

PAUL'S LETTERS
TO TIMOTHY
AND THE
CHURCH TODAY

Words of Admonition
Encouragement
and Warning

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Introduction

This book is dedicated to the Lumbumbashi church in the village of Lupiya in Zambia. Lupiya is on the shores of Lake Mweru in Luapula Province near the border with the Democratic Republic of Congo.

In July of 2006 I spent a little over three weeks teaching the church in Lupiya in the afternoons and preaching a crusade in the evenings. The initial draft of this book was prepared in the sixty to ninety minutes of morning study time I had each day.

Both I and my translator, Fanwell, were afflicted during most of our stay with coughing and runny noses due to the weather or something in the environment. This negatively affected our sleep and our ability to speak publicly.

At the instigation of certain church leaders, police traveled nearly three hours from the nearest town and rescinded our permit for public gatherings. However, as we learn in Paul's letters to Timothy, physical problems and men are not capable of fully hindering the Word of God. Even when Paul was persecuted and imprisoned, he continued to write, instructing and encouraging the church. Thus a large portion of the New Testament was written while Paul was imprisoned. These letters spoke to the churches of his day and speak to us as well, bringing instruction, counsel, and comfort.

A few hours after we left the village of Lupiya, we were involved in an automobile accident that could have caused serious multiple injuries or death, but left people with only minor bruises. Some asked, "Why would God allow His servants to experience such a near tragedy and monetary loss?"

We could ask the same of Paul's many apparently bad experiences. Paul stated he was "a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles." This was why he said, "For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to

keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day” (2 Timothy 1:11–12). Friend, have you made your commitment to Christ, and do you know what eternity has in store for you?

I pray that the Spirit of God will speak to you through this book and that you will allow Him to correct, instruct, and guide you in your personal walk of faith. May God help each one of us to be faithful—that is my hope and prayer.

“The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit.
Grace be with you. Amen.” (2 Timothy 4:22)

1 Timothy

Chapter One

1 Timothy 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope.

Paul was a messenger of God and called an apostle. Today in certain churches people are still taking the title of apostle. And some churches are called apostolic. Yet some of these people and churches are far from the teachings found in the New Testament, often following something other than the Bible. While in sincerity we may desire to have the faith and do the work of the early church, the name *apostle* or *apostolic* is not enough to prove the genuineness of our hope and claims.

Is the title or office of apostle still appropriate, or is it a position just for the original apostles? First let's start with what the word itself means. An apostle is "a delegate, an ambassador of the gospel; officially a commissioner of Christ (with miraculous powers)."¹

It was the characteristic of those called apostles in the early church that they had seen the Lord and were able to testify of Him and of His resurrection from a personal knowledge. When Peter spoke of the need to replace Judas, he said, "So, now we must choose someone else to take Judas' place and to join us as witnesses of Jesus' resurrection. Let us select someone who has been with us constantly from our first association with the Lord—from the time He was baptized by John until the day He was taken from us into heaven." Then they all prayed for the right man to be chosen. "O Lord," they said, "you know every heart; show us which of these men you have chosen as an apostle to replace Judas the traitor, who has gone on to his proper place" (Acts 1:21–22, 24–25 TLB).

More than twelve men followed Christ closely. There were men as well as women who could accurately be called disciples of Christ. Being a disciple was not limited to only the twelve but any “learner, i.e. pupil.”² (See John 8:31.) However, to have the position or gift of being an apostle one had to be called to that office by Christ. We learn this in Luke: “And when it was day, He called unto Him His disciples: and of them He chose twelve, whom also He named apostles” (Luke 6:13).

Matthias was chosen to be an apostle to replace Judas, who had hung himself after his betrayal of Christ. Peter and the other apostles, with those who had gathered with them to see the Lord ascend into heaven, prayed for the Lord's guidance in this selection.

The apostle Paul was the last person chosen to be an apostle, as Christ called him in a supernatural encounter on the road to Damascus. (See Acts 9:1–31.)

Another attribute of the apostles was that the Spirit inspired them, and further that they should teach according to the law and the testimony and the prophets before them. (See Isaiah 8:20.) Thus they were to be secured against error in their public teaching, whether they taught by word or by writing. This is not to say they were always infallible in their personal lives or had a full understanding of all revelation. Yet “as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay” (2 Corinthians 1:18). Paul further said, “For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe” (1 Thessalonians 2:13).

Another qualification to be an apostle was the power of working miracles. “Then He called his *twelve disciples* together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases” (Luke 9:1, emphasis added). This was not a power inherent in them to use in any way they chose; rather, it was the gift of God to give power to the proclamation of the gospel. Further, as we read of the New Testament miracles, we can see the miraculous was not a regular occurrence but was a marked manifestation of the power of God, demonstrated as and when He chose. (See Mark 16:20; Acts 2:43; 1 Corinthians 12:8–11).

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From these few insights it would appear the apostles had no successors. They were the only authoritative teachers of the Christian doctrines upon which the church was established. You and I, as well as every pastor, teacher, or evangelist, are merely building and expounding upon that which is already, for our faith is “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone” (Ephesians 2:20).

It is the sincere but often mistaken desire to replicate the apostles’ miracles and calling that may lead us into false doctrine and practices. It is sad but true that some who call themselves *apostles*, and churches with the name *apostolic*, have missed the mark of what the Bible teaches. We must remember a name counts for little; what matters is a born-again experience and faithful adherence in teaching and life practice to the Word of God.

There is much insight and truth to gain in the Scriptures, enough to last us a lifetime. Further, God’s purpose for us is that by His grace we are to practice and follow the truth of Scripture so that we might cast “down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5). This is our work as believers and teachers.

While we may have the title or ministry of pastor, bishop, elder, teacher, or evangelist, we, like the apostles before us, must have the commandment of God and of Christ as the authority and enabling to rightly and effectively conduct such work. And where does that calling come from? It is not necessarily gained at theology school and proved by a Master of Divinity degree. It does not come because others have chosen to call us pastor or bishop or apostle. Rather, it is a burden and calling of the Lord. “Yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!” (1 Corinthians 9:16).

Jeremiah sought to remain silent after God had called him to speak to Israel; this was because of the hardships of being a messenger of the Lord. “I said, I will not make mention of Him, nor speak any more in His name. But His word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay” (Jeremiah 20:9). To truly be a worker for God is a responsibility, gift, and calling.

Paul's Letters to Timothy and the Church Today

All of God's children who have been called to His kingdom of grace are thereby ordained to do some work for the Lord as we consecrate time, talent, heart, and mind to God. If you are a child of God, this ordination to service includes you.

The first thing to know and experience is the fruit of the Spirit. (See Galatians 5:22–23.) This fruit is an increasing development of a godly character as we take on the attributes of our Father in heaven. Further, as our hearts are changed and transformed, we have a desire to use our time and talents to the glory of God. This use of our talents is right and necessary. However, God also gives the gifts of the Spirit. These gifts are the calling and enabling of God to do His work. Sadly, today, some are self-called, taking up a work without having the fruit of the Spirit or perhaps having been appointed to the office of apostle, bishop, pastor, or teacher by the command of men. Today, people are called because of education, social influence, even financial status. However, that is not God's standard for service.

And he [Christ, through His Spirit] gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ. (Ephesians 4:11–15)

It can be clearly seen in Ephesians the manner and the effect of the work in the ministry of an individual called of God. Based on the biblical criteria for ministry, there are those with the name apostle, bishop, pastor, etc. whose ministry does not meet the stan-

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dard of God. Though an individual may be called or recognized by man, having numerous ecclesiastical titles, this in itself is not an indication of God's calling. Christ calls individuals to His service, as with Paul, by divine intervention though rarely is it so dramatic. He more often calls individuals to His service who have a character willing to be molded and guided by His Spirit and grace, and show love and fidelity to His Word and law, and these will be given the gifts of the Spirit.

As in nature, so it is with the gifts of the Spirit: there is growth and an increase in knowledge in the effective utilization of the gifts. It must be understood that the increase of knowledge or effectiveness in utilizing the gifts, while done in and though the individual, are the direct result of the Spirit and the surrender of the human instrument to the glory of God. Truly it can be said in the work of the ministry, as in the Christian experience generally, "All things come of Thee, and of thine own have we given Thee" (1 Chronicles 29:14).

Unto Timothy

1 Timothy 1:2 Unto Timothy, my own son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.

Paul addressed Timothy as his spiritual son in the faith. Both spiritual son and father were made such solely by the love of God through the Lord Jesus Christ.

God's grace drew Paul and Timothy to the gospel and changed each of them from sinner to saint. The mercy of Christ motivated both Paul and Timothy to service. The inspiration behind the life and ministry of Paul and Timothy is what should also motivate us. And what is that inspiration? The love of Christ. His love, accepted by the mind and experienced in the heart, "controls and urges and impels us" (2 Corinthians 5:14 AMP).

Paul and Timothy, as well as every sinner who has responded to God's Spirit, is to experience justification by faith. Henceforth,

we, as these faithful workmen for God, are to live to testify to the mercy and goodness of God.

Paul's encouragement and counsel to Timothy reach beyond a simple letter from an aged worker and spiritual father to a young friend and coworker. The letter to Timothy contains truth and counsel that is timeless. Paul's letters, when accepted by faith, and comparing them to the law and the prophets, will be found to be "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16).

The Charge

1 Timothy 1:3-4 As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine, Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do.

Timothy is reminded of the time he was left in Ephesus to continue the work as Paul traveled to Macedonia. Timothy's task then and always was to "warn and admonish and charge certain individuals not to teach any different doctrine" (1 Timothy 1:3 AMP).

Sadly, counterfeits and human corruption have often worked to undo, change, or modify true faith and the grace and peace that come from God. This was true in Paul's time and even more so today.

Timothy, as a minister of the gospel, was not to get caught up in legends, fables, and myths, no matter how popular or interesting they appeared. Such idle speculations and false doctrine had no place in the acquirement of true faith and sound doctrine. Whether in the past or in our own time, speculations and man-made myths, no matter how sincerely believed and propagated, have no eternal good to offer.

Whatever the nature of the fables and genealogies Paul warned Timothy to avoid and teach against, their effect upon the spiritual experience would be devastating to true faith. Error and suppo-

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sition, however it is presented and regardless of the century it is presented in, has the effect of creating “useless speculations and questionings” (1 Timothy 1:4 AMP).

What mattered in Paul’s time and what truly matters now is godliness and true faith. Each member of the body of Christ is to know by faith and love the work of the Spirit in his or her own life. This will lead to a godly character and the edifying or building up of others by an upright life and sound teaching.

The Purpose of the Commandments

1 Timothy 1:5–7 Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned: from which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling; desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm.

Paul’s purpose in admonishing Timothy was to show that a pure heart is the result of the truth and love for God. Such an experience brings into the life moral purity and integrity, and this can never be obtained by mere human religion. Further, the effect of God’s truth upon individual hearts leads to a clear conscience, without offense toward God or man. The effect of heeding God’s command is a faith that is without reserve and without pretence.

Paul set forth the standard of a genuine Christian experience that remains the same today. Yet Timothy and Paul had to deal with individuals who, then as now, had missed the mark. They were not aiming at or seeking and striving for “the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:14).

Individuals who were missing the purpose of the gospel, or who were otherwise becoming spiritually confused, had “wandered away into vain arguments and discussions and purposeless talk” (1 Timothy 1:6 AMP).

How many of us, though sincerely seeking God’s way, are also prone to falling into vain arguments and discussions that are of no

spiritual benefit, even if religious in nature? I am afraid it is far too common.

Apparently many caught up in idle speculation were desirous of being teachers or promoters of error. This still happens today. There are many religious teachers and promoters of falsehood who do not truly understand what they say about the subject they so dogmatically affirm. Even though the Scriptures may be used, a false interpretation is placed on them.

Those desiring to be teachers of the law were among the propagators of myths and fables that were troubling some. However, the falsehood that came into the early church was not limited to Old Testament laws and rituals, which had been fulfilled in Christ and were therefore no longer to be practiced. There was also pagan philosophy intermixed with Christianity, which led some astray. There were also Jewish fables that twisted, changed, or added to the truths of the Old Testament.

The Old Testament contains rich gems of truth that teach of faith and grace, and give us prophetic insight. However, it is the light shining from the cross and the gospel and the New Testament that brings clarity, beauty, and meaning to the Old Testament. Further, Paul's condemnation of supposed teachers of the law should not be taken to mean that the moral law of the Ten Commandments has been changed or was to be done away with. Far from it. The law remains the standard of righteousness and judgment and the revealer of sin. (See Romans 7:12; James 2:12; Romans 7:7.)

The Purpose of the Law

1 Timothy 1:8–11 But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully; Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for men stealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing

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that is contrary to sound doctrine; According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.

Throughout his ministry Paul taught salvation by grace through faith alone. He also taught that the gospel, when experienced, changes the life. Therefore, he declares that the law is good, if it is used lawfully; in other words, “for the purpose for which it was designed” (1 Timothy 1:8 AMP). Paul makes it clear what the purpose of the law is. He taught, “By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin” (Romans 3:20).

The moral law of God cannot save a man from sin, nor in trying to keep it can it be a means of gaining merit with God. The moral law can only point out what sin is, “for sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4). Paul further taught that the law would be followed in thought and action by the one who is transformed and saved by the gospel. (See Romans 8:1–4.)

The laws given in ritual and sacrifice were a shadow, or the gospel in symbols, valid only until the Messiah came. Jesus, by His life, death, and resurrection, and who now ministers as our High Priest, fulfilled the Old Testament types and shadows. (See Hebrews 10:1, 5–6.)

In 1 Timothy 9 and 10, Paul shows that the law is not for the righteous man. Does this mean the righteous man need not keep God’s law? Not at all. For all who are righteous are made such. “As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one” (Romans 3:10). The law itself is righteous and holy. (See Romans 7:12.) Further, sinful man is made righteous by Christ and thereby enabled to live by the righteous principles of the law. Therefore, the law is for the ungodly and the sinner, for it speaks condemnation to the transgressor. In contrast, those who live their lives with the fruit of the Spirit transforming their character have no law that condemns them. (See Galatians 5:18, 22–23.)

Therefore, by grace through faith transforming the life, “I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart” (Psalm 40:8). Let it be clearly understood, he who is righteous can

only be made such by Christ, and a righteous man lives righteously as well. Let us not be deceived, for it is only “he who practices righteousness [who is upright, conforming to the divine will in purpose, thought, and action, living a consistently conscientious life]” who truly “is righteous, even as He is righteous” (1 John 3:7 AMP).

Paul's list of sins and moral shortcomings is not all-inclusive, for the standard and calling of God is as high as heaven. Paul summarizes by saying, anything that “is opposed to wholesome teaching and sound doctrine as laid down by the glorious Gospel” (1 Timothy 1:10–11 AMP) is to be set aside. We can overcome as we experience the “washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost” (Titus 3:5).

The Calling of Grace

1 Timothy 1:12–16 And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.

Paul was called to preach and teach the gospel, and his calling was by Christ's enabling. It was Christ who put Paul into the ministry. Paul makes it clear that his ministry as an apostle and teacher was not a self-made calling or simply a career choice and a work he sought for. Rather, Paul, by his own admission, stated he “formerly

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blasphemed and persecuted and was shamefully and outrageously and aggressively insulting [to Him]" (1 Timothy 1:13 AMP).

Paul was a religious man and strictly followed the religion of his fathers, yet he was in the same condition all men find themselves in. "You were His enemies and hated Him and were separated from Him by your evil thoughts and actions." Despite our condition, by God's grace we can be "brought ... back as friends" (Colossians 1:21 TLB). This is what happened to Paul, and it can be our experience as well.

Paul's ignorance was like that of many; it was ignorance of the love and true character of God. Therefore, while being religious, he was actually God's enemy. Why? Paul's exercise of unbelief was regarding what the law and the prophets had taught regarding the nature of sin and salvation and the Messiah. This was true despite the fact that he was instructed in the Old Testament Scriptures. However, he was instructed wrongly and misapplied the Scriptures; therefore, he opposed the truth of God and misrepresented His character and made God to be what He was not. He formed God into an image and idea contrary to what the Scriptures taught.

How was Paul called from blaspheming Jesus to proclaiming His name and kingdom? How are you and I called from sinner to saint? It is only by the Lord's grace and because of His great love. In turn, God's love and grace, when responded to, will develop in us a love and faith centered on Him who has loved us so much. (See 1 John 4:10.)

The grace and love of God, and His desire to make that known to us, is a revelation and truth most profound. Such an idea is not idle speculation and philosophy, for this love is made known and clearly demonstrated as "Jesus came into this world to save sinners" (1 Timothy 1:15). When Paul understood this, he declared of his own sinful condition in the sight of God, "I am the chief of sinners." (See 1:15b.) It is only in understanding our sinfulness and great need that God's grace is experienced. In fact, it is the work of God's grace to make our sinful condition known to us.

Grace has a purpose and effect upon the heart and life. Not alone is it manifested that we might be drawn to God and see our great need. As with Paul, so with each one who has known the

grace of Christ, we are to “be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world” (Philippians 2:15).

The apostle Paul's conversion was a demonstration of the love of God. So too each individual's conversion is to be a testimony and witness of God's grace. As it was with Paul, so it is to be in our own lives. We are to become a pattern or demonstration of the reality and goodness of God.

The Glory of God

1 Timothy 1:17 Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Scripture mentions many great kings and influential leaders, both good and bad, and many more have come and gone through the succeeding centuries. In the religious world, man's ideas of God and eternity are numerous. Paul understood, and we must also understand, that there is but one true King, who is above the frailty and perverse ways of mankind's politics and religions. In knowing the love of God and the salvation He has given us in Christ, the seemingly important matters of this world lose their significance. We, like Paul, must learn to be focused on the eternal and only wise God of creation.

Paul's experience with God, who had saved him, and his hopeful expectation of an eternity with Him, led him to proclaim God's wisdom and to give Him honor and glory. However, such a life and testimony is not to be borne by Paul alone. The love and truth of God is also to be known and experienced by us. We, like Paul, need to know and proclaim the goodness and glory of God. Each one of us, by virtue of Christ's saving grace, is to live “that we should be to the praise of His glory” (Ephesians 1:12).

Timothy's Charge

1 Timothy 1:18–20 This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare; Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck: Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme.

Paul instructs Timothy to be faithful to the counsel of God and the encouragement and instructions coming from his own pen. He reminds Timothy of the prophecies given in the past, outlining his calling and duty before God. Further, this calling was confirmed and recognized by “the laying on of the hands of the presbytery” (1 Timothy 4:14).

Timothy's call to the ministry proceeded not from Paul or from elders of the church. His call was from God, and it was shown by his zeal and faithfulness to the Word of God. We too may have zeal and a desire to teach and minister, but unless the character is changed and transformed by the renewing of the Holy Spirit, our calling is from man alone and not God. While we may not be called to serve God by a direct prophetic revelation, we are called and drawn to God by His Spirit. The Spirit works with our consent to transform our hearts and enables us to yield our minds to the will of God as revealed in Scripture; then we can rightly give service to God and man.

Like Timothy, we too are admonished to “war a good warfare.” Everyone, knowingly or not, is involved in the battle for the mind. Even as Christians, we have the flesh to war against. However, with sanctified hearts, we have the grace to daily choose the way of the Lord. Further, in living and sharing the principles of the kingdom of grace in a world of darkness, we often find that “we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Ephesians 6:12).

The warfare before each child of God is twofold. One is internal, as we are daily presented with the way of the cross and the way of our own selfish hearts. The second battlefield in the Christian life is outward, as God's will and word, as revealed in the Bible, is opposed by much of society, its organizations, and sadly, at times, often religion. This warfare cannot safely be conducted "after the flesh: for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal" (2 Corinthians 10:3-4). Our spiritual battle for the obtaining of eternal life, while living the principles of God now in this life, cannot be conducted in the flesh, which means following the principles and ways of unconverted human nature. Rather, our spiritual warfare is to be "mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds" (2 Corinthians 10:4).

What are the strongholds of self and the world we must war against? "Arguments and theories and reasonings and every proud and lofty thing that sets itself up against the [true] knowledge of God" (2 Corinthians 10:5 AMP). Not only will the Christian meet, at every level of society, open and subtle opposition to biblical principles, we also have a battle to engage in within our own hearts, as we are individually called to "lead every thought and purpose away captive into the obedience of Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5 AMP).

Timothy was admonished to hold on to, with all the heart and mind, the faith of Jesus in a world of unbelief and the idle speculations of men. Paul's admonition to Timothy speaks through the centuries and calls us to the same faithfulness. Further, true faith, made a part of the life, leads to a good conscience. A clear conscience is the result of being "renewed in the spirit of your mind." This takes place as God's grace transforms the heart, giving us "the new nature (the regenerate self) created in God's image, [Godlike] in true righteousness and holiness" (Ephesians 4:23-24 AMP).

The admonition to hold on to faith is essential to a sound Christian experience. For we are in danger, if left to ourselves, of following presumption and the perversity of our own natural hearts and the doctrines and commandments of men. (See Mark 7:7.) Sadly, some in Timothy's day, and many in our own day, put

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away sound faith and a clear conscience and are in danger of making their Christianity a shipwreck upon the shores of time.

Paul warns of two men who went down a false path and, rather than serving God, were actually warring against Him. This is what some are doing today. Paul said he “delivered unto Satan” Hymenaeus and Alexander. What does this mean? Do God’s servants work with the devil? Was Paul involved in a kind of Christian witchcraft and thus bewitched or cursed these men? Absolutely not. God’s servants must never follow the principles and ways of the world or Satan’s kingdom.

Paul says that Hymenaeus and Alexander would “be disciplined [by punishment and learn] not to blaspheme” (1 Timothy 1:20 AMP). This was done as Paul and the Christian community turned away from them, to let them go their own way. Like the tribe of Ephraim, they were joined to idols; thus, it was best to let them alone. (See Hosea 4:17.) Without the support, sympathy, and fellowship of the church, it might be possible they would come to their senses and repent.

Paul elsewhere declared, “A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject” (Titus 3:10). As Christians we must follow our Father, who is both just and merciful. Further, all church discipline must be conducted with prayer, seeking God’s grace, and done according to the counsel of His Word. God rebukes and chastens that He might redeem; thus it should be in church discipline.

As believers we have no right to accept and support those who are teaching error, regardless of how sincere or nice such propagators of error may be. There can be no compromise with error, for all error that is tolerated or accepted, regardless of the reasons for doing so, will eat at the heart of true faith and faithfulness to God’s Word. Error and false “teaching [will devour; it] will eat its way like cancer or spread like gangrene. So it is with Hymenaeus and Philetus” (2 Timothy 2:17 AMP).

Endnotes

1. James Strong, LL.D., S.T.D., *The New Expanded Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001).
2. Ibid.

1 Timothy

Chapter Two

1 Timothy 2:1-4 I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

Paul is seeking to encourage all believers with counsel that reaches to our own day. Paul's admonition is that we should engage in supplications or petitions, prayer and intercession, with thanksgiving for God's blessings.

God is calling each of us to a life of prayer, not only for our own needs but also for the needs of others. This will work to remove from us our self-centeredness and develop the same concern for souls that Christ has for us.

Mankind on this sin-cursed earth, in Paul's day and especially our own, have many physical and spiritual needs. Many people, professed believers and unbelievers alike, are heedless and even careless regarding their souls' condition and of the great eternity beyond this life. Thus we are to engage in intercessory prayer. This does not change God's concern for those we pray for, as God has a tender regard for all mankind. However, regular prayer for others changes us and brings our hearts more fully into harmony with heaven.

We meet people every day, stranger or acquaintance, friend or family, and often they do not have a concern for their spiritual

condition. By praying for them we have an opportunity to work with God for their salvation. How can that be? God does not work against the will of a person; therefore, God hears our prayers on behalf of others because we are His children.

We are to pray for all men, including political leaders and those in positions of authority who make and administer the laws of the nations we live in. Not only are we to pray as outlined above for such people, we are also to pray that people in governments conduct the affairs of state in such a way that we as God's people can live a peaceable life and are free to live and share the gospel.

In Paul's day, living under the government of the Roman Empire, Christians were at various times persecuted. Paul himself had been imprisoned for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. The Jewish religious leaders often manipulated government authorities to come against Christians. (See Acts 12:1-5; 17:5-8; 18:12-16.) Then and now the admonition is to pray for government leaders and for those in authority whose character and policies can affect the societies we live in. We are to pray for their salvation and also pray that we may live lives of godliness free from persecution, unfair laws, and social agitation and turmoil that can be caused by unjust and unwise passionate rulers.

Paul's counsel to pray for all men and governmental authorities is applicable today as much as ever. In many countries, governments can make things difficult for believers. In the twenty-first century it is illegal to be a Christian in Saudi Arabia. People there can be arrested for praying and worshipping in their own homes. In other countries persecution is less oppressive but nevertheless very real. Permits for church buildings and other work is denied or other hindrances are placed in the way. Even in so-called Christian nations, laws are made and attitudes exhibited by those in authority that can hinder Christians from practicing or propagating their faith. What is a right under God and enlightened government is turned into a privilege and only granted by permission of authorities and the securing of permits, licenses, and the like.

Praying for others is part of heaven's plan, for God desires "all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4). By our lives, by our prayers, and by our ministry,

we are to be God's channels for the outworking of His will in the salvation of souls.

The Sovereignty of God and Christ in Man's Salvation

1 Timothy 2:5-7 For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not;) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity.

In Paul's time as well as our own, "there be gods many, and lords many" (1 Corinthians 8:5). However, there is only one God who has revealed Himself through "one mediator ... the man Christ Jesus." Therefore, Mary and any supposed saints have no role in intercession on our behalf; neither are they able to bring assistance or spiritual help. This would be true of any religious practice and belief where help and spiritual blessing is sought apart from God and our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Truly, "vain is the help of man" (Psalm 60:11) and his gods and intercessors. Jesus has ransomed all men from sin and death; therefore, all men everywhere may be saved and delivered from the wages of sin, which is eternal death. For "whoever believes in (trusts in, clings to, relies on) Him shall not perish (come to destruction, be lost) but have eternal (everlasting) life" (John 3:16 AMP). Salvation resides in Jesus alone, for He has "brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Timothy 1:10).

Paul declares that his calling and purpose is to preach the gospel and that his teaching is not a lie or misguided zeal propagated for personal benefit or glory. Rather, he gave his life for the truth of Christ so that, as a teacher, he might establish men in the faith of Jesus and the truth that leads unto godliness.

A Call to Earnest Prayer

1 Timothy 2:8 I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.

Paul again calls us to a life of prayer, not only in public worship but wherever our daily lives and circumstances find us. This is not to be a dry formality or an unmeaning habit and practice. Rather, this call to prayer is to be with a renewed mind as all “anger or quarreling or resentment or doubt” (1 Timothy 2:8 AMP) is put away from our lives.

The term *holy hands* may have been derived from a Jewish practice of washing the hands before prayer. While there is no such command in the Bible, lifting up holy hands would indicate seeking God’s grace so that the heart and life is undefiled by sin and free from wickedness. The lifting of hands represents our dependence on Christ’s merits and intercession as noted in the following verse: “Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice” (Psalm 141:2; see also 2 Chronicles 6:12–14.)

We cannot rightfully pray and offer praise when our hearts are agitated and troubled with feelings of anger or impatience with another human being. In such cases we should humble our hearts before the Lord and ask Him to heal our spirits before we even think of praying for His blessings or offering Him praise. (See Matthew 5:23–24; 6:14–15.)

We cannot rightly pray if we have doubts and a lack of faith. For “without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6).

Further, we are to believe that He is “able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us” (Ephesians 3:20). God understands our weakness and sympathizes with our lack of faith; therefore, the words of Christ to one weak in faith and that individual’s plea applies equally to us. “Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things

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are possible to him that believeth. And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief” (Mark 9:23–24).

We are to take God at His word and believe, not because of our feelings or our circumstances, but because His Word has said it. This act of the will, trusting in the Scripture, will build your weak faith. Faith is not totally dependent on man, for God has given each of us a measure of faith, though it is ours to exercise. (See Romans 12:3.)

Christian Women Are to Be Examples of Modesty and Godliness

1 Timothy 2:9–10 In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.

God here calls women, who are the most attractive of His creation, to strict modesty. Why? Was it the mere cultural oppression of women? Not at all. Christian women have a sacred duty and responsibility to dress for the glory of God. This duty extends to keeping themselves from being the objects of unnecessary attention and sexual attraction stemming from their attitudes or actions or manner of dress.

Today, women the world over, believer and unbeliever alike, have in many cases lost their modesty. Far too often they follow a pattern set by the world that debases rather than honors women. Several decades ago, one of the stated aims of the feminist movement was to end the exploitation of women. Yet contemporary culture in most countries of the world has often reduced a woman’s status to an object of sexuality.

In all things, for the woman truly living in the Spirit, the standard of God is “be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Romans 12:2). What will

be the result of this renewed mind? We will seek to know “what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God, even the thing which is good and acceptable and perfect [in His sight for you]” (Romans 12:2b AMP). The woman of faith will conduct her life and deportment, even in the matter of adornment and dress, according to the principles found in Scripture

Women of God are called to modest apparel; this in no way means a woman cannot dress attractively. However, God is more concerned that the character of a pure heart and godliness shines through. For a woman's real beauty and attraction should be her modesty and upright character.

Therefore, women of the Spirit will not wear jewelry to attract attention. As stewards of God's grace, they will not seek expensive clothing for the sake of display. It is appropriate for women and men to be decent, clean, and orderly in dress and appearance. However, it is an unnecessary expense and often a vain exhibit to go to great effort to have “[elaborate] hair arrangement or gold or pearls or expensive clothing” (1 Timothy 2:9 AMP). God makes it clear that the woman of the Spirit is above all a woman of “good works.”

Following God's Standard or Cultural Standards?

1 Timothy 2:11–15 Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.

What are we to make of Paul's counsel here in Timothy and again in 1 Corinthians 14:34–35? Was it only a cultural standard for his day? When Paul wrote this counsel it was most appropriate. It was the norm of society of the day and to some degree remains

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such in many nations even in the twenty-first century. The gospel of Christ liberates man's soul and mind and has been the source for much of mankind's advancement. However, Paul, in looking at the reason for a woman's subjection, shows that it is founded in the fall of man and the result of sin. God clearly, in all ages and all cultures, has set distinct roles for men and women.

Sinful man, in response to what has often been the oppression of women, and unbiblically so, has sought to free women, which in many cases has been right. However, in so doing, the distinct and unique role and place of women under God has often been blurred and even eliminated.

The curse placed upon women in child-bearing "does not hinder their souls' salvation, and] they will be saved [eternally] if they continue in faith and love and holiness with self-control" (1 Timothy 2:15 AMP). This curse is not a reason for women to be oppressed. Rather, Paul called upon women to be loved and protected as the weaker vessel. While a woman is to be in subjection to her husband, it is with the command for husbands to "love your wives even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it" (Ephesians 5:25).

Believers in some countries may look upon Paul's counsel as useless for today, while others would desire to see it strictly enforced. However, culture should not be the basis for our practices. Rather, we are to seek out all the light to be found in God's Word.

In 1 Timothy 2:11-12, women are commanded to learn in silence, forbidden to teach or usurp authority over the men. In some of the churches they had fallen into the habit of arguing and becoming overly excited, and the result was great disorder. Where women indulged in this, the situation was made worse, and immodesty on their part caused offense and scandal. It was necessary that this be forbidden.

Women who usurp authority over men and become domineering in church life are out of place. But this does mean it is improper for women to speak in an appropriate manner.

In the synagogue it was permitted for any man to ask questions, object, or attempt to refute a point. However, this liberty was not allowed to any woman. It was the same in the Christian

church. Paul ordered them to keep silence; if they wished to learn anything they were to inquire of their husbands at home. It was improper for women to be contending with men in public assemblies on points of doctrine, cases of conscience, etc. However, this does not mean that when a woman received God's Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit, which enabled her to minister, she was not to obey that call. What the apostle opposes here is their questioning, finding fault, and arguing in the Christian church, as the Jewish men were permitted to do in their synagogues.

The counsel of Paul in Timothy does not forbid women to give testimony and praise in an orderly way in religious meetings. The Scriptures prove this. In 1 Corinthians 11:5, directions are given that a women who prays or speaks a prophesy in public should follow the custom of that time and have her head covered. If it was wrong for women to speak or pray in public, why would Paul give these directions? The only difference made between men and women is that men were to uncover their heads and women were to cover theirs when they spoke or prayed.

The prophet Joel revealed that in the last days, under the gospel dispensation, both "sons and your daughters shall prophesy" (Joel 2:28).

Philip the evangelist had four daughters "which did prophesy" (Acts 21:9). To prophesy is not only foretelling future events, it also means "to break forth under sudden impulse in lofty discourse or praise of the divine counsels under like prompting, to teach, refute, reprove, admonish, comfort others."¹ This attention drawn to Philip's daughters, though brief, is an encouragement for sisters with the gifts of the Spirit to use them in building up God's kingdom. When women are forbidden to speak or work for Christ when it is done according to biblical counsel, the spread of the gospel is hindered and liberty in Christ is suppressed.

Paul, in Romans 16, makes special mention of several women who were coworkers in the Lord. He speaks of Phoebe as a servant of the church, Priscilla as one of his helpers in Christ, Tryphena and Tryphosa as those who labored in the Lord, and Persis as one who labored much in the Lord. All these women were active in work and witness for Christ.

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In Acts 18:26, we read of how Priscilla and her husband, Aquila, took Apollos and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly. In Philipians, Paul speaks of other sisters in the church as follows: “And I entreat thee, also, true yokefellow, help those women which labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellowlaborers, whose names are in the book of life” (Philipians 4:3). Here women are mentioned as laboring with Paul in the gospel, and these women with Clement were considered to be his fellow-laborers. Is it right to assume such women as these were silent in the churches and therefore did not utilize their God-given zeal and knowledge of the gospel? It seems unlikely.

Paul said, “Let your women keep silence in the churches.” He also said, “They are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law” (1 Corinthians 14:34). This shows that the speaking that is prohibited, in which women are to remain silent, is that which would show that a woman was not under obedience. What does this mean? The Scriptures teach that a subordinate position is assigned to the woman for the reason that she was formed from the man and was first in transgression. (See 1 Corinthians 11:8; 1 Timothy 2:12–14.)

The leadership of the church and authority is vested in the man. This order is not to be reversed, with the woman taking the position that has been assigned to the man. Every action on her part that shows that she is usurping this authority is disorderly and not to be allowed in the church. Men, however, must be submissive to God, doing things in the Spirit rather than in the flesh.

Women who ignore this command and take the place of pastor or bishop are outside biblical order. From what I have seen and experienced, it is often the case that women who minister outside the biblical order also manifest a liberal view and teaching of Scripture. This often is the result of a feminist agenda being followed to one degree or another even sometimes unwittingly. Women should be encouraged to use their gifts and talents for the Lord within the roles ordained by God as found in the Scriptures.

Endnotes

1. Greek lexicon based on Thayer's Lexicon and Smith's Bible Dictionary plus others; keyed to the large Kittel and the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Online Bible CD 2.5.3, Macintosh Version 1996.

1 Timothy

Chapter Three

1 Timothy 3:1–7 This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

The Standard for Church Leaders

People in churches the world over desire to hold church office. In regard to the office of bishop, Paul declares such a desire is good, but it is for a special task and work.

Paul makes it plain that desire alone is not the qualification necessary for the office of bishop. A bishop is a superintendent or overseer. “In the primitive church, a spiritual overseer; and elder or presbyter; one who had the pastoral care of a church.”¹

Sadly, some men and women aspire for various church offices, including that of bishop, for less than godly and upright reasons. Such false reasons include pride of position or the benefits this might entail.

Many are brought into church office, including that of bishop, based not on biblical standards but the standards of the world. Success in business or other seemingly beneficial social attainments are often the criteria. In some churches those who regularly support the church with financial means are given church office. While it is right and proper to support the local church and God's cause with our time and money, this alone does not show our dedication to God or prove that we are converted to Christ.

The church is not a social club, though some have become such. Rather it is the community of Christ, united for mutual support and edification in the things of God and for reaching the world with the gospel. Therefore, all that the church does, including the selection of church officers, should be done according to the Word of God. Anything short of this mars God's glory and we are in danger of being disqualified from service in His sight.

The first qualification of a bishop is that he be blameless. This means he "must give no grounds for accusation but must be above reproach" (1 Timothy 3:2 AMP). Failure to follow these foundational requirements puts the church in peril. It seems as if many bypass this critical requirement.

Paul told his coworker Titus to "set right what was defective and finish what was left undone, and that you might appoint elders and set them over the churches (assemblies) in every city as I directed you" (Titus 1:5 AMP).

The churches Paul raised up were made up largely of converted Gentiles, most of whom were previously worshippers of false gods. They were admonished to follow a holy standard in the selection of bishops. Why cannot we do the same?

The second qualification for the office of bishop, elder, or pastor is that they be the "husband of one wife." This leaves no room for polygamy or mistresses. Further, this disallows selection of those for the office of bishop who have been involved in unbiblical divorces and remarriages while professing to be Christians. God is holy and He calls all and will make all to be "holy in all your conduct and manner of living" (1 Peter 1:15 AMP).

Bishops and pastors, indeed all the children of God, are to be "circumspect and temperate and self-controlled; [he must be] sen-

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sible and well behaved and dignified and lead an orderly (disciplined) life” (1 Timothy 3:2 AMP). In short, a leader must have a genuine Christian experience, daily seeking the glory of God and the conversion of his own soul. A leader in God’s church should be one who hungers and thirsts after righteousness. (See Matthew 5:6.)

A bishop must be a well-rounded individual. Though “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23), a leader must be one who loves the Lord and is ever pressing toward the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. (See Philippians 3:14.) Further, a bishop “[must be] hospitable [showing love for and being a friend to the believers, especially strangers or foreigners]” (1 Timothy 3:2 AMP).

A bishop cannot be an exclusive or a factional person, exercising favoritism. A bishop must be one who is “a capable and qualified teacher” (ibid., AMP). A bishop or elder should not be one who indulges in wine or alcohol, regardless of the social or cultural acceptance of such a practice. He is not to be stubborn or headstrong or an argumentative, dictatorial individual. Rather, he is to be “gentle and considerate, not quarrelsome but forbearing and peaceable” (1 Timothy 3:3 AMP).

A bishop, whether working for a living or a full-time gospel worker, is not to be a covetous man. Under no circumstances should a church leader be a hireling; this is the individual who serves for the benefits to be gained, material or otherwise. (See John 10:12.) While we cannot always know the motives of the heart, the actions and attitudes of a man will show if he is “a lover of money [insatiable for wealth and ready to obtain it by questionable means]” (1 Timothy 3:3 AMP).

In a world of family problems and breakdowns, the church leader or bishop is called to a standard above that of the world. A bishop is called to “rule his own household well.” His children are to be kept “under control, with true dignity.” He is to live and conduct his home affairs in such a way as to command “their respect in every way and keeping them respectful” (1 Timothy 3:4 AMP).

If a church elder or bishop or pastor (all similar terms of office) cannot minister well the church in his own home, the problems and weaknesses of the home will be brought into the church.

Family members may exercise a rebellious, wayward heart. The prophet Samuel and Aaron the high priest had children who did not follow the way of God. (See 1 Samuel 8:1–3; Leviticus 10:1–10.) These were adult children, so their behavior did not disqualify their fathers from service. But fathers in positions of authority were not to excuse or cover up their children's sins before the congregation of Israel. In contrast, Eli lost his way, for he was indulgent with his children's disobedience. (See 1 Samuel 2.)

Many today, as in Paul's day, have come out of a life of sin and unbelief, and their family affairs and the raising of children seldom followed godly principles. While over time the men of such households may gain a genuine and growing Christian experience, in their homes, because of the unbelief of children or of spouses falling short of God's standard, the office of bishop is not theirs to hold. They can serve God in other capacities. We must never lower God's standards to meet our circumstances, no matter how sincerely done.

Those new to the faith, regardless of their zeal, earnestness, and sincerity, should not be considered for the office of bishop. While there are practical reasons for this, Paul outlines one for special consideration. A new convert to be put into an honored and critical spiritual position may lead to pride of authority.

In concluding the character attributes found in those chosen as bishops, we learn they are to "have a good reputation and be well thought of by those outside [the church]" (1 Timothy 3:7 AMP). This is speaking of the individual's character out in the world among his neighbors, associates, and work mates. A man cannot be a person of integrity and righteousness in the church yet not be such in his place of work and in the community. To profess and act in church in a way that is not what we really are in life brings reproach upon Christ and His church.

A bishop is not a superman, though the qualifications are high. All believers, as well as the church leader, can obtain God's standard, growing in grace as they submit to the Spirit of Christ daily.

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The Christian experience is not unobtainable; rather, it is for all who will allow themselves to be “renewed in the spirit of ... [their] mind; and ... put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Ephesians 4:23–24).

1 Timothy 3:8–13 Likewise must the deacons be grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless. Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.

Paul addresses the qualifications of a second class of church leaders in the early church. These were deacons, a position found in many churches today. The word *deacon* means “an attendant, i.e. a waiter (at table or in other menial duties); specially, a Christian teacher and pastor.”²

As I wrote the early draft of this book, I was in a village in Zambia, Africa, where I was teaching at a local church and conducting public meetings in the evening. The deacons were responsible for maintaining order in the evening meetings and looking after the workers’ needs; thus the idea of a deacon being one who serves. However, deacon is more than a glorified title for a church servant. This position, as in all work for the church and God’s kingdom, is one of importance. Therefore, God outlines the spiritual commitment and character that is to be found in deacons, which is no less a standard than that of bishops, elders, and pastors.

I will not comment further where the standards of the deacon are the same as that of bishops. However, Paul lays out additional considerations. A deacon, indeed the people of God generally, should be grave. This does not mean joyless or harsh; rather, it

means “venerable or honorable ... one who is well ordered in his earthly life and has grace and dignity derived from his heavenly citizenship.”³

A deacon is not to be double-tongued, speaking one way and living another, or exercising favoritism in speech. Deacons should not be “shifty and double-talkers but sincere in what they say” (1 Timothy 3:8 AMP).

A bishop should not be “given to wine,” meaning he is to be temperate, exercising abstinence. Paul writes that a deacon should not be “given to much wine.” Does this mean deacons can drink but only a little bit? The Bible speaks of two kinds of wine: the fresh juice of the grape and that which was fermented and alcoholic. The counsel of Scripture is that alcohol is “a mocker” (Proverbs 20:1), and intoxication is to be avoided. Christ, our example, left no record of alcoholic intake. Further, He refused the vinegar upon the cross, which contained pain or mind-numbing ingredients. The standard of God is one of temperance, avoiding all things harmful and using in moderation that which is good.

Deacons, as with all church officers, should be possessors of true faith, having a Christian experience and living a life void of offense toward God and man. As with the bishops, deacons are not to be new converts; rather, they must “first be proved” (1 Timothy 3:10). This means they are to “be tried and investigated and proved first; then, if they turn out to be above reproach, let them serve [as deacons]” (1 Timothy 3:10 AMP).

The wives and families of deacons, as that of bishops, are to be a pattern for the family of God in all godliness and decency and order. Further, the wives of deacons, as with women who serve in the church generally, are to be women of gravity and honor, not given to gossip and false witness and loose tongues. Wives of church officers, and all women who serve in the churches, are to be “self controlled, [thoroughly] trustworthy in all things” (1 Timothy 3:11 AMP).

Faithfulness in church office will rightly add to the respect of the office holder. Such ministry to the glory of God in service for God's kingdom will provide an opportunity for Christian growth and experience.

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However, service, no matter how faithful, is never a means to gain merit with God or to be used in seeking popularity in the church. Duties are to be faithfully performed as unto the Lord, ever seeking to discharge all things according to the will and Word of God.

1 Timothy 3:14–15 These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

Paul wrote this counsel to Timothy, believing it would be shared and taught in the churches. Paul also wrote knowing that his life and freedom were in constant danger. He had been imprisoned in Jerusalem, which eventually led him to Rome under appeal to Caesar. Several years were taken from him as he was confined or under house arrest. Many of Paul's letters to the churches were penned during this time of imprisonment. Now, however, he was free, and he desired to meet Timothy face to face.

Paul wrote important counsel so that Timothy and other leaders would understand their calling and responsibility, how all church members were to live and work for the glory of God. "The church of the living God" was to be in a world of darkness and error and sin, "the pillar and stay (the prop and support) of the Truth" (1 Timothy 3:15 AMP).

The church is the people of God, as an organized body and as individuals. The structure of the church and the experience of individual believers is to be built upon the truth of the gospel and the Word of God. Any betrayal of this sacred trust and compromise of the truth was to separate from the living God and from His church, regardless of the profession. For any individual Christian or any congregation to compromise the truth is to mar God's glory and hinder the advancement of His kingdom.

Any congregation or individual who does not live by the truth of Scripture becomes fallen, and to such Jesus says, "Remember

therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent" (Revelation 2:5).

While there are many professors of religion and many congregations and denominations, in the end, by heaven's reckoning, the true church can only be formed from those who love and live the truth. All those who refuse to love the truth and hold on to unrighteous thoughts, attitudes, and actions will be deceived and believe a lie. Unless they repent, such become a part of the synagogue of Satan rather than members of the church of the living God. (See 2 Thessalonians 2:10–12; Revelation 2:9.)

Churches do not define the truth; rather, the church and our individual faith must be built on the Word of truth, the Holy Bible. The Bible judges us individually and the professed church as well. The true church is made up of those who have "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus Himself the chief Cornerstone. In Him the whole structure is joined (bound, welded) together harmoniously, and it continues to rise (grow, increase) into a holy temple in the Lord [a sanctuary dedicated, consecrated, and sacred to the presence of the Lord]" (Ephesians 2:20–21 AMP).

Let us carefully examine our foundation, lest in following the traditions and commandments of men and churches we find ourselves honoring God with our lips while our hearts are far from Him. In such a condition Jesus declares, "Howbeit in vain do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Mark 7:7).

The Mystery of God

1 Timothy 3:16 And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

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The Christian church is founded upon the most sublime and wonderful revelation ever given to man. This truth is that “[God] was made visible in human flesh” (1 Timothy 3:16 AMP). The Word who created all things “was made flesh, and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). This truth demands our hearts, our lives, our all.

If evolution or other such theories regarding man’s origin and destiny is true, then Christianity and the Bible and God are all myths. However, the Bible is true, and God’s gift and measure of faith has awakened in your heart, leading you to believe and seek after Him. This is the evidence that “He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6).

The gospel of Christ is the only thing that can ennoble man and truly enrich his life. The name of Christ and service to His glory have set in motion through the centuries all that is good and noble and lovely in man. To the extent that mankind and the church ignores God, darkness and sorrow and heartache and decay will rule and reign on the earth.

Try for a moment to free your mind from the clutter of worldly everyday concerns. I pray that God speaks to your heart just now, that you could understand and grasp and bow down before the awesome revelation that He who was God became a man. Nothing more need be said if only the Spirit of God can make this fact known, not to the intellect alone but to the heart. I pray that to know the Word made flesh will become your lifelong quest.

May you, dear reader, know Him who was God, who came to this earth as a man and died for our sins and was resurrected to give us new life. May Jesus, who was “God with us” (Matthew 1:23), become your Savior and friend. This is my hope and prayer for you. Amen.

Endnotes

1. Noah Webster, *American Dictionary of the English Language* (San Francisco, California: Foundation for American Christian Education, 1967).

Paul's Letters to Timothy and the Church Today

2. James Strong, LL.D., S.T.D., *The New Expanded Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001).

3. Ibid.

1 Timothy

Chapter Four

1 Timothy 4:1 Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.

The Holy Spirit, speaking through Paul and therefore to us, expressly declares, “In the latter times some shall depart from the faith.” This departure began in the decades after Paul and the other disciples passed away. Paul declared, even in his own day, “the mystery of iniquity doth already work” (2 Thessalonians 2:7). He said there would be a great falling away, which was yet to come. (See 2 Thessalonians 2:3).

Paul warned the church, “Know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock” (Acts 20:29). The undermining of true faith was eventually to give rise to the majority following a paganized church. This fallen church mixed truth with error. Its intellectual and philosophical center would, in coming centuries, be centered in Alexandria, Egypt, while ecclesiastical power was to develop in Rome, eventually taking the place of the Roman Empire.

Despite the rise of apostasy from within the church, which is being repeated today, God has always had His true witnesses, a remnant who would “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3).

The departure from the true faith did not catch God by surprise, for He warned of such events. His warning extends to our time as well.

The falling away from the true faith, in the early church and in our own time, is not an indication of the weakness of God or of the gospel; rather, it shows the perversity of man and his fascination with error and sin. Jesus warned us that before He comes, “iniquity shall abound and the love of many shall wax cold” (Matthew 24:12). The words of Jesus speak to the professed love of many growing cold and feeble in the church, among those who claim to be His followers. Yet God would have a people who overcome sin, error, and the devil. The only question is, On what side will you and I be found?

What is the departure from faith the Holy Spirit has warned us would come after the apostles passed away and that would be the most pervasive in the last days?

- **Departing from the faith**

So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. (Romans 10:17)

The departure from faith has, as its root cause, the undermining of the Word of God. Though many claim to believe in Christ and His word and take the name of Christian, yet, like ancient Israel, God says to us that we are a “faithless and perverse generation” (Luke 9:41). How could it be, anciently and even today, that many in the professed church of God are wicked? Hear the word of the Lord.

But to the wicked, God says: What right have you to recite My statutes or take My covenant or pledge on your lips, Seeing that you hate instruction and correction and cast My words behind you [discarding them]? (Psalm 50:16–17 AMP)

The departure from faith comes as men add to or subtract from the Word of God. It comes as men ignore, reject, or neglect some aspect of God's truth and substitute in its place the ideas and teachings of men, which on the surface often appear spiritual and

even good but are nevertheless departures from the testimony of Scripture.

What will be the tragic consequence of departing from God's Word, regardless of the reasons for doing so? Jesus has clearly warned us, "But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:9).

Oftentimes the practice and teachings in the church come not from God but from the doctrines and commandments of men. Such religion is useless, for only the faith and practice that comes from God's Word can lead us to Him. The vain ideas of men, even though taught and practiced in the name of God and with great sincerity, leave us thinking that we are alive and active, but we are actually spiritually dead. (See Revelation 3:1.)

- **Departing from the faith**

For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. (1 John 5:4)

The departure from the faith the Spirit has warned us of is manifested as churches, ministries and individuals partake of the world's principles, philosophies, attitudes, and practices. It is seeking its sinful or faith-destroying pleasures and enjoyments. True faith engages in a daily warfare and gains the victory and overcomes all that is in the world that is opposed to sound doctrine and godly living. We are to live by faith, following God's Word though we live in a perverted and wicked generation. The church today, instead of overcoming the world, is often being overcome. A few broad examples follow.

The world overcoming the church

- Psychological principles and counseling come into the church that exalt self instead of Christ's way, which crucifies "the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Galatians 5:24). Personal responsibility is replaced by ideas and practices and techniques that

create victims rather than guilty sinners in need of the cleansing and life-changing grace of Christ. The sufficiency of God's Word and grace is replaced by the wisdom of men. Though sincere, such counsel is no better than the mind it proceeds from. But godly counsel and wisdom that comes from God's Word has as its source the mind of God.

- The corporate practices of the business world, where the customer is king, accompanied by customer service and satisfaction, is embraced by the church. Thus the desire for popularity and church growth lessens the admonition to “cry aloud, spare not, ... and shew My people their transgression” (Isaiah 58:1). “Reproof, ... correction, ... [and] instruction in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16) are replaced by feel-good sermons or sensual and emotional stimulation.

Love is dwelt upon, and indeed it is true that “God is love” (1 John 4:8). But this love is degraded into a weak sentimentalism based on feelings rather than principle. Meanwhile, God's denunciation of sin and His holy standards and law are deemphasized, lest the customer (i.e., the people in the congregation) be offended.

- The idolatry of human opinion and pride of position are exalted above the Word of God. This takes places even imperceptibly for many. What some supposed authority or a church or committee says comes to be accepted as the guide and standard rather than the Bible.

- Sin and compromise become the norm, and practices condemned by God's Word become acceptable under the guise of love and understanding. Our supposed love and acceptance of men often becomes disobedience to God.

What is the consequence of the world overcoming the church instead of having the faith that overcomes the world?

Their moral understanding is darkened and

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their reasoning is beclouded. [They are] alienated (estranged, self-banished) from the life of God [with no share in it; this is] because of the ignorance (the want of knowledge and perception, the willful blindness) that is deep-seated in them, due to their hardness of heart [to the insensitiveness of their moral nature]. (Ephesians 4:18 AMP)

• **Departing from the faith**

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. (Galatians 2:20)

To depart from the faith is to live a crossless religion. While there may be some of Christ and some truth, it is so little that compromise and self-will dominates the life. Instead of Christ and His Word being our guide and motivation, we have a religion encased in self. We continue to live in the flesh. We do not have Christ in our lives, for the true Christian experience is revealed by “sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience” (1 Peter 1:2).

The consequences of this departure from the faith lead many to profess the name of Christ, yet He does not recognize them as His children. (See Matthew 7:21–23.) Satan today takes on a religious guise, working in the world and in the church. In fact, he does not mind if people make a profession of belief in Christ, His death on the cross, and His resurrection from the dead. Satan and “the devils also believe, and tremble” (James 2:19).

Jesus declared, “Whosoever will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me” (Mark 8:34). Therefore, if faith and works and self-denial are not part of our lives, Satan is well pleased. Why? In assuming the name of Christian while our hearts are carnal and unregenerate, Satan is able to use us in his service better than if we had made no profession of Christ at all.

Sadly, many who have departed from the faith of Jesus, or have never known it, hide their error, compromise, and sin under the name of religion and Christian profession. “The lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” (1 John 2:16) largely remains in control; thus, “the love of the Father is not in” us (1 John 2:15).

• **Departing from the faith**

Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.
(Hebrews 10:38)

The just, meaning those who have known and experienced the pardoning love of God, live by faith and by the Word of God. Yet we are warned that in the last days many religious people will depart from the faith. They will have drawn back from truly following Christ.

Wherever the pardoning love of God is known and experienced, there love abides. In love for the Savior who has delivered us from guilt and condemnation, there will be commitment and a desire to follow Him. For to live by faith is to live for God. While many have a profession of belief in God, other things have a greater influence upon them than the Spirit of God and His Word. Thus, while religious, many are in reality departing from the faith.

• **Departing from the faith**

To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me. (Acts 26:18)

To be sanctified means “to make holy and signifies to set apart for God.”¹ Sanctification by faith is “the act of God’s grace by which

the affections of men are purified or alienated from sin and the world, and exalted to a supreme love to God.”²

It is obvious that a person or church that departs from the faith is no longer seeking to live a life of holiness and dedication to God, His truth, and His law. Instead of a heart and life given fully to God, leading to an ever-increasing hatred of sin and departing from it, there is an excuse of sin and acceptance of compromise; religion is remade into the image of man and the society around him.

What will be the consequence of this departure from the faith? When we are not escaping “the corruption that is in the world through lust” (2 Peter 1:4); we therefore do not with “all diligence, add to ... [our] faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness” (2 Peter 1:6–7). The result of this lack of sanctification by faith is that we become spiritually “blind and cannot see afar off” (2 Peter 1:9). Therefore, “the man whose life fails to exhibit these qualities is short-sighted—he can no longer see the reason why he was cleansed from his former sins” (ibid., Phillips). We have been cleansed from sin to live a life of consecration to God, yet many seem not to recognize or experience this. This is the result of departing from the faith.

- **Departing from the faith**

So also faith, if it does not have works (deeds and actions of obedience to back it up), by itself is destitute of power (inoperative, dead). (James 2:17 AMP)

To depart from the faith is to profess religion but to lack the works that by love should accompany a true Christian experience. What will be the consequence of departing from the faith? “But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?” (James 2:20).

The great departure from faith in the last days has already begun and will continually increase. The manner of the departure is summed up in the following points.

- There is a departing from the Word of God. This takes places as human speculation and the religion of men gain ascendancy.
- Largely if not totally devoid of saving faith, many do not overcome the world but instead are adopting the behavior, ideas, and philosophy of the world in their life and religious practices.
- There is a departure from the faith of Jesus, which is a total reliance on Him, leading to true justification, experiencing His forgiveness, accompanied by true commitment.
- There is a departure from piety, and godly and upright living, according to the will and Word of God.
- There is a departure from true faith that shows itself by “faith which worketh by love” (Galatians 5:6).

A Parallel Prophecy

And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel: only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach. (Isaiah 4:1)

In the hour of great apostasy before the coming of the Lord, there will be a great departure from the faith. As it was in Isaiah's day so it will be in our day. Seven women, representing the fullness or completeness of the churches, will have a profession without true faith and will take hold of the “one man,” Jesus Christ. However, the churches and professors of religion will want to eat their “own bread.” They will want to follow human ideas and the philosophies and doctrines of men. This substitution of God's Word for man's speculations leads to seeking out our “own apparel,” the apparel of self-righteousness. This is a righteousness that knows little or nothing about the justifying, pardoning love of God. This apparel of man's own righteousness sets a human standard far below the

standard of God; therefore, by religious works or a false hope, man is able to obtain what he believes is the righteousness of God.

Today there are Christians who believe they are spiritually “rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing.” Yet Jesus says to many of the professors of religion in our time that they know “not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked” (Revelation 3:17).

Despite this sad departure from God’s Word and Christ’s righteousness, the churches of this world still wish to be “called by thy [Christ’s] name.” They desire that the reproach of sin and guilt be taken away and eternal life be theirs. Yet they have separated from Christ. Christians in name only will be the prevalent condition of the “seven women” representing the churches in the last days.

Giving Heed to Seducing Spirits

The Spirit of God reveals what will result from this departure from sound doctrine and biblical faith. “Some will turn away from the faith, giving attention to deluding and seducing spirits and doctrines that demons teach” (1 Timothy 4:1b AMP).

Could it be possible that the churches and professors of religion will be “eager followers of teachers with devil inspired ideas” (1 Timothy 4:1a TLB)? Sadly, this is exactly what the Spirit of God has told us would happen, and it is the direct result of departing from the faith. The people of this world, knowingly or not, are involved in a battle for the heart, mind, and soul. Every individual is either being renewed in the spirit of the mind by the creative power of God or being conformed to the mind of Satan. (See Ephesians 4:23–24, 18.)

Where biblical faith and teaching is neglected, ignored, or set aside, into this space Satan will enter with his doctrines and ideas. Such teaching may fascinate man with seemingly wonderful knowledge and revelation, a new and apparently advanced religious experience, but it is all a lie.

What is the nature of the doctrines or teachings of seducing spirits? First, they pervert or change the truth regarding the gospel and how a man is saved and the resulting transformation it

brings in renewing the heart. The character and nature of Jesus is changed and distorted so that a false Christ is worshipped. Further, seducing spirits introduce a counterfeit Holy Spirit. The Spirits of demons come through religious men and teachers who themselves are “deceiving, and being deceived” (2 Timothy 3:13).

The apostle Paul describes the seduction in his second letter to the Corinthians.

But [now] I am fearful, lest that even as the serpent beguiled Eve by his cunning, so your minds may be corrupted and seduced from wholehearted and sincere and pure devotion to Christ. For [you seem readily to endure it] if a man comes and preaches another Jesus than the One we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the [Spirit] you [once] received or a different gospel from the one you [then] received and welcomed; you tolerate [all that] well enough! (2 Corinthians 11:3–4 AMP)

The seducing spirits of the last days, working in the world and especially in the church, will follow the same pattern as the serpent did in the garden of Eden. The result will be a counterfeit Jesus, gospel, and Holy Spirit brought into the churches and presented to the world. How did Satan work in the garden? This is important to understand, for the principles and tactics are similar, though now presented in a more pleasing manner for the taste of modern man.

Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? (Genesis 3:1)

Satan used the word of God to deceive, just as his agents do today. Satan said to the woman, “Can it really be that God has said, You shall not eat from every tree of the garden?” (Genesis 3:1 AMP).

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Satan is very effective when using the Word of God, yet it is done in such a way as to create doubt or to buttress error. This is how he works on the minds of many people and churches today. The result is to make the error more acceptable and not easily recognized. We learn further of Satan's manner of working.

And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. (Genesis 3:4-5).

Satan will use God's word to gain confidence with the unsuspecting, then introduce doctrines that contradict the Bible. He leads men away from accountability to God, and thus man becomes his own god. Instead of recognizing his guilt and shame because of sin, man takes the lies of Satan and develops the doctrines of self-esteem and other psychological ideas. This will lead men, even if unknowingly, to look to themselves instead of to God and His Word.

Satan leads men to think they know better than God; therefore, they distort or change His Word. This leads to practices of life and worship whereby we practically set aside God and the Bible. By this we, in essence, accept Satan's lie that we "shall be as gods," thinking we know the difference between good and evil. However, to one degree or another we "call evil good, and good evil; ...[and] put darkness for light, and light for darkness" (Isaiah 5:20).

Today, Satan's medium is not a serpent; rather, he sends forth "false Christs, and false prophets" (Matthew 24:24). This is most readily effected through churches and teachers who are apparently Christian.

For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers

of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works. (2 Corinthians 11:13–15)

We have been warned the doctrines of devils will bring a false Christ, gospel, and Holy Spirit, and they will work through men. They will “oppose Christ in the guise of Christ” (1 John 2:18 AMP). While professing His name and claiming to believe and teach the gospel, they are substituting the truth for mere human ideas.

Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. (1 John 3:7–8)

The doctrines of devils will promote the idea, both openly and subtly, that we need not worry about living an upright and godly life. Yet, by the grace of God, we are to follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness” (1 Timothy 6:11). This is the very experience Christ offers us. The ability to live such a life comes as the result of His death and resurrection, being accepted by faith and worked out in the life. First John is clear: It is the work of devils to deceive us to believe that unrighteousness, compromise, and sin are acceptable parts of the Christian experience. Thus multitudes take the name of Christ but do not know Him.

The agents of Satan, who are his medium for the seducing sprits to work through, are described as “false prophets [who] are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). Not only false prophets, but teachers and even congregations and denominations can accomplish the work of promoting the doctrines of devils.

What is the nature of the falsehood that the doctrines of demons bring? It is the spirit, teaching, or influence “which does not acknowledge and confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh [but would annul, destroy, sever, disunite Him].” Such influences are “not of God [does not proceed from Him]” (1 John 4:3 AMP).

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Such teachings include the denial of Christ's divinity. They include making Jesus a common man who sinned as we do rather than the one who "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15).

The doctrines of devils would make Jesus wholly divine, even claiming His mother was immaculately conceived. In Jesus dwells all the "fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Colossians 2:9). It is also true that He was "made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted" (Hebrews 2:17-18).

Therefore, "God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, [or by a sacrifice for sin] condemned sin in the flesh" (Romans 8:3). The result of this is "that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Romans 8:4).

The righteous requirement of the law being worked out in us through Christ, who came in the flesh and who died for us, is unpleasant to false prophets and teachers. They seek to promote, unwittingly to themselves in most cases, the doctrine of devils, which lessens sin's objectionable nature.

We read further of the false prophets and teachers and the nature of their devilish doctrines.

They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. (1 John 4:5)

The instruments of Satan who teach his doctrines are of the world; therefore, under the name of religion, ideas not found in God's Word are promoted. Rather than comparing "spiritual things with spiritual" so that the will of God would be known and followed, doctrines, practices, and church programs and administration are patterned after worldly knowledge. Problems in the world and church that need solving, help, and attention are approached from whatever angle seems best to us. Decisions are based on what

the world at large says and does rather than on what the principles of God's Word reveal.

In contrast to conforming to the ideas and practices of the world, the children of faith and light are "learning to know God [progressively to perceive, recognize, and understand God... and to get an ever-clearer knowledge of Him]" (1 John 4:6 AMP). Therefore, the children of God approach things in this world by seeking to know the principles taught in the Bible, making the application of its principles paramount.

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. (Titus 2:11-13)

God's Spirit and grace come into our lives as we open our hearts to Him. The surrender of mind and life to God will develop in us a life as described in the verses above. In contrast, the effect of seducing spirits and their doctrines lessens the desire for such a life of piety and devotion. The doctrine of devils promotes salvation in sin leading to a life not wholly devoted to God. To come under the influence of such seducing spirits, masquerading under the name of religion, may be pleasing to the carnal mind, but puts souls in danger of eternal loss.

Speaking Lies and Following Lies

1 Timothy 4:2 Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron.

The doctrines of seducing spirits come into the church through teachers and leaders who usually appear as kind and of great sincerity. Yet these outward attractions hide the false ways of teachers, and even whole churches, whose doctrines are untrue.

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Let us seek to understand more clearly the nature of the lies spoken in hypocrisy. *Hypocrisy* means “acting under a feigned part, figuratively deceit, from to dissemble pretend.”³

The majority of lying teachers are often not recognized as such by those whom they teach, for they are “dressed as sheep, but inside” the principles that guide them, causes them to be as “devouring wolves” (Matthew 7:15 AMP).

There is something in the heart of man that is attracted to error and compromise. The errors and lies of seducing spirits are often promoted with zeal and apparently pious motivation, and may be accompanied by seemingly good works, charity, and kindness. Despite this, the propagation of error and compromise of biblical truth indicates a fascination with the tree of good and evil. It is the “deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth... but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (2 Thessalonians 2:10, 12).

Behold, ye trust in lying words, that cannot profit. Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not; And come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations? (Jeremiah 7:8–10)

The lies coming from the doctrines of devils lead the professed people of God, to one degree or another, to be comfortable with sin. By our discharge of certain religious practices, we come to believe we are acceptable in God’s sight. But prayer and praise do not necessarily prove that our profession is genuine. It is obedience, worked out in us by a mind renewed in the spirit day by day. Sadly, however, many have come to accept the lying words of devils; therefore, they are satisfied in “having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof” (2 Timothy 3:5).

Thou lovest evil more than good; and lying rather than to speak righteousness. (Psalm 52:3)

Paul's Letters to Timothy and the Church Today

So many today the world over, in their day-to-day lives in thought and practice, actually love “evil more than good.” This is made plain, for we hate the instruction and correction of God’s Word. We ignore it, set it aside, or say we believe it but do not follow it. (See Psalm 50:16–17.)

He says, “All the leaders, who are supposed to warn my people, are blind! They know nothing. They are like watchdogs that don’t bark—they only lie around and dream. How they love to sleep! They are like greedy dogs that never get enough. These leaders have no understanding. Every one of them does as he pleases and seeks his own advantage.” (Isaiah 56:10–11 TEV)

This verse makes plain the nature of the hypocritical lies of seducing spirits and the men who, often unknowingly, are used by these spirits. Instead of faithfully giving sound “doctrine... correction ... [and] instruction in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16), they lack understanding. Doctrines and practices are introduced into churches by the leaders that are spiritually asleep, who do as they please, seeking their own way rather than following Christ’s way.

Thus, over time, the mind of the congregation is conditioned to “love evil more than good and falsehood more than truth” (Psalm 52:3 TEV). The people in the congregation are largely devoid of the power of discernment. They do not understand the compromise taking place in the church; this numbing of the spiritual faculties is increased for many take pleasure in lies through the entertainment they enjoy in their homes.

Many are heedless to the counsel of God “to learn [in your experience] what is pleasing to the Lord [let your lives be constant proofs of what is most acceptable to Him]” (Ephesians 5:10 AMP). Instead, many “turn aside from hearing the truth and wander off into myths and man-made fictions” (2 Timothy 4:4 AMP).

I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem an horrible thing: they commit adultery, and walk

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in lies: they strengthen also the hands of evildoers, that none doth return from his wickedness: they are all of them unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah. (Jeremiah 23:14)

History is being repeated as the doctrines of devils are at work through false teachers who lessen the seriousness of sin, replacing it with feel-good religion. This cannot renew the heart, leading to an experience where our souls “hunger and thirst after righteousness” (Matthew 5:6).

Thus, in the name of Christ, and claiming love for souls, false teachers often strengthen the hands of the evildoer. For we come to believe that we are spiritually rich and increased with goods, having possessions and outward advantage. However, we know not that in God’s assessment, we have separated from Him. In such a state, both teachers and those taught by them are susceptible to seducing spirits, having laid aside true faith.

A Conscience Seared

Conscience is the sense of what is right and wrong in one’s conduct or motives, impelling one toward right action.

For a conscience to be seared means it loses the ability to discern truth and error, right and wrong, becoming insensitive to the Spirit and Word of God.

Is it really possible that this is becoming the condition of many in the church today? A poll conducted by the Barna research group in 2003 indicated that 91 percent of professed Christians, ranging from Catholics to evangelicals, did not have a biblical world view.⁴ This means that nine out of ten professed Christians did not believe that absolute moral truths exist and that absolute moral truth is defined by the Bible, and therefore seek to guide their lives and judge all things by the Word of God. This is a departure from the faith of astounding proportions.

Professing to be Christian, yet not following the Bible, would indicate that true faith has departed. That vacuum must be filled, and it will be filled by seducing spirits and the doctrines of dev-

ils. This will render insensitive the moral sensibilities of many professed believers. Jesus Himself warned of the development of this condition before He would come the second time. He said, "Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold" (Matthew 24:12). This term *waxing cold* means a "reduction of temperature by evaporation to chill."⁵ This is a process, over time, where professed believers' love and commitment for God is lessened and often, imperceptibly to themselves, it is replaced by a love of sin and compromise, all the while maintaining enough of the profession of religion to believe things are relatively okay.

The heart condition and moral consciences of many in these last days, both in the world and in the church, find their parallel in the days just before the flood. This should not be a surprise to us, for Jesus warned us of this very thing. He said, "The world will be [as indifferent to the things of God] as the people were in Noah's day" (Luke 17:26 TLB).

The suddenness and thoroughness of the destruction by a flood will find its parallel at the coming of Christ. But that is not all. In the time leading up to the end, the condition of immorality, the carelessness and unconcern regarding true faith, and the worship of God will be repeated. This is true not only among the profane and wicked and followers of false religion, but also among those who profess a belief in the true God.

As it was before the flood, so it often is now. There is a great deal of religion, but it is built on the rejection of truth in preference for a lie. Churches and individual believers are being leavened with error and falsehood. What will be the result?

And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenantbreakers,

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without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them. (Romans 1:28–32)

We have come to a state where many profess to know God, but by their actions and practices and religion show they are actually forgetting Him. The purveyors of falsehood today do as the false professors did long ago.

I have heard what the prophets said, that prophesy lies in my name, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed. How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets that prophesy lies? yea, they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart; Which think to cause my people to forget my name by their dreams which they tell every man to his neighbour, as their fathers have forgotten my name for Baal. (Jeremiah 23:25–27)

In the secular world, we can readily see the desensitizing of the moral nature of man and his readiness to believe lies on spiritual matters. However, what is of more concern, for it is really the more dangerous, is what the Spirit said would take place in the church in the last days. What will be the consequence to an individual when they choose to believe a lie coming from seducing spirits?

Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man. (Romans 1:21–23)

Forbidden to Marry

1 Timothy 4:3–6 Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer. If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained.

Paul's counsel to Timothy has often been applied to practices found in Catholicism, which imposes celibacy upon its men and women workers in religious orders. Further, the doctrine of abstinence from certain types of meat on certain days readily fits Catholicism's departure from biblical faith in preference to church tradition.

Verse 3 is not limited in its application to certain practices within Catholicism or other religious sects in Paul's day. Individuals and religious groups since the days of Paul have looked upon the physical material world as evil. Therefore, marriage or conjugal relations were to be avoided to perfect devotion and piety.

Marriage is honorable when entered into with prayer and seeking God's will. God created marriage at the beginning when He created for Adam a helper and companion in Eve. Further, marriage has been used throughout Scripture as a description of the relationship of closeness and union God desires with His people.

"Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge" (Hebrews 13:4). Much evil has resulted in mandatory celibacy as well as in relationships between men and women that do not follow biblical standards. This would include the growing acceptance, even among those who profess a belief in God, to choose cohabitation over the

covenant promises between man and God within the sacred bond of marriage.

**A Call to Unite Heart and Life
In Spiritual Marriage to Christ**

In departing from faith and sound doctrine, the doctrines of devils gain the ascendancy. Then the closeness of heart and life to Christ, as found in the example of marriage, is lacking. Many are separating themselves from Christ as true faith and love are missing and only a profession remains. As it was in ancient Israel, so it is often the case today. “And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also” (Jeremiah 3:8).

Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. (Romans 7:4)

We are invited to be married to Christ, bringing forth the fruits of holiness that results from the uniting of man with God.

For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. (2 Corinthians 11:2)

God’s purpose for His church, the people of God, is that we would be as a pure virgin bride, wholly dedicated to Him in innocence of heart and purity of life.

Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted

that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God. (Revelation 17:9–11)

We find in all of these verses a spiritual application to marriage that outlines a literal faith experience with Christ in overcoming sin and coming into harmony with heaven's principles. Those leaders, teachers, and congregations that depart from the faith by a denial of the truth and total commitment to the Lord are left to be influenced and taught by seducing spirits. The blind lead the blind, and the truth is mingled with error; thus, error becomes the new standard and religion of many. This results in marriage, in its spiritual sense, being forbidden or deemed of little importance. So the Spirit's warning in Timothy is not just speaking to heretical sects or practices or of Catholicism's teaching on celibacy, but has a broader meaning as well.

Commanding to Abstain from Food

Those who depart from the faith, taking up doctrines of devils, have also at times set forth man-made prohibitions regarding what food can or cannot be eaten. When Paul wrote these words, he was likely referring to ascetic influences working in the church. Ascetics were not temperate and self-denying out of love for God and having the fruit of the Spirit, which brings forth true temperance. Rather, for ritualistic and ceremonial reasons, the prohibition of certain foods was considered desirable as a means of gaining spiritual purity or acceptance with deity. This results in man-made tests being brought in to gain merit and acceptance with God. Such ideas spoil the faith of those who accept them.

These verses in Timothy do not teach that we are free to eat just anything, for we read, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy,

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acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (Romans 12:1; 1 Corinthians 10:31).

God intends us to eat with a thankful heart, but also according to the counsel of His Word. Both the Old Testament and the New give clear guidelines on principles of diet, and specific things are not to be eaten. The counsel on diet is not solely for religious reasons, but for our health and well-being. God originally formed for man a vegetarian diet; this can be taken with the assurance that it’s according to His Word. While it is God’s original diet, it is not to be made a test and a standard of righteousness or acceptance with God. After the flood, God allowed flesh food, though He limited it to specific species. To deny these foods set aside by God’s Word, and making man-made tests to gain acceptance with God, is wrong. The vegetarian diet, the first and originally the best diet for man, and certain animal foods bear the approval of Scripture and can be taken with thanksgiving, as they are according to God’s Word.

The general principles of health and temperance revealed in the Bible, if followed, would eliminate many of the health problems of modern man that come about because of poor choices and habits in eating and drinking. The prophet asked, “Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread?” (Isaiah 55:2). While this question was in regard to spiritual matters, it is also a pertinent question to consider regarding our dietary choices.

God has given clear counsel in His Word; however, because we ignore the sanctified way to eat and drink, and the foods He formed originally and set aside for mankind to use, we often experience chronic disease and suffering. Let us remember that only food sanctified or set apart by God’s Word is suitable for mankind and is worthy of the prayer of thanksgiving.

The Work of Maintaining Spiritual Health

1 Timothy 4:7-10 But refuse profane and old wives’ fables, and exercise thyself rather unto

godliness. For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation. For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe.

Paul's admonition to Timothy speaks to us as well. We are to avoid what Paul calls "(profane and impure and godless fictions, mere grandmothers' tales) and silly myths" (1 Timothy 4:7 AMP). Paul is speaking of foolish teachings in the Jewish Talmud. The Greeks also had their myths. Those who were supposedly Christians mixed the falsehood of the religion of the age with Christianity. Sadly, this is still taking place. Today, Christian teachers bring in false ideas from psychology, Eastern religions, New Age, the Catholic mysticism of the past, and many other such things.

While the exact nature of the errors Paul was condemning may not be known, they were certainly contrary to faith and sound doctrine. Paul speaks of seeking "the doctrine which is according to godliness" (1 Timothy 6:3). Therefore, all teachings that do not lead to true faith and commitment and godliness are unimportant at best, or actually detrimental to sound faith. Timothy was urged to avoid them, and we are to do the same.

We are admonished to train ourselves "toward godliness (piety), [keeping yourself spiritually fit]" (1 Timothy 4:7 AMP). Exercise for health and fitness brings the benefit of longer life and better health. However, it is a short-term benefit, for we all eventually die. Some of the Greeks in Paul's day were taken up with exercise to gain fitness for the games. In the hope of gaining temporary honor from men, they, like many today, forgot to seek the honor of God, which alone gives us true nobility.

In contrast to the temporary pursuit of worldly honor, from whatever source, the pursuit of "godliness (spiritual training) is useful and of value in everything and in every way, for it holds

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promise for the present life and also for the life which is to come” (1 Timothy 4:8 AMP).

The pursuit of godliness, which is to exceed the mere physical pursuit of health and fitness, must become the passion of our lives. Such a pursuit is, without a doubt, “reliable and worthy of complete acceptance by everybody” (1 Timothy 4:9 AMP).

The pursuit of godliness and eternal life is worthy of our labor through faith motivated by love. Even if we suffer reproach from the ungodly or unbelieving in the church, we dare not take our eyes off “the mark... of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:14).

Our hope and trust must be fixed on the living God, He who is the Savior and Sustainer of all men. God sustains all of creation and every man. “For in Him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also His offspring” (Acts 17:28).

Every person, believer or unbeliever, has had the guilt and penalty of his or her sins paid for, and thus all men can be saved. “God has commendeth [demonstrated] His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).

However, the Father’s blessings come especially to those who, drawn by Christ’s spirit of grace, yield their hearts in trust. This is not favoritism on the part of God, for salvation is only for those who believe. Even believers suffer the heartaches and problems that accompany mankind on this sin-cursed earth. But they will not experience the pain and sorrow that often results from going our own way apart from God. God delights to provide, sustain, and protect His children as we call upon Him in trust and loving obedience.

Timothy’s Charge and Ours

1 Timothy 4:11–16 These things command and teach. Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.

Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.

Repeatedly Paul calls Timothy, and by implication us, to faithfulness in following His counsel in life, practice, and teaching. Timothy, though still a young man, was no less a worker for God than the aged Paul. Timothy's charge is also ours, whether we are young or old, for we too are to live exemplary lives before the world and in the church. Our lives, by Christ's enabling grace and Spirit, are to be examples "in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity" (1 Timothy 4:12 AMP).

Timothy's charge was to remain diligent and faithful until Paul's coming. And thus it must be for all true believers and teachers awaiting the coming of the Lord. We are to give ourselves to the reading of and living by the teachings of Scripture, as we "receive and welcome the Word which implanted and rooted [in your hearts] contains the power to save your souls" (James 1:21 AMP).

Timothy's duty and ours is to meditate upon the things of God, giving ourselves wholly to God's counsel. Then our spiritual progress and growth will be assured and we will be safe from departing from the faith.

Faithfulness to God in a world, and increasingly a church of unbelief, will require perseverance, as it did for Timothy. Receiving God's grace with a resolve to follow His Word will enable us, to encourage and assist others to also maintain true faith and sound doctrine. We will not be saved alone, for our faithfulness or lack thereof will influence others for life or death.

"Be thou faithful" is God's call to us. My hope and prayer is, that this will be your experience.

Endnotes

1. James Strong, LL.D., S.T.D., *The New Expanded Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001).

2. Noah Webster, *American Dictionary of the English Language* (San Francisco, California: Foundation for American Christian Education, 1967).

3. James Strong, op cit.

4. Full article can be found at www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=BarnaUpdate&BarnaUpdateID=154. Publication date December 1, 2003

5. James Strong, op cit.

1 Timothy

Chapter Five

1 Timothy 5:1–2 Rebuke not an elder, but intreat him as a father; and the younger men as brethren; The elder women as mothers; the younger as sisters, with all purity.

Timothy, as a young minister, was counseled how to treat his fellow church members. He was not to “sharply censure or rebuke an older man, but entreat and plead with him as [you would with] a father” (1 Timothy 5:1 AMP). Rightly or wrongly, an older man may take offense in a younger man correcting him. Further, in some cultures, a younger man correcting an elder is unacceptable. However, Bible religion is not based upon culture. It is necessary to encourage, admonish, or rebuke young and old, lay person or church worker. The counsel to Timothy and to us is to do this with tact and respect, yet remaining firm and unbending when it comes to right and wrong.

An argumentative spirit or over-zealous harshness, in most cases, creates the same spirit in others. Therefore, in our interaction with fellow believers, we are to treat them as we should treat family. Timothy, as a leader, was not to be domineering over younger men, exercising his authority in such a manner. Rather, he, as well as we, must learn to treat fellow believers as brothers, exercising love and care and also firmness where necessary to encourage in the right way.

Older women in the church are to be respected as a mother would be, and younger girls and women are to be treated as sisters. Such circumspectness would eliminate any sexual impropriety and lead to a congregational spirit of mutual love and respect.

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1 Timothy 5:3-4 Honour widows that are widows indeed. But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God.

Each society and country varies in regards to the level of care of its older citizens. In some countries the state provides for the infirm and elderly. However, even in such countries, it is appropriate for a congregation to involve itself in a ministry of encouraging and visiting the elderly and widows, especially those of their own congregation, and assisting physically as possible and where necessary.

Often senior members of the church find it physically difficult to attend church regularly if at all. Such should receive support and encouragement from the family of God. This can be as an organized congregational duty or taken up as a personal ministry by individuals. This is more important if the elderly and widows have families who are absent from them for whatever reason.

It may become necessary to seek out alternatives to home-based family care because of the inability to provide the care and special attention needed. However, as Christians, we cannot ignore God's counsel through Paul. Too often the aged are left alone, and many family members adopt the attitude of "out of sight, out of mind." This is not acceptable behavior from a professed child of God. As our parents provided for us, to a greater or lesser degree, in our younger days, so we are to help and encourage our parents as they grow older.

1 Timothy 5:5-8 Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day. But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth. And these things give in charge, that they may be blameless. But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.

Paul describes two classes of widows. One trusts in God, having no family or human help. Another class, having their needs supplied, live for pleasure more than for God. In the sight of God, the poor but pious widow is greater than the careless pleasure-seeker. Timothy and the early church were counseled to make a clear distinction between those in genuine need and those who lean upon the church when it is unnecessary or even for selfish reasons. Such counsel is still applicable.

Paul speaks to the church of his day, and to us as well, when he says that failure to love and care for our families disqualifies us from being considered real Christians. The one who neglects the care of his own family, physically or even spiritually, has denied the faith and is consequently worse than an unbeliever.

1 Timothy 5:9-10 Let not a widow be taken into the number under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man, Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work.

While all widows and the aged should be cared for, Paul gives clear counsel for his day as to the character of the widows who should have the attention of the church. Age was to be considered, for younger widows could work. Those who had attained the age of sixty were less likely to remarry, as younger widows were encouraged to do. He states further that past material status is to be considered. Why? Faithfulness in marriage indicates stability of character.

Paul specifically addresses widows who were self-sacrificing and/or hard working and thus had some degree of means. For to care for children, take in and feed and lodge strangers, and relieve the afflicted, not only with comfort and prayer but meeting physical needs as well, requires self-sacrificing attention but also money. So these widows may not have been as destitute as those described in verse 5.

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It seems possible that the widows mentioned in verses 9 and 10 were active church workers who assisted other women and young girls, ministering to their spiritual well-being. This is a natural and good work for women of any age, but even more so in Paul's day, when there was segregation of men and women. The widows mentioned here had given themselves to gospel work, and now, in their older years, were to be supported.

Whatever the precise meaning and practice Paul was seeking to encourage Timothy and the church to do, it is clear that the family is to bear responsibility toward their aged and widows, regardless of the country and culture they live in. Further, as possible and as needed, the church should try to step in and assist widows and the aged who have no one to help them. Depending on the circumstances, this may be financial or physical help. It certainly includes fellowship and spiritual encouragement. Unfortunately, the aged and older widows often find themselves alone and isolated from family or friends.

1 Timothy 5:11–16 But the younger widows refuse: for when they have begun to wax wanton against Christ, they will marry; Having damnation, because they have cast off their first faith. And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not. I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully. For some are already turned aside after Satan. If any man or woman that believeth have widows, let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed.

It seems that human nature has not changed much from the days of Paul. When younger widows were taken in to receive regular support, their idleness often led to lives of uselessness, resulting in harm to their own spiritual lives and to others. It is often the

same today. In some countries people are paid, for various reasons, to do nothing. While such help at times is legitimate, at other times, while it helps with the physical needs, it destroys character and personal responsibility.

These younger widows were free to remarry and encouraged to do so. The older widows were to be supported while they ministered to other women and children. Younger widows could pledge to remain single and devote themselves to this work as well. But this was a solemn commitment. If they pledged to remain single, giving their first consideration to Christ and the gospel they were not to cast off this pledge later. It was this full commitment to Christ that was lacking and not remarriage that was the cause of Paul's concern. This is why he advised it was not best to support these young and less experienced widows.

Paul reemphasizes that each family is responsible to care for their own, and not to burden the church. This is an important point.

In some parts of the world today, people look to the church to give them everything. People like the widows of Paul's day want the church to give to them even though they are not willing to give their hearts, minds, and strength to Christ. They are seemingly blind to the fact that the people of God are to give so that the church can fulfill its mission.

1 Timothy 5:17–18 Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward.

Local elders in the early church had the care of their local congregations. There was no paid professional ministerial class. But those who gave all their time and effort to the ministry were to receive respect and appreciation for their faithful performance of duty. This honor may have included adequate financial support where a congregation was able to do so. Both honor and material

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support was due to an elder if, in giving their time to the needs of the local church, they were also teaching the gospel and preaching publicly. Like the Levites of old, God calls individuals to His service and they are to be supported as they give their all to Him in ministry.

It is right for every person to be of as much help as they can to their local congregations and to share the gospel in their communities. However, not all are called to full-time gospel work, nor can all expect to be supported by the church.

People in ministry today who are faithful in the discharge of their duty and faithful to the standard of Christ and the Word of God deserve the sympathy, love, and financial support of the people of God. In some situations, congregations are small or lack the means to adequately support a full-time worker. Then it is necessary for those with experience and godly maturity to give of their time to assist and minister to the church and the community. This can be done while at the same time they remain in employment to provide for their financial needs.

Never should any congregation presume upon the time and talents of anyone without considering the Scripture counsel “the labourer is worthy of his hire” (Luke 10:7). All servants of God, whether their congregations or denominations provided adequate support or not, must be seeking “first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness” (Matthew 6:33), and not have the hireling spirit, working largely for the honor of position or the support and benefits received.

1 Timothy 5:19–21 Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses. Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear. I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality.

Timothy was advised not to listen to the idle gossip and prejudices of men in regard to church leaders. This is counsel we would

do well to follow today. Accusations or complaints against elders or other church officers should be carefully considered and accepted only when two or three voice the same concern. There is danger that the unsanctified and critical may undermine the worker for God by mere human standards and unsanctified judgments. Hearsay, gossip, and personal prejudices are not standards to be considered.

The other danger to consider is that some church workers seem to be beyond accountability. This too endangers the church and undermines its influence for Christ. Elders are not to manage the church like a company, with the members being mere employees to drive and push as leaders see fit. Sadly, this does happen. A fellowship, congregation, or denomination must run on the principle that "one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren" (Matthew 23:8).

Local or denominational church workers who persist in sin are to be rebuked and admonished openly so all may see that no one is free to violate God's law and Word. This censure may be among a group of fellow leaders or before the whole congregation, depending on the nature and seriousness of the charge. Such open discipline may be necessary to avoid cover-up of sin and so all "may be warned and stand in wholesome awe and fear" (1 Timothy 5:20 AMP).

Church leaders the world over are at times not properly held accountable for the errors they promote and the faulty character and sinful actions they engage in. God's Word demands faithfulness to deal with error and sin in leadership. It also tells us to counsel and encourage and not to exercise a critical and unfair spirit with leaders, for they, like all men, are liable to error. Assessing accusations against leaders and fellow church members is to be done without partiality.

And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted,
forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake
hath forgiven you. (Ephesians 4:32)

Forbearing one another, and forgiving one

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another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. (Colossians 3:13)

Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. (Galatians 6:1)

The verses above describe the spirit that is needed when meting out discipline to an offender, be he leader or layman. However, if the false accuser, or the leader who has committed error, chooses to exercise a wayward, unrepentant spirit, or if the offenses, sin, or false teaching are of a serious nature, removal from office and fellowship is right and proper.

Paul testified as in the presence of God, the importance of his counsel to Timothy and the church. In the church, each leader and lay member is to faithfully strive to come into “the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13). If this was what each church worker and member prayerfully sought for, and encouraged and helped others toward, many of our church problems would cease.

1 Timothy 5:22 Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men’s sins: keep thyself pure.

The laying on of hands was the public recognition that a person had been called by God, which was evidenced by a character renewed by the Spirit and having the fruit of the Spirit. Laying on of hands is not intended to impart a gift; rather, it is a public recognition of the gift already received from God and being used. The laying on of hands is a solemn dedication of the individual to Christ, with their acknowledgement and desire to be faithful to the commission given to them by God.

Therefore, it is inappropriate to be in a hurry when we appoint a church leader. It is wrong to set people aside by the laying on of hands without evidence in their lives that they have truly been given the gift and ability to rightly be a worker for God. Popularity and political or denominational expediency should never have any place in the solemn dedication of laying on of hands. Educational standards achieved or time served is also not an accurate criteria for ordination. Neither should it be thought that such a ritual in and of itself imparts power or legitimacy when the person is lacking the grace and fruit of the Spirit.

We should help and pray for the sinner, but never should we become involved in their sins. This is especially true in regard to laying on of hands. We should not participate as witnesses or be involved in laying on of hands when we know the person being dedicated has a questionable background and may not be worthy of such recognition. Simply remaining quiet and participating because others are doing so makes us guilty of the faults and failures that the one being ordained will bring to the cause of Christ. Never are church workers who have been disciplined as noted in 5:19-21 to be prematurely reinstated. And certainly not because of friendship, or pressure to do so from people of means or influence, or for any other merely human reason.

Do not be in a hurry in the laying on of hands [giving the sanction of the church too hastily in reinstating expelled offenders or in ordination in questionable cases], nor share or participate in another man's sins; keep yourself pure. (1 Timothy 5:22 AMP)

An Encouragement to Alcohol Consumption?

1 Timothy 5:23 Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities.

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It is sad how often people will pick up on a few Bible verses, maybe just one, to justify their practices when a careful and thorough reading of Scripture leads to an opposite conclusion, contrary to what they believe and practice.

Such is the case with this verse. Some people assume that Paul is speaking here of wine as we know it today, a fermented alcoholic drink. Paul was not encouraging Timothy to drink some wine to relax and unwind after a hard day's work. The call to drink wine was specifically regarding Timothy's stomach ailment. This may have been due to the poor quality of water he would take as he traveled or to some stomach or digestive ailment.

Paul's counsel is strictly medicinal in nature, and the wine was a remedy. This means it was unlikely to be alcohol at all, but the fresh juice of the grape known for its refreshing taste and medicinal properties. Timothy, being the son of a Greek father and Christian mother, would be familiar with the culture of abstinence. In the Greek culture which Timothy would have been familiar with, it was understood that adolescence extended to the age of thirty. No respectable young man would drink wine before that time. And Timothy followed more than Greek custom; he was a servant of God.

Paul understood the necessity for temperance and taught and practiced it himself. He was also familiar with God's requirements of ministers in the Old Testament.

"Do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou, nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die: it shall be a statute for ever through your generations" (Leviticus 10:9). "Neither shall any priest drink wine, when they enter into the inner court" (Ezekiel 44:21).

Paul telling Timothy to drink does not give license for us today to drink alcohol, whether to unwind and relax or to get drunk. If we choose to drink wine for health benefits, the harmful effects of alcohol will undo whatever benefit might be derived from the juice of the grape.

It was common in Paul's day for a non-alcoholic grape syrup or jelly-like substance to be diluted with water; this would neutralize the water's alkalinity and improve the taste. Such wine would

not bring about intoxication when drunk to satisfy thirst and the body's need for liquid. Further this practice would avail to help Timothy overcome his stomach ailments which was the purpose of Paul's counsel.

1 Timothy 5:24–25 Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after. Likewise also the good works of some are manifest beforehand; and they that are otherwise cannot be hid.

Some prospective or current church leaders, upon investigation, will be found wanting and thus are not to be considered for church office. If they are already in office, they are to be removed until such a time as their character changes. Many such people are hypocritical and are not discovered for who they are until a later time, when their sin and folly comes out into the open. Genuine Christian character will be seen by a consistent course, and such ones are safe to bring into church office.

This counsel is not only for church elders and leaders. Some people, by their inconsistent course, make it plain that they are judgment-bound unless they repent. Others may succeed in largely covering up their compromise, error, and sin. Yet these will find themselves one day before the judgment seat of Christ. The only safety is to avoid the deadly delusion that leads us to think or act as if “we have no sin [refusing to admit that we are sinners],” for if we do so, “we delude and lead ourselves astray” to our eternal loss (1 John 1:8 AMP).

Regardless of our error and sin, if we truly humble “ourselves under the mighty hand of God” (1 Peter 5:6), we have the assurance that God “is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

When a sinner repents, the church must avoid two common errors. We should not withhold our sympathy from the repentant, nor should we be too quick to reinstate expelled offenders. All must show the fruits of repentance in humbleness and submission to Christ, shown by a change of life.

1 Timothy Chapter Five

As all sin and compromise will eventually be seen and judged, so too all our righteous deeds and loving service for Christ and His kingdom will have a sure reward, even if we are maligned and unappreciated here.

The true child of God can, with confidence, know he will be vindicated in the future and often even in this life. For the true gold of a Christian experience, even in a world of sin and compromise, cannot remain hidden indefinitely.

1 Timothy

Chapter Six

1 Timothy 6:1–2 Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed. And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren; but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit. These things teach and exhort.

In centuries past, misguided Christians, false professors of religion, and unbelievers have used Paul’s counsel to justify slavery. Slavery was widely practiced in Paul’s day and seemed a normal part of life. Christ’s kingdom of grace and His own example while upon earth show that the conversion of the human heart was the ultimate cure to society’s injustices and sinful practices. Therefore, Paul did not speak against the practice of slavery itself; rather, his appeal was to the heart of master and servant. Both parties, by experiencing the renewing of the mind through the creative power of the gospel, were to treat each other with Christian kindness.

If Paul’s counsel were put into practice, it would eliminate all the abuses common among slaves and masters. Further, to bring Christian principles into the relationship would, over time, dismantle the practice of slavery as it is incompatible with the principles of heaven.

Paul implores Timothy to “teach and urge these duties,” not as a blanket approval of slavery but as a call to live out the far-reaching principles of the gospel.

1 Timothy Chapter Six

We can take the same principles set forth here by Paul and apply them to today's world of work. Rather than trying to get away with doing as little as possible, we should do our work faithfully. Rather than despising our bosses or employers, we should, by the faithful discharge of our duty and maintaining a positive and courteous Christian outlook, give them honor. This, in reality, is honoring God through our manner of work and attitude.

1 Timothy 6:3-5 If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness. He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself.

All those who, in their life or teaching, refuse to bring into practice the words or teachings of Christ, leading to sound doctrine and godliness, are in danger of missing the calling of the gospel altogether. For where the life and teaching is largely void of godliness, which results from the acceptance of the gospel, the perversity of the natural heart will gain the ascendancy. What would be the result of not following the teachings of Christ, though still making a religious profession? Envy, strife, and evil surmising would come to be a part of the character.

1 Timothy 6:6-10 But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they

have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

Godliness is the result of accepting the gospel. It is to be taught by sound and practical instruction, and is an experience that each believer is to seek. *Godliness* means “a religious life; a careful observance of the laws of God and performance of religious duties, proceeding from love and reverence for the divine character and commands.”¹ Such a character is the blessing Christ offers all who follow Him. (See Matthew 5:8.) Many who have not tasted and seen “that the Lord is good” (Psalm 34:8) desire the unlawful gains of this world and heaven too. Yet Christ said the love of possessions rather than complete surrender of heart to His kingdom unbalances the life and experience. He said, “You cannot serve God and mammon (deceitful riches, money, possessions, or whatever is trusted in)” (Matthew 6:24 AMP).

Despite such clear counsel from God's Word, some are determined to make gain and the acquirement of possessions the message of the Bible. With the tendency of the heart of man to covetousness, some seek to make the gospel “a source of profit [a money making business, a means of livelihood]” (1 Timothy 6:5 AMP).

Through twisting the Scriptures and playing on the desperation or desires of the sincere but unconverted or biblically ignorant, pleas for money through various gimmicks are common. Proponents of this message claim that if just a seed of faith is given to a particular ministry or individual, God will return the monetary donation many times over.

At times promoters of the prosperity gospel will mass-mail items that are useless and of no value. Such items may include a special prayer candle, supposed holy oil or water, a prayer cloth, or an outline on a piece of paper where the recipient should place their hand. The recipients are told that if they will follow the instructions that accompany these items, and send in a thank offering or a seed of faith offering, their prayers will be answered.

These mailings may appear to some to be personal correspondence speaking to their needs. Again an encouragement to give money is included, the giving of which is to show your faith and

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unlock heaven's blessings. What is God's counsel to us if we are exposed to such teachers, ministries, or churches, regardless of the tactics they use? "From such withdraw thyself" (1 Timothy 6:5). To do otherwise may lead to having our faith misplaced and our view of God distorted.

Christ has promised us that if we "seek ... first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness ... all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33). Therefore, the first priority in life is the possession of godliness. This "is, indeed, a source of immense profit, for godliness accompanied with contentment ... is great and abundant gain" (1 Timothy 6:6 AMP).

Much of the world is restless for something they do not have, even if their physical wants and needs are supplied which in some countries is true of the majority. However, until our hearts' desire is in Christ, our restlessness and lack of contentment will always be present to a greater or lesser degree.

We often spend much of our life seeking pleasure and enjoyment and possessions. We act and plan without realizing that all we seek is temporal and will soon come to an end. Since "we brought nothing into this world, ... it is certain we can carry nothing out" (1 Timothy 6:7). Ah, but there is one thing we can carry with us if we so desire. It is "gold tried in the fire" (Revelation 3:18). This gold is a character established on faith, hope and love and is the result of accepting the gift of Jesus' grace and salvation. "He that hath the Son hath life" (1 John 5:12).

Therefore, "having food and raiment let us be therewith content" (1 Timothy 6:8). If we exercise a restless spirit rather than seeking godliness, and put our time and effort into striving for riches, we shall fall into temptation and be ensnared. The temptation may appear attractive if we have lost sight of Christ. Yet the "many foolish and hurtful lusts" we strive for will ultimately lead us to "destruction and perdition" (1 Timothy 6:9).

God has not forbidden wealth or comfort. What He has forbidden is "the love of money," for this love replaces love for God and is the source of much of this world's evil. What men will do for money is often shocking; it can lead to the loss of freedom and life, the loss of self-respect, even the loss of human love and compas-

sion. Christians are in no less danger if they allow love for money and the world's pleasures and possessions to gain the ascendancy. For while professing faith and believing that the hope of eternal life is theirs, they are nevertheless departing from the faith.

The Duty to Flee

1 Timothy 6:11–12 But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.

Every man, woman, or young person who desires eternal life must escape all the errors outlined in the letter of 1 Timothy. However, it is not enough to flee compromise, error, and sin. Indeed we cannot truly flee alone, for Christ must be with us. With Christ by our side as we daily surrender and seek His kingdom, we will be strengthened and have the desire to pursue a right standing with God and true godliness. Such a life of faith will lead to love and steadfast endurance and meekness of heart. These possessions are the true source of contentment in this life and make us fit for eternal life.

Eternal life begins now when Christ abides in the heart and life. Therefore, let us fight the good fight of faith, for there are many enemies and temptations that would steal our hearts and our reward. It is necessary that we hold on to faith and hope, for the storms of life will try to break our hold and trust on God.

The stronger the temptations and pleas to sin and compromise, the more earnest we should be to lay hold of eternal life. Our strength is in proportion to Christ's hold on us, which is determined not only by His enduring love but by our calling upon Him for help.

1 Timothy 6:13–16 I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before

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Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.

There was a responsibility resting upon Timothy that extends to you and me, which is to keep God's commandments. It is our duty to flee all error and sin and to engage in the Christian warfare that is solemnly laid before us. The Christian life is to be lived, not for months or a few years, but day by day, walking in faith as long as life shall last.

Paul calls Timothy to consider the God of creation, who gives life to all things; therefore, He would sustain Timothy. Further, the God of all life would raise him from the grave. Such promises of the sustaining hand of God are for us also.

Timothy was charged to give consideration to Christ, who, facing the cross, gave a clear testimony before Pilate. (See John 18:36–37.) We too are called to “think of Him Who endured from sinners such grievous opposition and bitter hostility against Himself [reckon up and consider it all in comparison with your trials], so that you may not grow weary or exhausted, losing heart and relaxing and fainting in your minds” (Hebrews 12:3 AMP).

All of us will one day stand before the Father and Jesus. Yet heaven is on our side, for God's desire is to “have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4.) Further, Christ “gave Himself a ransom for all” (1 Timothy 2:6).

Timothy's duty and privilege was to be unsullied by the world. He was to teach and live irreproachably while awaiting the coming of the Lord. This admonition was not for Timothy alone or believers long ago. It remains the solemn charge upon all believers until

this “mortal shall have put on immortality” and the final victory is gained “through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 15:54, 57).

At Christ's coming all the principalities and powers that have been at war with truth and righteousness, and seeking to ensnare every believer, shall be put down. Then God, whom we have accepted as our Father, shall reign as King of kings.

God is from everlasting to everlasting and dwells in unapproachable light and power, and He shall be honored in the day of His coming. Our deliverance will be “to the praise of the glory of His grace” (Ephesians 1:6). Even now in this life, by His enabling grace and power, we can honor Him by living “holy and without blame before Him in love” (Ephesians 1:4).

Mankind, with his numerous religions and ideas about God and eternity, has set forth many ways to eternal life. However, only God has immortality. It is not inherent in the nature of man; immortality comes only as a gift. Therefore, if we want eternal life, we must know “Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Timothy 1:10). Christ, when living upon this world, made known to mankind “the Father, He has declared Him [He has revealed Him and brought Him out where He can be seen; He has interpreted Him and He has made Him known]” (John 1:18 AMP).

The Duty of Believers with Means to Set Their Priorities Right

1 Timothy 6:17-19 Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

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Regardless of the level of comfort we may obtain through the possession of this world's goods and wealth, we dare not allow these possessions to inflate us with pride of accomplishment. Neither should we assume an attitude of superiority over others based on our acquirement of means. Nothing in life comes to us unless allowed of God; therefore, it is fatal to the soul to trust in riches, whose possession remains uncertain in a world of death, sudden disasters, and change of fortune. Our focus must ever remain on God as we seek, above all things, the true riches of love, hope, and faith. Timothy was commanded to teach these principles, and we are commanded to follow them.

Men of means in the world, especially believers, have a solemn duty. They have gained their wealth from the world God has created and continually sustains. Therefore, they are to use their means to "do good, to be rich in good works, to be liberal and generous of heart, ready to share [with others]" (1 Timothy 6:18 AMP). While such good works will not merit God's grace or gain for us salvation, when done by faith and in love for God we are building a solid foundation for eternity. Such selflessness, when in the possession of means, indicates we are laying "hold on eternal life" rather than the fleeting "pleasures of sin for a season" (Hebrews 11:25).

1 Timothy 6:20–21 O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: Which some professing have erred concerning the faith. Grace be with thee. Amen.

Paul's closing admonition to Timothy speaks to us as well. The knowledge of Christ and the gospel is to be laid up in the heart and followed with all the mind and strength. We are to avoid at all costs the vain and empty fashions and follies of the world that change with each passing year. We are to shun all the contradictions of falsehood that increasingly are coming into the church, offering supposed new knowledge and spiritual illumination.

We are not to allow the ever-increasing science and technology that is part of the modern world to capture our minds and

attention, leading us to doubt God and His Word. Rightly understood, all true knowledge and science will reveal to us “the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!” And yet even with all of man’s knowledge and science we find “how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! (Romans 11:33).

Accepting supposed new revelation that contradicts God’s Word or comes as an addition to the Bible will cause us to err regarding true faith and the way to eternal life. We are to avoid the teachings “and foolish arguments of what some people wrongly call ‘knowledge.’ For some have claimed to possess it, and as a result they have lost the way of faith” (1 Timothy 6:20–21 TEV).

Our safety is in the grace of God, which draws our hearts and enables us to serve Him in love. I pray you will allow the power of God’s grace to be in your life, as it is God’s desire to save you and make you His child. Will you accept His pardon, favor, and help this day?

Endnotes

1. Noah Webster, *American Dictionary of the English Language* (San Francisco, California: Foundation for American Christian Education, 1967).

2 Timothy

Chapter One

2 Timothy 1:1–6 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus, To Timothy, my dearly beloved son: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day; Greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy; When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also. Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.

Paul's second letter to Timothy was written from prison, for his freedom was taken from him about AD 66–67. Paul would never again have his liberty in this world, though prison walls did not bind his pen or his spirit. In light of his circumstances, Paul's instruction to Timothy was to remain faithful and to fulfill his calling from God.

Paul opens his letter by reminding Timothy of his calling from Christ as an apostle, a work he had given decades of his life to in teaching the gospel amidst trial and persecution. He stated it was by the will of God that he was an apostle. It is God's will that you and I, by our lives and testimonies, also be messengers of God's

mercy and goodness. We, like Paul, have the promise and hope of eternal life in Christ.

Despite stoning and shipwreck, suffering want and betrayal, Paul knew for a certainty the reality of the gospel and the Savior whom he loved and served. How sad it is that we often have such a weak faith and testimony for Christ, despite our relative peace or prosperity compared to the difficulties Paul faced.

Paul's regard for Timothy was as father to a beloved son. This closeness was founded upon each one's love for Christ and mutual work in preaching the gospel. The foundation for such closeness and friendship was in the calling each had received and the grace and mercy and peace both had known in Christ. The bond between them was not only human but was touched as well by the uniting of hearts in the spirit of Christ.

Our ability to be faithful to our calling as children of God and enabled to experience a unity with heaven is dependent as well as was Paul's experience, on the grace and mercy received from Christ and God.

Can we say, like Paul, that we have served God with a pure conscience? This is the privilege of every child of God. It is not solely for men of special talents or calling—far from it. All who have known the forgiving grace of God through “the blood of Christ, ... who offered Himself without spot to God” are to experience a conscience cleansed “from dead works to serve the living God” (Hebrews 9:14).

Faithfulness to God is not only of eternal benefit to our own souls' salvation. Our faithfulness is also a source of encouragement and hope to others. Such was the encouragement of Timothy to the aged Paul. Our influence is far reaching, for good or bad. We can encourage others to faithfulness or we can be the cause of discouragement.

Timothy's tears of love were an encouragement to Paul. He saw in Timothy the fruit of his labors for Christ that would extend far beyond his own life, which was soon to end.

Paul was encouraged when he thought of Timothy and his mother and grandmother, who each had faith in Jesus. Trust in God cannot be inherited, but it can be encouraged and cultivat-

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ed, as it was for Timothy, when we are in a home where belief in God is cherished and practiced. Many have not had the privilege of growing up in a family of faith, as Timothy did. However, such a legacy can begin now with you. By faith, we can receive the gift of God, the salvation that is in Christ. Then, by the grace of God's spirit living in us, we can become an encouragement and help to others.

It is in the nature of man on this sin-filled earth that if he does not appreciate the gift of salvation and use his gifts and talents from the Lord, his faith grows weak. Further, the talents, abilities, and gifts from God that are to be used for His service will become ineffective, ready to perish, if they are not constantly used and appreciated. Therefore, let us, like Timothy, “(fan the flame of, and keep burning) the [gracious] gift of God” (2 Timothy 1:16 AMP).

There was no transference of grace, power, or spiritual endowments from Paul to Timothy by the mere laying on of hands. Paul sought to encourage Timothy to remember and think upon God's goodness, which called him to the ministry. It was this calling from God that was recognized by Paul and others, when in solemn recognition and acknowledgement of God's gift, hands were laid upon Timothy dedicating him to God's service.

No man or group of men can transfer any kind of spiritual power or ability to another person. We can be taught by others and encouraged to faithfulness, but that is the extent of the transfer of spiritual graces from man to man. Our gifts and abilities are ultimately from the Lord and are to be used in His service. We can only give to God our faith and love, which is the result of our surrender to His drawing love.

2 Timothy 1:7–10 For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God; Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and

grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

The gift of God in bringing us salvation is transforming in its nature. Knowing God also delivers us from fear, arising from the many problems that accompany us in this life, including fear of the unknown and what lies beyond the grave. God's gift brings to us an understanding of His power to save. The Spirit of God working in our lives instills in us love and peace and a well-balanced mind as we live a disciplined life with self-control.

Never are we to be ashamed of God's Word and counsel, though we live in a world of increasing unbelief. Neither should we abandon and shun God's servants who faithfully bear God's Word amidst opposition from an ungodly world and oftentimes from a faithless church. We cannot really claim to love God if we fail to support and pray for His faithful and afflicted servants who give heart and life to God's work. As with Timothy, our faithfulness to Christ may require that we suffer for His sake. Indeed, this will be the case, for to each one of us has been "granted [the privilege] for Christ's sake not only to believe in [adhere to, rely on, and trust in] Him, but also to suffer in His behalf" (Philippians 1:29 AMP).

This suffering comes as a result of faithfulness to Christ "in the midst of a crooked and wicked generation [spiritually perverted and perverse], among whom you are seen as bright lights (stars or beacons shining out clearly) in the [dark] world" (Philippians 2:15 AMP).

Our ability to live for God a life of consecration is solely the result of His grace and "not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:9). God has not brought salvation to mankind because of anything in us of merit or goodness; rather, it is due to His goodness and kindness. Our destiny is to be children of God, "for we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them"

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(Ephesians 2:10). That is His desire for us, but it can be frustrated by our perverse will and unbelief.

God's heart of grace toward mankind has been plainly shown to the world in the incarnation of He who was "God ... manifest in the flesh" (1 Timothy 3:16). The result of Christ's incarnation, which was conceived in ages past, is that Christ has abolished the condemnation of eternal death and has brought abundant life to us now and a glorious immortality through the good news of the gospel.

2 Timothy 1:11-14 Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day. Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us.

Paul was granted numerous spiritual gifts, including the gift of healing and the gift of tongues, in order to communicate the gospel to many nations and people. He was also a preacher, teacher, and apostle. But God's work is not left to only the specially endowed. Far from it. Each one of us has a role to play in furthering God's kingdom and making His will known on "earth, as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10).

All men have been chosen by God to be saved because of His love and mercy. Those who have been called by God are to dedicate their talents to Him. As we have the fruit of the Spirit, we make known God's character and are prepared, as the Spirit directs, to receive gifts for the work of ministry in the church and to the world. Christ has gone to heaven to prepare a place for us (see John 14:2), and each of His children has a work and influence for God.

As Paul suffered for his master and the cause of truth in a world of darkness and error, so we, to one degree or another, will suffer as Christ works in us, “that He might deliver us from this present evil world” (Galatians 1:4). Why is this opposition to be expected? As we live out Christ’s kingdom principles in a world under the dominion of the evil one and the “children of disobedience” (Ephesians 2:2) who are under his influence, the principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness that prevail all around will oppose us.

Therefore, let us with faith and hope fix our trust upon the cross and the glories of the world to come. And let us, like Paul, believe and allow the Word of God and the strength of the Spirit to persuade and fix our hope on Him who has loved us so much.

Paul committed his life and work to God with utmost confidence. And we too may do the same, “being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it [will finish it] until the day of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:6).

Timothy was implored to hold fast to sound doctrine, for the early church was already facing the subtle corruptions of faith that are the mark of our own age. True faith founded upon God’s Word, and in love seeking His honor, will keep us as it kept Timothy from the seductions of error and compromise.

Timothy’s calling to the gospel work as a minister and teacher was a sacred trust. And to each of us as believers it is entrusted to rightly represent God, with a heart, mind, and soul surrendered to Him. “Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? for ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Corinthians 6:19–20).

2 Timothy 1:15–18 This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes. The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain: But, when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found me. The Lord grant unto him

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that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day:
and in how many things he ministered unto me at
Ephesus, thou knowest very well.

Paul, though a giant of Christian faith, experienced betrayal and rejection. We too may meet betrayal from those who know not the gospel, even though they may profess to be Christians. We must not allow ourselves to be discouraged or disappointed if this happens. Christ has chosen us out of the world, so to some extent the world will hate you. (See John 15:19.) As with Paul, hatred, disappointments, or betrayals may come from those we know and trust, even professed brethren in the faith.

Though Paul experienced betrayal as professed believers abandoned him, what encouraged his soul was the faithfulness and friendship of others. He especially mentioned Onesiphorus. We too should appreciate the special friends along our pilgrim path who encourage and strengthen us in the Lord. When God grants us such companionship, we should be especially grateful.

Even if we are largely alone, as Paul was at times, we are to look beyond the trials and disappointments “unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood” (Revelation 1:5). I pray the love of Christ will be what you fix your hope and trust on in this world of disappointment.

2 Timothy

Chapter Two

2 Timothy 2:1–6 Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier. And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully. The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits.

Paul's counsel to Timothy is sound advice to us as well. Our strength in this world of sin is in proportion to the grace of God experienced as, with a surrendered heart, we are filled with His mercy and strengthened by His grace.

Timothy was ordained a minister of the gospel and was therefore expected to commit the truth to others. That trust is ours as well. By our influence and active witness, in whatever form, we are to make the principles of God's truth known to others. In turn they will make God's love and truth known. Thus the light of God's kingdom will spread.

Many Christians seek lives of ease and freedom from difficulty. Yet we have not received such a calling. The commitment required of a soldier is also required of us. As soldiers must at times follow orders that are inconvenient, and even dangerous, so will be the lot of every true child of God.

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A soldier cannot have divided loyalties, and neither can the Christian. Our time, talents, means, and indeed all we have and are is to be entrusted to God. As a soldier must yield to the commands of superiors, so we are to “trust in the Lord with all ... [our] heart; and lean not unto ... [our] own understanding” (Proverbs 3:5).

Drawing a lesson from the athletic world, Paul declares that he who gains success on the field of sports must compete lawfully, for there can be no shortcuts or cheating. For us as Christians it must be the same. There is no easy path to eternal life and growth in faith and godliness. As with the successful athlete, there will of necessity be a need for discipline and self-control.

The prize of eternal life, unlike the games, is for all who will run the race of faith. The athlete can gain the prize only if he competes fairly, according to the rules laid down. So for us. We can only gain the crown of life one way, and that is by saving faith in Christ. Christ, by His grace, will enable and strengthen us to live to please Him as we day by day develop a character made ready for heaven.

Paul next draws lessons for the Christian life from the farmer. Only he who works hard with faithfulness can hope for and expect the fruits of an abundant harvest. It will be no different for the true child of God. We must labor to develop faith and a firm trust in God, looking beyond short-term disappointments. The farmer, to gain success, must be in the work for the long haul, year after year. It is the same in the Christian experience, for as we sow righteousness in our daily lives we can expect a sure reward.

Further, the farmer can only reap what he sows. So it is with the Christian experience. “For whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting” (Galatians 6:7–8). As the husbandman in due time shall reap, we are encouraged to not grow “weary in well doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not” (Galatians 6:9).

2 Timothy 2:7–10 Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.

Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel: Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound. Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

Paul admonished Timothy and the churches to give careful consideration to all that he wrote. Following his counsel would lead to a full understanding of the practical truths of godliness and the application of its principles in all aspects of life. However, it is not enough to simply consider Paul's counsel. God, through His Spirit, must give us intellectual and heart understanding and enabling grace to live out the counsel of heaven.

An encounter with the risen Lord was Paul's whole motivation in life, work, and worship. It must also be our motivation, and indeed it will be if we "have been raised with Christ [to a new life, thus sharing His resurrection from the dead]" (Colossians 3:1 AMP).

What will be the result of our personal encounter with Christ by faith as the Spirit draws us? We will set our "minds and keep them set on what is above (the higher things), not on the things that are in the earth" (Colossians 3:2 AMP).

Paul often used the term "my gospel." Was Paul's message of salvation his own development of theology? Or was it from God? Paul's life was so closely entwined with his calling and work that Christ's gospel was his own. It was the whole focus of his life. In the same way, God desires that we would so surrender to Him each day of our lives that when doing His will and following heaven's principles we are following our hearts' desire.

Today there are pastors and teachers who have left the faith, and who change and distort the gospel. Paul never did this. He was ever true to this calling. What was the nature of Paul's calling and the gospel he taught?

At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from

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heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.

But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me. (Acts 26:13–18).

Some people who, like Paul, have suffered for their religious belief think that this shows the correctness of their faith. Religious persecution of itself does not prove the correctness of our belief, but simply the prejudiced and hard heart of the sinful men who engage in the persecution, even though it is sometimes done in God's name.

The persecution Paul suffered, including imprisonment, was for the word of God. Paul's hardship was often a cause of his rejoicing as he saw that the influence of his ministry and the power of God's Word could not be completely hindered. Paul's heart was encouraged amidst trial and opposition because he had known the blessings of Christ found in Matthew 5:3–12. The promise of Christ was experienced abundantly by Paul, as Jesus said, "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:10).

Like Paul, we, through Christ's enabling grace, should learn to endure all things. We are to receive God's favor and blessings without growing careless amidst peace or prosperity. Neither are we to grow discouraged in the midst of life's many disappointments and trials. It is not only our own souls' salvation that is at stake. Like Paul we have an influence on others. This is why he said, "I [am ready to] persevere and stand my ground with patience and endure everything for the sake of the elect [God's chosen], so that they too may obtain [the] salvation which is in Christ Jesus, with [the reward of] eternal glory" (2 Timothy 2:10 AMP).

2 Timothy 2:11-13 It is a faithful saying: for if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: if we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us: if we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.

What made Paul so steadfast? The confidence of eternal life with Christ. Living a life of faith here and now is not possible by merely wishful thinking or vain or misplaced hope.

Can that steadfastness be ours? Yes. But our hope is only genuine if we have died with Christ, surrendering to Him as Lord and Savior. This is not something we can do of ourselves, but comes as we respond to "the kindness and love of God" (Titus 3:4).

The love of God received into the heart leads to a death as we experience "the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus 3:5). A life of surrender to the will and Word of God is what it means to be dead with Christ. "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin" (Romans 6:6).

Thus, "if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Romans 8:11). The renewing and life-changing work of the Spirit in our lives brings us to Christ that we might be "made free from sin." The Spirit leads us to become "servants to God" and increas-

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ingly develops in the life “fruit unto holiness” that in the end will result in “everlasting life” (Romans 6:22).

The life-changing Spirit at work in us now is the assurance that we shall “live with Him.” In contrast, if we deny Christ by a love of the world, by sin, or by compromise of the gospel, we deny Christ, and He cannot cover us with His merits. If we live with unconfessed and unforsaken sin, He cannot intercede for us. Yet even in such a state, He desires our salvation and continually works to reprove us and draw us by His love and grace. If we remain indifferent and depart from the faith and listen to “seducing spirits and doctrines of devils,” there will come a time when we will be “cast forth as a branch, ... withered” by sin and compromise (John 15:6). Then Christ will deny us, for we have been spued out of His mouth. (See Revelation 3:16.)

Despite humanity’s unfaithfulness and lack of faith and commitment, God’s love and grace do not change. “He abideth faithful He cannot deny Himself.” “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

Therefore, anyone who loses eternal life is lost due to his own perversity of heart and unbelief. Those who prefer the pleasure of sin, or have no love for the truth and accept falsehood in the place of truth, will be lost. Yet the kindness and mercy of God remains. Whether or not we respond, He remains faithful. This is why the message of Scripture and the voice of the Spirit have, since the inception of sin, spoken to mankind this message: “Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else” (Isaiah 45:22).

2 Timothy 2:14–19 Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers. Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their word

will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some. Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

Repeatedly Paul encourages Timothy to put into practice and to teach the counsel he has given. Why such repetition? It was not Timothy's unwillingness to live and teach what was right; rather, it was the great importance of truth according to godliness that led Paul to the constant emphasis. Thus it must be with us. We often have to go back to the foundation of trust in God and sound doctrine and true faith. Today we live in a religious age and a Christian church that is often leaving "the pillar and ground of truth" (1 Timothy 3:15) for new ideas and ancient apostasy that are contrary to Scripture. Practices and teachings are coming into the church that ignore or distort biblical truth and, despite claims to the contrary, are of "no profit." Just as in Paul's day, pleasing words and false doctrine work to undermine sound faith and extinguishes the spirit of consecration.

We, like Timothy, must study God's Word. This study is not for intellectual knowledge alone; rather, it is that we might know God and be reproved and admonished, building a character for heaven. We are to receive "with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls" (James 1:21).

We are not to be "like children, forever changing our minds about what we believe because someone has told us something different, or has cleverly lied to us and made the lie sound like the truth" (Ephesians 4:14 TLB). "Rather, let our lives lovingly express truth [in all things, speaking truly, dealing truly, living truly]. Enfolded in love, let us grow up in every way and in all things into Him Who is the Head, [even] Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed One)" (Ephesians 4:15 AMP).

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By God's Spirit of truth working in us, we are to search the Scriptures rightly and with prayerful hearts, seeking to be approved of God. Vain, useless talk and teachings are in direct contrast to the word of truth being rightly studied and lived out in the life. These have the tendency to lead us into a feel-good religion, but it is accompanied by false doctrine and leads away from godliness. False teachings are like a canker, "an eating sore, spreading corruption and producing mortification."¹ As used in Timothy it speaks of teachers of error "in the church, who, pretending to give true spiritual food, produce spiritual gangrene."²

Such was the case in Paul's day with Hymenaeus and Philetus, who were teaching that the resurrection had already taken place. All false teaching will undermine truth faith. This leads to much profession of religion but often a lack of real heart transformation and discipleship.

Despite the falsehood and errors striving for mastery among the professed people of God, from Paul's day to our own, the foundation of truth remains. True faith and biblical Christianity has not and will not change. Despite many false professors in the church, God knows those who are His, for they are known by the genuineness of their faith. This seal of true faith is manifest by departing from iniquity, error, and sin. Indeed, the true Spirit of grace received into the heart teaches us and enables us to deny "ungodliness and worldly lusts" as we "live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world" (Titus 2:12).

2 Timothy 2:20–21 But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work.

As in a house so it is in the church, there are things "for honorable and noble [use] and some for menial and ignoble [use]" (2 Timothy 2:20 AMP). This has two lessons for us. All in the church

are important for as Paul wrote in Corinthians “those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, [i.e., less important] are necessary” (1 Corinthians 12:22).

And in the church we do not cast away the timid, or the less talented, for each individual who is seeking God has a place, even as items in our homes whether common or expensive serve their purpose.

Paul goes on to say that the things that dishonor Christ and negatively affect our character or the church is to be purged and taken out of the life. All believers regardless of their position or standing in the church are to be a vessel unto honor. This means living a life pleasing to God and setting aside every “weight, [encumbrance] and the sin which doth so easily beset us” then we are to “run with patience the race that is set before us” (Hebrews 12:1).

In the church we will find false professors of religion. We are to help and pray for them, but never to follow their example. We are admonished to purge our lives of all “contaminating and corrupting influences” (2 Timothy 2:21 AMP) that would undermine true faith, putting us under the influence of seducing spirits. This cleansing from our lives of all that is dishonoring to Christ is possible only by God’s enabling strength, motivated by faith and love. The result of this casting aside of the dishonorable attributes of thought and life is that each of us will be “a vessel set apart and useful for honorable and noble purposes, consecrated and profitable to the Master, fit and ready for any good work” (2 Timothy 2:21 AMP).

2 Timothy 2:22–26 Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes. And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the

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truth; And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.

Young or old we are to flee the lusts of the flesh, which demonstrate an immaturity and shallowness in our experience. Not only must we make an effort to flee and set aside spiritually hurtful practices, we are to pursue righteousness. This means all that is virtuous and good, living in conformity to the will of God, “bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5).

False doctrine and unimportant side issues, which lead away from the pursuit of godliness, are to be shunned if we are to have a sound Christian experience. This is by no means a call to shun controversy, for we will have to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3). Truth must be upheld by our lives and by our teachings. It can never be compromised to gain peace or false unity.

As servants of God, laity or gospel workers, we are to live and teach our faith without a quarrelsome, contentious spirit. Rather, by God’s grace, we must be gentle but firm and uncompromising, patient and forbearing when challenged or falsely accused.

Those who ignorantly or willfully oppose sound doctrine and godliness must be rebuked and admonished, yet taught with courtesy the enabling virtue of the truths we profess. Uncompromisingly living and teaching the truth in love will lead some to perceive and recognize their error. This example may help them to come to their senses, escaping from the snare of the devil that has held them captive to false ideas, doctrines, and religious practices that lead away from Christ and salvation.

The great purpose of the devil is to ensnare each one of us in falsehood and sin or a thousand other things that would take away the hope of eternal life. The great purpose of God, of whom Paul was an instrument, is to lead us into the light of truth and away from the soul-damning influences of falsehood and sin. My friend, what influence and power is being worked out in your life? I pray

you will allow the light and love of heaven into your life this day.
Amen.

Endnotes

1. James Strong, LL.D., S.T.D., *The New Expanded Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001).
2. Ibid.

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2 Timothy 3:1–5 This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.

In 1 Timothy 3 Paul gives a warning of a time when professed believers in Christ would depart from saving faith and sound doctrine. In 2 Timothy 4 he warns of a time when people will not tolerate sound biblical instruction but will desire teachers who bring errors inspired by seducing spirits. Sadly, the age we live in fully manifests the time spoken of in the above references.

The good news is that time is almost over, as the perilous dangers and difficulties signal that these are the last days. A careful reading of 2 Timothy 3:1–5 shows the condition of mankind in general and the religious world in particular, and it matches the description of mankind just before the flood. Romans 1:28–31 is recognized as a description of man’s character and spiritual condition before the deluge. The description of people’s thoughts and lives, in short their character, in Romans 1 and here in 2 Timothy, are very similar.

Jesus said, “As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the son of man” (Luke 17:26). Not only will the world

meet sudden destruction, as in Noah's day, the heart condition of man will find its parallel in the world and in the church just before He comes again. This condition of near universal apostasy is the source of the distress and danger Paul has warned us of.

Religion in general and the professed church in particular will be little better than the world, and both will be in a similar spiritual condition as in the days just before the flood. Peace and safety will be the hopeful message. Meanwhile, the religious world, claiming to know and teach the truth of God, will increasingly be leading people away from Him. As iniquity increases, the professed love of many for God will grow cold. (See Matthew 24:12.)

In contrast to the general apostasy and falling away from truth and sound Christian experience, God's true people will "flee these things" and seek "after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness." They will "fight the good fight of faith" and "lay hold on eternal life" (1 Timothy 6:11-12).

The Perilous Way and Christ Way

As we compare the attributes of character of those who claim religion but deny true faith with those who follow Christ's way, I encourage you to examine your heart. Ask God to help you see whether the religion you claim is one of peril and danger or if you are truly following the way of Christ.

1. **Men shall be lovers of their own selves**—fond of self, selfish, lovers of self, and utterly self-centered.

Christ's way: "And he said to them all, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?" (Luke 9:23-25)

2. **Covetous**—fond of money, excessively eager to obtain and possess, lovers of money, and aroused by an inordinate, greedy

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desire for wealth. “For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God” (Ephesians 5:5).

Christ’s way: “Let your conversation [manner of living] be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” (Hebrews 13:5)

“Let your character or moral disposition be free from love of money [including greed, avarice, lust, and craving for earthly possessions] and be satisfied with your present [circumstances and with what you have]; for He [God] Himself has said, I will not in any way fail you nor give you up nor leave you without support.” (Hebrews 13:5 AMP)

3. **Boasters**—fond of presenting one’s endowments or words to others in an advantageous light

Christ’s way: “Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory [boast] in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord.” (Jeremiah 9:23–24; see also Psalm 34:2; 44:8.)

4. **Proud**—appearing above others, haughty; high opinion of oneself with some contempt for others

Christ’s way: “But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: and whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to

give his life a ransom for many." (Mark 10:43–45; see also Proverbs 8:13; 1 John 2:16.)

5. **Blasphemers**—abusive (blasphemous and scoffing). It is an injury offered to God by denying that which is due and belonging to Him, or attributing to Him that which is not agreeable to His nature.

Christ's way: "For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God." (Colossians 1:9–10)

6. **Disobedient to parents**—un-persuadable; i.e., contumacious or rebellious; willfully disobedient, inflexible, unyielding perverse, stubborn.

Christ's way: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth." (Ephesians 6:1–3)

7. **Unthankful**—thankless, ungrateful, not making acknowledgments for good received.

Christ's way: "Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Ephesians 5:20)

"In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." (1 Thessalonians 5:18)

8. **Unholy**—wicked, not renewed and sanctified (see Psalm 50:16–17.)

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Christ's way: "That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." (Ephesians 4:22–24)

9. **Without natural affection**—hard-hearted toward kindred. "They will be without natural [human] affection (callous and inhuman)." (2 Timothy 3:3 AMP)

Christ's way: "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another." (Romans 12:10)

10. **Trucebreakers**—one who violates a truce, covenant, or engagement (admitting of no truce or appeasement.)

Christ's way: "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation." (Psalm 24:3–4)

11. **False accusers**—slanderers, troublemakers

Christ's way: "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." (1 Peter 2:21–23)

12. **Incontinent**—powerless, without self-control; intemperate and loose in morals.

Christ's way: "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound [disciplined, self-controlled] mind." (2 Timothy 1:7)

13. **Fierce**—passionate, angry, furious

Christ's way: "But the fruit of the Spirit is gentleness ... meekness." (Galatians 5:22–23)

14. **Despisers of those who are good**—hostile to virtue

Christ's way: "Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good." (Romans 12:9)

"Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate: it may be that the Lord God of hosts will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph." (Amos 5:15)

15. **Traitors**—treacherous betrayers; those who betray a trust

Christ's way: "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." (2 Corinthians 5:14–15)

16. **Heady**—hasty, disposed to rush forward in an enterprise without thought or deliberation; hurried on by will or passion, ungovernable.

Christ's way: "Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not. Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. For whoso findeth me [wisdom] findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord." (Proverbs 8:33–35; see also Jeremiah 10:23; James 4:15.)

17. **Highminded**—to inflate with self-conceit; proud, arrogant

Christ's way: "But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble." (James 4:6)

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18. Lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God—lovers of sensual pleasures and vain amusements more than and rather than lovers of God.

Christ's way: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." (1 John 2:15–17)

19. Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof—having an appearance of godliness and piety, but denying and contradicting their profession by their lives. "For [although] they hold a form of piety (true religion), they deny and reject and are strangers to the power of it [their conduct belies the genuineness of their profession]. Avoid all such people [turn away from them]" (2 Timothy 3:5 AMP).

Christ's way: "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. ... Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart." (2 Timothy 2:19, 22)

From such turn away—"I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat." (1 Corinthians 5:9–11; see also Romans 16:17–18; 2 Thessalonians 3:6; Titus 3:10–11.)

My friend, as we have briefly looked at the characteristics of the perilous way and Christ's way, I hope you have been able to determine by God's grace which direction you are going. If we turn away from Christ and the truth of Scripture and yet still profess religion and a belief in God, we will one day hear these sad words from Christ: "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who act wickedly [disregarding My commands]" (Matthew 7:23 AMP).

2 Timothy 3:6-9 For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith. But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs also was.

Individuals who only have a form of godliness often approach women of weak character with their subtle manners and deceitful characters in order to propagate their falsehoods. The idea presented by Paul is that such women are under the influence of sinful desires and propensities, and hence are better adapted to accept the ideas and purposes of deceivers. But it is not women alone who are subject to deception. All who are "weak-natured and spiritually dwarfed ... loaded down with [the burden of their] sins [and easily] swayed and led away by various evil desires and seductive impulses" (2 Timothy 3:6 AMP) are in danger.

Because of this form of godliness or religious profession without the experience of the gospel, "the power of God unto salvation" (Romans 1:16), sexual immorality raises its ugly head in the church. Adultery, fornication, pornography, and sexual abuse, which should not even be named among the saints, often finds expression. Some people professing religion, like some of the women in Paul's day, are ever learning but never "able to come to a knowledge of the truth." In contrast, the true child of God shall "cleanse

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his way by taking heed thereto according to Thy Word” (Psalm 119:9).

In Paul’s time as well as in our own age, those who merely have a form of godliness may learn many things, but they do not understand the true nature of the Christian experience. There are many such professors of religion in the world. They give attention to religion, but never understand the Scriptures. There are also some who have a speculative acquaintance with the doctrines of Christianity, but never become acquainted with Christ in a saving relationship.

Still others may study the creeds of their church, but remain strangers to practical piety. Such ones are familiar with the various philosophical theories of religion but do not know by experience saving faith. They may even accept miracles, signs, and wonders, the so-called moving of the Spirit, yet show by their lives that they are not influenced by the Spirit of Christ. They may be busy and active in religion, and even know many things about it, but they remain strangers to the saving power of the gospel. All such professors of religion, though exposed to the gospel and hearing things about the Bible, never experience in their hearts saving truth and practical godliness.

Jannes and Jambres are not mentioned in the Old Testament, but according to Jewish tradition they were the Egyptian court magicians who opposed Moses.¹ Counterfeit religion has always been in the world, but will increasingly be seen in the Christian church as well. Many professing godliness and faith in Christ will in practice be opposed to the truth and will be believing and teaching a counterfeit gospel, Christ, and Holy Spirit. (See 2 Corinthians 11:3–4.)

Those doing the work of Jannes and Jambres in Paul’s day and our own, work in like manner as the magicians who opposed Moses. Paul wrote to Timothy that there were those who made similar claims to that of the apostles. They represented themselves as having as much authority as the apostles. However, their claims were false, as are many of those who call themselves prophets and apostles today. Such ones, by their doctrine and lives, in reality neutralize the work of the Spirit and the power of God and His

Word, though claiming to accept all three. Such false teachers are able today, as they did long ago, to influence and lead weak-minded persons away from the truth, though claiming to follow it. Blind teachers leading blind followers are one of the most dangerous forms of opposition to the true gospel and biblical Christianity.

Counterfeit religion and a mere form of godliness will prevail in the last days, and many in the church will believe and claim it is a time of great revival and enlightenment. Sadly, many professors of religion will not realize like Jannes and Jambres before them, that they have been fighting against God.

2 Timothy 3:10–13 But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.

Paul draws our attention to his life and ministry of teaching sound doctrine in contrast to the perverse disputing of men. Paul's faith, patience, love, and steadfastness was and still is an example to believers. Our lives are also to be examples to those around us by God's enabling grace.

Paul experienced persecution at Antioch when the "Jews stirred up the devout and honorable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabbas, and expelled them out of their coasts" (Acts 13:50).

Again, at Iconium, as Paul taught a "great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed. But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren. Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands. But the multitude of the city was divided: and part held with the Jews, and part

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with the apostles. And when there was an assault made both of the Gentiles, and also of the Jews with their rulers, to use them despitefully, and to stone them, They were aware of it, and fled unto Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and unto the region that lieth round about: And there they preached the gospel” (Acts 14:2-7).

At Lystra “there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead” (Acts 14:19).

These are but some of the examples of how Paul was persecuted and experienced hardships “for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Revelation 1:9).

Paul teaches Timothy and us that persecution was not to be his experience alone. In one form or another it is the experience of “all that will live godly” in this world. Jesus said, “The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you” (John 15:20). The nature and intensity of persecution will vary according to time and place and the circumstances we find ourselves in. But it will be there and will be experienced in some degree by all who have chosen to walk with Christ and enter the straight gate and narrow way.

We should not be looking for a time of great revival, for both in the church and in the world “evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived” (2 Timothy 3:13). The rampant increase of apostasy and falsehood is the condition foretold for our day. This apostasy in the church is preparing the world for the image and mark of the beast. This image to the beast will be formed by a power with apparently lamb-like profession but that speaks as a dragon. (See Revelation 13:11-13.)

2 Timothy 3:14-17 But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction,

for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

If Paul repeatedly called Timothy to faithfully continue in the things he had learned, is not this our necessity as well? Indeed it is. Only he “that endureth to the end shall be saved” (Matthew 10:22). “Patient continuance in well doing,” seeking God’s “glory and honour” by His enabling grace, assures us of “immortality” and “eternal life” (Romans 2:7).

Timothy was fortunate to be raised in a family who loved and feared God, and the Scriptures were the foundation of his childhood home. This has not been the case with many of us. Yet, as we by faith accept Christ and follow His Word, we too may experience the wisdom the Scriptures will impart, thereby making us wise unto salvation. Indeed, if we will lay aside compromise, error, and sin and in a “humble (gentle, modest) spirit receive and welcome the Word” into our hearts and lives, the Word “contains the power to save your souls” (James 1:21 AMP).

In our day of speculation, which increasingly is undermining God’s Word, it is still true that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God. God’s Word alone is the true source of all profitable doctrine, in contrast to the often well-meaning but mistaken notions of man. God’s Word is to bear its testimony of reproof and correction to make plain “the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12). The Bible alone contains the instruction that will make and keep a man righteous as he submits by faith to follow Christ and His Word. The faithful teaching and study of Scripture remains the means by which “the man of God may be perfect” so that in a world of perversity and religious error we may to God’s glory “shine as lights in the world” (Philippians 2:15).

Endnotes

1. Footnotes from The Amplified Bible on 2 Timothy 3:8.

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2 Timothy 4:1–5 I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.

Repeatedly Paul implores us to faithfulness and to our calling as children of God. Paul’s final command or commission is in light of the fact that Christ shall judge the living and the dead at His coming. If we are in Christ, we need not fear the “wrath of the Lamb” (Revelation 6:16). Yet it is well to keep in mind that “God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil” (Ecclesiastes 12:14).

In light of our accountability to God for the truth and salvation He has brought to us through Christ, we must allow God’s Word to reprove, rebuke, and exhort us and to be faithful in the discharge of our duty. For all who minister God’s Word—be it in the family, in church, in Bible studies, in public teaching, or any other form—we must be faithful in letting the Word of God do its work of “exposing and sifting and analyzing and judging the

very thoughts and purposes of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12 AMP). We have no right to undermine God’s Word by our silence or by watering down its message.

Faithfulness in the study and personal application of Scripture and its teaching is essential. For Paul’s warning is especially applicable today, as people “will turn aside from hearing the truth and wander off into myths and man-made fictions” (2 Timothy 4:4 AMP). And what is the root cause of this? Disguised though it may be, many emerging practices and concepts in the church are the result of a love of sin and an unwillingness to enter the narrow road and straight gate. (See Matthew 7:13–14.) The rise of a church filled with professed believers who are “lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God” (2 Timothy 3:4) is now in full bloom.

The delusion overtaking many, and seemingly willingly so, has been foretold repeatedly in Timothy, which is why this letter written so long ago is present truth for our day.

Dear reader, where do you stand? Will you be one of Christ’s humble followers who live by and uphold the Bible, living and teaching sound doctrine? Or will you be among the many seeking for a crossless, self-pleasing, gratifying religion? While many teachers, churches, and ministries promise “liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage” (2 Peter 2:19).

Timothy was called to watch, meaning “to abstain from wine, figurative be discreet; to be free from the influences of intoxicants.”¹ We are called to the same experience. All spiritually numbing influences are to be shunned. This includes alcohol, the careless and irrational use of prescription drugs, our entertainment, and all the influences of life that can affect the mind and the development of a well-rounded Christian experience. As with Timothy, if we are faithful to God we will need to endure afflictions and the trying of our faith, enduring temptations and overcoming by God’s enabling grace.

While most of us are not evangelists or in the work of the ministry, we each have an influence and some work to do for Christ. We must be living in such a way that we let the light of God’s saving

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grace shine in a sin-darkened world. As was Timothy, you and I are called to be faithful in all our duties.

2 Timothy 4:6-8 For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

As Paul closed his letter to Timothy, the increasing likelihood that he would never again be free to travel and preach the gospel or see his friend face to face loomed large. Indeed, Paul's likely execution was a stark reality. However, Paul showed no fear. This was not a stoical indifference to fate or a false bravery. Rather, it was the realization that His Lord was the Master of the universe and "the resurrection, and the life" (John 11:25), the one who holds the "keys of hell and of death" (Revelation 1:18).

Paul's confidence had no link with a false hope or delusive self-confidence, but rather a confidence fixed upon Christ and His word. He declared, "I have fought a good fight." He had consistently followed the narrow way, taking up his cross and following Christ. He had kept his doctrine and teaching true and his faith uncontaminated by error and compromise amidst trial and opposition and the perverse and subtle errors of false apostles and teachers.

Someday, my friend, your life and mine will end. Unlike Paul's looming death, it may come suddenly and unexpectedly. Today can you say, "I have been faithful to Christ in the discharge of my duties"? Can you this day say, "I have kept the faith of Jesus in my heart unsullied from error, compromise, and sin"? By God's grace, we must live each day faithful to God and His truth. Pilgrim, do not grow "weary in well doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Galatians 6:9).

Paul's firm hope and trust was in Christ, and he knew the victor's crown was his. The crown Paul speaks of is used elsewhere in Scripture and is a symbol of the reward of eternal life given to the faithful. However, Paul's hope and earnest expectation was fixed not only on his own reward. He directs our attention to the fact that the reward is for all who love Christ and long for His appearing. For "every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure" (1 John 3:3).

2 Timothy 4:9–15 Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me: For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry. And Tychicus have I sent to Ephesus. The cloke that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments. Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works: Of whom be thou ware also; for he hath greatly withstood our words.

Paul, ever the hopeful man he was, even when in prison, gives Timothy an update of his needs, which he hoped Timothy or others would fulfill. It is likely Paul was executed before Timothy could honor his friend's request. Paul mentions how various brethren had left him to carry on the work.

Special mention is given to Demas. This man had apparently worked with Paul, for in Colossians 4:14 his name is mentioned as being with him in the work. In Philemon verse 24, Demas is signaled out for a special greeting with other workers. Now, however, Paul states that Demas had forsaken him. He did not leave, like the others, to carry on with the work of the Lord. Seeing the difficulties of the way and Paul's own hardship, Demas turned back to the world that seemed to him to offer greater advantage and ease.

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Demas's unfaithfulness stands as a warning to us. Our faithfulness of the past or even present is not sufficient for the future. It is only "he that endures to the end" who "shall be saved" (Matthew 10:22). Let us not be captured by "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" for these things are "not of the Father, but ... of the world" (1 John 2:16).

We are admonished to be "kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:32). However, this does not undo the necessity to rebuke and expose those who, in teaching or life, are involved with "the unfruitful works of darkness." Rather, we are to "reprove them" (Ephesians 5:11). It is needful at times to do as Paul did and name those who have sinned or who oppose the truth, for "them that sin rebuke before all, that others may also fear" (1 Timothy 5:20).

2 Timothy 4:16–18 At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Paul, in his first trial and imprisonment in Rome, stood alone. Those who should have stood with him forsook him. And thus it may be with us. We too must sometimes stand alone in our times of affliction, trial, and persecution. However, it is our privilege to know, as Paul knew, the sustaining grace of the Lord, who will walk with us in our times of adversity. Indeed, Christ has promised, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me" (Hebrews 13:5–6).

Even in Paul's imprisonment, the word of God was not bound. Indeed, it is not possible that the influence of a true child of God can ever be fully extinguished. For even in death, "their works [influence] ... follow them" (Revelation 14:13). Through Paul the gospel was preached by letter and personal testimony and reached even to Caesar's household.

Paul declares of his first imprisonment that he "was delivered out of the mouth of the lion." We too will face lions in our lives, for the "devil as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8). We, like Paul, will be delivered if we "resist steadfast in the faith" (1 Peter 5:9). Strengthened by Christ's enabling grace we too will pass through trial and perplexities in this life. However, if we trust and believe, "the God of all grace ... will Himself complete and make you what you ought to be, establish and ground you securely, and strengthen, and settle you" (1 Peter 5:10 AMP).

God's deliverance and sustaining grace was known and recognized by Paul. We too are to know the strength of the Lord, for the Lord has promised all who will trust in Him that "in the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

2 Timothy 4:19–22 Salute Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus. Erastus abode at Corinth: but Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick. Do thy diligence to come before winter. Eubulus greeteth thee, and Pudens, and Linus, and Claudia, and all the brethren. The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit. Grace be with you. Amen.

Though facing little possibility of release from prison and most likely the summons to execution at any time, Paul was of good courage and filled with hope. His hope was certainly not based upon his situation. Paul had "fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before [each one of] us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even

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Jesus, made an high priest for ever” (Hebrews 6:18–20). Neither can we lose hope in our unfavorable circumstances.

Paul closes his letter not with sadness or fear of the future, but by greeting his fellow workers, as he had always done, and sending greetings from those in the faith. Considering Paul’s circumstances there was much he could complain about or be afraid of. The fact that no such sentiments are written speaks forcefully of the reality of Christ within the hope of glory. (See Colossians 1:27–29.) We, like Paul, have the privilege of knowing Him who is life eternal. (See John 17:3.)

Paul’s last words to Timothy sound down through the ages, heralding a sacred truth that I hope and pray will be your experience and mine until our lives and work close.

*The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit.
Grace be with you. Amen. 2 Timothy 4:22*

Endnotes

1. James Strong, LL.D., S.T.D., *The New Expanded Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001).

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