expository sermon; cf. Acts 18:15).⁴ Third, "teaching" was necessary. This responsibility appears to have been systematic instruction in the doctrines of the faith.⁵ It may have been a thematic approach to instruction as contrasted with section by section exposition of a passage.⁶

"anagnosis ["reading"], *paraklesis* ["exhortation"] *didaskalia* ["teaching"] are the three elements in the ministry of the word ..."⁷

¹Hiebert, *First Timothy*, p. 85.

²Jim Elliot, quoted in Elisabeth Elliot, *Shadow of the Almighty*, p. 179.

³See Simpson, p. 70; Towner, *The Letters ...*, p. 317.

⁴Hanson, p. 93. See Steven J. Lawson, "The Passion of Biblical Preaching: An Expository Study of 1 Timothy 4:13-16," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 159:633 (January-March 2002):79-95.

⁵Cf. Hanson, p. 93.

⁶J. N. D. Kelly, p. 105.

⁷White, 4:126.

4:14 Timothy needed further encouragement to keep using the abilities that God had given him to serve the Lord. Timothy had received ordination for service to God by "the laying on of" Paul's (cf. 2 Tim. 1:6) and some elders' "hands." At Timothy's ordination a prophet who was present received a revelation from God that Timothy would serve Christ in a particular way.

Another possibility is that these were two separate episodes in Timothy's life: perhaps first at Lystra, and later at Ephesus.¹ So Paul may have been calling on Timothy here to remember that event, or those events, and the responsibility that was his in view of that special revelation (cf. 1:18-19).

"The laying on of hands by the elders had not communicated the gift. It was the outward expression of fellowship with the gift imparted unto Timothy [by the Holy Spirit]."²

Since Paul charged Timothy with exercising authority over the Ephesian elders (v. 13; 5:17-25), this reminder, that a group of elders had previously recognized Timothy's authority, would have encouraged him. The procedure described in this verse has, along with other similar instances of this practice described in Scripture, served as a pattern for the formal ordination (setting apart) of people for ministry.

"And surely it is useful for the dignity of the ministry to be commended to the people by this sort of sign, as also to warn the one ordained that he is no longer a law unto himself, but bound in servitude to God and the church."³

"The nature of succession in the ministry was certainly present [when the Pastorals were written], but it was regarded as primarily a succession of teaching or tradition rather than as

¹Lock, p.54; Towner, *The Letters ...*, p. 325.

²Gaebelein, 4:1:169.

³Calvin, 4:3:16.

an 'apostolic succession' of ordination reaching back to the apostles."¹

"The Bible never speaks of a corresponding group identity for deacons [as it does here of elders]. The notion of deacons functioning as a 'board' is never mentioned in the Bible."²

This does not imply, of course, that having such a group is wrong.

4:15 As Timothy concentrated on these responsibilities (vv. 6-16), his personal "progress" in godliness would become "evident to all" his fellow saints in Ephesus (cf. Luke 2:49, 52). There is a play on the Greek words at the beginnings of verses 14 and 15: "Do not neglect" (Gr. *amelei*) contrasts with "Take pains" (*meleta*).

"While I do not want to sound critical, I must confess that I am disturbed by the fact that too many pastors and Christian workers divide their time and interest between the church and some sideline. It may be real estate, trips to the Holy Land, politics, civic duties, even denominational service. Their own spiritual lives suffer, and their churches suffer, because these men are not devoting themselves wholly to their ministry."³

"No one who really wants to count for God can afford to play at Christianity. He must make it the one great business of his life."⁴

"It is inspiring to see a young preacher grow for then the church will grow with him."⁵

¹Hanson, p. 37.

²Litfin, p. 741.

³Wiersbe, 2:228. Cf. Phil. 3:13; James 1:8.

⁴Ironside, p. 109.

⁵Robertson, 4:582.

4:16 In summary, Timothy was to pay close attention to both his personal life and his public ministry.¹

"No matter how straight a person may be in his doctrine or how effective he may be in his teaching, if there is a flaw in his inner or outer life, it will ruin him. This is where many ministers have failed tragically. While he is watching over others, the pastor must keep an eye on himself."²

Timothy should not grow slack but should keep up the good work he had begun.

"Stickability is an essential quality for effective leadership."³

The rewards would be deliverance for him, from failure and a wasted life (cf. 2:15; James 1:21), and the deliverance of those to whom he ministered, from error and retrogression. Obviously Paul was not saying that God saves us eternally because we perform our duties faithfully.⁴

Christians do not always remain faithful to the Lord either in their beliefs or in their behavior. Hymenaeus and Alexander, who were evidently fellow workers with Paul, and possibly elders in the Ephesian church, denied truth regarding the resurrection (1:20; 2 Tim. 2:17), and they vigorously opposed Paul's teaching (1:20; 2 Tim. 4:14). Paul warned Timothy not to wander away from the true teachings of the faith (6:20-21). When cultists come knocking on the door they want people to adopt their unbiblical views and to abandon their belief in the truths of orthodox Christianity. Paul's warning in chapter 4 is very relevant, much needed, and vital for us to heed as modern believers.⁵

¹See Joseph M. Stowell III, "The Effective Leader," in *Integrity of Heart, Skillfulness of Hands*, pp. 315-22.

²Earle, p. 375.

³King, p. 83.

⁴Cf. Dillow, pp. 126-27.

⁵See Robert N. Wilkin, "Saving Faith and Apostasy: Do Believers Ever Stop Believing?" *Grace Evangelical Society News* 6:11 (November 1991):1, 4.

Even though Timothy was an apostolic representative, his responsibilities were mainly pastoral. Consequently what Paul said to him is directly applicable to pastors and others who do pastoral work today.

B. BASIC PRINCIPLES OF INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS 5:1-2

Paul now turned to the subject of interpersonal relationships in order to help his son in the faith get along with people effectively and instruct others wisely. What he had written in 4:11-13 might have led Timothy to understand his mentor to mean that he needed to resort to harsh and overbearing action. Because of this possibility, Paul hastened to explain that Timothy should not be abusive in prescribing and teaching these things. This brief section is transitional. It connects with 4:11-16 in form and concern, and with 5:3-25 in content.

"As with an article of clothing, the church has its seams, created naturally by age differences, gender differences, economic differences and so on. These seams, where these various groups come together, often show visible signs of stress. It falls to the Christian leader to cross all these lines from time to time in order to minister effectively. But crossing these lines requires sensitivity and care."¹

"A minister must sometimes approach members of his congregation for the purpose of correction. When he does, he must consider closely not only what he's going to say and how he's going to say it but *to whom* he will be speaking."²

"... two thoughts are common to the section. (i) The respect due to all, as members of the Christian family: cf. 5:1, 2, 3, 17; 6:1 ... (ii) The importance of winning respect among their pagan neighbours, cf. 5:7, 8, 14; 6:1."³

One of the greatest failings of people involved in pastoral work is their inability to relate to and work with others effectively. This failure is often traceable to the pastor's attitude toward others: how he views them. Paul wisely prefaced his specific instructions, concerning how to deal with

¹Towner, *1-2 Timothy ...*, p. 113.

²Swindoll, p. 98.

³Lock, p. 55.

certain leadership needs, with fundamental principles designed to facilitate good interpersonal relationships.

In short, Timothy was to relate to everyone in the church as if they were the members of his own family. Paul had already taught that the local church is a household (3:15). Therefore believers, and especially a leader of the church, should treat other Christians accordingly. Timothy should not take an adversarial (hostile) role with members of the Ephesian church.

Specifically, Timothy should deal with "an older man" respectfully and appeal to him gently rather than rebuking him harshly. One's chronological age, regardless of his spiritual age, was reason enough to approach him humbly rather than arrogantly. This should include older elders (church officials) as well as other older men.

"Within the Greco-Roman (and Jewish) family, the father was owed complete respect (cf. Sir 3:12-14)."¹

Of course, the leader might eventually have to rebuke and even exclude from the fellowship any person who was destroying the church—by teaching false doctrine, for example. But even in those cases he should approach older men patiently, as is appropriate when dealing with one's "father."

"Just as it is difficult for an older person to respect the teaching and leadership of a younger man (1 Tim 4:12), so also it is difficult for a younger man to know how to instruct and correct the older people in the church."²

The church leader can deal with "younger men" (i.e., younger than the older men just mentioned) more directly, but he should always do so as with "brothers." The pastor should regard younger men, not as inferior or superior to himself, but as equals. In Timothy's case these men were his contemporaries. Even an elderly man should think of younger Christian men as his brothers, giving them the dignity of equals, rather than looking down on them as inferiors.

Timothy should think of and treat the "older women" in the congregation as "mothers." This implies giving them special consideration in view of their

¹Towner, *The Letters ...*, p. 331.

²Mounce, p. 269.

age and experience. Some pastors tend to neglect the older women because they have difficulty identifying with them, or because some of them do not appear to be the more productive members of the congregation, or for other reasons. This practice differs from the one that Paul urged Timothy to adopt.

The leader should regard the "younger women" as "sisters" in the Lord and treat them with the "purity" that one would grant his physical sister. Perhaps because it is a temptation for some pastors to love their spiritual sisters too much, Paul added "in all purity" (v. 2). If a pastor determines to relate to the younger women in his congregation as sisters, he will not do anything to or with them that would harm them in any way.

"No sort of behavior will so easily make or mar the young preacher as his conduct with young women."¹

Throughout his epistles Paul urged his readers to adopt certain attitudes toward God (to think of Him as Father, Lord, Savior, etc.) and themselves (as saints, ambassadors, sons of God, etc.). These attitudes were crucial for them to maintain so that they might live properly. The way we think determines how we behave. Here (vv. 1-2) he taught a particular view toward others in the local church that is essential to success in interpersonal relationships, especially for church leaders.²

C. HOW TO DEAL WITH WIDOWS AND ELDERS 5:3-25

Paul now addressed how Timothy was to deal with two main problem areas in the Ephesian church: the younger widows and the erring elders.

1. Provisions for widows 5:3-16

Paul gave instructions concerning the church's responsibility for its widows in order to clarify how and for whom the church should provide special care. Widows have been, and still are, especially vulnerable individuals. As such God has always shown special concern for their protection (cf. Deut. 10:18; 24:17; Ps. 68:5; Isa. 1:17; Luke 2:37). The early church normally mirrored His attitude (Acts 6:1; 9:39). In the Greco-Roman world, a female normally

¹Robertson, 4:583.

²See Appendix 3: "Prospective Ministers Need Training in Interpersonal Competence" at the end of these notes.

obtained her social status and identity from her male, either her father or, after marriage, her husband.¹

"... the real widow seems to be set up as an ideal in contrast to the young widows in much the same way that Timothy is in contrast to the false teachers (4:6-16; 6:11-16)."²

This whole discussion of widows appears to focus on the younger widows in particular. They may be the same women that Paul spoke of in 2 Timothy 3:6-7 who were responding positively to the false teachers. This may explain the surprising length of this section. This is the most extensive treatment of a group in the whole epistle.

5:3-4 "The basic thought of the word 'widow' is that of loneliness. The word comes from an adjective meaning 'bereft' and speaks of her resultant loneliness as having been bereft [deprived] of her husband."³

Paul distinguished three kinds of widows in the church: First, there were those who had children or grandchildren who could financially support them. The Christian physical relatives of this group should care for these widows (cf. Mark 7:10-12; Eph. 6:2). Second, there were those who had no family at all to care for them.

"In explanation of 'nephews' in KJV, the *Oxford English Dictionary* (7:91) notes that in the seventeenth century (when KJV appeared) the term *nephew* was commonly used for a grandson, though that meaning is now obsolete."⁴

"No 'corban' business here. No acts of 'piety' toward God will make up for impiety towards

¹Towner, *The Letters ...*, p. 335.

²Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy ...*, p. 114.

³Hiebert, *First Timothy*, p. 91.

⁴Earle, pp. 376-77. KJV refers to *The Holy Bible: Authorized King James Version*.

parents. ... Filial piety is primary unless parents interfere with duty to Christ (Luke 14:26)."¹

The church should care for the second group, the widows with no family to care for them, and presumably widows with non-supportive family members. The church should honor this second group of widows, the extremely dependent, rather than looking down on them.

"It is what a person is, not what he has, that is the proper gauge of honour, or of dishonour ..."²

5:5-6 However not all in the second category should receive regular financial help. Only those widows without children or supporting relatives (Gr. *memonememe*, "left alone") who give evidence that they are looking to God for their needs and are seeking to honor Him with their lives qualify (e.g., Anna in Luke 2:36-38). "Requests" translates *deesis*, which refers to prayers for one's personal needs.³

Widows who give themselves to the pursuit of pleasure ("luxury," v. 6), in contrast to the pursuit of God, do not qualify for regular support. This is the third group of widows in the passage.

"In the contemporary world many widows were tempted to resort to immoral living as a means of support, and that is probably in the apostle's mind when he uses the verb *spatalao* (*liveth in pleasure*)."⁴

These women receive in their lives the wages of their sin: spiritual deadness. The word "dead" describes widows who are presumably believers (cf. James 2:17).

"To have pleasure in life is a legitimate and healthy thing; but to live for pleasure, as some people do,

¹Robertson, 4:584. "Corban" means given to God. See Mark 7:11-13.

²King, p. 90.

³Wuest, 2:3:80.

⁴Guthrie, p. 101.

and did even in Timothy's day, is an unworthy, and unhealthy, thing. The difference between Christians is largely a matter of appetite—is he satisfied, with the things of God, or does he hanker after the things of the world?"¹

"It has been my experience in three different pastorates that godly widows are a 'spiritual powerhouse' in the church. They are the backbone of the prayer meetings. They give themselves to visitation, and they swell the ranks of teachers in the Sunday School. It has also been my experience that, if a widow is *not* godly, she can be a great problem to the church. She will demand attention, complain about what the younger people do, and often 'hang on the telephone' and gossip. (Of course, it is not really 'gossip.' She only wants her friends to be able to 'pray more intelligently' about these matters!)"²

5:7 Timothy was to give these "instructions" so that family members in the church would shoulder their rightful responsibility. He was also to do so in order to encourage the widows to seek the Lord and be "above reproach" rather than pursuing lives characterized as indulging in luxury (v. 6).

"The Ephesians are evidently so spiritually immature that even after all the years of Paul's ministry he is not able to speak to them as mature Christians but still is dealing with the basics [cf. 1 Cor. 3:1-2]."³

5:8 Paul cited a commonly recognized responsibility in order to encourage the relatives of widows to provide for them (cf. Rom. 2:14). Family members have a universally recognized duty to care for one another ("provide for his own"). Even unbelievers acknowledge this. If a Christian fails here he

¹King, p. 91.

²Wiersbe, 2:229.

³Mounce, p. 284.

behaves contrary to the teaching of his faith and is, in this particular, "worse than" the typical "unbeliever" who helps his needy relatives. Even as He hung on the cross the Lord Jesus made provision for His mother's care (John 19:26-27).

"The Christian who falls below the best heathen standard of family affection is the more blameworthy, since he has, what the heathen has not, the supreme example of love in Jesus Christ."¹

Jesus called His disciples to be willing to give up the *pleasures* of family life in order to follow Him, not the *responsibilities* of family life (Luke 14:26). The care of family members is one of the Christian's ministry responsibilities.

These instructions do not rule out helping ungodly widows in the church, of course. They just prohibit placing them on a list to receive regular official church support. Should every church have such a list? The New Testament does not command this, but it may have been customary in the first-century churches—like the holy kiss, meeting in homes, etc.

5:9-10 Evidently the Ephesian church had a "list" of widows who received regular support from the congregation.

"It would appear probable that in the apostolic age all women consecrated to God, in a single life and for doing works of mercy, formed a single *tagma*, or order."²

"These are the widows who possessed the necessary qualifications for the performance of certain spiritual and charitable functions in the church ..."³

A widow had to meet three qualifications in order to get her name on this list: First, she had to be at least "60 years old."

¹White, 4:129.

²Liddon, p. 55. See also Simpson, p. 74.

³Hendriksen, p. 173.

At this age most widows probably became incapable of providing for their own needs, and most would no longer have the opportunity to remarry.

"Sixty was the recognized age in antiquity when one became an 'old' man or woman ..."¹

Second, she had to have been "the wife of one man." The same qualification existed for a man to be qualified to serve as an elder or deacon (3:2, 12). Following the same interpretation given in 3:2, this would mean that the widow was unqualified if she had been unfaithful, promiscuous, or polyandrous. Polyandrous means married to more than one man at a time, which was a rare occurrence in Paul's culture. Remarriage after the death of her spouse would not necessarily disqualify her (cf. Rom. 7:2-3). Later Paul wrote that he wanted younger widows to remarry (v. 14). So it is unlikely that he meant to exclude remarried widows from this list.

Third, she had to have established "a reputation for" doing "good works." Paul cited five typical examples of good works: (1) She had "brought up children" responsibly.

"It is not child-birth so much as the 'Christianly and virtuously bringing up of children,' her own or those entrusted to her charge, that St. Paul has in his mind."²

Effectively rearing children evidenced good works in the home. (2) She had "shown hospitality to strangers." This demonstrated good works in her community.

"Inns in the ancient world were notoriously dirty, notoriously expensive, and notoriously immoral."³

(3) She had humbly served her Christian brothers and sisters. "Washed the saints' feet" seems to be an example of humble service in the church. (4) She had "assisted" people who were

¹J. N. D. Kelly, p. 115.

²White, 4:131.

³Barclay, p. 128.

"in distress" or special need, which is an example of good works toward the needy. (5) She had "devoted herself to every good work." Good works had been important to her, presumably as an expression of her faith in Christ.

Some writers believed that Paul was describing a special order of widows, with spiritual and charitable duties to perform, for which they received remuneration.¹ Such an order existed in later centuries, but its existence in the infancy of the church is, in our time, unproveable.²

5:11-12 It was not wise to place younger widows on this list, and Paul explained why. Younger widows' "physical desires" would be stronger, and these feelings would make it very hard for them to remain committed to serving Christ wholeheartedly as single women.

"The metaphor is that of a young animal trying to free itself from the yoke, and becoming restive through its fulness [*sic*] of life."³

Paul evidently assumed that a wholehearted commitment to the Lord characterized those on the list (cf. v. 5). If the church leaders placed younger widows on the list, and they subsequently wanted to remarry, they would have to set aside their previous pledge of devotion to, and service of, Christ alone.⁴ They would thereby incur some form of temporal "condemnation." Perhaps this punishment came from their consciences, their church family, or elsewhere. It certainly was not eternal condemnation.

"The pledge Paul referred to was probably a more or less formal commitment, taken on joining the list of widows, wherein the woman vowed to serve Christ entirely without thought of remarriage."⁵

¹E.g., Bernard, pp. 80-81.

²See Lea, p. 149.

³Bernard, p. 82.

⁴Knight, pp. 226-27. See also Barclay, pp. 131-32.

⁵Litfin, p. 743.

"In the ancient world it was next to impossible for a single or a widowed woman to earn her living honestly. ... She either had to marry, or had to dedicate her life completely to the service of the Church; there was no halfway house between the two."¹

Another interpretive option is that perhaps these verses describe, more particularly, a younger Christian widow faced with the temptation of marrying an unbeliever (cf. 1 Cor. 7:39).² Her physical desires might overpower her commitment to do God's will and lead her to live contrary to the faith that she professed. Many English translations render the Greek word *pistin* (faith, v. 12) "pledge." Obviously setting aside her "previous pledge" does not mean breaking her pledge to her former husband, since her former husband was dead, and Paul encouraged widows to remarry (v. 14).

"The explanation for Paul's strong words apparently lay in his view of widowhood as a spiritual commitment. He did not want younger widows to accept the calling of widowhood and then renounce that call with the appearance of any eligible man. It was better to allow them to plan for remarriage as he directed in 5:14."³

5:13-15 Placement on the list of supported widows would not be good for younger widows because it would open them up to the temptations of idleness and unchristian behavior. They would naturally be tempted to use their energy and time in too much talking and become "gossips," and get into other people's affairs and become "busybodies." In short, they would fail to participate in constructive activities and instead become involved in what was destructive. Contrast the behavior of the commended widows in verse 10.

¹Barclay, p. 132.

²Kent, p. 179; Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy ...*, p. 121; Mounce, p. 291; Towner, *The Letters ...*, p. 353.

³Lea, p. 151.

"In their visits to homes they pick up private matters and spread them abroad. This is always a snare to those who go from home to home or church to church."¹

One writer speculated that the younger widows had been deceived by false teachers in Ephesus, were promoting deviant doctrine, and the church was funding this false teaching by supporting these widows. He believed that this accounts for the prolonged discussion of widows here.² While this theory may be true, it is only a possibility. I would not preach it.

In view of the possibility of the younger widows intruding into other people's affairs inappropriately, Paul encouraged them to remarry ("get married"). In the ancient world most people expected that a widow would remarry.³ The apostle urged the younger widows to get married and "have children" (cf. Titus 2:5). The Greek word *oikodespotein* means "manage the household." Since the husband is ultimately responsible to God for what happens in his home (3:4; Gen. 3:16), Paul must have meant that the wife is to manage the household under his authority.

By remarrying, the younger widows would not give "the enemy" (any accuser of believers, including Satan) an opportunity to criticize them for going back on their pledge to serve Christ as a specially committed widow. Evidently this had already happened in the Ephesian church (v. 15). In forsaking their professed service of Christ in this way, some had "turned away to follow Satan." This is a strong description of the real situation involved in going back on a commitment to Christ.

Notice that turning away to follow Satan is a possibility for younger widows in the church as well as for other believers. Departing from God's will does not necessarily identify a

¹Earle, p. 378.

²Dillon T. Thornton, "'Saying What They Should Not Say': Reassessing the Gravity of the Problem of the Younger Widows (1 Tim 5:11-15)," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 59:1 (March 2016):119-29.

³Bruce W. Winter, "Providentia for the Widows of 1 Timothy 5:3-16," *Tyndale Bulletin* 39 (1988):85; W. K. Lacey, *The Family in Classical Greece*, p. 117.

person as an unbeliever. He or she may be a prodigal who is a true child of the Father but has chosen to depart from Him. He or she may have been led astray by false teaching, or his or her passions, or may have simply drifted away from the faith (Heb. 2:1). Or such a person may be an unbeliever.¹

Did Paul mean that every young widow, and perhaps every young woman, should get married and bear children? I think not. This was the typical role of a young woman in Paul's day, and it still is today worldwide. This seems to be another example of presenting the typical situation with room for exceptions assumed.

"The wife who works simply to get luxuries may discover too late that she has lost some necessities. It may be all right to have what money can buy, *if* you do not lose what money cannot buy."²

How can we resolve the apparent conflict between Paul's advising the younger widows to remarry, in this verse, and his forbidding the inclusion of widows married more than once on the official list in 5:9? "The wife of one man" (v. 9) does not mean married only once but married in harmony with divine approval (what is right) and social approval (what is regarded by others as appropriate). The same principles underlie the elder and deacon qualification in 3:2 and 12.

5:16 In conclusion, Paul sought to correct a possible misunderstanding. He wrote that financially capable Christian women should assist the widows in their families so that the church would not "be burdened" with their support. Probably he referred to "any woman" here in order to clarify that this duty applied to women who did not have living or believing husbands—in addition to male heads of households.

¹See Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity*, pp. 1066, 1070-74, for accounts of 19th century intellectual leaders who had Christian upbringings but renounced Christianity.

²Wiersbe, 2:231.

"Rich people should be ashamed to burden the church with their poor relations."¹

"Certainly we must honor our parents and grandparents and seek to provide for them if they have needs. Not every Christian family is able to take in another member, and not every widow wants to live with her children. Where there is sickness or handicap, professional care is necessary, and perhaps this cannot be given in a home. Each family must decide what God's will is in the matter, and no decision is easy. The important thing is that believers show love and concern and do all they can to help each other."²

"Paul's advice [in 5:9-16] focused on the three terms, *respect*, *compassion*, and *responsibility*."³

2. The discipline and selection of elders 5:17-25

Another group in the church deserved Timothy's special attention: the elders. Therefore Paul gave instructions concerning the care of elders to his young representative in order to enable him to deal with present and potential elders properly.

The structure of this pericope is similar to that of the previous one dealing with widows. In both sections Paul began by showing genuine concern for the care of those in the group: "honor" (3:3, 17). He then proceeded to urge correction of those within each group that needed it. He ended on a positive note in each section. Both sections deal with proper interpersonal relationships in the household of faith: the church (vv. 1-2).

5:17 It is clear that "the elders" that Paul referred to in this section were the church overseers and not just any older men in the congregation. Paul had already given the qualifications for these officers (3:1-7), and now he described them as leading, "preaching," and "teaching." From this verse we learn that the overall duty of the elders was to "lead" the church, in the

¹Henry, p. 1891.

²Wiersbe, 2:231.

³Lea, p. 153.

sense of directing its affairs and giving oversight to all of its activities (cf. 1 Pet. 5:1-4).

William Kelly held the unusual view that elders were never chosen by the churches but were only appointed by the apostles, thus making this office obsolete in the modern church. He believed that the gifts are in the church today, but the offices are not.¹

What was the "double honor" to which Paul referred? The single honor most likely was to enjoy the respect that came to the elder for being an elder. Paul had previously commanded that widows be given honor (vv. 3-16), and now he commanded that some elders receive twice as much honor as other elders, especially those elders who work hard at "preaching and teaching."

One view is that when Paul wrote "double" he meant large in general (cf. Rev. 18:6). Receiving "double honor" then would mean receiving even more respect than would normally be given an elder.²

"One honor goes to him because of the position which he occupies. Extra honor goes to him if he serves with distinction."³

"At least a part of the 'double honor' Paul urged for the competent elder involved a recognition for a job well done. For us today writing a letter of gratitude, making a phone call of appreciation, and expressing a personal word of praise can accomplish the same thing."⁴

Another view is that the "double honor" consisted of the respect intrinsic to the office plus the joy of having done his

¹William Kelly, p. 147.

²Jamieson, et al., p. 1367; King, p. 99.

³Kent, pp. 182-83. See also Lenski, p. 683.

⁴Lea, p. 159.

job well.¹ This joy, however, seems to be internal in the elder rather than something external that would be given to him.

A third view is that the "double honor" is payment for services rendered, given either occasionally (an honorarium) or regularly (a salary).² The following quotations in verse 18 support this view.

"The term 'honor' does not refer merely to an honorarium, but the failure to give proper pay would imply a lack of honor. The idea of 'double' may refer to the double portion the oldest in the family received (Deut 21:17). It probably consisted of the twin benefits of honor or respect and financial remuneration [cf. vv. 3, 17-18]. The fact that pay was at least included shows that those who gave leadership to spiritual affairs could expect financial support from the church (cf. 2 Cor 11:8-9; Gal 6:6)."³

A fourth possibility is that the honor was pay, and the "double honor" was double pay.⁴ As far as I know, no one has proved that elders in the early church typically received pay for their ministry. Consequently, I think it would be unwise to argue for paying faithful elders double from this verse, though pay would be one appropriate way to express honor.

Note that not all the elders in the Ephesian church worked "hard at preaching and teaching." This may imply that all were equally responsible to preach and teach, but some did it with more diligence than others. Or it may mean that some elders had more responsibility to preach and teach than others (e.g., the pastoral staff). Both options may be in view since both situations are universally common. In any group of elders one

¹Hiebert, *First Timothy*, p. 101; J. E. Huther, *A Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Epistles to Timothy and Titus*, p. 172.

²See Hendriksen, pp. 180-81. Cf. Calvin, 2:8:35; Alford, 3:2:351; Earle, p. 380; Knight, p. 232; Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy ...*, p. 129; Mounce, pp. 306, 309-10; Towner, *The Letters ...*, p. 363; Strauch, pp. 133, 238-46. Cf. also 1 Cor. 9:7-14; 1 Thess. 2:7.

³Lea, p. 155.

⁴Litfin, p. 744. Cf. Guthrie, p. 105.

will be more diligent and/or more competent in these ministries than another. Verse 17 probably allows for a division of labor among the elders, though all were to be skillful in teaching (3:2).¹ The distinction that some churches make between teaching elders and ruling elders is essentially functional.²

5:18 Paul cited two scriptural authorities to support his instruction to those who serve the church by providing leadership as elders: Moses (Deut. 25:4; Lev. 19:13; Deut. 24:15; cf. 1 Cor. 9:9) and Jesus (Luke 10:7; cf. Matt. 10:10). If Paul meant that both quotations were "Scripture," this is one of the earliest New Testament witnesses to the inspiration of another New Testament book (Luke and/or Matthew; cf. 2 Pet. 3:16). However he could have meant that only the first quotation was Scripture. He may have simply been quoting a commonly accepted truth (a contemporary proverb or saying) that Jesus also quoted, which Matthew and Luke recorded, for support (cf. Mark 1:2-3).

"The ox only treads out the corn of which they make the bread that perishes; but ministers break the bread of life which endures for ever."³

5:19 Criticism of leaders is a favorite spectator sport. Paul directed that his readers should not entertain "an accusation against an elder" unless "two or three witnesses" agreed in their testimony of his wrongdoing (cf. Deut. 19:15; Matt. 18:16; John 8:17; 2 Cor. 13:1; Heb. 10:28).

"'Where there's smoke, there's fire' may be a good slogan for a volunteer fire department, but it does not apply to local churches. 'Where there's smoke, there's fire' could possibly mean that

¹See George W. Knight III, "Two Offices (Elders/Bishops and Deacons) and Two Orders of Elders (Preaching/Teaching Elders and Ruling Elders): A New Testament Study," *Presbyterion* 11:1 (Spring 1985):1-12.

²See David A. Mappes, "The New Testament Elder, Overseer, and Pastor," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 154:614 (April-June 1997):162-74; P. C. Campbell, *The Theory of Ruling Eldership or the Position of the Lay Ruler in the Reformed Churches Examined*, p. 59.

³Henry, p. 1891.

somebody's tongue has been 'set on fire of hell!' (James 3:6)."¹

5:20 Following a private rebuke Timothy should publicly ("in the presence of all") rebuke a persistently erring elder ("those who continue in sin"). This procedure would also discourage others ("the rest also will be fearful") from sinning. The "sin" in view is impossible to identify. The Greek present tense implies continued sin, but the general word for "sin" (Gr. *hamartanontas*) leaves the offense unspecified. Perhaps the sin involved violating one of the elder qualifications, including the general qualification of blamelessness.²

Who are the "all" and "the rest" in view in this verse, the elders or the entire church?

"... since the level at which the sin of the elder is being dealt with is that of two or three witnesses, the analogy with Mt. 18:15-18, particularly v. 17, 'tell it to the church,' would point to 'all the church' as more likely ..."³

In our day the church leaders would be those responsible to carry out what Paul commanded Timothy to do. It seems reasonable to assume, on the basis of Matthew 18, that if they could deal with the problem adequately without involving the whole congregation they would do so.

5:21 Paul could hardly have stressed the importance of absolute objectivity and honesty in dealing with offending leaders more strongly (cf. 6:13; 2 Tim. 4:1). "God," "Christ Jesus," and "His chosen angels" are all judges (Matt. 25:31; Mark 8:38; Luke 9:26; Rev. 14:10). Lock believed that the "chosen" angels are "chosen [selected by God] to share in the judgment."⁴ Another

¹Wiersbe, 2:232.

²David A. Mappes, "The Discipline of a Sinning Elder," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 154:615 (July-September 1997):340.

³Knight, *The Pastoral ...*, p. 236.

⁴Lock, p. 63.

possibility is that Paul described them as "chosen" simply to distinguish them from fallen angels.

Paul urged Timothy, on behalf of these judges, to judge fairly: without "bias" or "partiality." The apostle may have been thinking of Deuteronomy 19:17 here, since that verse also specifies a trio of judges in a context of judging an accused offender.

5:22 Paul also urged Timothy to minimize the possibility of elder failure by being extremely careful about whom he appointed in the first place. "Lay hands upon" in this context probably refers to public ordination (cf. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6).¹ Another view is that it refers to the restoration of repentant fallen elders.² A person who appoints a deficient candidate to office shares his guilt when the candidate's unacceptability surfaces. Since Timothy occupied the seat of a judge he needed to stay free from "sin" himself. As in 4:6-16, Paul's concern about the sins of others led him to insert a short aside to Timothy about the importance of ordering his own life, specifically the importance of maintaining his purity (cf. 4:12; 5:2).

5:23 Paul may have realized that the process of elder discipline that he imposed on Timothy would have been hard on him physically as well as emotionally. According to this verse Timothy suffered from frequent illness. Consequently the apostle prescribed "a little wine" for medicinal purposes. Since Paul's instruction was for medicinal purposes, this verse contributes nothing to either side of the debate over the use of wine as a beverage.

"The words imply that Timothy was a total abstainer from wine."³

"We must remember that wine was one of the chief remedial agents of those times in which the

¹Knight, *The Pastoral ...*, p. 239; Earle, p. 381; J. N. D. Kelly, p. 127; David A. Mappes, "The 'Laying on of Hands' of Elders," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 154:616 (October-December 1997):473-79.

²Lock, p. 64; White, 4:137-38; Hanson, p. 103; Wallis, p. 1378.

³Hiebert, *First Timothy*, p. 105.

science of medicine was in its infancy among Greek physicians."¹

"... while total abstinence may be recommended as a wise counsel, it is never to be enforced as a religious obligation."²

"It is the will of God that people should take all due care of their bodies, to use them so that they may be most fit and helpful to us in the service of God. Wine should be used as a help, and not a hindrance, to our work and usefulness."³

"Note that Paul didn't just heal Timothy or urge him to seek a healing. Rather, he prescribes what we might call a medicine. This is evidence that the sign gifts were ceasing toward the end of the age of the apostles."⁴

This verse is a personal parenthesis in the flow of Paul's argument about sinning elders.

5:24-25 Timothy needed to be cautious about choosing church leaders.

"In assessing people, errors are unavoidable."⁵

Sins are not always obvious as soon as someone commits them. However eventually they will become known if persisted in—usually. In the same manner good deeds can remain hidden for years, but often they become known. Consequently the better a church knows its potential elders the fewer surprises they will present after their appointment.

¹Wuest, 2:3:88.

²E. F. Brown, quoted by Barclay, p. 139.

³Henry, p. 1892.

⁴Wilkin, "The First ...," 2:984.

⁵Towner, *The Letters ...*, p. 376.

V. INSTRUCTIONS FOR GROUPS WITHIN THE CHURCH 6:1-19

In the last major section of this letter Paul called on Timothy to instruct the members of various groups within the church concerning their Christian duty.

A. SLAVES 6:1-2

He addressed Christian slaves first.

6:1 As he had done previously (e.g., 5:1-2), Paul urged the adoption of proper attitudes toward others that would normally make it easier to produce proper actions. Christian "slaves" were to regard their "masters" as "worthy of all honor" (cf. 1:17; 5:3, 17; 6:16) if for no other reason than that God had placed their masters in a position of authority over them. Such a respectful attitude would lead to the kind of service that would not bring dishonor on the God whom the slave professed to serve or the doctrine that he professed to follow (cf. Isa. 52:5). Though I take "under the yolk" as describing all slaves, some interpreters have understood this phrase as referring to slaves who were under an unusually oppressive burden.¹

5:2 Christian slaves who had believing masters had a second reason to give their masters honor and faithful service: They were their Christian brethren. As such they deserved even greater consideration than unbelieving masters. Disrespectful behavior was inappropriate in such a case, as was shoddy service, since the person who benefited from the ministry of the slave was a brother or sister in Christ.

"Spiritual equality does not efface civil distinctions."²

Another view sees "those who partake of the benefit" as the Christian slaves who, because of their respectful service,

¹E.g., Hanson, p. 105.

²Patrick Fairbairn, quoted by Simpson, p. 82.

reaped benefits from their unbelieving masters. I prefer the first view.

"A first-century slave's hope for manumission [release from slavery] was more than a dream, and the realistic possibility of obtaining freedom served to motivate the slave to excel in service."¹

"There were something like 60,000,000 slaves in the Roman Empire."²

"It is interesting to note that the institution of slavery is taken for granted. The rights, or wrongs, of the matter are not argued anywhere in the New Testament. ... The gradual permeation of the spirit of CHRIST in the hearts of men has brought about the desirable change of outlook on this abhorrent evil."³

Timothy was to "teach and preach" this instruction to the church. Perhaps Paul wrote no instructions for Christian masters of slaves, either because there were none in the Ephesian church, or because they were behaving properly. Perhaps Paul wrote Timothy (and Titus, cf. 2:9-10) about the conduct of slaves, but not masters, because many slaves had become Christians, and most of them undoubtedly had non-Christian masters.⁴ Other instructions for slaves and masters appear elsewhere in the New Testament (1 Cor. 7:20-24; Gal. 3:28; Eph. 6:5-9; Col. 3:22-25; Phile.; 1 Pet. 2:13-25). Paul probably did not discuss other family relationships (e.g., husband, wife, children, masters) because he was addressing a specific Ephesian situation and not teaching on family relationships in general.⁵ What Paul said to slaves here is applicable to employees today.

¹Towner, *The Letters ...*, p. 379.

²Barclay, p. 141.

³King, p. 94.

⁴Knight, *The Pastoral ...*, p. 243.

⁵Mounce, p. 325.

"A Christian young fellow, while his master was out at lunch one day, was tempted by a commercial traveller [*sic*] to agree to some shady transaction. The man urged 'Come on, your master's not in', To which the lad very properly replied, his finger pointed upward, 'Excuse me, my Master is always in'."¹

"How could a Christian leader such as Paul tolerate the existence of oppressive, dehumanizing slavery without denouncing it? To answer this question, we must note that the time was not propitious [favorable] for a Christian to secure freedom for slaves by denouncing slavery. Paul's modification of the servant-master relationship in Eph 6:5-9 destroyed the very essence of slavery. Also the New Testament consistently calls Christians to a role as servants (Mark 10:43-45)."²

"While not condoning slavery or calling for its dissolution, Paul makes it clear that the deeper and more significant relationship is that between two believers rather than how society defines their relationship on the surface."³

"The politico-social problem of the first ages of Christianity was the relation of freemen to slaves, just as the corresponding problem before the Church in our own day is the relation of the white to the coloured races."⁴

¹King, p. 95.

²Lea, p. 163.

³Mounce, p. 330.

⁴White, 4:139.

B. FALSE TEACHERS 6:3-10

Paul returned to instructions concerning the false teachers (cf. 1:3-11; 4:1-5) in order to alert Timothy to their underlying attitudes so that he could deal with them effectively.

"... Paul issues a kind of 'wanted poster.' It is the counterpart to the 'job description' given in chapter 3."¹

6:3-5 The apostle first described the actions of the false teachers (v. 3), then their attitudes (v. 4a), next the fruits of their ministry (vv. 4b-5a), and finally their motivation (v. 5b).

"As Paul elaborates on those who teach 'otherwise,' it becomes clear again (cf. 1:4-7) that the problem is not simply that of disseminating factual errors; it is rather a failure of the heart that involves willful rejection of God's pattern."²

The false teachers in Ephesus advocated doctrine that was "different" from what Scripture and the apostles taught. They disagreed with the teachings of the "Lord Jesus Christ" that fostered spiritual health in those who heard and responded to them appropriately. Furthermore they rejected the doctrine that conforms to, and results in, godly behavior ("godliness"). These are three overlapping rather than distinctly different activities (cf. 1:3, 10; 3:16; 4:6-10).

"When it meets 'the truth,' the corrupted mind sees and seeks only objections; when it meets what differs from this truth, it sees and seeks reasons for accepting this difference."³

"It is little wonder, then, that missionaries of the cults are so resistant to the gospel and so easily angered in theological discussions. Corrupt minds

¹Towner, *1-2 Timothy ...*, p.135.

²Idem, *The Letters ...*, p. 393.

³Lenski, p. 702.

and argumentative dispositions go hand in hand with opposition to the gospel."¹

Paul regarded these teachers as guilty and blameworthy. Their error was not an innocent one. It sprang from improper attitudes, specifically, the "conceited" desires to exalt self and to accumulate money selfishly. Compare the religious hucksters of the Ephesian Artemis cult as Luke described them in Acts 19:23-41. Such motivation demonstrated that they really understood "nothing" that is truly important. This motivation also led them to an unhealthy interest in controversies and terminology. This interest produced all kinds of selfish and divisive behavior and attitudes that were not loving and edifying (1:5). Contrast the elder qualifications in 3:2-12.

"Conceit leads to a love for controversy. Those who think well of their opinions like to argue them with others. Where a spirit of controversy seizes a family, office, or institution, all sense of community and unity disappears."²

"The indictment of the false teachers is thus multifaceted and comprehensive. It begins with their heterodoxy (v. 3), which is correlated with their conceit and lack of real understanding (v. 4a) and their sick interest in mere controversy (v. 4b), turns to the maliciousness of life that flows from these characteristics (v. 4c), roots all this in spiritual blindness (v. 5a), and ends with their materialistic motivation (v. 5b). It is given to warn the church against such people."³

6:6-8 Paul urged Timothy to remember that true and great gain comes from the acquisition of "godliness," which includes an attitude of "contentment" with one's material possessions. It does not come from teaching godliness to others primarily in

¹Towner, *1-2 Timothy ...*, p. 136.

²Lea, p. 170. Cf. Earle, p. 383.

³Knight, *The Pastoral ...*, pp. 252-53.

order to receive pay for doing so. That conduct demonstrates an attitude of discontent with one's material possessions.

"Though Christianity is the worst trade, it is the best calling in the world. Those that make a trade of it, merely to serve their turn for this world, will find it a sorry trade; but those that mind it as their calling, and make a business of it, will find it a gainful calling."¹

The apostle further reminded Timothy that there is really no relationship between godliness and one's material possessions. Material things are transitory. As we entered the world without anything material, so we will leave it with nothing material (cf. Job 1:21; Eccles. 5:15).

"As the Spanish proverb grimly puts it: 'There are no pockets in a shroud.'"²

Possessions are simply tools that we can use to bring glory to God (cf. 4:3-4; 6:17). Having the basic necessities of life—"food and covering [clothing and shelter]"—we can and should be content (cf. Matt. 6:24-34; Luke 12:16-32; Heb. 13:5-6). "Food and covering" is a synecdoche for all the necessities of life. Paul had learned this lesson of healthy detachment from material things in his own life (Phil. 4:10-13). We must learn it too (cf. Heb. 13:5).

"Materialism is a desire to possess things instead of a love for the God who made those things."³

"To whom little is not enough nothing is enough."⁴

"Contentment is one of the greatest assets of life."⁵

¹Henry, p. 1892.

²Barclay, p. 150.

³Lea, p. 170.

⁴Epicurus, quoted by Barclay, p. 149.

⁵Earle, p. 384.

"... the heathen world understood that to be content was to be really wealthy; while to be always seeking earthly wealth was to be poor. ... The reason is because heathenism conceives of man as finding perfect satisfaction in himself, and so resents a desire for external objects as interfering with this proud sense of self-satisfaction. St. Paul knows that man is only satisfied in God; and therefore devotion to God is the first condition of this true satisfaction, and contentedness with an earthly lot the second."¹

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, the famous Welch physician turned preacher, made the following comments in an address delivered to the Literary and Debating Society at Westminster Chapel, on Feb. 6, 1925, shortly after he became a Member of the Royal College of Physicians:

"Of course, the fallacy which underlies all these things [he was speaking of the pursuit of money] is a very old one. It is that, if you are wealthy, you are happy. Quite by accident, it has been my lot to be able to study a large number of wealthy men at close quarters. [The British prime minister David Lloyd George, Rudyard Kipling, King Edward VII, and many other wealthy and prominent members of the British nobility were patients of his mentor, Dr. Thomas Horder, Chief of Staff at St. Bartholomew's Hospital in London, to whom Lloyd-Jones was Chief Clinical Assistant.] The conclusion at which I have arrived concerning them has been that they are intensely miserable people, their misery being exceeded only by those who worship wealth and have it not."²

"How can the Christian learn to be content with simple living? Certainly not by accepting the standards set by this world. Paul suggests that an

¹Liddon, p. 77.

²Iain H. Murray, *D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones: The First Forty Years 1899-1939*, pp. 69-70.

eternal perspective and an attitude of detachment toward things are prerequisites. As an eternal perspective develops, dependence on things material will decline."¹

6:9-10 A simple lifestyle demonstrates contentment with the basics of life (cf. Acts 20:33).² In contrast, greed for more ("those who want to get rich") opens the door to temptation (cf. Prov. 23:4). This temptation comes in the form of unwise lustful "desires"—for wealth, power, and/or pleasure—that impede one's spiritual progress, like a trap holds an animal that gets snared by it. Eventually the end of the person, so entangled, is spiritual "ruin" and personal "destruction," if he or she does not escape its grip and turn from it (cf. Prov. 28:20).

Paul used a second figure to warn against greed (v. 10a). The "root" attitude of greed bears all sorts of evil "fruit" in wicked actions. Note that it is "the love of money," not money itself, that is the snare. It is possible to have very little money and yet to love it. Some people have much money but do not love it. Love of money contrasts with love of God and neighbor, the two objects of affection that should draw the Christian (Matt. 22:39; cf. Matt. 6:24; Luke 16:13; 1 John 2:15).

"The connotation in 'the love of money' (*philaguria*) is not the acquisition of wealth in order that it may be used in prodigal expenditure but rather the miserly accumulation and hoarding of money for the very love of it. That which should be a means to support life is made the end of life itself."³

"Money in itself is neither good nor bad; it is simply dangerous in that the love of it may become bad."⁴

¹Towner, *1-2 Timothy ...*, p. 139.

²I. Howard Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, p. 649.

³Hiebert, *First Timothy*, p. 114.

⁴Barclay, p. 152.

What are the dangers involved in "the love of money"? Barclay listed five:

"(i) The desire for money tends to be a thirst which is insatiable. ... (ii) The desire for wealth is founded on an illusion. ... It is founded, first, on the desire for security; and, second, when a man thinks that he has attained to a minimum of security, the desire for further wealth is founded on the desire for comfort and for luxury. ... (iii) The desire for money tends to make a man selfish. ... (iv) The strange thing is that the desire for wealth is based on the desire for security, but it ends in nothing but worry and anxiety. ... (v) The love of money may easily lead a man into wrong ways of getting money; and therefore may lead him in the end into pain and regret and remorse."¹

"To seek to be independent, to be able to pay one's debts, to provide a house and a home and an opportunity for one's family, prudently to provide for the future, is a Christian duty; but to evaluate everything in terms of money, to make the love of money the driving-force of life, cannot ever be anything else than the most perilous of sins."²

Paul pictured a person wandering from the narrow path of truth as he pursues money. He gets caught in thorns that pierce his skin and cause him great pain (cf. Matt. 13:22). Paul may have been thinking of these false teachers impaling themselves.³

"The sentiment is, that there is no kind of evil to which the love of money may not lead men, when once it fairly takes hold of them."⁴

¹Ibid., pp. 152-54. Paragraph divisions omitted.

²Ibid., p. 154.

³Towner, *The Letters ...*, p. 404.

⁴Patrick Fairbairn, *Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, p. 239.

As Christians who live in a materialistic world, we must cultivate Paul's attitude of contentment very deliberately (cf. Heb. 13:5-6). This is an especially difficult task in a society like the one in which we live in North America. We are constantly hearing through advertising and the media that we need all kinds of luxuries. According to Paul, and Jesus, our personal needs as human beings are very few. Paul's point was that we should seek godliness more diligently than we seek money and the things that it can buy.

"If you are afraid that perhaps the love of money is getting a hold on your soul, start giving some of it away and see how you feel! If you feel really glad then you are still safe, but if it almost breaks your heart then it is time to get down on your knees and pray to be freed from this sin of covetousness! It is going to ruin you unless you are delivered from it."¹

Compare Paul's attitude of contentment with that of the rich young ruler in Matthew 19:22, Mark 10:22, and Luke 18:23.

C. THOSE COMMITTED TO CHRIST 6:11-16

Paul continued the emphasis that he began in the previous section (vv. 3-10) by appealing to Timothy to pursue spiritual rather than physical goals in his life. He seems to have intended his instructions for all the faithful Ephesian Christians in view of what he just wrote in verses 3 through 10. He addressed them to Timothy personally since he, as a leader of the church, had the greatest responsibility to set the example for the rest. Paul called on Timothy to persevere. This section is the climax of the epistle.

"In chaps. 1 and 4 Paul establishes the pattern of criticizing his opponents (1:3-7; 4:1-5) and then following with words of encouragement to Timothy (1:18-20; 4:6-16), which include reference to Timothy's spiritual beginnings (1:18; 4:14). He repeats this same pattern here."²

6:11 In contrast to the "some" (v. 10) who pursued money, Timothy should flee from the worldly temptation to get rich.

¹Ironside, p. 155.

²Mounce, p. 351.

THE CHRISTIAN'S THREE-FOLD ENEMY	
The Problem	The Solution
The World	Flee
(1 John 2:15-17)	(1 Tim. 6:11; 2 Tim. 2:22)
Lust of the flesh	
Lust of the eyes	
Pride of life	
The flesh	Deny
(Rom. 7:18-24)	(Rom. 6:12-13; 8:13)
The devil	Resist
(1 Peter 5:8)	(1 Peter 5:9)

Paul evidently called Timothy a "man of God" in order to remind him of his calling and commitment to follow the Lord. The Old Testament writers used the title "man of God" of prophets (i.e., Moses, Deut. 33:1; David, Neh. 12:24; Elijah, 1 Kings 17:18; and Elisha, 2 Kings 4:7). It describes only Timothy in the New Testament. Paul was giving Timothy a great honor and encouragement by calling him a "man of God." The title describes one who stands for God faithfully against opposition, as a spiritual leader and as an example to all believers.

In following God Timothy should pursue virtues that are different from the acquisition of wealth for selfish purposes. He should emphasize what the Holy Spirit seeks to produce in the life of a Christian (Gal. 5:22-23) and what is essential for a leader of God's people (3:1-3).

- "Righteousness" includes all attitudes and actions in harmony with what God calls right.

- "Godliness" is godlike character and conduct.
- "Faith" is trust in God.
- "Love" is selfless devotion to God and the needs of others.
- "Perseverance" is faithful continuance through adverse or discouraging circumstances.
- "Gentleness" is tender kindness toward others.

The first two of these qualities are general characteristics that represent one's relationship with God. The second two are specific attitudes that animate the Christian life. The third two are specific dynamic character qualities that define correct ways of relating to a hostile world. Together these six traits draw a silhouette of a man (person) of God. The trio of "faith," "love," and "perseverance" also appears in Titus 2:2.

Guy King saw these virtues in relation to our fellow human beings (righteousness), in relation to God (godliness), in relation to duty (faith), in relation to all (love), in relation to circumstances (patience), and in relation to self (meekness).¹

"Virtue lists, such as this one (2 Tim 2:22-25 3:10), were a typical feature of Hellenistic ethical teaching that allowed the cardinal virtues to be packaged and presented neatly and concisely. The use of this device by Paul and other NT writers (sometimes alongside a contrasting list of vices) shows indebtedness to the literary and pedagogical fashions of the day."²

6:12 Our spiritual enemy opposes the Christian's pursuit of godly ideals. Paul therefore urged his younger friend to plunge into this conflict and to "fight" (cf. 2 Tim. 3:1—4:5). The goal is worth fighting for, and it requires fighting for (cf. Phil. 3:12). In so doing Timothy could obtain the reward that God wants

¹King, pp. 117-19.

²Towner, *The Letters ...*, p. 408.

to bestow on every believer: the fullness of "eternal life" (cf. John 10:10). Some Christians have eternal life but never really take hold of it. Similarly some people who are alive physically never really enter into the fullness of life because they are never fully healthy and strong.

"Eternal life is viewed as a free gift (see John 3:16; Eph. 2:8-10), a present experience (see John 10:10), and a reward (see Mark 10:29, 30; Luke 18:29, 30). Here Paul is not speaking of Timothy's salvation, but instead of his fruitfulness in this life and his rewards in the next."¹

"Like a skillful coach, Paul supplies ample motivation for maintaining the struggle."²

"... growth is not automatic; it is conditioned upon our responses. Only by the exercise of spiritual disciplines, such as prayer, obedience, faith, study of the Scriptures, and proper responses to trials, does our intimacy with Christ increase. Only by continuing in doing good does that spiritual life imparted at regeneration grow to maturity and earn a reward."³

"Possessing eternal life is one thing, but 'taking hold' of it is another. The former is static; the latter is dynamic. The former depends upon God; the latter depends upon us. The former comes through faith alone; 'taking hold' requires faith plus obedience (6:14)."⁴

Timothy's good "confession" of eternal life before "many witnesses" probably refers to his baptism in water, rather than to his ordination.⁵

¹ *The Nelson ...*, p. 2050.

² Towner, *1-2 Timothy ...*, p. 142.

³ Dillow, p. 136.

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 137. Cf. Deut. 4:1, 40; 5:29, 33; Heb. 12:9-11.

⁵ Lock, p. 71; Hanson, p. 111.

"The note of the appeal is threefold, 'flee,' 'follow,' 'fight.'"¹

6:13-14 Here is Paul's strongest exhortation to Timothy in this letter. He wanted him to "keep" God's "commandment" without any shameful inconsistency ("fault") or behavior that could draw justifiable criticism ("reproach"). God's "commandment" here probably refers to the gospel viewed as a rule of life.² Paul reminded Timothy that "God," who gives life to all things and who therefore could give Timothy fullness of life, was observing him. He also reminded him that he lived under the gaze of "Christ Jesus," who had made a "good confession" in His hour of trial "before Pontius Pilate." The Christian's fight only lasts until the Lord Jesus appears, which could happen at any moment. Therefore Timothy needed to persevere.

"The word 'appearing' or 'manifestation' emphasizes the visibility and glory of the coming Lord who is now hidden and invisible to human sight in Heaven."³

The fact that Paul referred to the Lord's "appearing," rather than to Timothy's death, either of which would end his struggle, is significant. It suggests that Paul believed that Christ's return for His saints, at the Rapture, was imminent and could precede Timothy's death. Compare Paul's final words in 2 Timothy 4:6-8 with these closing words in verses 12-14. They are very similar. Nevertheless some interpreters, including some pretribulationists, believe that Paul was referring here to the Lord's second coming, not the Rapture.⁴

6:15-16 God will send Jesus Christ back to earth at His appointed "proper time." Paul's doxology (a statement glorifying God) emphasized His adorable and unique sovereignty, immortality, and incomprehensible holiness (cf. Exod. 24:17). "To Him belong all honor and dominion" throughout eternity (cf. 1:17).

¹Morgan, *An Exposition ...*, p. 506.

²Wallis, p. 1380; Knight, *The Pastoral ...*, p. 266.

³Hiebert, *First Timothy*, p. 118.

⁴E.g., Wuest, 2:3:100.

"Ephesus was not only the haven of Artemis, but an early center of emperor worship as well. This doxology, therefore, is Paul's parting shot that the God with whom the church has to do in the gospel of Christ is none other than the supreme Ruler of the universe, the Lord over all other lords."¹

D. THE WEALTHY 6:17-19

Paul had not finished all he wanted to say about money, so he returned to that subject briefly with a word of instruction for the wealthy Ephesian believers. He gave these directions in order to balance what he had said earlier in this epistle (in vv. 9-11).

6:17 Paul had previously instructed those who thought of themselves as not having wealth ("those who want to get rich," v. 9). Now he addressed those who were "rich," namely, who had material riches and knew it. The Greek word *plousioi*, meaning the "wealthy," refers to the materially rich, particularly those who did not need to work for a living.² Two attitudes often mislead the rich. One is the idea that greater monetary wealth indicates greater personal value or worth. The other is the notion that riches guarantee power and security. Paul warned against both of these conclusions.

"Those who spend more than they make, trusting that future income will cover their present overspending, are [also] trusting in uncertain riches."³

Since God will determine our future financial resources, rich people should put their "hope" in the Giver rather than in His gifts (cf. 4:10; 5:5). "God" controls these resources. Since He has given us what we have, we can "enjoy" His gifts. We can take pleasure in the fact that they free us from certain

¹Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy ...*, p. 154. Cf. Mounce, p. 361.

²Knight, *The Pastoral ...*, p. 272.

³Wilkin, "The First ...," 2:990.

temptations (cf. Prov. 30:7-9), and they enable us to meet our financial obligations and to help others.

"The reason everything may be enjoyed lies in the recognition that everything, including one's wealth, is a *gift*, the expression of God's gracious generosity."¹

6:18-19 Paul urged Timothy to instruct the rich to view their money as God's enablement to accomplish "good works." Rather than enjoying a reputation for having much money, they should cultivate a reputation for being "rich in good works." They should also be openhanded ("generous"), "ready" and willing "to share" with others what God had given them. By doing so they would be ensuring that the Lord would reward them for their faithful stewardship. They would be investing in the "treasure of a good foundation for the future" when they stood before Him (cf. Matt. 6:19-21; Luke 12:33-34; 18:22). Moreover, in so doing they would experience the fullness of their eternal "life" (cf. v. 12).

"We lay hold on eternal life as we realize in our souls that we do not belong to this sphere; that everything for us is connected with the scene to which we are going."²

"A kind heart as well as a generous hand is demanded of the rich."³

It is not sinful to be rich, and it is not godly to be poor. God has given wealthy Christians resources for ministry that other Christians do not possess. With these resources come the temptations and opportunities to misuse them.

Note that Paul did not say that the wealthy should dispose of all, or even most, of their wealth. He said they should be "ready to share" (v. 18) as the Lord directed them. Presumably God

¹Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy ...*, p. 157.

²Harry A. Ironside, *Sailing with Paul*, p. 26.

³Bernard, p. 102.

will lead one person to do one thing with his or her money and another person something else (cf. John 21:22).

Note too that wealthy Christians should not feel guilty because they are wealthy ("God ... richly supplies us," v. 17), assuming that they have become wealthy legitimately. They should enjoy what God has given them rather than feeling guilty about having it. This is difficult for some to do because we commonly equate personal enjoyment with the gratification of our flesh. The rich Christian should cultivate the joy that comes from laying up treasure in heaven by investing his or her life and wealth in what will endure forever.¹

"The whole teaching of the Christian ethic is, not that wealth is a sin, but that wealth is a very great responsibility."²

This passage is one that most of us western Christians in particular need to take to heart. In comparison with the rest of the world, we are wealthy. We must guard ourselves against the temptations of our flesh, and the voices in our culture, that urge us to take a very different attitude toward money than what Paul taught.

VI. CONCLUDING CHARGE AND BENEDICTION 6:20-21

Paul closed his letter with a final summary exhortation to urge Timothy, once more, to avoid going astray in his ministry (cf. 1:3-5, 18-20). Paul again mentioned two of the primary themes in the Pastoral Epistles: the importance of personal perseverance (cf. 1:18; 4:1-16; 6:11-16) and the danger of opponents.

"What is most remarkable about this conclusion is the lack of any final greetings. All the Pauline letters, including this one, sign off with a final grace, or benediction. But only 1 Timothy and Galatians have no greetings from Paul and friends to the recipient and friends (cf. 2 Tim. 4:19-21; Titus 3:15). To the very end this letter is characteristically 'all business,' and

¹See Knight, *The Pastoral ...*, p. 274.

²Barclay, p. 159.

except for some new language, this final charge merely summarizes that business."¹

By addressing "Timothy" by name, Paul gave a personal emotional touch to his charge. He loved his son in the faith and wanted to spare him pain and failure.

Timothy should "protect" all that had been "entrusted" to his care, including this epistle, the gospel, and his ministry (cf. 4:12-14; 6:2; 2 Tim. 2:2). This also included his responsibility to oppose the false teachers and to keep his own life pure (cf. 4:11-13; 5:22-23; 6:11-12). Specifically, he should avoid the "empty chatter" that characterize the world system and the "opposing arguments" of those who claimed superior "knowledge."

This last warning is apparently a reference to Gnostic influence that was increasing in Ephesus. Gnostics taught that there was a higher knowledge that was available only to the initiates of their cult. Paul had already set forth his full rebuttal to their contention in his epistle to the Colossians. The appeal of these false teachers had seduced some of the believers in Ephesus who had "gone astray from the faith."

In closing, Paul wished God's "grace" for Timothy and the other saints in Ephesus. "You" is plural in the Greek text (cf. Col. 4:18; 2 Tim. 4:22; Titus 3:15).

SUMMARY OF PAUL'S COUNSEL TO TIMOTHY ²	
What to do (exhortations)	What not to do (warnings)
Command others to teach no other doctrine than the true doctrine of Christ (1:3).	Do not listen to myths or endless genealogies, which cause disputes (1:4).
Teach the good news that Christ saves sinners (1:15-18).	Avoid worthless stories (4:7).

¹Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy ...*, p. 160.

²Adapted from *The Nelson ...*, p. 2042.

Pray and intercede for everyone (2:1).	Do not neglect your spiritual gift (4:14).
Choose church leaders who are worthy of the office (3:1-15).	Do not rebuke older men, but exhort them (5:1).
Instruct others in sound doctrine (4:6).	Do not receive an accusation against an elder unless there are at least two witnesses (5:19).
Train yourself in godliness (4:7-8).	Do not govern the church with prejudice, but be impartial (5:21).
Be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, and in purity (4:12).	Do not hastily lay hands on (appoint) anyone (to church leadership, 5:22).
Honor worthy widows (5:3).	Withdraw from those who reject apostolic teaching and are constantly arguing over words (6:4-5).
Stay pure (5:22).	Flee from those who are greedy and want to become wealthy from the ministry (6:5-11).
Pursue righteousness, faith, love, patience, and gentleness (6:11).	Avoid profane and idle talk, which is falsely called knowledge (6:20).

Appendix 1

Women and Ministry¹

The following information is offered with the hope that it will enable the reader to make good decisions in the so-called gray areas of biblical interpretation, especially those pertaining to the ministry of women.

Preliminary Considerations

Ancient Israel, Assyria, and Babylonia were all patriarchal societies, and the basic kinship unit of each was the tribe (or clan) rather than the nuclear family. In Israel women enjoyed respect as individuals, and the Mosaic Law protected their personal rights. Inheritances passed through the males, but women could inherit if no male was present to inherit. Women participated in public and private worship. In patriarchal times the male family head led in family worship and, under the Mosaic Law, only males of the tribe of Levi and the clan of Aaron served as priests. God excluded other males and all females from the priesthood. Women participated in social and business life with men, but their contracts were subject to the ratification of their husbands. Women served as prophetesses and even queens with no condemnation for their roles, but examples of these cases are rare.

In Jesus' day Judaism viewed women as both subordinate and inferior. The religious leaders discouraged men from communicating with women because they thought that they might lead men astray. They encouraged women to stay in their homes and to wear veils in public for the same reason. However within the home Jewish men often valued their wives and loved them tenderly. Commonly Jewish men believed that women could not and should not learn about religious matters. Women could attend public worship, but only the men conducted civil matters.

Within Greco-Roman first-century culture there was much diversity. Older Greeks viewed women as inferior and useful only for labor, pleasure, or childbearing. Among the wealthier Romans and Greeks, women often received education, they could inherit, and they enjoyed social acceptability. Lower-class Romans and Greeks did not educate their women and regarded them more as servants.

¹This material is essentially a condensation of parts of *Man and Women in Biblical Perspective*, by James B. Hurley.

Jesus gave women a higher place than did His contemporary Jews. He did not choose women as His disciples or apostles, but, in contrast to the rabbis, He did permit them to accompany Him, minister to His needs, and learn from Him. He regarded women as needing His message as much as men. Moreover, He did not deal with them in a condescending manner. His position on divorce granted women more protection than did the Mosaic Law (i.e., permanent marriage with few exceptions).

The apostles perpetuated Jesus' attitude toward women. The church incorporated women into the body of believers, considered them able to learn, and taught them the truths of the faith. Women played a significant role in the church's expansion: they assisted the apostles as they had assisted the Lord. The early Christians held marriage in high esteem and considered it a permanent commitment. As was also true in Jesus' teaching, the apostles viewed celibacy as a valid, though not a superior, calling. They saw headship in the church as existing to serve those under authority, not for the personal benefit of those in leadership.

The early church viewed the marriage relationship as a vehicle to reflect the relationship between God and the believer. The husband was to practice loving commitment to his wife for her welfare. The wife was to respond to her husband's leadership as the church does to Christ's leadership. Together the husband and wife glorify God by demonstrating God's love and the proper human response to it.

The apostles taught that the headship of the man should be observable in the church as well as in the home. Since creation men have been responsible for the spiritual welfare of God's people. In the church the elders have this responsibility. Men alone practiced activities that involved the exercise of elder authority. These included fostering the spiritual growth of the church, ensuring the faithful teaching of God's truth, and serving as Christ's under-shepherds for the welfare of the flock. However women could act and serve in other areas. They carried out a wide-ranging ministry to the body of Christ. Evidently women served as deaconesses. Sexual differences were not a factor in ministry, except when it came to the authoritative teaching and disciplinary power of the elder, which were restricted to men.

In Israel, in both the patriarchal and Mosaic periods, God appointed certain males to lead His people. That is, no females and not all males could serve as priests. Only some males functioned as priests. Therefore women as a sex were not subordinate to men as a sex in the matter of religious

authority. God selected only certain men to nurture and teach His people. The whole congregation received the service of certain persons, male and female, whom God had chosen to lead in meeting physical needs—including prophetesses, queens, and deaconesses in the church. Nurture, teaching, and serving others were not ministries reserved exclusively to priests in the old economy nor to elders in the new. What is distinctive about those positions is their formal role and responsibility.

There were problems in the relationships of believers in the past, just as there are in the present. In the Corinthian church, for example, some of the women wanted to reject any differences from the men. Men and women were jealous of their brothers and sisters, and carnality was common. They had incorrect perceptions of what was an important role in the body. Paul had to remind them that their purpose should be to build up one another.

Proper Procedure

In trying to determine what to do in specific situations involving women and ministry, there are several factors that should be considered. This must be done in order to ensure that we do what is pleasing to God and right for others (i.e., Christian ethics). We must consider what God has revealed: His moral standards. We must, secondarily, also make sure we understand the situation encompassing the decision accurately: its context. Third, we must take care that we are doing the right thing for the right reasons: our motivation.

It is difficult to make decisions involving the will of God because our knowledge is imperfect and other people may not share our perceptions.

One of the problems of perceiving the situation properly involves the question of what headship entails. Good people disagree on this fundamental point. Consequently they have come up with diverse positions on the proper role relationships of men and women.

Headship is largely an issue of authority. Some have erred by equating authority with the right to command. Biblical headship always involves building up others. Furthermore, authority always includes the element of delegation. A leader who refuses to delegate is not using his authority properly. In the family some men feel their authority is incomplete if they do not personally make all the decisions. This demonstrates a failure to understand the nature of headship. Headship should take into account the

needs and abilities of those for whose sake those in authority make decisions. Headship also involves providing an example for those under one's authority.

Another problem of definition involves the meaning of "teaching or exercising authority over a man." We have more precisely defined role relationships for headship in the church than we have for headship in the family. How much delegation of authority did God intend in the work of an elder? Obviously He intended some, including teaching and church discipline. Where along the continuum of teaching, for example, does a woman fit in? The scriptural precepts are that women can teach (1 Cor. 14:26) but are not to exercise authority over a man (1 Tim. 2:11-12). What she can and cannot do within these parameters is the question. People differ because they understand Scripture differently, they see the significance of the issues involved differently, and they have different motives.

Principles for Making Decisions

One principle taught in Scripture is that, in the marriage relationship, the husband is to be the self-sacrificing head, and the wife is to be the submissive respondent.

Second, the pattern of representative male leadership for God's people—in matters of teaching, ruling, and nurturing—had been God's will from the creation of Adam and Eve throughout history.

Third, restrictions on the office of elder in the church do not apply to all other religious activities. Men and women serve on the same footing outside the office of elder.

Fourth, in both Israel and the church, the appointive headship of certain men does not apply outside marriage and the church. There is no biblical restriction on the roles of the sexes in social and civic life.

Fifth, leaders must actively pursue the welfare of those they lead.

In addition to these clear normative standards the Bible also urges proper motivation: love for God and our neighbors.

Applying the Principles

At this point we must bring the actual situation into consideration to do the will of God. We must examine the biblical principles in the light of the realities of life. It is not that the situation determines our ethics. But the situations necessarily affect the application of biblical principles, just as the surface of a putting green must affect how someone strokes a golf ball.

The following guidelines are helpful in evaluating the context of any sort of action in a "gray area."

Concerning scriptural revelation, does the Bible expressly prohibit or permit the activity? Often we can answer the question at this level, but it is important to proceed on.

Concerning the actual situation, does the activity effectively overthrow a biblical norm or motive but escape censure on a technicality of definition? Is the activity in keeping with the obvious purpose of Scripture but prevented by a technicality of definition? The spirit must always receive preference over the letter.

Concerning how others will perceive the activity, is it likely to lead to misunderstanding or will others see it in such a way that it leads to confusion or becomes a stumbling-block? Can we explain it sufficiently so that it is not likely that others will misunderstand or stumble? Our actions must not only be right, but other normal people must also perceive them as proper.

Appendix 2

Women in the Church: Biblical Data Report

An Ad Hoc Faculty Committee on the Admission of Women to Dallas Theological Seminary prepared this survey of the biblical data pertaining to the participation of women in the worship and service of God between 1984 and 1987. The committee based this report on the premise that the faculty and administration should design and administer the curricular offerings and degree programs at Dallas Seminary in a manner consistent with a valid understanding and application of Scripture.

1 Timothy raises some questions about the ministry of women. I have included this report in these notes because it sets forth a distillation of the biblical teaching on women, including the ministry of women.

I. Woman at Creation

- A. Woman has personal equality with man as an image-bearer of God (Gen. 1:27-28; 5:1).

Allowing for biological distinctives, a woman has the same human nature, qualities, and abilities as a man. Maleness and femaleness, though distinct, are fully harmonized (Gen. 1:28; Ps. 8:4-8; 1 Cor. 11—12).

- B. Woman has a distinctive role function within this equality (Gen. 2:18).

The priority of the male in creation reflects God's appointed *order* for His creation, not male superiority. Man has the responsibility of headship (cf. 1 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 5:21), and woman has the responsibility of being a "fitting helper" (Gen. 2:18). Each supplies what is lacking in the other. They are complementary because they are distinct.

II. Woman at the Fall

- A. The superiority of male over female is first mentioned in Scripture as an inevitable consequence of sin—not as an inherent quality or right. In the post-Fall order of things, God said man would exploit woman's natural "helpmate desire"

toward him, or more probably, he would retaliate in the face of her "desire" (cf. Gen. 4:7) to dominate and lead him, in order to dominate and subjugate her (Gen. 3:16b). The subjugation of either women or men is a symptom of mankind's fallen nature (cf. e.g., pagan religions).

III. Women in Old Testament Times Until the Time of Jesus

- A. Women served in the doorway of the Tabernacle (Exod. 38:8; 1 Sam. 2:22).

The same Hebrew word (*saba*) is used of their work as that of the Levites. These women were probably widows who devoted themselves to the service of God.

- B. Miriam, a prophetess, and all the women with her gave public praise to God (Exod. 15:20-21).

Apparently, she also had some leadership role along with Moses and Aaron (Mic. 6:4).

- C. Deborah was a prophetess and also a judge in Israel (Judg. 4—5).

Deborah and Barak sang a song of praise for God's deliverance, which is recorded for both men and women to read (Judg. 5).

- D. Hannah prayed in the house of the Lord, and her prayer of thanksgiving was recorded for both men and women to read (1 Sam. 1:9—2:10).

- E. Huldah was a prophetess who prophesied before the high priest and the men of King Josiah (2 Kings 22:8-20; cf. 2 Kings 22:3 with Jer. 1:2).

- F. Many women sang in the temple choirs (1 Chron. 25:5-7; Neh. 7:66-67).

- G. Many women had an important part to play in proclaiming the Lord's Word (Ps. 68:11).

- H. Though a few women served as civil rulers in Israel (e.g., Deborah), there is no record of a female priest or a female high priest.
- I. The prophet Joel predicted that one day "your sons and daughters will prophesy" (Joel 2:28-32; cf. Acts 2:16-18).
- J. The Virgin Mary's praise to God is recorded for both men and women to read (Luke 1:46-55).
- K. Anna was a prophetess who served in the temple "night and day with fastings and prayers" (Luke 2:36-38).

IV. Women in the Ministry and Teaching of Jesus

- A. A loyal group of women accompanied Jesus and served Him on His ministry tours (Luke 8:1-3; Matt. 27:55; Mark 15:41).
- B. In contrast to normal custom and rabbinic standards, Jesus spoke with a Samaritan woman and revealed to her the nature of true worship (John 4:7-26).
- C. Jesus cared equally for the physical infirmities of women (Mark 1:29-31; 5:25-34), and He drew attention to the devotion of an unnamed poor widow to teach a lesson in discipleship (Mark 12:41-44).
- D. He permitted Mary, Lazarus' sister, to sit at His feet and learn--a privilege granted only to men at that time (Luke 10:42).
- E. Women who had been healed by Jesus praised God publicly in the synagogue (Luke 13:13).
- F. In a male-dominated culture, Jesus redressed legal situations which were weighted against women (cf. Matt. 19:9-10; Mark 10:11-12).
- G. Though Jesus had both male and female disciples, all twelve original apostles were men (Matt. 10:1-4; Mark 3:13-19).

- H. Jesus entrusted women with the high privilege of carrying the news of His resurrection to His twelve disciples (Mark 16:6-8; Luke 24:11).
 - I. Mary Magdalene was one of the first people to see Jesus as the risen Lord (John 20:11-18).
 - J. Jesus' charge to evangelism and discipleship given to the apostles applies to the church at large: with reference to *all* believers, men and women (Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 1:8).
- V. Women in the Life and Ministry of the Early Church**
- A. The Holy Spirit fell on both men and women on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4).
 - B. Women prayed with men (Acts 1:14; 12:12).
 - C. Women had various ministries of hospitality, service, and good works (Dorcas, Acts 9:36; Mary, the mother of Mark, Acts 12:12; Lydia, Acts 16:14-15).
 - D. Priscilla and Aquila took Apollos aside, and "explained to him the way of God more accurately" (Acts 18:26-28).
 - E. The Holy Spirit used women as His prophetic mouthpiece (Philip's four daughters were prophetesses, Acts 21:8-9).
 - F. Overall, it appears that women took as active a part in the life and ministry of the church as men.
- VI. Women in the Ministry and Teaching of Paul and Peter**
- A. Paul affirms the personal *equality* of man and woman in the new creation, by stating that in Christ there is "neither male nor female" (Gal. 3:28).

A woman obtains salvation by faith exactly as a man does (Eph. 2:8-9; 1 Pet. 1:18-19), and both are co-heirs of "the grace of life," despite some physical limitations a woman has as the one with "the weaker [feminine] vessel [body]" (1 Pet. 3:7).

Like a man, she is indwelt by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:9b), and her body also serves as a sanctuary of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19-20). In the new creation, she has equal standing before God (Rom. 5:1-2), and man and woman are interdependent (1 Cor. 11:11-12).

- B. A woman has access to God in prayer as does a man (1 Cor. 11:4-5, 13); she is nurtured by His Word as is a man (1 Pet. 2:2); and she enjoys the privileges and responsibilities of the priesthood of all believers (1 Pet. 2:5, 9; 3:7; Rev. 1:6a).
- C. In Christ, a woman is given the same spiritual gifts available to men today, including: pastoring, teaching, and evangelism (1 Cor. 12:7-11, 27-31; Rom. 12:3-8; 1 Pet. 4:10-11).

The Holy Spirit sovereignly distributes spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:11). They are given in order that all believers might use them to glorify God (1 Pet. 4:10-11), and to equip and build up the body of Christ (Eph. 4:12-16). They are to be exercised for the common good, and according to God's established order (1 Cor. 12:7; 14:26-40). A spiritual gift is not the same thing as a church office.

- D. Paul recognized that the Holy Spirit used women as His prophetic mouthpiece (1 Cor. 11:5).
- E. Paul instructed older women to teach younger women and children (cf. 2 Tim. 1:5 with 3:14-15; ch. Prov. 1:8; Titus 2:3-5).
- F. Women had ministries of hospitality, good works, and service (1 Cor. 16:19; Col. 4:15; 1 Tim. 2:10; 5:9-10).
- G. Paul encouraged both unmarried men and women to remain single, and to devote themselves to the Lord's service (1 Cor. 7:32-34).
- H. Euodia and Syntyche were co-workers with Paul (Phil. 4:2-3).
- I. In Romans 16, 10 out of the 29 people Paul commended for loyal service were women (Rom. 16; cf. 1 Cor. 9:5). No distinction in service or status is implied.

Phoebe was called a "deacon (servant) of the church" (Rom. 16:1). Andronicus and Junia (feminine), Paul's kinsmen and fellow-prisoners, were said to be "outstanding among the apostles who also were in Christ before me" (Rom. 16:7).

- J. Within the framework of the personal equality of man and woman, God has established a functional order in which *man* has the responsibility of headship (leadership) in both the home and church (1 Cor. 11:3, 8-9; 14:34-36; Eph. 5:23; Col. 3:18; 1 Tim. 2:11-12; 1 Pet. 3:1-7), and *woman* has the responsibility of willing submission in recognition of God's order (Eph. 5:22-24; Col. 3:18; 1 Pet. 3:1).

Functional submission in these spheres is not inconsistent or incompatible with personal (ontological) equality in Christ. The two must exist side by side, just as God instituted them originally.

One primary means by which woman glorifies God is through being the "glory of man" (1 Cor. 11:7), that is, by fulfilling her responsibility—given at creation—of voluntarily submitting herself to the headship of man.

In the New Testament, the headship-submission relationship relates to the home and the church. Not all women are subject to all men.

- K. Paul's list of elder qualifications indicates that the office of elder/pastor is limited to men, and this office, with its commensurate authority, is conferred by the local church (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Pet. 5:1-4).

Consequently, the directing/ruling function of the local church is reserved for men. There are no examples of "ordained" women elders in the Scriptures, nor are they encouraged to seek such an office. Nevertheless, elders may delegate certain responsibilities to various church members, both men and women.

- L. Whether the office of deacon is open to women is debated. The primary passage which raises this issue is 1 Timothy 3:11. There are three major interpretations of this verse:

1. The women mentioned are unmarried assistants to male deacons.¹
2. The women mentioned are the wives of male deacons.²
3. The women mentioned are a select group of female deacons within the church.³

The second and third views seem more probable, and both handle the data adequately. Whether or not they held the office of deacon in New Testament times, it is clear that women fulfilled many of its functions (cf. 1 Tim. 2:10; 5:9-10; Acts 9:36).

Phoebe may have been a recognized "deacon" (deaconess) of the church in Cenchrea (Rom. 16:1-2). If so, this would indicate that both men and women served in this office. However, since she was probably a wealthy social leader in the city, she may have been simply an unofficial patroness of the church.

- M. Since the function of "teaching" is a spiritual gift, and not an office of the church, it is available to both men and women (Rom. 12:7; 1 Cor. 12:28-29).

The question, however, is not *whether* a woman may teach, but *whom* she may teach, and in *what setting*. Three Pauline passages speak to this issue: 1 Corinthians 11:2-16; 14:26, 34-36; and 1 Timothy 2:9-12. The interpretation and application of these passages continue to evoke considerable debate in evangelical circles. It is generally agreed that these verses primarily refer to activities within the context of corporate worship.

1. 1 Corinthians 11:2-16; 14:26

¹Robert M. Lewis, "The 'Women' of 1 Timothy 3:11," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 136:542 (April-June 1979):167-75.

²Ryrie, *The Place ...*, p. 91; C. K. Barrett, *The Pastoral Epistles in the New English Bible*, p. 61.

³James B. Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective*, pp. 229-31, and the majority of commentators.

On two occasions, Paul mentioned specific situations in which a woman may speak in corporate worship (1 Cor. 11:5 and 14:26).

In 1 Corinthians 11, Paul instructs a woman to have a sign of authority on her head (1 Cor. 11:10), when she prays and prophesies, in order to demonstrate her submission to God's established order in the church. Some argue that "authority on her head" refers to a woman's own authority to exercise her spiritual gifts, within the divinely ordained order, and not to a sign of another's authority over her.¹

The nature of this sign of authority in Paul's day is difficult to determine, but it is usually interpreted in one of two ways:

- a. It may refer to the practice of wearing veils in corporate worship, since some sort of head covering seems to be indicated in the passage, even though the term "veil" does not occur in the Greek text.²
- b. It may refer to a woman's long hair which, when properly fastened, would serve in place of a head covering (11:15), reflecting her submission to God's established order in the church.³

This raises the hermeneutical problem of "cultural relativity," with its corresponding adaptations. Unchanging truths about God and His will are applied in a variety of cultural and situational contexts within Scripture itself. It is generally recognized, especially by dispensationalists, that not all biblical teaching about

¹Morna Hooker, "Authority on Her Head: An Examination of 1 Corinthians 11:10," *New Testament Studies* 10 (1963-64):410-16.

²Bruce K. Waltke, "1 Corinthians 11:2-16: An Interpretation," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 135:537 (January-March 1978):46-57.

³Hurley, pp.184-86.

conduct is normative for behavior today.¹ Some applications of biblical principles are restricted to a limited audience. Scripture itself must specify the nature and extent of this restriction, in some way, and biblical theology must confirm it.

One task of exegesis, that is widely practiced but lacks widely accepted definitive criteria, is to distinguish universal, unchanging, normative truths from recorded applications—which are local, temporary, and subject to changing situations. To fail to see how a particular application of a normative principle has been culturally conditioned, or to treat a normative principle as culturally relative, would both be mistakes. How to make this distinction, and do it accurately, needs further thought and discussion

Many interpreters agree that the normative principle in 1 Corinthians 11 is that a woman, while praying and prophesying, is to show her acceptance of and submission to God's ordering of His creation (11:7-13). Accordingly, the application of this principle here is culturally conditioned. In Paul's day, it was expressed by the head covering, which was necessitated by first-century culture (11:16). Our culture has no consistent, corresponding custom. However, a woman's hair naturally serves in the place of a head covering, and the normative principle of a submissive spirit remains constant.

Some, however, would argue that the head covering is not simply a particular application of a normative principle, and therefore *culturally determined*, but is, in fact, part of the normative principle itself, and thus *normative practice*—since Paul appeals to creation order in his argument. But one must consider whether Paul

¹See Renald E. Showers, *There Really Is a Difference! A Comparison of Covenant and Dispensational Theology*, ch. 4: "An Introduction to Dispensational Theology," pp. 27-32.

used the creation account to substantiate male headship or a female head-covering.

2. 1 Corinthians 14:34-35

In light of 1 Corinthians 11:5 and 14:26, it is reasonable to suggest that 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 does not mean that women are to be absolutely silent at all times during corporate worship. Of several interrelations of this passage, two of the most common are also the most probable:

- a. Paul's prohibition is against women speaking out to teach men in corporate worship (cf. 1 Tim. 2:11-12).¹
- b. Paul's prohibition is against women *evaluating the utterances* of the prophets in corporate worship, since this evaluation would involve an "exercise of authority" which would go against the requirement of submission to male headship (1 Cor. 11:2-6; 1 Tim. 2:11-15).²

Both interpretations have merit, but the latter one fits the context of 1 Corinthians 14:26-35 better. As shown above, the Law did not prohibit prayer and praise by women in public worship. Consequently, Paul's reference to the Law (14:34) is probably a reference to the creation account, and God's established creation order, as it is now to be exhibited in the local church.

3. 1 Timothy 2:9-15

In verses 9 and 10, Paul directed that a woman's dress and behavior should be appropriate, when she engages in corporate worship, so that—in attitude, appearance, or conduct—she does not give the impression that she

¹Knight, *The New ...*, pp. 36-37.

²Hurley, pp. 188-94.

rejects God's established order of male headship in this sphere.

In verse 11, Paul asserted that women are to receive instruction in corporate worship with a *quiet* and *submissive* spirit. If they do this, they will have less difficulty obeying Paul's command, in verse 12, to neither teach nor have authority over a man in public worship. This is not Paul's narrow opinion or an overreaction to a local church problem at Ephesus.¹

The reason for Paul's prohibition is twofold:

- a. Adam was formed *before* Eve (2:13)—a reference to God's established order in creation and the principle of headship (Gen. 2:21-22).

There is a proper kind and order of leadership, in the new creation as well as in the old, prior to and following the Fall.

- b. Eve was *genuinely deceived* by Satan; whereas Adam was *willfully disobedient* to God's command (2:14).

Eve acted on her own initiative and was deceived. Paul did not wish Eve's error to be repeated in the church. Thus, a woman—no matter how gifted or capable—is not "to have authority" (not just "to usurp authority," KJV) that properly belongs to a man in this sphere. This is simply God's established order. Paul did not mean that a woman is inherently less intelligent, or more easily deceived than a man—and so cannot teach or lead. Male headship itself has not preserved the church from heresy. Neither did Paul mean that sin in the human race is the fault of a woman (cf. Rom. 5:12-21).

¹See Douglas Moo, "1 Timothy 2:11-15: Meaning and Significance," *Trinity Journal* 1 NS:1 (Summer 1980):62-83.

Despite her equal standing in Christ, a woman should not despise the key role assigned to her—childbearing and childrearing—and should use it as an opportunity to glorify God. Her unique ability to bear and nurture life is evidence of God's favor upon her. In so doing, she will work out her salvation ("be preserved") in God's ordered plan, and will reap eternal reward (2:15).

Though women are forbidden to teach men in corporate worship, they can always teach women and children (Titus 2:3-5), and give instruction to men as well—at least privately—as Priscilla and Aquila did with Apollos (Acts 18:26).

Several questions remain:

- a. What constitutes teaching in the worship service of the church?—a testimony, a devotional, a missionary report, singing a solo, or reading a passage of Scripture?
- b. Does a woman violate Paul's injunction if the elders of her church, realizing she is a competent teacher, agree that she should teach the whole church, men included, in the area of her competence which may or may not involve the direct exposition of Scripture?
- c. Can a woman teach men in settings apart from local church worship or church-related meetings (e.g., home Bible studies), such as in a college classroom, in personal evangelism, in a writing ministry, or on the mission field where no male missionaries serve (cf. Acts 18:24-26)?

VII. Conclusions

- A. Scripture affirms that women are equal with men, both as image-bearers of God and in their personal standing before God and the church.

- B. Scripture affirms that women are distinct in their femaleness from men in their maleness—as created and ordered by God.
- C. Scripture affirms a basic pattern of functional order, applicable to the church, in which men are given headship—the task of leadership, and women are to be subject to this leadership (as are men who are not designated leaders).
- D. Scripture demonstrates that women have unique and significant ministries to fulfill—along with men—in the church, because they are gifted with the same spiritual gifts as men. There are no gender distinctions in the distribution of spiritual gifts.
- E. The office of *elder* is not open to a woman, but as with a man, she can exercise her gifts without holding this office.
- F. The office of *deacon* is probably open to a woman—at least women fulfilled many of its functions in the New Testament church.
- G. The Scriptures indicate that a woman may participate actively in corporate worship, but she is not to teach or engage in activities in which she has authority over a man or men in this sphere.

She may minister in church services, or church-related meetings, so long as her primary purpose is not to have (or exercise) authority that befits the office of elder/pastor. It is debated whether this prohibition regarding teaching the Scriptures or Bible doctrine extends beyond the confines of corporate worship or church-related meetings.

There are numerous spheres of leadership and ministry that are appropriate for women, limited only by situations where a woman would assume "headship" authority over a man or men. Such spheres include Christian education, outreach and evangelism, specialized pastoral ministries, church administration, a music ministry, a prayer ministry, a service ministry, and a writing ministry.

Perhaps two biblical guidelines would be helpful in evaluating particular situations:

- a. Does our interpretation or application of a biblical passage in a given situation affirm woman's personal equality with man?
- b. Does our interpretation or application of a biblical passage in a given situation affirm woman's responsibility of willing submission to man's headship responsibility in the home and church?

Appendix 3

Prospective Ministers Need Training in Interpersonal Competence

At "The Conference on Student Development in Theological Education" in June 1985, Dr. David Schuller of the Association of Theological Schools provided the following information.

Of those ministers involuntarily terminated by churches in recent years, only 6 to 13 percent failed due to professional incompetence. However, 46 percent were unsatisfactory due to interpersonal incompetence. Of this second group, half were too autocratic, and half were too passive.

Schuller gave nine signs of interpersonal incompetence. Hopefully these findings will enable God's servants to avoid these pitfalls.

1. They did not understand the situation, especially what they personally had done to make the matter worse. (This may identify a failure to listen and observe.)
2. They blamed others instead of accepting personal responsibility.
3. They did not delegate appropriately.
4. They were unable to develop common loyalties with people.
5. They were unable to make clear and direct statements or to behave consistently with statements they did make.
6. They needed emotional support and approval all the time from everybody.
7. They were unable to interpret the present in terms of reality.
8. They treated "differentness" as a threat.
9. They did not support others emotionally while disagreeing intellectually.

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