# *The Pastoral Epistles of Paul—1 Timothy*

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## *Outline of First Timothy*

# *Paul's First Epistle to Timothy*

## *Author, Recipient, and Setting of the Epistle*

The author of 1Timothy is the Apostle Paul (***1: 1***) who writes to his "true child in the faith", Timothy. We first hear of Timothy in Acts 16: 1 when Paul retraces the steps of his first missionary journey by traveling once again through southern Galatia to the cities of Derbe and Lystra. Apparently Timothy lived in Lystra. He could have been converted to Christianity during Paul's first missionary journey to Lystra where he healed a lame man and was almost worshipped as Hermes (Acts 14: 8-18). Afterwards, antagonistic Jews from Antioch and Iconium turned the crowds of Lystra against Paul and Silas and stoned Paul almost to death (v. 19) all of which must have made a big impression on Timothy's grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice who had taught Timothy the OT scriptures from his "childhood" (2 Tim. 1: 5; 3: 15). Thus, it is apparent that Timothy's grandmother, mother and Timothy himself were "OT believers" who were converted to Christianity from Judaism on Paul's first missionary journey. All three were ready to hear Paul and Silas' message of the gospel when they first arrived in Lystra.

After his conversion, Timothy accompanied Paul on his second and third missionary journeys and later became Paul's emissary in Ephesus representing his apostolic authority (cf. ***1 Tim. 1: 3-4*** with ***5: 17***). There were other elders (***presbuteros***; ***3: 1***) who were overseers (***episcopos***; ***5: 17***) of the church at Ephesus, but Timothy is given instructions in ***chapter 3*** about the necessary qualifications of these men. This brings up interesting questions since the letter was written about 65 AD after Paul had been released from his first Roman imprisonment (Acts 28). The reference to his departure from Ephesus to Macedonia (***1: 3***) has no reference in ***The Acts of the Apostles*** nor do his instructions to Timothy to remain in Ephesus. Since there were already elders chosen for the Ephesian church by the time Paul visits them in Miletus (Acts 20: 17; about 57 AD), why is he only now giving instructions about qualifications?

## *Purpose of the Epistle*

### *1. To correct false teaching*

Paul reveals part of his purpose for writing in the first few verses (***vv. 3-4***) in which he urges Timothy to correct the abuse of certain teachers who were leading the flock in Ephesus astray. The purpose of doctrinal instruction was not to tickle the imagination with wild speculations (***1: 4***) but to produce disciples whose lives were changed ("love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith"; ***v. 5***). What these "strange doctrines" (***v. 3***) were will be covered later.

### *2. To provide Timothy with a list of qualifications for elders and deacons*

To accomplish the goal of producing godly disciples, Paul gives Timothy an explicit list of qualifications for elders (bishops) and deacons most of which are moral, not intellectual, qualifications (***1 Tim. 3***). Thus, a godly membership in the church depends, to some extent, on godly leaders who are exemplary models who are able to provide the proper examples to imitate (***4: 12***). The church is the "household of God" and Timothy must know how every believer must conduct himself within this household (***3: 14-15***).

### *3. To establish the proper roles of males and females within the church*

In ***chapter 2***, Paul emphasizes the importance of living under authority. All Christians must live under the authority of civil rulers, and prayers must be offered for these rulers to the end that the Christian church can live in peace and accomplish its redemptive task in society (***vv. 1-8***). Women should submit themselves to the spiritual authority of men; they are not allowed to teach men within the context of worship (***2: 12***). On the other hand, this doesn't mean that they have no role at all within the household of faith. Mature women who had a reputation for good works and the proper rearing of their children could be of considerable diaconal assistance to those in need (***5: 9-16***).

### *4. To encourage Timothy*

Paul writes to encourage Timothy in his role as apostolic representative (***chapter 4***). He was relatively young to assume such responsibilities for the church in Ephesus, troubled as it was by false teachers who taught all kinds of errors including abstinence from marriage and legalistic asceticism. In spite of his youth, Timothy should not allow himself to be intimidated by those who were troubling the church, but through his example prove to be a godly leader.

## *I. Salutation (1: 1-2)*

Paul opens his letter with his usual salutation, including a reference to his apostleship by the "commandment" of God (cf. Rom. 1:1; 1 Cor. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; Col. 1:1; 2 Tim. 1:1; Tit. 1:1) and his characteristic benediction (cf. Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:3; 2 Cor. 1:2; Gal. 1:3; Eph. 1:2; Phil. 1:2; Col. 1:2; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2; Tit. 1:4; Philemon 1:3). Two differences in this salutation stand out. One difference is his inclusion of the word, "mercy" which only occurs in ***1*** and ***2 Timothy***. Another difference is his reference to his apostleship as the "commandment" of God rather than the "will" of God (cf. 1 Cor. 1: 1; 2 Cor.1: 1; Eph. 1: 1; Col. 1: 1; 2 Tim 1: 1), a difference unique to 1 Timothy and obviously a reference to his commission by the Lord as an apostle to the Gentiles (Acts 9: 15; 26: 16-18). Paul never volunteered to be an apostle; he was drafted into service!

## *II. Introductory Remarks (1: 1-20)*

### *A. Instruction against False Teachers (1: 3-11)*

### *1. Myths and genealogies*

These may have been fabricated stories taken from bits and pieces of the OT wrenched out of their historical and grammatical context. Concerning them Hendriksen remarks,

> We feel at once that here we have been introduced into the realm of typically ***Jewish*** lore. It is a known fact that from early times the rabbis would "spin their yarns"—and ***endless*** yarns they were!—on the basis of what they considered some "hint" supplied by the Old Testament. They would take a name from a list of pedigrees (for example, from Genesis, 1 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah), and expand it into a nice story. Such interminable embroideries on the inspired record were part of the regular bill of fare in the synagogue, and were subsequently deposited in written form in that portion of ***The Talmud*** which is known as ***Haggadah*** (***1 Timothy***, pp. 58-59; emphasis his).

Thus, it is small wonder that when the multitudes heard ***Jesus*** teach, they were truly amazed "for He was teaching them as *one* having authority, and ***not as their scribes***" (Matt. 7: 28-29).

Regretfully, fanciful interpretation of the Scriptures is still with us in the 21st century when teachers attempt to construct the "hidden meaning" of Scripture based on the ***numerical value of words***, or other such nonsense, to produce interpretations which only ***they*** can understand. Biblically illiterate Christians who listen to them say, "Wow! Isn't he brilliant! I never saw that in Scripture before!" In actual fact, they never saw it because it isn't there. There are others who attempt to predict exactly the timing of the return of Christ even when He said that only the Father knows the day (Matt. 24: 36). All Christians should be exposed to the science of biblical interpretation (hermeneutics) in order to determine their sound historical and grammatical meaning. Otherwise, ignorant teachers will lead them astray into fanciful interpretations of Scripture.

### *2. Gnosticism*

Paul also instructs Timothy to warn false teachers against ***strange doctrines*** which included false asceticism and the necessity of celibacy (***4: 3***). This was a form of 1st century Gnosticism (see discussion below under ***4: 1-5***). Abstinence from food and marriage recalls Paul's warnings to the Colossians against the Gnostics in Colossae who were making the same requirements saying, "Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch" (Col. 2: 20-21). There, Paul calls such teaching "the commandments and teachings of men", while in ***1 Tim. 4: 1*** he calls it the "doctrines of demons". Such teaching had "no value against fleshly indulgence" for the Colossian Christians (Col. 2: 23), and in Ephesus it did not produce "love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith" (***1 Tim. 1: 5***).

Legalism and false asceticism—a long list of do's and don't's which have no reference to God's law—are often substituted for genuine godliness. African Christians have been taught that drinking alcohol in any quantity is sinful, and many have wrongly concluded that abstinence from it somehow enhances one's spirituality. Yet, legalism is the flip side of the coin of antinomianism (lawlessness). The same people who condemn alcohol may be the very ones who condone (accept) or practice sexual relationships outside the bond of marriage. (If the AIDS epidemic in Uganda (and throughout the African continent) is any indication, and considering the fact that 80% of Ugandans claim to be Christian, there must be much promiscuity even within the church.) ***He who condemns what God allows will soon allow what God condemns.*** God allows drinking alcohol in moderation (***1 Tim. 5: 23***; Deut. 14: 26; Ps. 104: 14-15) but categorically (without exception) condemns sexual intercourse outside of marriage (1 Thes. 4: 3). False commandments do not help us in our walk with God. Realistically, our only hope is the internal work of the Holy Spirit enabling us to keep God's true commandments both in heart and action (Rom. 8: 4). This includes the requirement of love (1 Tim. 1: 5)—love for God whom we never wish to grieve with our disobedience, and love for others which prevents us from doing anything which would hinder their walk with the Lord.

### *3. Instruction which leads to godliness*

Theological inquiry which loses sight of the ultimate goal of sanctification (***v. 5***) degenerates into "fruitless discussion". Qualification is needed, of course. Not every portion of Scripture yields itself to a simple rule of application (e.g. "You shall not kill"), and not all Scripture is easy to understand without concentrated intellectual scrutiny (examination). Even the Apostle Peter had trouble

understanding some of Paul's instruction (2 Pet. 3: 16). Furthermore, not all Scripture has an ***immediate*** moral application, but an ***eventual*** one. Some of it pertains to redemptive history—including the genealogies of ***Genesis*** and ***I and 2 Chronicles***—and the eschatological hope of all Christians in the second coming of Christ and the restoration of heaven and earth. Regular meditation upon such truths yields thanksgiving, worship, the hope of eternal life, and a Christian philosophy of life (a Christian world-view) which enables the Christian generally to set his affections upon the things of God rather than the fleeting pleasures of temporal life (Col. 3: 1-4). As one's affections change—loving the things of God rather than the world—so will his moral behavior (Col. 3: 5—4: 6). But such change will take some time.

Yet, even weighty theological inquiry into the millennial question (the events surrounding the return of Christ) should result ***eventually*** in sanctification or moral improvement over one's lifetime. Such study should not simply tickle the intellect and satisfy our curiosity. The Apostle Peter thought as much, for he said, "But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up***. Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness*** (2 Peter 3:10-11).

"Conscience" is the word, ***suneidesis***, literally man's "co-knowledge" or "con-science" based on the knowledge of himself and his innate knowledge of God (Hendriksen, p. 62). Intuitively, man knows that he is God's creation, and whenever he observes the created universe, he also knows something of the invisible attributes of God. This is the very knowledge which sinful men attempt to suppress in unrighteousness, not wishing to submit themselves to the moral law and will of God.

> For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because ***that which is known about God is evident within them***; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, ***have been clearly seen***, being understood through what has been made, so that they are ***without excuse***. For even though they ***knew*** God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened (Rom. 1: 18-21).

The conscience, then, "is the response of man's moral consciousness to the divine revelation concerning himself, his attitudes, and his activities"…It is in the believer that conscience attains its highest goal. For the regenerated individual ***God's will***, as experienced in His Word, becomes "the Lord of conscience, its Guide and Director" (1 Peter 2: 19)" (Hendriksen, p. 62, emphasis his). Consequently, one's cultural tradition ceases to be the lord of the conscience.

### *4. The proper use of the Law*

If the study of the Scriptures, or even systematic theology, does not lead to improved behavior, then we have not truly ***understood*** what we have studied. This is Paul's complaint concerning the false teachers of the Law in Ephesus who did not understand what they were talking about in spite of their misplaced confidence (***1: 7***). ***Verse 8*** implies that these teachers were using the Law ***un***lawfully with their fabricated stories from the OT and with their insistence upon refraining from marriage and certain foods. The Gnostic belief that the body was completely evil and the spirit completely good also led paradoxically (unexpectedly) to a form of licentiousness (immoral behavior) which reasoned that since the body was destined for destruction anyway, it did not matter what a person did with his

body (cf. 1 Cor. 6: 13-20). Many scholars believe that Paul is arguing here against the same kind of Gnosticism he fought in the book of ***1 Corinthians*** and ***Colossians*** (see below under ***chapter 4***). But what is the ***lawful*** use of the law? Notice that Paul says, "But we know that ***the Law is good***, if one uses it lawfully" (***v. 8***). There is a strong correlation between this verse and Rom. 7: 12, "So then, the Law is holy, and ***the commandment is holy and righteous and good***." The context of Romans 7 deals specifically with the proper use of the law. As a Pharisee, Paul had used the Law unlawfully to justify himself before God through keeping the Law; but the Law was never meant for this purpose, not through any fault in the Law, but through man's sinfulness and weakness. While the Law was meant to result in life (in that it pointed to the holiness of God and the blessedness of obedience to God), it proved to result in death because all men are sinners (Rom. 7: 10). The Law is useful in ***defining sin***, for we "would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, 'You shall not covet'" (7: 7). It is also useful in ***destroying our hopes of being saved by works and leading us to grace***. In Gal. 3: 15-25, Paul describes the Law as a ***pedagogos*** (a disciplinarian) to lead us to Christ. The Law beats us up and condemns us for our failure but with the benevolent result of driving us to Christ who saves us by grace. Third, after we are saved by grace, we may look to the Law not as a means of salvation, but as a ***guide in showing us the will of God in relation to our neighbor (Gal. 5: 14) and in relation to God.*** By the Spirit we are enabled to keep the Law—not perfectly but consistently (Rom. 8: 4). When we walk by the Spirit, our lives will yield the fruit of the Spirit, "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; ***against such things there is no law***" (Gal. 5: 22-23).

This last statement in Galatians parallels what Paul says in ***1 Tim. 1: 9-11***. He says that the Law was not made for the "righteous" person, but for law-breakers. If a man is righteous he doesn't need the law as an external constraint upon his behavior or to inform him about the will of God. He is controlled by the Holy Spirit who produces the fruit of the Spirit his life. There is no law, and there can be no law, against the fruit of the Spirit. Does this mean, then, that Christians don't need the law because they possess the Holy Spirit? One can see that the way Paul is using the term "righteous" does not refer to the "positional" righteousness of the believer in union with Christ. He is speaking of the ***perfectly*** righteous man. Thus, he is speaking only ***hypothetically*** (theoretically) since no such person exists or has ever existed with the only exception of the God-man, Jesus Christ. That even Paul did not claim to be such a person is evident from his admission in ***v. 13*** that he was formerly a persecutor of believers and a blasphemer. Further, he never made any claims to perfection ***after*** his conversion but pressed on toward the goal of perfection (Phil. 3: 12-13). He also proclaimed without qualification, "by the works of the Law ***no flesh*** will be justified" (Gal. 2: 16b), including himself.

Had the false teachers in Ephesus been convicted of their own sinfulness, they would not have used the law to spin their fanciful stories, as if such stories would have any usefulness in helping men see their dreadful sinfulness and turn to Christ. They also would not have used the Law as a means of earning their salvation by abstaining from marriage and certain foods. They would have used it in the way it was intended to be used as described above—to convict them of sin, to kill their hopes of salvation by keeping the law, and as a ***pedagogue*** to lead others to Christ. They would have recognized that the law was made for ***them***, ungodly sinners (Hendriksen, pp. 65-67).

Notice that Paul makes reference to the Mosaic Law in ***vv. 9-10*** and says that all these violations of the law are not in accordance with the sound teaching of the gospel. Such violations included such things as kidnapping (cf. Deut. 24: 7; Ex. 21: 16), homosexuality (Lev. 20: 13), and murder—particularly the murder of one's own parents—all of which are found in OT law. In the NT, the

reference to kidnapping is found only here in ***1 Timothy***. Thus, Paul uses two case laws of the OT as the authoritative word against kidnapping and homosexuality, sins which are not explicitly mentioned in the Ten Commandments (Decalogue). The case laws of the OT were given to provide concrete examples or ***expositions*** of the Decalogue. Thus, there is no contradiction in Paul's mind between the Law of God expressed in the OT with the law of God which was still binding in the NT era, and there is no conflict between Law and Gospel as long as the law is used "lawfully." The gospel is the good news that Christ has come into the world to save sinners. But from what are we saved? We are saved from both the penalty and ***power*** of sin. We are saved from the penalty of sin in justification; we are saved from the power of sin in progressive sanctification; and we will be saved from the very presence of sin in glorification. Salvation which is described as anything less than deliverance from the power of sin is not the salvation taught in the Bible. This is precisely why so many people in the West, including the US, and in Africa are deceiving themselves. They believe that salvation is merely justification, but it does not affect inward change in the heart and outward change of behavior. Consequently, in Rwanda and Congo we have had thousands of people being killed by professing Christians whose faith is merely external and nominal—in name only. Millions of professing Christians are going to hell every single day with false security; and they will face Christ, the judge of all men, who will one day say to them, "I never knew you; depart from me, you who practice lawlessness" (Matt. 7: 23).

### *B. Thanksgiving to God (1: 12-17)*

Paul now digresses to offer thanks to God for calling him into the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. Since ***1 Timothy*** is written about 65 AD, Paul is nearing the end of his ministry and his life. Tradition holds that he was beheaded in Rome by the order of Caesar Nero in 68 AD. As Paul has sacrificed his life for the gospel—enduring many dangers, hardships, and suffering (2 Cor. 11: 23-28)—his estimation of himself has ***not increased but decreased***. Writing to the Corinthians in 55 AD, ten years earlier, he says, "For I am the ***least of the apostles***, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God (1 Cor. 15: 9). Five years later (60 AD) writing to the Ephesians he remarks, "To me, the very ***least of all saints***, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ (Eph. 3:8). Another five years later in 65 AD he now says to Timothy that he is the ***"chief"*** or ***"foremost"*** of all sinners calling himself "a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor." As our knowledge of Christ increases, He gets bigger, and we get smaller. This is something we should keep in mind as those who labor in the Scriptures. What is our learning and ministry doing to us? Is it making us bigger in our own eyes or smaller? If it is not making Christ bigger and us smaller, something is severely wrong in our understanding and application of the gospel. In contrast to the Apostle Paul, many preachers in Africa are getting bigger and bigger in their own eyes, and they are requiring increasing subordination from other pastors and from their own congregations. This is what happens to us when we fail to see our proper place in the kingdom of God and in the church. We get "too big for our britches (pants)".

The chief priests, scribes, and Pharisees of Jesus' day sinned with a full knowledge of Christ's deity and authority. His work was empowered by the Holy Spirit, and this fact was unmistakable; yet, He was accused of performing miracles by the power of the devil (Matt. 12: 32; Mk. 3: 29; see my commentary of these passages in ***Synoptic Gospels***). There is no forgiveness of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, but Paul was shown mercy because he "acted ignorantly in unbelief" (***v. 13b***). He became a ***living exhibit*** of the mercy and patience of God toward sinners who commit atrocious crimes against God and one's fellow man. Paul, the kidnapper and persecutor of Christians became

the foremost apostle of the Lord Jesus. If God can forgive him, He can forgive anyone. Christ came into the world for the express purpose of saving sinners (***v. 15***; probably a well-known creedal statement in the early church). Contemplation of such mercy always led Paul to doxology (***v. 17***; cf. Rom. 11: 33-36).

### *C. Warning against Apostasy (1: 18-20)*

In conclusion of his introductory remarks, Paul reminds Timothy of the "prophecies" concerning him. What were these prophecies? When we examine Acts 16: 2, we find that the brethren in Lystra and Iconium spoke highly of Timothy's faith and spiritual stature; and in light of the fact that the gift of prophecy was evident in the church (cf. Acts 21: 8-11), it is possible that positive predictions were made about Timothy's future ministry. But this is pure speculation. Prophetic utterances do not have to be ***predictions*** but may simply imply ***pronouncements*** which are based on biblical truth. At any rate, Paul brings Timothy back to the early days of his Christian ministry to remind him of his beginnings in the gospel. Pleasant memories of his commissioning could later provide a strong preventative to the apostasy which had overtaken others, including Hymenaeus and Alexander, the chief trouble-makers in Ephesus (***v. 20***; cf. 2 Tim. 2: 17; 4: 14; Hendriksen, p. 87).

Paul was not unrealistic. The threat of falling away from the faith was not a ***hypothetical*** possibility, but ***real***; and he would not refrain from this veiled warning to Timothy that unless he fought the good fight and kept the faith, he, too, could succumb to apostasy. Anyone can, and the history of the church is littered with examples. Reformed doctrine maintains the truth of the perseverance of the saints, but it does not do so without the secondary means of personal discipline in the word, prayer, and the continuance in the community fellowship of the church. Without these things, the believer cannot persevere.

Yet, Paul had not given up on these two apostates, but had handed them over to Satan so that (***hina***—in order that) they would be taught not to blaspheme (***v. 20***) This statement is strongly reminiscent of 1 Cor. 5: 5 when Paul delivered the incestuous sinner of the Corinthian church "to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that [***hina***] his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." Perhaps through excommunication—in which the unrepentant, professing Christian is judged to be an unbeliever (Matt. 18)—he would realize his offense and turn back to God. Being turned over to Satan may also imply bodily suffering as was actually the case of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5: 1-10). The same apostolic gift of healing in the NT era also may have included the "gift" of inflicting bodily harm upon an unrepentant sinner (Hendriksen, p. 87). The purpose for this bodily harm in 1 Cor. 5: 5 is clearly for the purpose of salvation and restoration, and there is no evidence that Ananias and Sapphira were not true believers simply because they were judged with death. God may have graciously ended their lives to forestall (prevent) their utter apostasy. Other believers in Corinth became weak and sick and a number "slept"—a euphemism (nice way of saying something unpleasant) for the death of believers (1 Cor. 15: 6, 20, 51; 1 Thes. 4: 13-14) because they had despised the institution of the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11: 27-31).

## *III. Instructions for Living in God's Household (2: 1—3: 13)*

Paul now begins the main body of the letter and the first of the instructions on how one should conduct himself in the church, the household (***oikos***) of God.

### *A. Instructions for Men to be Spiritual Leaders in the Church (2: 1-8)*

At the time Paul wrote these words, Nero was emperor of Rome. Toward the end of his reign (lasting from 54 to 68 AD), he had used Christians as human torches to illuminate the imperial gardens at night. The sight of Christians being burned alive and the smell of burning flesh appalled even his Roman guests who, although accustomed to the carnage of the Roman arena, began to sympathize with the Christian population of Rome. Yet, the importance of praying for civil rulers could not be set aside simply because a cruel madman was in power—all the more reason to pray! Submission to ruling authorities is rooted in the sovereignty of God who raises men to power and removes them from power according to His will (Dan. 4 and 5). Men never sit on thrones or occupy presidential palaces by accident or even by the will of the people, ultimately speaking. They are there by the will of God, "For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God" (Rom. 13: 1). This truth was eloquently demonstrated by the Lord Jesus when He stood before Pontius Pilate who boasted that he had life and death power over Jesus. Jesus replied, "You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above" (Jn. 19: 11a).

The Bible says that "The king's heart is *like* channels of water in the hand of the LORD; He turns it wherever He wishes" (Prov. 21: 1). It is therefore in the best interests of God's people to pray for kings and all who are in authority to make rulings which promote the peace and tranquility of the church; for when we have peace we have the greatest opportunity to promote the kingdom of God throughout the world. Although God has often used persecution to promote missionary outreach (Acts 8: 1-4), Paul seems to favor the general rule that peace is better for the kingdom than political chaos. While persecution is inevitable, there is no command in Scripture to pray that the church will be persecuted. After roughly 30 years of ministry (35 AD to 65 AD) through much of the Roman Empire, Paul was convinced that he could never have planted as many churches had the world been plagued with constant warfare. The Pax Romana (the "Roman Peace") enabled him to travel as a free Roman citizen on good roads under the protection of the Roman government. His main enemies were not Romans or thieves, but orthodox Jews.

Such truth is certainly applicable on the African continent. When countries like Congo and Sudan are constantly plagued by warfare, it is very difficult for church leaders to receive continuing education or even for them to find the presence of mind to study. It is difficult to do evangelism and church planting when a nation lies in chaos. Likewise, when 800,000 to a million people were killed in the genocide of Rwanda, many people wondered whether there was any truth to the gospel of Jesus Christ since so many professing Christians were killing their Christian neighbors. In each of these cases, there was, and is, a void of leadership. It is the primary responsibility of political leadership, not to stimulate the economy or to provide goods, services, or jobs but to provide the safety of their constituents so that they may lead a peaceful and quiet life and be able to provide for themselves and their families.

The "all men" of ***v. 4*** and the "for all" of ***v. 6*** must be qualified by the "all men" of ***v. 1***. The apostle is commanding Christians to pray for all men of ***every class and without distinction***. All kinds of men need our prayers, including kings and those in authority. Furthermore, God desires all kinds of men to be saved, including civil rulers and anyone in authority. Men of worldly stature, even evil men like Nero, are not disqualified from salvation if they repent of their sins and embrace the gospel. The ransom price which Jesus provided with His own blood is sufficient for all kinds of men and God desires such men to be saved. With this qualification in mind, ***v. 6*** cannot be used to teach ***universal atonement*** for the sins of all men ***without exception*** or that Christ died for all men ***without exception***

(i.e. for every single individual). If Christ died as a ransom for every individual, then every individual will be saved since the penalty of sin has been paid for every person (see my ***Systematic Theology, "Soteriology"***).

The main thrust of Paul's instruction is that Christians should continue to pray for their rulers since no one, not even a wicked ruler, is outside the umbrella of God's saving grace. Furthermore, there is no mediator between God and man other than the man, Christ Jesus, who bore testimony to God's solution to man's sin problem at the proper time (cf. Gal. 4: 4). The hope of every generation is never in the hands of the government, good or bad. While the Roman Caesars claimed to be divine and to bring salvation to the people, there is only one Messiah and one Savior, Jesus Christ (Acts 4: 12). Paul's implication here, if anything, seems to be that civil rulers are often a ***hindrance to the gospel*** rather than a help—allowing for the exception of political stability, law and order as in the Pax Romana. For this reason, the men of the church should be diligent in prayer for civil rulers.

God has provided us with a great privilege in praying for our government. How would we react if we were given the opportunity every week to sit down with President Museveni or President Kigami to discuss the political and social affairs of Uganda or Rwanda? (We should not hold our breath until this happens!) Yet, each day God gives us the privilege—and the duty—to bring our petitions and prayers concerning our government before Christ, the King of Kings. We are often irritated with the decisions or outright oppression of our governments, and this is possibly the reason Paul tells Timothy that the men of the church should ***pray*** for rulers rather than ***complain*** about them in "wrath and dissension" (***v. 8b***). "Don't lose control, just pray." We will never know until eternity how many governmental decisions were influenced by the faithful prayers of God's people—or how many negative decisions were not influenced because we failed to pray.

By this command to the men, Paul does not imply that women were not supposed to pray, but he is ***directing it primarily to the men whose spiritual diligence should set the example for the whole church***. This is an important point to make since it is always the danger in every church that men will abdicate (give up) their responsibilities as spiritual leaders while women assume these responsibilities by default. This should never happen. Just as the father and husband must assume his headship responsibilities in the ***home***, men should likewise accept and perform their leadership roles in the ***church***. Their leadership should be something that women can follow, not something they despise. Not only should there be male leadership in prayer, but in teaching and spiritual oversight, something which Paul later addresses in ***chapter 2*** with a brief directive and in ***chapter 3*** with the qualifications for elders and deacons.

The phrase, "I want men in ***every place***" (***v. 8***), indicates that there were multiple congregations within the city of Ephesus (so also William Hendriksen, ***1 Timothy,*** p. 102 and Douglas Moo, ***"What Does It Mean Not to Teach or Have Authority Over Men?", Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood—A Response to Evangelical Feminism***, p. 182, John Piper and Wayne Grudem, editors). Large auditoriums built for the purpose of public worship were not in existence at the time ***1 Timothy*** was written. Not until after the Edict of Milan (313 AD) when Christianity was made legal in the Roman Empire and after the extended influence of Emperor Constantine (who was supposedly converted to Christianity), were large buildings constructed for public worship using public tax revenues. Until then, Christianity thrived in the Roman Empire without them by meeting regularly in private homes and even catacombs (underground burial sites) during times of intense persecution.

Thus, the church can grow quite well—in my opinion, ***better***— without extensive real estate through intimate gatherings of smaller groups which encourage qualitative growth in the context of personal community and fellowship. In this way, the church prepares itself for both qualitative and numerical growth through the development of small congregations and organically connected with the larger congregation. These small groups (there is no magic number of how small or big they should be) will also need leaders who are raised up within the congregation in the "laboratory" of smaller "congregations" where they will get ***more practical opportunity for developing their spiritual gifts*** (note ***1 Tim. 3: 2-12*** which implies the necessity of "testing" these men, whether elders or deacons, before ordaining them to a task for which they have no practical experience—a common error in most churches).

Further, small group meetings of believers are similar to the family life of each member in which fathers exercise spiritual oversight. Consequently, fathers who failed to manage their own families (households) properly would not be considered as good candidates for overseers of the church. The smaller nucleus of the family household is the pattern from which the household of the church is taken.

It is evident that within the Ephesian church there were ***multiple*** elders for the spiritual oversight of the congregation. What is not said or known is whether ***one*** elder or ***more than one*** were assigned to ***each*** of the worship centers. It is probable that one elder would have been the pastor-elder for each separate congregation within the larger church at Ephesus. Later, Paul instructs Timothy of the necessity for compensating elders for their work, "especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching" (***5: 17***). By implication, other elders who didn't work as hard at this task were to be less compensated. And how would these multiple leaders be compensated materially for their labor? When this requirement was written, contributions were not being drained away by expensive auditoriums, electrical bills, upkeep, and public address (PA) systems, and occasionally, pipe organs (as in the West). If this were true today, there should be funds available to multiply the number of ***people*** who give themselves and their time fully or partially to the ministry of teaching and preaching both domestically and internationally. I love to hear good music, and I love the organ music of famous composers like J.S. Bach. But first things first. We must first spend God's money for priorities, not luxuries—pastors and missionaries, not keyboards and public address systems.

I am speaking primarily as a Westerner who has seen a great deal of excess in church building programs and a great ***deficiency in people needed for ministry***. This is not as big a problem in Africa where church buildings are far more modest and functional. No one in the West could fault African congregations for their buildings. Yet, each culture has its own limitations, and every church must set biblical priorities. Even in less affluent cultures, the same mistakes can be made. More money should be spent on ***actual ministry*** and much less on ***buildings***. Laborers, not brick and mortar, are what the church needs most. Yet, it has come to my attention that many pastors are not paid by their congregations who, nevertheless, have buildings for worship services. This is misplaced priority, especially when pastors could be paid and congregations could be divided into several house churches, precisely the way they were in Ephesus.

***(Parenthetical Note)***

The parenthetical note in ***v. 7*** is puzzling—"I am telling the truth, I am not lying." He uses this expression on three other occasions (Rom. 9: 1; 2 Cor. 11: 31; and Gal. 1: 20). In the latter two

references Paul was defending his apostleship, thus requiring a solemn oath to confirm the truth of his apostolic claims. Also in ***Romans***, a solemn oath was needed to confirm the shocking revelation that he would have been willing to be damned if his damnation would have insured the salvation of his Jewish brethren (Rom. 9: 3)—a truly amazing statement. But why would Paul have to tell Timothy, of all people, that he was not lying about being appointed as a preacher and an apostle? It is possible that Paul is underscoring his authority as an apostle ***for the purpose of arming Timothy against the anti-authoritarian teachers of Ephesus.*** As men should submit to and pray for civil authorities, they should also submit to their spiritual authorities, including Paul and those whom Paul had placed over the church, namely Timothy. In ***4: 12***, Paul tells Timothy to let no one look down on his youth, implying that there were, indeed, some in Ephesus who were doing just that. Timothy, therefore, needs to be reminded that he is the personal representative of Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ who had been personally chosen and commissioned by Christ Himself. As Paul's personally chosen representative, no one has the privilege of dismissing Timothy's authority. Furthermore, we should not miss the obvious fact that this letter would be read publicly to the whole congregation.

### *B. Instructions for Women to Submit to Their Husbands and to the Male Leadership of the Church (2: 9-15)*

#### *1. Submission in the matter of adornment*

Paul now turns to the women who were also having a bit of trouble submitting to authority—male authority. The immodest dress and style of ***v. 9***—braided hair, expensive clothing and jewelry—were characteristic of pagan women who were "making their statement" in society, possibly independent of their husbands. It is a matter of historical record that hair braids were expensively adorned with "jeweled tortoise-shell combs, or by pins of ivory or silver" (Hendriksen, p. 107, citing T.G. Tucker, ***Life in the Roman World of Nero and St. Paul***). Pearls were obtained from the Persian Gulf or from the Indian Ocean, all at a very handsome price far in excess of the average Christian's purchasing power (Hendriksen, p. 107). Such jewelry was becoming popular among high-priced prostitutes (Towner). At the very least, all of these things were signs of extravagance and personal pride which presented the wrong impression of the Christian faith. ***Paul did not want Christian women to stand out for the wrong reasons, but to stand out because of their Christian convictions.*** The Apostle Peter admonishes the female readers of his letters in the same way saying, "Your adornment must not be *merely* external—braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; but *let it be* the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God" (1 Pet. 3: 3-4).

Are the apostles' directives here relevant for the modern church, or should they be ignored as out-dated, legalistic exhortations suited only for ancient cultures? Braided hair, jewelry, and pricey dresses in affluent cultures do not necessarily send the same message as they did in first century Ephesus—particularly in the 1st century church which consisted primarily of the working class. However, let's not dull the edge of Paul's concern—and Peter's—for modesty and proper adornment among Christian women. Peter and Paul must have had an important principle in mind which safe-guarded the internal purity of the church as well as its witness before the ever-watching world. God made women beautiful to the male eye, but this strength can also be a weakness. They can attract the wrong kind of attention to the exclusion of the right kind. While good looks and sexuality are part of God's creation meant to be enjoyed within the proper boundaries, they should never be the focus of attention. God's focus, as always, is upon the heart (1 Pet. 3: 4) and the good works which flow from

it (***1 Tim. 3: 10***). These things are the proper "adornment" of the Christian woman, and they are precious to the Lord because they ***attract more attention to the Lord than to the woman***. Too much external adornment with expensive clothing (or immodest clothing) and coiffures (hair-do's) only attract attention to the woman's body which belongs only to the Lord—and to her husband should she one day be married. If a pure heart and good works are precious to the Lord, they should also be precious to the Christian male who should be looking for more than a pretty face and a shapely body, but a godly woman to help him in fulfilling his dominion task before God and in being a better man. Male lust is not always—probably not often—the fault of the way a woman dresses. However, if the way she dresses immediately draws the male eyes to excessively exposed breasts (by means of a low-cut blouse or dress) or to her thighs (through an excessively short skirt or dress), then she has contributed to his lust. Paul was well aware that prostitutes in Ephesus and elsewhere dressed in such a way that advertised their "wares" and sent the message, "I am available" (Towner).

Although written 2000 years ago, Paul's words are especially relevant for Christian men and women living in the 21st century. We live in an age of celebrity-worship and the worship of the human body—what Hendriksen calls the "cult of beauty." Our TV screens are full of images of beautiful women (and handsome men) who epitomize the "ideal" woman or man. Coupled with these images are pictures of the "good life" of money, material possessions, and fame. Closets are filled with the latest clothing styles which are seldom worn more than a few times. Many people (even professing Christians) define themselves by what they wear, the cars they drive, and the houses they live in. We should flee from these idols of sex, money, and power which are meant only for destruction (Col. 3: 5-6). Apparently the emphasis on style in the church of Ephesus was getting a bit out of hand—as they have been in Western culture for quite some time—and Paul had to draw attention to the danger of Christians being "of" the world rather than being "in" it (Jn. 15: 19; 17: 15). Hendriksen's comments over 50 years ago are more relevant than ever,

> In a woman who professes to be a believer such pursuit of the cult of beauty and personal adornment is doubly unbecoming. It offends the Creator and Redeemer….Though always wrong, it is most reprehensible in a woman who is getting ready to attend church; for showy clothes [or immodest ones] ill befit broken and contrite hearts, the kind of hearts which God welcomes at the service of the Word and sacraments" (***1 Timothy***, p. 108; words in brackets mine).

Before moving on to next section (***vv. 11-15***), the reader should notice how Paul approaches the subject of women's dress within the context of the public assembly of the church. In ***1 Tim. 2: 1-8***, the public prayer of men is in view followed immediately by Paul's instructions to women. Quite naturally, any restrictions in dress within the context of church worship would also apply to women in other public contexts. Then, beginning in ***chapter 3***, Paul addresses the requirements for elders and deacons. The point made here is that Paul's directives to women about teaching or exercising authority over men are directly related to the public ministry of teaching and oversight.

### *2. Submission to male leadership in the church*

As stated above, there was a relationship in the social context of Ephesus (as in Corinth and all Greek pagan culture) between women's dress and their attitude concerning male leadership. Women who wished to demonstrate their independence from their husbands would be those who were more likely to emphasize external adornments. The interpreter must, therefore, read between the lines of Paul's instructions about external adornments in ***1 Timothy***, just as he must read between the lines of Paul's instructions to women in Corinth to have a symbol of authority on their heads while praying in public

worship (1 Cor. 11: 1-16). According to the social context, women in Corinth who cut their hair short or refused to wear some kind of hair covering were ***flaunting their independence from men in general or from their own husbands in particular*** and were socially identified as immoral women. Although not specifically stated, it is likely that women in the church of Ephesus were following the advice of false teachers to assume a less traditional approach to role relationships and to assume the same functional roles as men, including teaching and leadership roles. "The problem addressed in 1 Corinthians 11: 2-16 is of the same general nature, in which the Christian women were adopting a style of dress (or hairstyle) that implicitly proclaimed their independence from their husbands. And, as we have seen, the situation at Ephesus is very similar to that at Corinth some years earlier" (Moo, ***Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood—A Response to Evangelical Feminism,*** pp. 181-182).

Although this particular platform of the false teachers in Ephesus is not explicitly stated in ***1 Timothy***, it is very likely for the following reasons (Moo, p. 181). ***First***, the false teachers in Ephesus were encouraging abstinence from marriage (***4: 3***), and this teaching would naturally lead to the disparaging (treating as inferior) of other ***traditional female roles*** like working in the home. ***Second***, Paul's counsel to young widows (***5: 14***) is given because some of the women in the Ephesian church had abandoned these traditional roles "to follow Satan" (***v. 15***)—another way of saying, "to follow the false teachers" who were propagating "the doctrine of demons" (***4: 1***). ***Third***, the problem in Ephesus is very similar to the problems of the church in Corinth. In both churches there were some false teachers who were denying the possibility of a future, physical resurrection from the dead in favor of a purely spiritual resurrection (cf. 2 Tim. 2: 18; 1 Cor. 15). This false teaching, in turn, led to inappropriate attitudes about sex, food and the body in general (1 Cor. 7; 8: 1-13; ***1 Tim. 4: 3***). In other words, if the Christian has already been ***spiritually resurrected***, then the physical realm, including the body, is not important.

> While we cannot be sure about this, there is good reason to think that the problem in both situations was rooted in a false belief that Christians were already in the ***full form of God's kingdom*** [what some theologians call a "realized eschatology"] and that they had accordingly been spiritually taken "out of "the world so that aspects of this creation, like sex, food, and male/female distinctions, were no longer relevant to them. It may well be that these beliefs arose from an unbalanced emphasis on Paul's own teaching that Christians were "raised with Christ" (Ephesians 2: 6: Col. 2: 12; 3: 1) and that in Christ there is neither "male nor female" (Galatians 3: 28). What Paul would be doing in both 1 Corinthians and the pastoral epistles is seeking to right the balance by ***reasserting the importance of the created order and the ongoing significance of those role distinctions between men and women that he saw rooted in creation.*** Whether this specific interpretation of the data of 1 Corinthians and the pastorals is correct or not, the similarity between the battery of problems in the two situations strongly suggests that in Ephesus, as in Corinth, a tendency to remove role distinctions between men and women was part of the false teaching. Very likely, then, Paul's teaching about the roles of men and women in church ministry in 1Timothy 2: 11-15 is occasioned by the need to counter the false teachers on this point (Moo, pp. 181-182; emphasis and words in brackets mine).

Thus, there were women in the church—following the false teachers—who were questioning the policy of having only male teachers and male leaders (***vv. 11-12***). This has been the subject of intense debate in evangelical churches in the US for a number of years. It is no longer debated in mainline, liberal churches that for years have ordained female elders and pastors. (They are now ordaining both male and female homosexuals. Once the wisdom of God is questioned in one area, it will soon be questioned in other areas that we find disagreeable). It is also possible that women in

Ephesus were becoming publicly argumentative with the male leadership of the church and with male teachers within the context of worship and/or in private. Moo continues,

> Paul must therefore warn them to accept without criticism the teaching of the properly appointed church leaders. But there is probably more to the problem than this. There is good reason to think that the underlying issue in verse 11 is not just submission to the teaching of the church but ***the submission of women to their husbands*** and, perhaps, ***to the male leadership*** of the church….The facts that this verse is directed only to women and that verses 12-14 (and perhaps also 9-10) focus on the relationship of men to women incline us to think that the submission in view here is also this submission of women to male leadership….In light of our suggestions about the nature of the false teaching at Ephesus, we may surmise that women at Ephesus were expressing their "liberation" from their husbands, or from other men in the church, by criticizing and speaking out against their husbands, or from other men in the church, by criticizing and speaking out against the male leaders. (The basic issue, may, then, be roughly the same as in 1 Corinthians 14: 33b-36). This tendency Paul encourages Timothy to counter by enforcing the principle of submission of the women to the appropriate male leadership (Moo, p. 183).

I have personally experienced argumentative women in the church who believed they knew far more than the elders, especially me, about shepherding the church. I later realized, too late, that their disdain for me was rooted in their inability to respect their own husbands and to submit to their leadership in the home, something I should have suspected from the very beginning. Quite naturally and predictably, they were also incapable of submitting to my leadership. ***This is yet another important reason why the headship of the man in the home and his headship in the church are quite inseparable.*** Women who insist that they can be submissive in the home while being elders in the church simply don't understand the dynamic which female leadership in the church will entail (include). Therefore, it is not an insignificant, circumstantial proof of exclusive male leadership in the church that an elder must be one who manages his own household. As the home goes, so goes the church.

Before discussing what Paul means by quiet submission, it is necessary to explain what he does not mean. ***First***, he does not mean that women cannot teach or exercise authority over men in ***any*** social sphere. Women can teach men mathematics, science, literature, etc.; and they can exercise authority over men in political offices or in occupational settings. These are areas ***outside the church***, and the church has no jurisdiction or authority in these areas except through moral influence. Paul is speaking specifically about the ***"household of God"*** (***1 Tim. 3: 15***). However, in the home (Eph. 5: 22) and church God has given men the responsibility for spiritual leadership (cf. Vern Poythress, ***"Why Male Leadership in the Family Requires Male Leadership in the Church" in Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood—A Response to Evangelical Feminism***, John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds.). Paul is speaking of teaching in the context of the church, not in a secular context.

***Secondly***, Paul is not saying that women must always remain mute ("quiet") throughout the worship service. In 1 Cor. 11: 5-6, Paul orders women to have a covering over their heads while praying or prophesying in public worship. If they had to remain ***absolutely*** silent, Paul would be contradicting himself since he says, "But every woman who has her head uncovered while praying or prophesying… (1 Corinthians 11:5a NASB). The praying or prophesying mentioned is clearly within the context of church worship.

The two reasons Paul gives for denying women the right to teach or exercise spiritual authority over men have ***nothing to do with cultural norms or conventions***. He presents two historical events

which establish male authority in the church—one ***before*** the fall and the other ***at*** the fall. ***First***, Adam was created before Eve thus establishing the ***historical priority*** of the male. He uses this same reasoning in 1 Cor. 11: 8. At creation, man did not originate from the woman, but the woman from man. ***Second***, Adam was not deceived at the fall, but Eve was deceived by the serpent. The ***first reason*** demands little explanation. Adam was created first and was cultivating the garden before Eve was created (Gen. 2: 15-18). Further, it is clear from scripture that Eve was created from Adam to be ***his*** helper, not the other way around. The order of creation implies the order of submission, and even her name ***Isha*** (in Hebrew) is derived from his, ***Ish*** (Hendriksen, p. 110). Further, according to the reasons Paul gives here, the prohibitions to women teaching men were not occasioned by the fall. The submission of women to men in the church is inherent in the relationship between Adam and Eve in the creation event prior to the fall. Consequently, even redemption does not reverse this submission (Moo, p. 190).

The ***second reason*** needs more elaboration. It would seem on the surface that since Eve was deceived, she is less culpable (blamable) than Adam who sinned with a full understanding of what he was doing. Paul says plainly, "it was ***not*** Adam who was deceived." We could also conclude, wrongly, that women are too gullible and naïve—too easily deceived—to be entrusted with teaching men. However, if our argument proves this, it proves too much. If women are too naïve or too easily deceived to teach men, they are also too naïve to teach ***other women or even children***. If women are too easily led astray, they shouldn't be teaching ***anyone***, but it is clear that Paul encouraged the more mature women to teach the younger women (Titus 2: 3-4) (cf. Moo, p. 190, and James B. Hurley, ***Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective***, p. 215). There is ***no*** evidence from Scripture or from experience that women are more naïve or gullible than men.

So what does Paul mean? He is warning the Christian women of Ephesus not to make the same mistake as Eve who failed to submit herself to Adam (Moo, p. 190). As she had been given to Adam as his helpmeet, Adam had been given to her as her spiritual head. Upon being confronted by the serpent, rather than making an ***independent decision*** about eating the fruit, she should have consulted her husband first. ***Eve subverted the divinely established order or authority structure***—God, man, woman, creature—by replacing it with another authority structure—creature, woman, man, God. Everything was reversed as she became Adam's spiritual leader, not his spiritual helper and subordinate. Adam, for his part, participated in this reversed authority structure by following his wife's disobedience rather than correcting it, thus incurring the greater blame. By appealing to these two events, Paul maintains: (1) that the woman's submission to man has been established from the beginning of creation and was not instituted because of the fall. Her submission is implicit in the very order of creation—man first, then woman. (2) That the need for her submission was not overturned or reversed at the fall. In fact, the fall further confirmed and intensified this need. By attempting to be independent from male leadership, women are making the same mistake as Eve and will further promote Satan's designs. Though woman desires to free herself from man's authority, he will continue to rule over her but often not for her good as originally (Gen. 3: 16a compared to Gen. 4: 7 in which the same word for "desire" is used in both verses). Women will desire to rule their husbands, but God will never allow this abnormal situation to prevail—although it does, indeed, occur as an aberration of the created order (the "hen-pecked" husband who cannot stand up to his domineering wife).

In opposition to the interpretation offered here, there are those who have argued that sometimes an appeal to the creation event does not demand the permanency of the behavior grounded in creation.

For example, Paul requires women in Corinth to wear a head covering while praying or prophesying on the basis of the order of authority—"But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:3 NASB). The ***principle*** of this command is the functional submission of the woman to the man on the same basis as the functional submission of Christ to God the Father. While the principle of submission is as eternal as the godhead, the ***specific form*** in which the principle finds cultural expression may change. In this particular case, women in modern cultures should continue submitting to their husbands (the principle), but the specific manifestation of the principle (the behavior) would have nothing whatever to do with head coverings. Other forms of behavior which are ***culturally sensitive*** would be more relevant to manifesting the principle of submission (e.g. showing respect for one's husband in public discourse even when the wife may not share his opinions). "But" as Moo continues,

> …the difference between this and 1 Timothy 2: 12-13 is simply this: in 1 Timothy 2: 12-18, ***the principle cannot be separated from the form of behavior.*** In other words, for a woman to teach a man or to have authority over a man is, by definition, to void the principle for which Paul quotes the creation account. Granted this and granted the complete absence of explicit temporal or cultural references in the whole paragraph, ***the prohibitions of verse 12 can be ignored only by dismissing the theological principle itself*** (p. 191, emphasis mine).

Another contrary interpretation has been that the prohibition was occasioned by the women in Ephesus who were teaching false doctrine. Thus, Paul is not prohibiting ***all*** women from teaching men, but only ***those who were spreading the doctrine of other false teachers***. ***Verse 14*** is used to support this argument. Since Eve "taught" Adam to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the Ephesian women must not follow Eve's example by propagating false teaching. In answer to this interpretation, we may question the effectiveness of Paul's reasoning back to the created order in ***v. 13***. What relevance does the fact that Adam was first created have with reference to a few women teaching false doctrine? There is no logical connection between the two ideas. Furthermore, the analogy of this argument is distorted. In ***v. 14***, Paul says that Eve ***was*** deceived (passive voice), not that she ***deceived*** (active voice) Adam. The fact of Eve's ***being*** deceived fits well with the historical context in Ephesus in which women were ***being*** deceived by false teachers (see also 2 Tim. 3: 6-7) and should therefore submit to Biblical teaching in quietness and submission. Had Eve "taught" Adam, and if this had been Paul's argument against the false female teachers, he could have easily have made it. As it is, one looks in vain for any evidence that women in Ephesus were teaching false doctrines (Moo, pp. 189-190). Had this been true, it would have been odd, indeed, for Paul to omit any reference to this fact in his instruction to Timothy since it would have been relevant to the prohibition.

In light of the above considerations, it seems prudent to accept the earlier rationale for Paul's prohibition stated above: ***(1)*** the spiritual headship of man implicit in the order of creation and ***(2)*** the error of Eve in taking the independent initiative of eating the fruit apart from submitting to the one who was given to be her spiritual head. If women in Ephesus resist male leadership and instruction, they will make the same mistake and thus controvert the divine order rooted in creation.

This interpretation is also consistent with Paul's instructions to the church of Corinth in ***1 Cor. 11: 5-17*** and ***14: 26-40***. In those texts, he presents guidelines for the public exercise of prayer, tongues and prophecy. The propriety (suitableness) of women praying or prophesying in the church is addressed in ***1 Cor. 11: 5-17***. Women are allowed to pray or prophesy in church worship provided they ***put a***

***covering over their head*** to visibly demonstrate submission to their husbands—a culturally sensitive manifestation of submission which may not be relevant in all cultures (Thomas R. Schreiner, ***"Head Coverings, Prophecies and the Trinity",*** p. 132, ***Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood***). In support of this directive, Paul appeals to the ***order of creation***, not culture, to show that women should be in general submission to their husbands always and in public worship particularly. So then, while the specific behavior of wearing head coverings is culturally determined—since non-Christian women without head coverings showed their contempt for male headship—the principle of submission is rooted in the order in which men and women were created (***v. 8***) and the purpose for which the woman was created, to help the man (***v. 9***). Paul's reasoning in 1 Corinthians is therefore consistent with his prohibitions concerning women teaching or exercising authority over men in the church of Ephesus (***1 Tim. 2: 12-13***). "The acorn (principle of submission) does not fall far from the tree (creation)." But in this case, following Moo's argument, the specific behavior of head coverings can be separated easily from the principle of submission. Many other culturally sensitive behaviors can be substituted for head coverings.

In 1 Cor. 14: 26-40, Paul gives directives concerning the exercise of tongues and prophecy. It is clear from the text that the prophetic gift in the church of the NT was not on the same level as the prophetic calling of such men as Isaiah and Jeremiah. But even the OT prophets were subject to strict regulations (Deut. 18: 18-22), and there were many false prophets in OT Israel who failed to meet those regulations (Jer. 28: 11-17). The NT prophets were allowed to speak in the public assembly, but not without accountability. Other members would "pass judgment" (v.29). The prophets were to speak one at a time to avoid confusion (v. 33) allowing others to evaluate what they said. The standard of evaluation was the word of God already committed to writing in the OT along with the apostolic tradition thus far communicated to the NT church (cf. Gal. 1: 6-9); and, as we can see from the cited text, even Paul himself advised that no one listen even to him if he preached a different gospel from the one he had already preached. As we learn from 1 Cor. 11, women could participate in the prophetic pronouncements delivered to the church (the precise substance of these "prophecies" are not within the scope of this commentary). Therefore, unless we are willing to believe that Paul contradicted himself in the space of a few pages, we must understand the command to be silent in 1 Cor. 14: 34 as ***qualified*** and ***not absolute***.

So what is the qualification? The command to remain quiet must refer to the evaluation of prophetic utterances in ***vv. 29-33.*** Although a woman could prophesy, she could not participate in passing judgment upon other prophets; otherwise, the principle of submission to male leadership could not be effectively or practically preserved (D. A. Carson, ***"Silent in the Churches": On the Role of Women in 1 Corinthians 14: 33b-36***, p. 152, ***Restoring Biblical Manhood and Womanhood***). Going further, Carson says,

> More broadly, a strong case can be made for the view that Paul refused to permit any woman to enjoy a church-recognized teaching authority over men (1 Timothy 2: 11ff.), and ***the careful weighing of prophecies falls under that magisterial function.*** This does not mean that women should not learn: let them ask their husbands about various aspects of these prophecies, once they return home. Why should the Corinthians buck [resist] not only the practice of all the churches (verse 33b) but also the Scriptures themselves (verse 36)? Are they so enamored with the revelations that they have received that they dare to pit them against the authentic deposit found in Scripture and in the apostolic tradition? And if they feel they are merely interpreting that tradition under the promptings of the Spirit, are they not troubled to see that all the churches have translated the same texts and the same Gospel, into quite different ecclesiastical practices? Are you the only people the word of God has reached (cf. verse 36b)? (p. 152, emphasis mine)

In other words, passing judgment upon the prophecies of men in the church would constitute the activity of teaching other men or exercising spiritual authority over them. Even if women were allowed only to pass judgment on the prophecies of other ***women***, the men would be present and necessarily subjected to their teaching and spiritual oversight.

Returning to Paul's directives in ***1 Timothy 2***, God will preserve and protect women in their ***God-given role*** if they willingly submit to male authority in the home and the church (***v. 15***). Specifically, they "will be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint." The NKJ renders the verse, "Nevertheless she will be ***saved*** in childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control." The word "saved" is ***sōzō***, the same word used in Rom. 10: 13, "for 'whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be ***saved***.'" This is admittedly a difficult statement. What could Paul mean that women are "saved" through the bearing of children? First, he does not mean that bearing children is a meritorious act by which women save themselves eternally. The preposition used in the verse is ***dia*** ("through") not ***en*** ("by means of"). Some commentators believe that this is a reference to the birth of Christ. That is, in the same way mankind has been saved through ***the childbirth*** of Jesus, women will continue to be saved by this same birth. Although the definite article, "the", is present in the Greek text, there is little to commend this interpretation as it stands, but a modified view of it may have merit (see below). Another interpretation is that women will be preserved through the life-threatening experience of child-labor. This interpretation is likewise unsatisfactory. Hurley's interpretation may be the most sensible.

> ...Paul is saying that women in general (and most women in this day) will be kept safe ["saved"] from seizing men's roles by participating in marital life (symbolized by childbirth), which should be accompanied by other hall-marks of Christian character (faith, love and holiness with propriety) which will produce the adornment of good deeds for which he is called in 2: 10 (***Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective*** p. 223, words in brackets mine).

Thus, in Hurley's view the word "saved" is ***not*** used in the ***soteriological*** sense found in Rom. 10: 13 and other places in scripture, but in a more ***general*** way. (You cannot always solve a theological or hermeneutical problem with a Greek word. If this were so, there would be far fewer disputes.)

Another possibility (a modified form of Hendriksen's view, pp. 111-112) is that women who embrace their God-given roles in the church and home will participate in the glorious covenant promise to Adam and Eve, namely, that ***the seed of the woman would crush the head of the serpent.*** When man fell into sin, the curse upon the woman was that there would be pain in childbirth. Nevertheless, this curse was a mitigated (lessened) curse since the woman would still be able to have children—a blessing. One of those children descended from her would be ***the Christ*** who would crush Satan's head. Adam, hearing God's curse upon Eve—but understanding the promise that his seed would not be extinguished—calls her Eve, the mother of all the living (Gen. 3: 20). Thus, God would save mankind ultimately through the childbirth of Jesus***. Paul picks up on this theme from Genesis and extends the application.*** Women still have a very important, irreplaceable function to perform in the covenant community—one that men cannot perform. As it turns out, that function is ***not*** that of leading men. Instead, women will influence and bless the Christian church through their God-given role of ***bearing and rearing*** covenant children in a godly manner so that they will one day submit to the Christian faith and the lordship of Christ. In so doing, the covenant community will grow both numerically and qualitatively not merely through the ***bearing*** of children but the ***nurturing*** of children in the Christian faith. ***Both*** bearing children and nurturing them are implied in Paul's statement. As these children grow into Christian adults who are equipped to do battle against Satan,

the serpent, he will continue to be crushed beneath the feet of Christ's church—His body—against which the gates of hell cannot prevail (cf. Matt. 16: 18 with Rom. 16: 20, in which the warfare against Satan is described as an ***ongoing, unfinished*** task for the church made certain by the once-for-all, ***definitive*** victory of Christ). Women will, therefore, be "saved" through the bearing of children who will in turn strengthen the future church to remain steadfast against the attacks of the evil one. Of course the only way they can serve in this function is to "continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint" (***v. 15b***). Without faith and love, they will be incapable of passing on their faith to their children. The term, "saved" is therefore used in a somewhat ***broader eschatological sense*** to include the final, glorious destiny of the church delivered totally and completely from Satan's onslaughts—the eschatological salvation.

Thus, the ***spiritual influence*** of women in Christ's church is not through the spiritual leadership of men but to a large extent (though not by any means exclusively) through the ***spiritual influence upon their children***—the traditional role which Paul is advocating (cf. Tit. 2: 5). These children become godly men and women partly through a nurturing mother. This by no means excludes the nurture of fathers (Eph.6: 4), but it emphasizes the crucial influence mothers have on children especially in those early formative years at home in which their faith and values are being developed at home. It is also no secret that mothers will have more time with their small children while the fathers are in the market place working to support them.

Countless examples could be given, including Timothy's own mother and grandmother who nurtured him in the Jewish faith long before his conversion to Christianity under Paul's preaching (2 Tim. 1: 5; 3: 14-15). Yet, this influence goes beyond early childhood into adulthood since it is often the mother whose continued love, care, and prayer (attended by the Spirit's power) moves her children's hearts more than the father. One need only think of women like Augustine's mother who prayed on her knees night and day for her son to abandon a promiscuous sexual life and embrace the Christian faith. Her prayers were answered, and Augustine of Hippo became the greatest Christian theologian of the early church whose influence spread widely and deeply into the Protestant Reformation. Suzanna Wesley was another godly woman who gave birth to 19 children, including John and Charles Wesley who were instrumental in the first Great Awakening which brought revival to the church. The famous saying, "She who rocks the cradle rocks the whole world" is true because great men are influenced by great women, including mothers. ***Women diminish their importance when they downplay the traditional role of being mothers.*** They may participate in the kingdom in many other ways (as chapter 1 Tim. 5 indicates), but being a godly mother is by no means the ***least*** important function—and appears to be the most important for younger women.

The interpretation above will stick in the throat of many evangelical Christians who have restricted Paul's words to the cultural situation of the 1st century. Yet, since Paul's reasoning has nothing at all to do with that culture, but creation and the fall, the burden of proof lies upon those who wish to dismiss these instructions as irrelevant for the modern church. The question is not, and never has been, the relative intellectual and spiritual equality of men and women. In terms of spiritual gifts and conduct, many women are wiser and more spiritually mature than their male counterparts. Some are also more intelligent—something to which I can personally testify, having a wife whose mind is sharper and quicker than mine. The issue is: What has God said? In His infinite wisdom, He decided to create man first and gave him, not the woman, functional authority in the church and the home.

Regretfully, African women are buying the bill of goods now sold to them by western feminism. Although it is a good thing that they are availing themselves of many educational opportunities and other privileges, they have also become convinced that a woman must enter the market place to

accomplish something "important" with her life. Professional men and women in Africa often live apart in different cities pursuing separate careers—and, consequently, separate lives—in order to become proficient consumers of more and more available goods and services to the middle class. Meanwhile, their children are sent off to boarding schools without the daily influence of mother and father. Even if children live at home, they live with one parent or the other, not both, thus being robbed of the "normal" family life God intended. Moreover, what are the implications for church life which must be patterned after the family? If the pattern of family life is flawed, so will the pattern of life in the church.

### *C. Instructions for Choosing Leaders for God's Household (3: 1-13)*

#### *1. Elders or Overseers (3: 1-7)*

The qualifications for overseer (***episcopos***) begin quite naturally where the directives to women end. "…if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires *to do*" (NASB). The ESV and NIV are closer to the Greek text, "If **anyone** aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task" (ESV). "If **anyone** sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task" (NIV). The noun, "man" is not found in the Greek text, and the verb is third person which could be used of a feminine subject ("she") as well as a male subject. Having said this, it logically follows that if women were not allowed to teach or exercise spiritual authority over the men—the explicit duties of the office of elder/overseer (***1 Tim. 3: 2b,*** "able to teach"; ***Acts 20: 28***)—they could not be considered for this office.

Furthermore, it is not merely incidental that an elder (***v. 2***) and deacon (***v. 12***) must be the husband of one wife. If women elders or deacons were permitted, it would seem prudent for Paul to remove all doubt by saying, "An overseer (or deacon) who is male must be the husband of one wife." It would not be necessary to say that a woman overseer or deacon must be the wife of one husband, since this would be assumed. Polyandry (having two or more husbands) was not permissible in Greco-Roman or Jewish culture, nor is it common anywhere in the world to this day—not an inconsiderable proof of the necessity of male headship in the home. Two verses later, Paul would make it clear that the family is the testing ground for any man who aspired to be a leader in the church. If he cannot manage his leadership role in the immediacy of his home, he is unqualified to assume this role in the ***broader family*** of the church. This would necessarily imply that only men would qualify as elders in the church, those who were heads of households (if married). Since women could not be heads of households, they could not be heads of the household of God, the church. Of course, it could be argued that male headship in the home was also a culturally determined practice not mandated by Scripture, but it would be difficult to prove this point exegetically from the book of ***Genesis*** and Paul's application of ***Genesis*** in ***1 Timothy 2.***

Therefore, when considering the question of who should assume the office of elder/pastor or deacon in the church, the ***broader context*** of ***1 Timothy*** must be considered. Paul's purpose in writing this letter is to instruct Timothy how believers should conduct themselves in the church, the ***household*** of God (***3: 14-15***). Thus, the church is patterned after the family in which there are fathers, mothers, children, brothers, and sisters (***1 Tim. 5: 1-4***). Appointing women as leaders in the church would confuse the pattern of authority already established in the home, a pattern in which the man is clearly the leader and the woman his subordinate (Eph. 5: 22—6: 4; Col. 3: 18-21). In both ***Ephesians*** and ***Colossians***, as in ***1Timothy***, the biological family is intricately connected to the church and serves as

the pattern of its spiritual life. The church is a family. Vern Poythress has noted that even in the absence of specific instructions requiring male leadership, the family structure alone would have been sufficient to establish this order in the church. Yet, too often, modern distortions of the nature and function of the church disable our comprehension and enjoyment of its community spirit.

> Finally, note that in situations of face-to-face intimacy, the church is largely made up of whole families who as a family come to church meetings. The church is quite likely to meet regularly in small groups in member's homes, and the home atmosphere extends to the whole meeting. In the church meetings themselves, the fathers continue to exercise authority over their families. In Titus 1: 6, Paul indicates that the elders should be men "whose children believe," in which case the whole family would regularly come to meetings and the obedience or disobedience of children to their father would be manifest at the meeting itself (see Titus 1: 6; 1 Timothy 3:4). In fact at a church gathering the lines between family and church are not very clearly drawn, because the family comes to the meeting as a family and not merely as isolated individuals. Family worship at home and family worship with a larger group might seem very like one another, except that the larger group is the extended family—that is, God's household.
>
> All these factors, then, add up to generate a firm impulse to see the mature fathers in the church as the natural people to become fathers in a more extended and official sense, namely, fathers of the church as an extended spiritual family. If church life is as robust and intimate as it should be—if it is a normal ***family*** life—the church will find itself recognizing male overseers even if hypothetically it did not have the specific instruction from the Apostle Paul in 1 Timothy 3: 1-7 and Titus 1: 5-9….
>
> …many evangelical churches today are seen primarily as lecture halls or preaching stations. People identify the church with its building, in contrast to the biblical emphasis that those united to Christ are the real church. Moreover the building is viewed merely as a place for hearing a sermon or enjoying religious entertainment. Such a view impoverishes our communal life as Christians….
>
> …in too many evangelical churches, people have little experience of the Biblical practice of common family life. There may also be no regard for the necessity of church discipline. The church leaders are nothing more than gifted speakers or counselors (paid ministers), or else managers of church property and/or programs (whether these people are called trustees or elders or deacons). Such "leaders" are just people whose useful gifts have brought them into prominence. In such situations it is understandable that some people may fail to see why appropriately qualified women may not exercise the key functions they associate with leadership. In fact, Christians will not fully understand the logic leading to male overseers until they come to grips with what the church should really be as God's household (Vern Sheridan Poythress, ***"The Church as Family: Why Male Leadership in the Family Requires Male Leadership in the Church"***, pp. 241-243, ***Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood***, Piper and Grudem, eds., bold emphasis his; underlined emphasis mine).

### *a. Above reproach within the church*

Of the many qualifications of elders, only ***one*** has any direct reference to ***intellectual*** acumen, "able to teach", and since teaching requires application, this also would require spiritual maturity. The rest of the qualifications are concerned with Christian ***character***, something the ordination process for Western pastors—with its usual emphasis on intellect and memory (in many denominations)—should take more into consideration. Intellectual knowledge of the Scriptures does not guarantee character. In his second, final, letter to Timothy Paul says, "The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to **faithful** men who will be able to teach others also (2 Timothy 2:2 NASB, emphasis mine). "Faithful" men, not "brilliant" men. They must be able to teach, but teaching the scriptures is not the same as teaching mathematics. While it is helpful to have character in any field of study, it is essential that a man has Christian character when imparting the truth of the Bible. The disciple learns not merely through ***listening*** but ***watching.*** Had the original twelve disciples seen moral inconsistencies in the life of Jesus, they would have never given their

lives as martyrs for the faith. Jesus lived what He taught, and pastor-teachers must do the same. When the Bible speaks of wisdom and knowledge, theoretical knowledge is never the subject in view. An overseer must be a man of solid Christian witness and reputation ***within*** the Christian community. Later, Paul mentions the necessity of a good reputation ***outside*** the Christian community (***v. 7***). Overseers must be shepherds of the flock (Acts 20: 28), but this function is only possible if he presents a positive example of what a mature Christian ought to be. If he can be seriously accused of blatant violations of Biblical principles, those detriments to his character must be corrected before he can lead others. Being above reproach is the ***general heading*** to all the other specific qualifications as elders (so also Hendriksen, p. 119). Thus, he must be above reproach as a husband, in temperament, in wisdom and prudence, in his use of money, etc. When Paul later mentions being above reproach to those outside the church, he "brackets" [ ] all the qualifications for elders within these two general categories: above reproach ***inside*** the church and above reproach ***outside*** the church.

Structurally, Paul emphasizes the importance of having a good reputation by including this requirement at the beginning (***v. 2***) and end (***v. 7***) of the requirements for elders. Thus, it forms an ***inclusion*** (or ***inclusio***) which emphasizes the moral requirements of elders.

***b. The husband of one wife***

Polygamy had not been completely eliminated among Jewish Christians in the first century, although the practice was diminishing steadily. The ***ideal*** of monogamy (following the words of Christ in Matt. 19: 5) is now upheld as a ***necessity*** for church leaders. By extension, monogamy thereby becomes the standard for all Christian marriages, not just the marriages of officers. Hendriksen has interpreted the phrase as "one wife's husband", a man who is faithful in his marriage relationship and of unquestioned morality (p. 121). I find this interpretation unsatisfying since ***every*** male in the congregation, elder or non-elder, must adhere to this standard of general sexual morality. Otherwise, he should be disciplined. Given the extremely immoral past of most Greco-Roman Christians, I would suggest that training in sexual morality would have been one of the first things Paul would have taught his converts (cf. 1 Thes. 4: 3). Elders must stand out from the congregation by excelling ***above*** the average standard. They must be men that others will look up to and emulate. If it is argued that he must be a man who has ***never*** been sexually promiscuous either as a single man or as a husband, a Christian or non-Christian, the argument proves too much. It would prove that a person who was a former persecutor of the church (Paul, no less) could be an apostle, but a person with an immoral past—regardless of repentance—could not be an elder. Paul is not speaking of a person's ***past***—either the non-Christian past or the Christian past—but one's ***present*** behavior.

There were many men coming to faith in Christ who ***already*** had more than one wife, and there would be ***no Biblical grounds*** for divorcing all but one of them. In that day it was entirely possible, even probable, that a divorced wife would be condemned to a life of destitution, and she may even turn to prostitution for survival. Moreover, had polygamy been categorically (without exception) condemned by Paul, this particular requirement would have been redundant, and therefore, unnecessary. There would be no point in disqualifying polygamous men for the office of elder if polygamy was also grounds for church censure or grounds for refusing admission into the church. The OT scriptures did not condemn polygamy outright, but regulated it to ensure the protection of women, even slave-wives, whose polygamous husbands no longer wished to provide their emotional and material needs (Ex. 21: 7-11). Nathan rebukes King David not for polygamy but explicitly for

adultery (cf. 2 Sam. 12: 7-9). By the time David committed adultery with Bathsheba, he already had at least nine wives plus an unknown number of concubines. His first was Michal (1Samuel 18); his second, Ahinoam (1Sam. 25:42); Abigail, third (1Sam. 25:42); Macaah, fourth (2 Sam.3:3); Haggith, fifth (2 Sam.3:4); Abital, sixth (2 Sam.3:4); Eglah, seventh (2 Sam.3:5). Micah is not mentioned in 2 Sam. 3 because she bore him no children. The wives mentioned above bore sons to David in Hebron. In 2 Sam. 5:13 we find that David "took more concubines and ***wives*** (plural) from Jerusalem, after he came from Hebron…." Again, this was ***before*** he took Bathsheba as his wife. Besides Solomon, who was born by Bathsheba, David fathered ten sons in Jerusalem (2 Sam.5:14-16). Even assuming that all of them were born to David by only two of the wives from Jerusalem (which is highly unlikely) then David had a minimum of nine wives (not counting concubines) before he took Bathsheba as his tenth wife.

Some expositors—following the Church Fathers, Tertullian and Chrysostom—have attempted to make "husband of one wife" refer to more than one wife ***throughout a man's life***, thus disqualifying widowers and all divorced men; but there is no exegetical reason to accept this interpretation (Hendriksen, p. 121). While polygamists and their wives could be Christians in good standing in the church, only men whose marriages reflected the ***ideal of monogamy*** could serve as overseers. Jesus establishes this ideal when He quotes Gen. 2: 24 in Matt. 19: 5, "the ***two*** shall become one flesh" rather than "***they*** shall become one flesh" (from the Hebrew text; although two is implied by the singular for "wife" in the Hebrew. The Greek translation of the OT, the Septuagint also uses "two").

Furthermore, if monogamy is the ideal for overseers, it is also the implied standard for ***other*** men in the congregation. Quite naturally, the requirement has led (or will eventually lead) to the eradication (abolition) of polygamy in the Christian church regardless of cultural practice. We have seen this pattern among Christian marriages in Africa which are becoming increasingly monogamous; thus, the gradual disappearance of polygamy in Africa is not accidental, but the result of an increasing Christian world view among African Christians. Polygamy among Muslims in Africa has not diminished to the same degree.

What is being suggested here is that Christian churches should not go beyond the Biblical standard in requiring monogamy from Christians who were already married to more than one wife ***before*** conversion. Like Paul, we should be sensitive to the cultural situation to avoid creating more problems than we are solving. If a man is already married to two or more wives before becoming a Christian, he must remain married to them ***after*** becoming a Christian. If he sends all but one away, he has committed a sin by unlawfully divorcing his other wives. If they should choose to leave him voluntarily because of his conversion to Christ, he is not bound to remain married to them (1 Cor. 7: 15-16). However, if they wish to remain married to the believing husband, he should ***not*** send them away (1 Cor. 7: 12-13). To do so would be an unlawful divorce.

Many church leaders in Uganda have unwittingly counseled polygamist Christians to sin against Paul's commandments in 1 Cor. 7: 12-13 by advising them to dismiss all but one of their wives, even though these women would have agreed to stay married to him. When we forbid what God allows, we will inevitably allow what God forbids. There is no scripture in the Old or the New Testaments which specifically forbids polygamy. It is clearly not the ideal for marriage, but it is not a sin ***by definition***; otherwise, God would have never regulated polygamy (Ex. 21: 7-11). God never regulates anything that He defines as sin; he simply condemns it and punishes it. Murder is condemned and punished. God does not say, "Murder is a sin, but if you murder anyone, here's the way you should

do it." There is no need to give specific instructions concerning something which is absolutely forbidden. On the other hand, specific instructions are given in the case laws about how a man should provide both material and emotional support (conjugal love) for more than one wife (Ex. 21: 7-11).

On the other hand, let's say there is a Christian man in your congregation who wishes to marry a second wife. Should he be allowed to do so? The answer is a resounding "NO!" He is already a monogamous Christian husband who should now understand that monogamy is the ideal for ***all*** husbands in the church, not just leaders. Polygamy is allowed only as a ***concession*** to husbands and wives who were already involved in polygamous marriages before their conversion to Christ. If this Christian insists on his legal right in Africa to marry a second wife, the church leaders should also insist on their responsibility to excommunicate him lest his poor example become an epidemic in the church. Concessions are permitted exceptions within the church; they are not the general rule. The general rule is monogamy.

One last point. By saying that overseers must be the husband of one wife, Paul does not imply that an elder ***must*** be a married man. Paul was not married and believed that marriage would be a hindrance to his apostolic duties (1 Cor. 7: 32-34). The Lord Jesus had already established the legitimacy of celibacy for those who could function in life without marriage and would devote more attention to the kingdom in the unmarried state (Matt. 19: 12). The emphasis here is that ***if*** the elder is married, he must be married to only one woman. (It should go without saying that he must be married to one woman, not one man (***1: 10***), but since the Episcopal church in the US does not recognize the plain meaning of Scripture, this should be said.)

### *c. Temperate*

This means that the overseer cannot be given to excess (so also Hendriksen, p. 122). Paul speaks specifically of the excessive use of wine and the excessive affection for money in ***v. 3***, but other excess must also be avoided. An obese (overly fat) man who can't control his appetite, or someone who can't control his spending habits, would also disqualify himself for the office of elder. (I will let the reader determine the definition of obese, but I have seen preachers back in the states who would fit the definition.)

### *d. Prudent*

Knowledge of the word is not sufficient, but one must also have the ***wisdom to apply it to practical situations.*** An elder must be able to think on his feet in order to say the right thing at the right time or to wait for the proper moment to say anything at all (Prov. 12: 23, 25). This is, indeed, a difficult requirement, for taming the tongue is the most challenging task in the Christian life (James 3: 8), especially for someone like me whose boiling point is too quickly reached. A prudent man weighs all the evidence and does not come to rash decisions or judgments (Prov. 14: 5; 18: 17). He is not given to impulsive decisions. (For churches who are in the process of selecting elders, a thorough study of the ***Proverbs*** would be beneficial in defining the quality of prudence.)

### *e. Respectable*

An elder must be a man of good behavior. He is a man people take seriously when he speaks because they know that he is wise and "practices what he preaches." This characteristic would include sexual purity, a characteristic not specifically mentioned but assumed within the requirements for elder.

### *f. Hospitable*

Does the man make a habit of having people into his home, even those who do not have the same socio-economic status? Does he go out of his way to show kindness to those who are in need? It was common for believers during this time to house other believers who were traveling from place to place, especially traveling missionaries. Traveling was very dangerous, and public accommodations were few (cf. 2 Jn. 1: 10; Rom. 12: 13; Matt. 25: 35; Lk. 10: 30-37).

### *g. Able to teach*

Not all elders will have the same level of teaching ability, but all elders must be able to clearly articulate the Christian faith and teach others at least on a one-on-one basis. Much to be preferred is to have a number of elders within a congregation who can ***share*** the preaching and teaching load of the person normally called "***the*** pastor". As Acts 20: 28 indicates, ***all*** the Ephesian elders were given the responsibility of "shepherding" (from ***poimen***) the flock which means that ***all*** elders or overseers are pastors (cf. 1 Pet. 5: 2). One man or two usually have superior preaching skills, but this could be more common traditionally because other elders in the church have had little opportunity to cultivate the skill of preaching. Other comments concerning this will be made below in the treatment of ***1 Tim. 5***.

As mentioned earlier, this is the ***only*** intellectual qualification of elders which must also assume the wisdom (prudence) to apply one's knowledge. Yet, it ***is, indeed***, a requirement; and a person who has great difficulty understanding the Bible and communicating it to others should question his call to be an elder in the church. Further, if he is not an avid (eager) reader of the Bible and other books which enhance his understanding of the Bible—in short, if he doesn't even like to read—he is not suited to be an elder who must be able to teach others. Those of you who are studying to enter the teaching ministry should take note. If your reading is limited to being able to pass formal tests and acquire a certificate or degree, but you have no intention of continuing your studies informally after graduation, then perhaps you should acknowledge this lack of enthusiasm now rather than later. There are many other occupations which are honoring to God, so maybe you should become a farmer, truck driver, or carpenter instead (cf. Darrow L. Miller, ***Life***Work).

### *h. Not addicted to much wine*

Elders may partake of wine in moderation, but they may not drink to excess (see above, "temperate"). Paul advised Timothy to take a ***little*** wine for his stomach and frequent illnesses (***5: 23***). The word for wine in both texts is ***oinos***, the same word used in Jn. 2 when Christ turned water into wine at the wedding of Cana (120-180 gallons of it!). The alcoholic nature of this wine is implicit in the word itself and in the headwaiter's response to the bridegroom, "Every man serves the good wine first, and when *the people* have drunk freely, *then he serves* the poorer *wine*; *but* you have kept the good wine until now" (John 2:10 NASB). In other words, after the guests have "drunk freely" to the point of being "tipsy" (mentally affected by the wine); they don't have sufficient wits about them to differentiate between good wine and bad. It all tastes the same. A headwaiter could discern the difference between wine and grape juice.

***Oionos*** is also the same word used in Matt. 11: 19 when Jesus commented on the accusation that He was a glutton and a drunkard (***oinopotēs***) and in Eph. 5: 18 where Paul tells the Ephesians not to be

drunk with wine but to be filled with the Holy Spirit. No one gets drunk on grape juice. The analogy Paul is using is that a person should not allow himself to be controlled by wine or any other alcoholic substance, but should surrender himself to the control of the Holy Spirit. The burden of proof lies upon those who wish to prove that "wine" in the NT is non-fermented grape juice. Advocates of the "grape juice theory" also do no better in the OT with the word, ***yayin. Yayin,*** translated "wine", is used in Gen. 9: 21 when Noah drinks wine from his vineyard and becomes drunk. The same word is used in many texts in ***Proverbs*** that warn us about its abuse (Prov. 20: 1; 23: 20; 23: 29-35. However, we are also warned in the Scriptures about the abuse of sex, but no one argues that sex has no legitimate use within the bounds of marriage.) The same Hebrew word for wine, ***yayin***, also occurs in Ps. 104: 15, and I will include the context of vv. 10-14.

> He sends forth springs in the valleys; They flow between the mountains; [11] They give drink to every beast of the field; The wild donkeys quench their thirst. [12] Beside them the birds of the heavens dwell; They lift up *their* voices among the branches. [13] He waters the mountains from His upper chambers; The earth is satisfied with the fruit of His works. [14] He causes the grass to grow for the cattle, And vegetation for the labor of man, So that he may bring forth food from the earth, [15] And wine which makes man's heart glad, So that he may make *his* face glisten with oil, And food which sustains man's heart. (Psalm 104:10-15 NASB)

The reader will notice nothing negative in the context. God is the giver of all ***good*** gifts to His creation in general and to His image-bearers in particular. God gives man wine to make his heart glad; thus, the Psalmist, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, acknowledges the soothing effects of wine upon the mind (the "heart" is a general term which includes the mind). God even invited His OT people to drink wine (***yayin***) or strong drink (***shekar***, the "hard stuff") in His presence as part of their yearly tithe (Deut. 14: 23-26). It is quite apparent, then, that God permitted man to create alcoholic wine with this particular use in mind, as a temporary respite (relief) from the hectic schedules of everyday life. The problem arises when the temporary respite becomes a substitute for the consolation of the Holy Spirit.

I have gone to some length with this subject since many Africans believe that a person cannot drink ***any*** wine, beer, or any alcoholic substance without drinking too much and becoming drunk. But if this is true, then there would be no positive reference to wine in the Bible, and Paul would have forbidden any use of it by elders or by Timothy. We must beware lest we go beyond the Biblical requirements and create another form of Phariseeism declaring anyone to be a good Christian as long as he doesn't drink alcohol and declaring him unspiritual if he does.

But I must conclude with what Paul emphasizes. The elder ***cannot*** be a drunk, and if he is known to linger at his wine, he not only is unqualified to be a candidate for elder, but may instead be a good "candidate" for church discipline if the problem persists (Matt. 18: 15-20). Can a person who has so little self-control be "respectable" or "temperate"? The elder must be characteristically "filled with the Holy Spirit"; that is, controlled by the Spirit and His word, rather than controlled by wine or any other intoxicating drink (banana beer ?). He must not allow the relaxing effects of wine to be a substitute for the comfort and controlling influence of the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, if ***anyone*** in the church lacks the ability to control his drinking and characteristically drinks too much, he or she should not drink ***at all.*** Thus, drinking even in moderation can be a sin to someone who regularly drinks too much.

### *i. Not pugnacious, but gentle, peacable*

The word, "pugnacious" literally means "striker". The New King James version renders it "not violent" and the old KJV, "not a brawler". This requirement would naturally fit with the previous one since drunkenness invites brawls (Hendriksen, p. 125, citing Prov. 23: 29-30). The NASB (1977 and 1995) has rendered the word, "pugnacious", which in the English means "argumentative." I believe this is a good interpretation of Paul's intention since he is using the word more figuratively than literally. Paul is not primarily speaking of someone who gets into regular fist-fights, but one who regularly gets into arguments.

Although an overseer must be willing to defend the Christian faith and correct wrong thinking and wrong actions, he must not be one who ***enjoys*** being argumentative or is simply difficult to get along with. By extension, an elder must be ***approachable*** by any member of the flock, even those who are characteristically shy and easily intimidated. He must give the impression that other people's opinions matter, that he is not above the possibility of being wrong, and that he is willing to change his mind and apologize if he has been proven wrong. When correcting others, he must do so gently and peacefully, believing in the power of the Holy Spirit to grant repentance and to use sound teaching to change the minds of those who are in error (2 Tim. 2: 24-26).

This qualification refers to excess in ***temperament***. An elder must be able to ***control his temper*** or any excessive use of his tongue. The positive attribute would be "gentle" and "peaceable", someone who knows how to handle himself properly in an argument, especially with one who is ***not*** peaceable (***v. 3***). None of this means that an elder should be void of passion, but his passion should be about the right things. A man who is known to frequently "vent his spleen" or "let off steam" would not be the best choice of an overseer (Prov. 12: 16). At the same time, we must be cautious not to disqualify men who act like men. Show me a man who never gets riled (angry) about anything, and I'll show you a man who may also be complacent about sin in the church. Only men of passionate conviction should be elders, but sometimes those convictions must be strenuously controlled.

### *j. Free from the love of money*

This one is tricky, and several questions arise. How do we determine whether a potential overseer is free from the love of money? Love is affection for someone or something which is internal, and we can't see a man's heart; thus***, how can we make a judgment*** about one's affection for money? The subjectivity involved may tempt us just to forget the requirement altogether, and most churches have done just that. Yet, Paul obviously believed that such a thing as the love of money could be ***objectively*** (though not easily) assessed; otherwise, he would not have included this characteristic as a ***requirement*** for being an overseer. In other words, why make something a requirement if it cannot be evaluated? So then, how do we assess this lack of affection for money? Do we simply ask the elder candidate, "Do you love money?" to which he will predictably respond, "Oh no, I don't love money"? "Okay," you respond, "Then you qualify for elder." If this sounds ridiculous, it's because such a scenario ***is*** ridiculous. There is no point in asking this question any more than asking him questions about other requirements for elder. A person's ***life*** will answer all the questions we need answered ***within reason*** without the expectation of infallibility.

How do we determine whether a potential elder loves his wife? There are many tangible ways in which husbands can prove that they love their wives. One of the basic ways to prove this is by being

sexually faithful to their wives. If they have sex with other women, no amount of talk will convince anyone, least of all their wives, that they truly love their wives. To be convincing, husbands must also be gentle and kind to their wives, not abusing them physically, verbally, or emotionally, but living with them in an understanding way (1 Pet. 3: 7). An abusive husband will have a difficult time convincing his wife that he loves her, despite repetitive claims that he does so or in spite of how many times a week he desires sex, in which case an abused wife will feel more like a prostitute than a wife. In other words, there are objective, tangible ways in which husbands can prove to their wives that they love them and cherish them, and if they contradict these claims with abusive behavior or emotional and material neglect (refusing to make a living for their wives), they prove that all their claims of love are false. A husband's actions accurately reveal his inward affections or the lack of them—all talk to the contrary.

In the same way, ***a person's use of money demonstrates his attitude about money***. A person who claims that he doesn't love money but pampers himself with a lavish life-style of extravagant homes, cars, and clothes—relative to his own cultural standards of affluence—does not make a credible profession. The Apostle James recognized that the Christian faith is nothing if it is not convincingly demonstrated, for "faith without works is dead." If Christians are unwilling to help other people—especially other Christians—with the basic necessities of life, whatever their claims to faith may be, they are acting as hypocrites (James 2: 14-20). Later in ***1 Timothy***, Paul requires Christians to take care of their own parents (***5: 3, 8***) and for the church to take care of widows who are "widows indeed" (that is, those who have no Christian children to provide for them; ***5: 5***). He also orders Timothy to teach the congregation the necessity of providing materially for their elders who labor in the oversight of the congregation (***5: 17-18***). A congregation which refuses to take adequate care of their parents, widows, and elders but makes provisions for their own needs and many of their wants (non-necessities) proves their love of money rather than God; they are sowing to the flesh rather than to the Spirit (Gal. 6: 6-8; note the context of these verses).

Therefore, "…the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs (***6: 10***). The love of money is a false god—the most competitive god of all—which blinds us to the needs of others. The more we focus on it, the more we think we need. Paul also instructs wealthier Christians in the church at Ephesus to be focused on using their excess income for the good of others. "Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. *Instruct them* to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed" (***6: 17-19***).

Therefore, if ***every member*** of the congregation must follow such commandments by living a generous life-style uncluttered by extravagance and greed, then surely the ***elders*** in the congregation must model this generosity and disaffection for money. If they don't have a reputation for this disaffection for money, then they should not be chosen as elders. Ironically, it is often one's display of wealth and financial success which wins him the nomination of elder, even in the absence of noticeable generosity. Of course, many questions arise about the relative amount of wealth which Christians may enjoy. What exactly is an extravagant house or car or life-style? Western missionaries in Africa may be accused of materialism by the way they live relative to most Africans, although their standard of life may be lower than it was while living in the West. This is one factor among many which makes the assessment of "the love of money" very complicated. Paul is not advocating a

Christian version of asceticism since even material gifts are from God (***4: 4***). Most assuredly Paul did not accuse the wealthy Christians of sin just for being wealthy; nor did he accuse them of sin for not redistributing all their wealth among other members of the congregation. (He also did not criticize the poor for being poor.) God is not a Marxist who uses the power of the government to redistribute wealth by excessive taxation (socialist-style redistribution). Love must be voluntary in order to be genuine love.

By permitting the conditions which give rise to both the wealthy and the poor, God creates opportunities for the wealthy to glorify Him by sharing their abundance with those who have less, thus proving that they love God more than their money (Matt. 6: 24). If there were no poor people, there would be no opportunity to glorify God in this way and therefore one less way to prove God is our greatest treasure. (And this does not imply that a person has to be absolutely destitute before a fellow believer offers him a helping hand nor that a believer has to be wealthy in order to help others; cf. 2 Cor. 8.)

One good "rule of thumb" in answering the question of how generous we ought to be is this: Does my giving and generosity hinder me from buying something I want? Said another way: Is my generosity really a sacrifice to my life-style; am I giving up something I want as a result of my giving? If not, I must not be giving enough (so also Darrow Miller, ***Life*Work—*A Biblical Theology of What You Do Every Day***, p. 198, and C.S. Lewis, source unkown, but I know I read it somewhere). If our generosity does not require us to sacrifice something, perhaps we are simply giving out of our abundance or surplus but are not giving sacrificially (cf. Lk. 21: 1-4). In other words, we should be able to feel the economic "pinch" of our generosity. Elders should be chosen who model (but do not advertise) a self-sacrificial life-style. Hard and fast rules are impossible; but, once again, if the love of money cannot in the least be objectively determined, why mention the qualification in the first place?

### *k. One who manages his own household well*

An overseer must have a good reputation as a family man. This would include being beyond reproach as a husband and a father. Considering our own imperfections in this area, most of us should wonder how ***any*** man would qualify as an elder. Yet, Paul is not demanding perfection, but ***consistency***. Managing one's household is qualified by the phrase, "keeping his children under control with all dignity" (***3: 4***). In Tit. 1: 6, Paul says, "having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion." The word "believe" (***pistos***) is used in ***Titus***, seemingly implying that an elder must have ***Christian*** children to qualify for the office of elder. This has been the subject of much debate. What if a father has three children, two of whom are believers, but one an unbeliever? And what if he came to faith late in life, and did not have the opportunity to lead any of his children to Christ while they were young? Are such fathers disqualified as elders? Thorny questions.

The additional clause in ***Titus***, "not accused of dissipation or rebellion", seems to qualify the term "believe." In other words, Paul is ***objectifying*** belief or describing belief as ***observable characteristics.*** We cannot look on the heart of a man's children to know for sure whether they are believers or unbelievers, but we can observe their actions. Are they living in rebellion to the Christian faith, or are they openly defying the authority of their parents? For sure, there are many children of believers who do not exhibit a passion for the Christian faith, and they may be going through many spiritual struggles; but their immaturity is not necessarily a sign of unbelief. Immaturity and unbelief are two different things. Their fathers should not be disqualified just because their children lack luster and enthusiasm in their spiritual lives. (Many pastors would have to be dismissed otherwise.)

Further, it would seem to me that fathers should be evaluated on the basis of a consistent "track" record. If ***most*** of their children demonstrate a credible profession of faith while ***one*** has repudiated the faith, the congregation should give the benefit of the doubt that all the children were properly nurtured; but one chose not to listen. The ***Proverbs*** leaves plenty of room for the possibility that Solomon's son would chose not to follow his counsel; and, indeed, he didn't (cf. Prov. 1: 8-19; 2: 1-5; passim [in many places]; 2 Chronicles 10). We must leave room for God's sovereignty and human responsibility, not demanding complete success.

On the other hand, what if all or most of his children repudiate the faith? This may imply that he cannot serve the congregation as a good example of someone who has faithfully reared his children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6: 4). Of course, there will be some discrepancy in the selection of elders, many of whom are younger whose children are not old enough to have proven either his faithfulness or unfaithfulness in this matter; and this may be one good argument for not choosing men who are ***too young*** to have proven themselves. After all, the very word "elder" (***presbuteros***) implies a man of Christian maturity who has proven himself. If a man has demonstrated an inability to "manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God" (***3: 5***). If he has failed in the crucial areas of disciplining his children or earning the respect of his wife, what probability of success will he have in overseeing the many discipline problems of a whole congregation? This question brings us to the next qualification, "not a new convert", but before we discuss this, one other point should be made about managing one's household well.

This qualification comprehends the marriage relationship more than the former statement about being the husband of one wife. If a man is managing his household well, this implies that he is also ***managing his wife well***. Does he have her respect? If not, why not? Is he providing a good example to her of someone who is ultimately concerned about others—her particularly (Eph. 5: 25-26)—and the kingdom of God? Is he abusive to his wife or children physically, emotionally, or verbally—excluding the loving corporal discipline of young children and he gentle correction of his wife? If so, far from being a candidate for elder, he should be under the discipline of the church, and if abuse continues after the first stages of church discipline, excommunication is in order. An elder must set the example of a man who loves his wife as Christ loves the church, sacrificing himself for her good and treating her tenderly as a weaker vessel who is called upon to submit to him even when his decisions may not be wise (1 Pet. 3: 7). It is not always easy to determine whether a husband is doing this simply from the way he treats his wife at church, for many men are able to play the game of "good husband" in front of others but become abusive in private—the "Dr. Jekyl and Mr. Hyde" story in which the good doctor becomes a menacing wolf at night. I wonder whether wives should be interviewed about their marriage by the session of every church before their husbands are elected as elders. This would certainly be a novel idea and may meet with a great deal of resistance; but if anyone has anything to hide, better to find it out before making him an elder who is responsible for the spiritual oversight of others.

***l. Not a new convert***

An elder should be old enough in the faith to have been "around the block" a few times. That is, he must have had sufficient experience in living the Christian life and in applying his faith to the difficult problems which people often face. Generally speaking, men who have recently become Christians have not faced as many challenges as those who are older in the faith, and they will be tempted to believe that they are wiser than they really are. As Paul says here, their appointment to the office may in itself be a temptation to become conceited. An older man has the opportunity to look back at his life and recognize his many short-comings and failures; thus, appointment to the office of

elder may very well be a very humbling thing for him making him wonder how anyone would consider him worthy of the office. A young convert, on the other hand, does not have as long a list of spiritual failures, and may think far more highly of himself than he ought to think (Rom. 12: 3). Over-confident of his spirituality and ability ("Why else would the people elect me?"), he is a good candidate for falling into sin (1 Cor. 10: 12). Many young pastors who have just graduated from seminary have fallen into this trap. They are educated, but many of them are not wise.

The "condemnation incurred by the devil" (***v. 6a***) could mean the condemnation of ***pride.*** Satan was prideful and thought he did not need to depend upon God for wisdom, resulting in his removal from heaven. Furthermore, he successfully tempted Adam and Eve not to rely upon the truthfulness or goodness of what God said but to decide what is good and bad independently of God. ("Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'?") The Bible says, "Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and turn away from evil" (Prov. 3: 7).

***m. A good reputation with those outside the church***

Paul concludes his qualifications for elders by repeating the general principle. An overseer must be above reproach also with those who are not believers—those outside the church. Nothing is so damaging to evangelism than the ungodly behavior of professing believers who live like unbelievers. The damage is intensified when even the leaders of the church fail to present a credible Christian witness. The elder's life should be an exhibit to those outside the church of the transformation of life which Christ makes possible. If someone becomes an elder who does not exhibit this kind of life, he may be emboldened to drift further and further into sin, thinking, " 'If I can get away with this conduct of mine, and still be elected overseer, I can get away with anything'" (Hendriksen, p. 129). Thus, he drifts further into sin and the devil's trap or power.

***2. Deacons (3: 8-13)***

Paul now turns his attention to deacons whose primary responsibility in the church was the administration of mercy ministries (not building maintenance). The office was first introduced in Acts 6: 1-5 when the ministry to widows was going through some growing problems and conflict (typical of any ministry which is really accomplishing something). Seven men were chosen to administrate the food being distributed to these widows so that the apostles could concentrate their attention upon prayer and the ministry of the word (***v. 4***). Thus, the ministry of the deaconate originated because of ***the necessity of the division of labor*** in the church. The same people cannot do everything.

We may assume that the moral requirements listed for elders would also be required of deacons and that the requirements for deacons would also be required of elders. The high character of these men is apparent in the selection of Stephen who became a great preacher and later died as a martyr, and Philip who became a great evangelist. Thus, the work of a deacon is not mundane, unimportant work, but spiritual work which requires maturity and wisdom. Far too often, deacons are simply given the task of overseeing the maintenance of church buildings or taking up the offering in worship. Since church buildings were not constructed until the fourth century, what did deacons do the first 300 years of the church's existence? Clearly, the ministry of mercy was their first concern, and they received considerable help from women in fulfilling this task (see below).

***a. Possessing dignity***

The word ***"semnos"*** can also be translated "grave" (KJV) or "reverent" (NKJV). A deacon must be a man of spiritual weight or seriousness (see discussion above).

***b. Not double-tongued***

He must be a man who doesn't say one thing to one person but something entirely different to someone else. He must say what he means and mean what he says. Inconsistency can be innocent, for all of us have discovered inconsistencies in our statements to two different people about the same event. However, our inconsistencies can result from the desire to please men. One person wishes to hear one thing from us and another person something else. ***Wishing to be popular with everyone, we tell them what we think they want to hear.*** A duplicitous (two-faced) person (another word for double-tongued) is not qualified to be an elder. The church needs leaders who are not afraid to speak the truth in love even if unpopular, to say what needs to be said even if no one wants to hear it. Again, the qualifications for deacons would equally apply to elders and vice versa (the other way around).

***c. Not addicted to much wine***

(See above under 1. h.) In addition to what has already been said, the word "addicted" (most translations) indicates overuse, not occasional use. A person who drinks a small glass of wine per night and stops at that is not addicted. Likewise, the word "much" (***polus***) indicates a large quantity. Elders and deacons must not consume large quantities of alcohol.

***d. Not fond of sordid gain***

This requirement focuses not only on the attitude but the act itself. Deacons—as well as elders—must make their money ***honestly***. Every deal, every transaction, must be above board and out in the open without a hint of fraud. There may be legal ways to deceive a person in a business transaction which are not moral. The ultimate question for the Christian is not, "Is it legal?" but "Is it ethical and moral?" from God's point of view? A deacon must not be a man who is willing to make money at the cost of personal integrity or the harm of another person. "Better is the poor who walks in his integrity Than he who is crooked though he be rich" (Proverbs 28:6 NASB). The practicality of this requirement is fairly obvious. Given the responsibility of caring for the needy, the deacons would be entrusted with church funds allocated (set aside) for these duties. Dishonest deacons would have the opportunity to embezzle those funds. A deacon must be a genuine Christian who serves with a clear conscience.

***e. Holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience***

This is a reference not only to the integrity of his faith but also the content of his faith. Although the deacon has no spiritual oversight of the congregation, this does not imply that he can be biblically illiterate or ignorant. He must understand the Christian faith and cling to it.

Deacons were first ***tested*** (***v. 10***), an interesting addition which is not mentioned in reference to elders, but clearly implied with the heading, "above reproach" and "a good reputation with those outside". How the church went about testing the deacons is left unexplained, but perhaps for a time prospective deacons had to serve with experienced deacons to see if they met the qualifications. If they didn't enjoy the ministry of mercy or proved irresponsible, they didn't qualify. However this

probation period was carried out, it is clear that ***both elders and deacons*** had to be men of ***proven*** character and worth ***before*** they should even be considered for the office. It is foreign to the NT to have men of unproven character assume places of leadership. Speaking from personal experience as a former pastor, such men can be a thorn in the flesh. Notice that those who serve well as deacons should be appreciated in the church (***v. 13***). This does not mean that if they serve well as deacons, they can then be "promoted" to the office of elder, as if the elder is more important—a common misconception. The ministry of mercy is a high calling in itself deserving of high honor. It is a different office requiring different gifts and calling. Just as some deacons would not be suitable elders—perhaps lacking the ability to teach—some very capable elders would not be suitable for the office of deacon. Their gifts don't coincide with the responsibilities of deacons but are more suited to the ministry of the word (cf. Acts 6: 1-4; notice also from this text that these men had to be men of "good reputation").

The women of ***v. 11*** are possibly deaconesses, and this interpretation is somewhat supported by Rom. 16: 1. However, the word ***diaconos*** can also mean a "servant" in an unofficial capacity. Another possibility is that Paul is referring to the widows who were placed on the "list" for special service in the church (***5: 9-16***; particularly the reference to gossip in ***v. 13***; see discussion below). More likely, however, this was yet another class of women in the church who were ***deacon's assistants***. While a male deacon may be in charge of a certain ministry in the church, he would need the assistance of women to carry out these duties, particularly in helping needy women in which case he would not wish to be alone with them in their homes, thus inviting gossip and possible slander. There is little merit to the view that Paul is speaking of deacons' wives (although ***gunaikasi*** can be thus translated; cf. NIV translation). The qualifications of elders, deacons, and the women who help deacons are introduced with the recurring formula, "likewise"; ***ōsautōs*** (cf. ***vv. 8, 11***). Therefore, this group of women is a separate group all to its own, not simply the wives of deacons. Additionally, if Paul was speaking about ***deacons'*** wives, why did he neglect to say something about the ***elders'*** wives?

However, against the view that they are official deacons is the next verse, "Deacons must be ***husbands*** of *only* one wife, *and* good managers of *their* children and their own households." The implication is that just as an elder must manage his household well, thus proving his ability to manage the church, a deacon's home must also be his ***proving ground*** for the broader responsibilities of the church. Both offices assume one's leadership in the ***home***, a task given to men, not women. Another difficulty with the interpretation of "deaconess" is that only ***one sentence*** is given concerning the qualifications of these women. If a third office of deaconess was implied, we would have expected a longer description of their moral requirements (Hendriksen, p. 133). Additionally, given Paul's explicit instructions about women taking their proper place in the church in ***chapter 2***, it would have been necessary for him to be more explicit here if he were allowing women to take official positions of leadership.

The issue is not as critical as the debate about women elders who are responsible for the spiritual over-sight of the church. Deacons have no such spiritual oversight although they must be spiritual men. Whatever view is taken, it is a well-known fact that women in the church shoulder much of the responsibility of caring for church members through visitation of the sick, hot meals, counseling, and other merciful acts. They are desperately needed in the church, and such women should be duly appreciated whether or not they have an official title. Perhaps it is because they are not duly appreciated in the church or at home for their many contributions to life and community that they aspire to official positions which don't belong to them. But it should be remembered that the important thing is not what ***title*** we have in the church but whether or not we are genuinely ***useful*** to

Christ and His people. A person should covet the ***opportunity to serve***, not the title. Whether others see what we do or not, God sees; and He will reward us accordingly (1 Cor. 15: 58).

### *IV. Personal Instructions to Timothy (3: 14—4: 16)*

#### *A. The Theme of 1 Timothy: " I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth." (3: 15)*

The instructions of ***1 Timothy*** are communicated to Timothy with the purpose of informing him how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God—the theme and purpose statement of Paul's letter. This same purpose will be in view through the remainder of the letter, for Paul is not finished with the many practical matters which are crucial to the orderly functioning of the church. They may seem mundane and insignificant to the modern mind, but any church officer will testify that even little problems which come up in congregational life are those which often threaten its very existence (cf. Acts 6: 1-4, a situation which threatened to divide the Gentiles and Jews in the new church). Added to these are the doctrinal problems which Timothy is facing.

The church is "the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth." This means that the church is the living, breathing testimony to the truth that Christ has come into the world to save sinners. Sinners do not read the Bible or biblical commentaries. They read Christians. If the church fails to produce people who are "saved" from their bondage to sin and self-centeredness, the truth of the gospel is compromised in the eyes of the world in the same way a building's structure is compromised if its pillars (its structural components) fail. Remove these pillars and the building collapses. If God's people visibly fail to function as the family of God, the household of God, the living edifice (building) or monument to the truth of the gospel collapses in the ***eyes*** of the world. The gospel looses credibility. And why shouldn't it loose credibility if Christians cannot behave any better than unbelievers? If we cannot get along with one another and care for one another, why should a pagan world believe that the gospel "saves" anyone from anything? Only the Lord knows how much damage the hatred of racism and tribalism has caused throughout the history of the church, thus hindering the progress of the kingdom of God both in the West and in Africa.

#### *B. Common Confession of the Early Church (3: 16)*

Paul interjects a common saying among Christians at this time (***3: 16***). This is the only time that the phrase "mystery of godliness" occurs in the NT. Generally speaking, a "mystery" (***musterion***) is something ***partially revealed in the OT but fully revealed in the NT.*** The "mystery" of the Gentiles being included among the people of God on equal footing with the Jews was only partially hinted at in the OT but made fully known in the New Covenant (Eph. 3: 3-9). The mystery of the church as the bride and body of Christ is more fully revealed in the NT (Eph. 5: 32). Christ is the "mystery of godliness". Not by works of human merit—the ***expected*** means of godliness—but only through faith and trust in Jesus Christ can a person be cleansed of his unrighteousness and be made righteous in God's sight. Furthermore, through the cleansing work of the Holy Spirit in sanctification, a Christian who is ***declared*** righteous in God's sight will actually ***become*** the righteous person God declares him to be. Through ***progressive sanctification***, God makes us into the godly people he declares us to be in ***justification***. In Christ the righteousness of God was revealed (Rom. 1: 17), a righteousness which

did not depend on human effort but a righteousness rooted in the work of Christ alone—a true mystery whose full significance even Christians have trouble comprehending.

### *C. Doctrinal Heresies (4: 1-11)*

#### *1. Asceticism (4: 1-6)*

Jesus had already warned of false prophets (Matt. 24: 1; Mk. 13: 22), and this may have been the communication from the Holy Spirit that Paul was speaking of. However, Paul himself received messages directly from the Spirit some of which were warnings about apostasy (Acts 20: 29-30; 2 Thes. 2: 3). That "the later times" were already present when Paul wrote is evident from his description of them. Some professing believers would fall away from the faith by believing in false doctrines, and this was already happening in the early church. Christians today are also living in the later times between the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ and His second coming. The later times are better known as the "last days" (cf. Acts 2: 17; 2 Tim. 3: 1; Heb. 1: 2; James 5: 3; 2 Pet. 3: 3).

In ***1 Timothy***, Paul is combating one manifestation of 1st century Gnosticism, ***asceticism***—the renunciation of material pleasures and comforts with the goal of attaining spiritual perfection. According to Gnosticism, the "good God" of the NT era did not create the material world (the world made of matter) which is evil. This ***material world and the human body*** were created by Yahweh of the OT era (also known as the Demiurge) and they are enemies of pure spirit which is the goal of religion. Therefore, they must be conquered if one is to free himself from them to enjoy a purely spiritual existence. However, Gnosticism proposed ***two entirely different methods*** for conquering the body and the material world. The first method was ***asceticism***, abstinence toward material and physical comforts and pleasures, primarily sex and food. This first form of Gnosticism—***shunning the flesh***—is Paul's present target in ***1 Timothy***. The Church Father, Tertullian, also wrote against asceticism in his treatise, ***Against Marcion***. (Marcion was a heretic who denied the inspiration of the OT scriptures with few exceptions.)

Another way to conquer the body was ***indulging the flesh*** and letting it have its way. This alternative form of Gnosticism was known as ***hedonism***, and is condemned in the writings of the Apostle John (1 Jn. 3: 4-10; Rev. 2: 15, 20, 24), Peter (2 Pet. 2: 12-19), and Jude (vv. 4, 8, 11, and 19) (The summary of Gnosticism above, including references, was taken from Hendriksen, ***1 Timothy***, p. 147).

A good biblical summary of the hedonistic form of Gnosticism is found in Jude, v. 4, "For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who ***turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ."*** In the name of Christianity, some Gnostic teachers converted the grace of God into licentiousness, the indulgence of every form of sin including sexual immorality. How strange that the same fundamental error can manifest itself in two ***entirely different*** ways! But sin is seldom consistent. Generally speaking, ***legalism*** (making rules that are not biblical) and ***antinomianism*** (ignoring God's rules) are flip sides of the same coin and go hand in hand, as in the Gnostic heresy. Another example of this were the Pharisees who were meticulous in tithing on the herbs of their gardens while purposely dishonoring their aging parents by withholding material help (Mk. 7: 6-13). They also disapproved of Jesus healing on the Sabbath, the very deliverance which was foreshadowed in the Sabbath (Matt. 12: 10; compare Lk. 4: 17-21 with Isa. 61: 1-3; the "favorable

year of the Lord was the Year of Jubilee, the 50th year following seven Sabbaths of years or 7x7=49). Furthermore, the Pharisees of the Hillel school of thought were known for easy divorce.

"Deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons" refers to the ***ascetic form*** of Gnosticism which forbade marriage and other God-given liberties "which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth" (***v. 3b***). God created food and marriage and they should be enjoyed as His creation within the boundaries Scripture allows. "Sanctified" (***v. 6***) means to be set apart; thus, Scripture is our guide as to ***how*** we may set apart all the things God has made for ***legitimate use***. The created order is ***not ours to exploit***. Sex is part of God's creation, but we are not at liberty to enjoy sex any way we please. Food is also created by God, but we are not allowed to eat to the point of obesity (serious overweight). The geophysical, material world including rivers, forests, streams, and oceans may also be enjoyed by man, but man may not destroy, pollute, or litter any part of this world without reaping the consequences. He is not the owner but only the steward.

Prayerfully ("by means of the word of God and ***prayer***", ***v. 5***), we must consult the ***word*** of God to know the boundaries of our use and enjoyment; and if our use is legitimate, no one has the authority to forbid us this use. Instead, as we enjoy this good earth and all the material things God has given us to enjoy, we give Him thanksgiving and worship (1 Cor. 10: 31). Our conscience in the use of material things should be bound by the word of God alone, not by the conscience of someone else (1 Cor. 10: 29b). On the other hand, we should be careful not to live as if we are a law unto ourselves. Our consciences and our understanding of lawful liberties are sharpened by our interaction with other Christians who may correct our understanding. Further, our freedom in the gospel allows us to give up the right to enjoy certain liberties for the sake of other believers who may not understand these liberties (1 Cor. 8: 4-13; 10: 23-29, focusing on vv. 28-29; cf. J. Knox Chamblin, ***Paul and the Self—Apostolic Teaching for Personal Wholeness***, chap. 6, ***"Freedom in Slavery"***).

***False doctrine and immoral character*** are also flip sides of the same coin. One's character will assuredly suffer if his theology is wrong. Once I spoke with a well-meaning brother who had been told by the Holy Spirit to give someone else's bible away. Somehow, his belief in the ubiquitous (everywhere) communication of the Spirit directly to believers overruled the Spirit's stated commandment, "You shall not steal." Some people commit all kinds of sins in the name of love, including having sex with someone they "love" outside of the marriage relationship. ***Biblical love and law always go together and never contradict one another***; thus, we cannot love someone and break God's law at the same time.

Several years ago there was a well-documented case on TV about a woman who had been having an affair with her married pastor (30 years her senior) for over ten years. She was told that she was under his spiritual authority and that having risen to a certain state of spiritual attainment, he was now above the sin of adultery; it didn't apply to someone like him. Paul was describing such men and women when he says that their conscience is seared; it no longer speaks to them or restrains them because they have gagged or muffled the conscience so many times. It is always easier to commit the same sin the second time than the first, and especially to commit it the 50th time. Some men are captured by pornography by accidentally locating a pornographic site on the internet. If they had dealt decisively with it, they would have quickly canceled the site. Instead, they continued gazing at the lewd pictures, gagging the conscience until it no longer says "no". Pretty soon they are visiting the site on a regular basis. A friend of mine lost his marriage and family to pornography. Wrong theology, however spiritual it may sound, has no power against the flesh. Only Christ-centered

theology which teaches legitimate law-keeping through the power of the Holy Spirit—without whom no one can live a genuinely moral life—can save us from the power of the world, the flesh, and the devil (Rom. 8: 1-0). Paul warned the Colossians who were also being influenced by Gnosticism,

> If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, "Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!" (which all *refer to* things destined to perish with use)—in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men? These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in ***self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence*** (Col. 2: 20-23).

Notice he says that such self-made religion is of ***no use against fleshly indulgence***. It cannot give us the power we need to avoid immorality. Apparently, then, the same people in Colossae who were propagating false asceticism were indulging the flesh; their false religion was powerless.

Our lives are simply an extension in practice of the theology we espouse (believe and hold to), for one cannot avoid making moral decisions every day which are informed either by bad theology or good theology. It does no good to say, "I don't care about theology; I just want to worship Jesus." But exactly ***who*** is this Jesus, anyway, and ***what*** did He believe and teach? If one is serious about knowing what Jesus believed, then he must allow himself to be informed by both the Old and the New Testaments, because Jesus said that He didn't come to do away with any of it (Matt. 5: 17-18). All of us are "doing theology" on a daily basis, whether we know it or not; but it is either good theology yielding good practice or bad theology yielding bad practice. Furthermore, even good theology does not guarantee good practice if there is little or no application in dependence upon the Holy Spirit. Most of us practice far less theological truth than our theological theory would allow.

### *2. Worldly fables (4: 7a)*

Paul had already warned Timothy not "to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies, which give rise to mere speculation rather than *furthering* the administration of God which is by faith" (***1 Tim. 1: 4***). "Worldly fables" is a synonym for "myths and genealogies—spinning wild stories about OT characters which are based on the ***careless handling of Scripture and unsuppressed imagination.*** If one wishes to read fables and fiction to their children, this is quite legitimate. Personally, I have enjoyed reading ***The Chronicles of Narnia*** by C. S. Lewis to my four children and deeply regret that I did not read to them more of such fables and other literature during their childhood. But this is not what Paul is talking about. He is talking about those who ***construct fables from Scripture*** and call them biblical instruction. The biblical teacher must spend his time majoring on one book, the Bible. It alone is inspired by God; and therefore capable of perfecting us for every good work (2 Tim. 3: 16-17).

Why the Apostle mentions "old women" in this context is difficult to determine (***v. 7***). Was this more of the Apostles' "dislike of women" for which he is so often accused? I don't think we should accuse the good apostle of misogyny (hatred of women) on account of this verse or any other. Could Paul be referring to some specific old women in the church of Ephesus who were supporting the false teachers and spreading strife among the brethren? But this is only speculation. Sometimes old people are given to "superstitions" (Hendriksen, p. 150)—old stories which are based purely on someone's imagination but not truth. One such superstition in the US is that it is "bad luck" to walk under a ladder or to cross the path of a black cat. Something terrible will happen to you if you do. Few

people actually believe these myths (I hope), but they are just two examples. (Incidentally, I have disproved the myth about walking under ladders hundreds of times as a former house painter.) The same kind of fanciful imagination was fueling the myths and fables being spread around Ephesus. Paul says in effect, "Such fables are not worthy of any ***reasonable*** Christian."
Ironically, the modern scientific world accuses ***all Christians*** of being superstitious. How can reasonable people believe that God became a man and that this God-man died on a cross to save people from their sins? Is this not the worst case of superstition? For that matter, is not the very idea of a supernatural God a superstition beyond credulity? The skeptics would have a point were it not for the ***empty tomb*** and the ***eyewitnesses*** of Jesus' resurrection. The biblical record emphasizes the fact that there were many eye-witnesses of Jesus' miraculous deeds and his resurrection (Jn. 21: 14; Acts 3: 15; 5: 32; 10: 38-41; 13: 28-31; 1 Cor. 15: 3-8). Further, if the Jewish authorities could have produced the dead body of Jesus after the rumor of His resurrection circulated, they certainly would have done so, but they couldn't. Their fabricated (false) story of how the disciples had stolen the body out of a heavily guarded tomb (Matt. 27: 62-66; 28: 11-15) was far less believable than Jesus' resurrection considering all the miracles He had performed in Jerusalem and throughout Palestine—in the presence of thousands of witnesses—and also considering the cowardice of the disciples the night he was betrayed (Matt. 26: 56b, 69-75). Are we to believe that these fearful disciples suddenly changed into special forces "commandos" and overpowered trained Roman soldiers whose lives depended upon their success in guarding Jesus' tomb? So, who's superstitious?

### *D. Personal Discipline and Teaching (4: 7b-16)*

Avoiding worthless fables and any theology which is powerless against the flesh, Timothy is to discipline himself for the purpose of godliness (***v. 7b***). Paul was commonly using metaphors from the Greco-Roman games, in this case the Isthmian games (cf. 1 Cor. 9: 26-27; Gal. 2: 2; 5: 7; Phil. 2: 16; Hendriksen, p. 152), and he does so here likening spiritual discipline to bodily exercise. The word "discipline" (***gumnazō***) is taken from ***gumnos*** ("naked"; cf. Matt. 25: 36, 43; Jn. 21: 7; Rev. 3: 17). Participants in the Greek games trained naked or with very little clothing even in adverse weather conditions, so I would not suggest applying this command literally. The analogy is simple. As the Olympic athlete sheds any excess clothing which would ***hinder*** his training, Christians must strip themselves of any habits—even lawful liberties—which would hinder their discipleship and growth in grace.

Physical discipline is valuable only for this present, temporal life since in the new heavens and earth God will give us new glorified bodies not subject to disease, aging, and death (1 Cor. 15). Spiritual discipline, on the other hand, has eternal value which will not pass away. This is another "trustworthy statement deserving full acceptance" which Paul quotes for effect (v. 9; cf. 1 Tim. 1: 15; 3: 1; 2 Tim. 2: 11; Tit. 3: 8).

Several principles come to mind from this analogy. ***First***, spiritual discipline, like bodily discipline, is ***not easy***. Anyone who exercises regularly will tell you what a chore it can be to make yourself do it. Most of the time you don't feel like it and would rather catch another nap or read a book. It takes discipline and sacrifice to force yourself to do what you know you ***should*** do to take care of your body. (Remember, Paul did not tell Timothy that bodily discipline had "no profit" but "little profit" in comparison to godly discipline.)

Spiritual discipline isn't easy, either, and God never meant for it to be easy. That's why it's called "discipline". Getting up in the morning to pray, to read the Bible, to attend corporate worship, to take time for fellowship, for ministering to others, etc, all take time and effort which many Christians are not willing to sacrifice to grow in their Christian faith—and growth requires all of these things, including ministry to others. Consequently, many true believers are weak believers, and some are scarcely distinguishable from unbelievers. While a certain degree of sanctification is promised to every believer (John says that if we are walking in darkness we are liars—1 Jn. 1: 6); nevertheless, we must ***actively participate*** with the Holy Spirit if we expect to grow strong and useful in the Christian faith. God will not circumvent (go around) personal effort in the growth process any more than he will grant good physical health to someone whose diet consists of only donuts and coffee (or only matoke and posho). You will never be physically fit if all the exercise you get is raising a fork to your mouth. Many Christians are miserable and disillusioned with the difficulty of life and the mistakes they have made in life without coming face to face with the main problem—themselves. Our ***primary enemy*** in this life is not the devil, or even the world of temptations, but ***ourselves*** and our own laziness in fighting the fight.

***Second***, godliness "holds promise for the present life and *also* for the *life* to come" ***(v. 8).*** Its usefulness in this life is that it will save us from a lot of unnecessary grief and will grant us the biblical blessedness which Jesus describes in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5: 1-12). ***Happy are those who are holy***. But its value is not limited to ***this*** life because godliness is eternal, holding promise for life in the new heavens and new earth. Heaven's inhabitants will be godly people. This brings up the question of the ***continuity of one's personal godliness*** for the age to come. If all believers will be instantaneously transformed into the likeness of Christ upon His return (1 John 3:2), can we not conclude that those who have rigorously disciplined themselves in this life will have no advantage over Christians who have been lazy in spiritual discipline? I don't believe so. It is true that at the return of Christ we will all be glorified, a state which encompasses full sanctification to holiness. There will be no sinners in heaven; only fully sanctified saints. Nevertheless, those who discipline themselves for godliness and service in ***this*** life will be rewarded eternally for their active participation and achievement. Jesus promised rewards for character and service (Matt. 6: 1-6, 20; 10: 41-42; Lk. 6: 23, 35; 19: 11-27; Rev. 22: 12), and the Apostle Paul confirmed those rewards (1 Cor. 3: 8, 14; 9: 18; 15: 58). In the parable of the minas, ten cities were given to one slave while five were given to another—to each one ***according to his labor***. Common sense suggests that the Apostle Paul will receive more reward in heaven for his tireless labors and suffering for the gospel than any of us, some of whom are sailing into heaven with easy breezes ***relative*** to Paul's stormy seas. Would any of us begrudge the good apostle for the Lord's special recognition?

It is for the "life to come" ("this", ***v. 10***) that Paul and Timothy labored and strived; for in Paul's estimation, if there is no life after death, there is no point in all our striving, and "we are of all men most to be pitied" because of our futile sacrifices (1 Cor. 15: 19). "If from human motives I fought with wild beasts at Ephesus, what does it profit me? If the dead are not raised, LET US EAT AND DRINK, FOR TOMORROW WE DIE" (1 Cor. 15: 32). Our "hope" is in the "living God" (***v. 10***) who is "not the God of the dead but of the living (Matt. 22: 32b). Thus, contrary to much liberal Christian theology which disputes the claims of the bodily resurrection of Christ and which teaches a moralistic Christianity devoid of power, the Apostle Paul ***motivated*** Timothy with the hope of the resurrection and the eternal rewards of faithful service. It is entirely possible that even modern evangelical Christians have settled for a mediocre (unexceptional) Christian life and service on the presumption (an unproven assumption) that the ***only*** reward promised in Scripture is to get all the

way through the "pearly gates" into heaven. As long as we get there, so it is thought, any extra effort is wasted.

Multitudes of people who have this attitude are not genuine believers and have never been gripped by the great love of the Father who has sent His son to die for us and to give us an eternal inheritance. Anyone who has been subdued by such love and grace will not be calculatingly stingy with how little he can offer Jesus in his lifetime (Matt. 25: 14-30; note, the worthless slave does not receive a lesser reward in heaven, but a place of "weeping and gnashing of teeth"—hell). At the same time, I acknowledge that defective theology breeds defective love and service, and the less we contemplate the purpose for our existence as fellowship with God and the service of God, the less we desire to make a return on the investment He has made in us. Instead of earning the ten-fold or five-fold we were capable of, we may earn only two-fold (a third possibility that Jesus does not mention in Lk. 19: 11-26). The more we trust His promises (Heb. 6: 10), the more we will be inclined to sacrifice for His name. The rewards will be secondary to being with Christ, yet our belief in future rewards is a response of faith to the promises of His word. If such rewards were not necessary for our motivation, Jesus would not have mentioned them. Timothy should "prescribe and teach these things" (***v. 11***).

One other question remaining from ***v. 10*** is the enigmatic (confusing) phrase, "who is the Savior of all men, ***especially*** of believers." The word "especially" (***malista***) is used in Gal. 6: 10; Phil. 4: 22; 1 Tim. 5: 8, 17; 2 Tim. 4: 13; Philemon 1: 16; and other places to set something or someone apart into a special class. Since reformed Christians believe that Christ's atonement is applied ***only to believers***, those elect before the foundation of the world, how is it that Christ can be said to be the Savior of ***all*** men? In a special sense, Christ is, indeed, the Savior of believers only. Only believers are forgiven of their sins, and only believers will partake of the salvation which consists not only in pardon for sin, but also adoption, sanctification and glorification, to name a few of its benefits.

On the other hand, there are ***certain saving benefits which are applied to all men*** because of Christ's atoning work on the cross. The world is a better place because of Christ's salvation since Christians throughout the world have made the world a better place to live. Genuine biblical Christianity (as opposed to false Christianity) has brought justice, peace, modern science, hospitals, economic prosperity and a host of other blessings to a world which once lay in complete darkness (see Alvin J. Schmidt, ***How Christianity Changed the World,*** and D. James Kennedy and Jerry Newcombe, ***What If Jesus Had Never Been Born***). Unbelievers don't give the Christian faith credit for centuries of social and economic progress, but a careful look at world history will verify how the Christian faith has changed the world for good. Thus, in this sense, Christ is also the Savior of ***all*** men because any civilization immersed in the Christian world-view has been "saved" (non-soteriologically) from the destructive effects of alternative world-views. Even communist China has been "saved" economically from the destructive powers of communism by allowing more economic liberty to its citizens since 1978. This does not mean that all men will enjoy the eschatological salvation promised only to believers. In that sense, Christ is the Savior ***especially*** of believers.

Looking at the OT, we can also see that God was the Savior of all Israel by delivering them from their bondage in Egypt (Ps. 106: 21); yet, only a small proportion of Israel coming out of Egypt actually embraced the covenant promises unto salvation. With most of them God was not well-pleased (1 Cor. 10: 5; Hendriksen, pp. 154-155). Thus, God was the Savior of ***all*** Israel, but ***especially*** of believing Israelites.

Timothy was relatively young (***v. 12***) to shoulder the responsibilities given him, possibly between the age of 34 and 39 (Hendriksen, p. 157). As Paul's ***apostolic representative***, he was not on the same parity (not equal) with other elders in the church of Ephesus but had greater authority than they, some or all of whom were older than he. No matter. Timothy must not allow anyone to look down on his youth (see note on ***2: 7***). The word "look down on" (***kataphroneo***) can be translated "despise" or "think lightly of" (cf. Rom. 2: 4; 1 Cor. 11: 22). It is worthy of note that Paul did not tell Timothy not to get ***discouraged*** when others looked down on his youthfulness. Rather, he commands Timothy (the verb is imperative) not to ***allow*** anyone to despise his youth. Nothing is said about how Timothy was going to avoid this condescension, but that when it happened Timothy must not allow it to stand unopposed. He must stand his ground and remind his opponents that he is God's man for this special work in establishing a solid biblical foundation in Ephesus. They may not like being under the authority of a younger man, but that was beside the point. They must be told to submit to his authority or else incur the displeasure of God. Such language does not give Timothy, or any other ecclesiastical leader, license to fleece the sheep and impose tyrannical rule. Two of the requirements of elders are a gentle and peaceful spirit and a lack of argumentativeness (***3: 3***; cf. 2 Tim. 2: 25). Nevertheless, Timothy must draw the line somewhere and must not allow anyone to intimidate him simply because he is young.

At the same time, authority is empty without character. "In speech, conduct, love, faith *and* purity" he must prove himself "an example of those who believe" (***v. 12b***). By modeling the very character he is teaching, Timothy's authority receives the authentication (the stamp of genuineness) needed to fortify himself against his challengers. If they accuse him of wrongdoing, let his godly character prove to be an embarrassment to them (cf. 1 Pet. 2: 12; Acts 24: 13)! Of course, character is very subjectively assessed, and I am not suggesting that congregational members are at liberty to challenge a leader's authority on the basis of scant (insufficient) evidence and ridiculous character assassination (cf. ***1 Tim. 5: 19*** and discussion below). Any congregation which attacks its leaders without sufficient proof of serious infractions of God's law for the purpose of dismissing an unwanted pastor or elder only hurts itself. "Obey your leaders and submit *to them*, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be ***unprofitable for you***" (Heb. 13: 17).

On the other hand, congregations which appreciate their leaders, encourage them by various means to remain with them, and submit to their preaching even if it is sometimes unpleasantly directed to personal flaws, are blessed of God with the longevity of a spiritual father who has had ample time to know and care for his flock. It has become a sad day in US evangelicalism when the average pastor remains with a congregation for a national average of only two years either because of moral failure, false accusations, or because pastors are "climbing the corporate ladder" to bigger and more affluent congregations. The US church is no better for the turnover, and I hope the African church can teach us a lesson in this regard; but from casual observation, it seems that the "bigger is better" mentality has infected the African church as well. The "successful" pastor, it is widely believed, is the one with the bigger congregation and the bigger salary.

Three duties are listed for Timothy's consideration—the corporate reading of the Scriptures, exhortation and teaching (***v. 13***). The modern reader, with multiple copies of the Bible in his possession, may not think much about the necessity of reading the scriptures except to comply with the proper mode of worship which must include this practice. However, when Paul wrote these words, the average Christian did not have a copy of the OT, much less the NT which had not been

completely written or circulated. Each copy of the OT had to be meticulously hand-written, and such copies were understandably expensive for the average church member. Paul is not meticulously concerned with the order, as if the exhortation which is based upon the teaching of scripture actually precedes the teaching. Exhortation (***paraklasis***) has a variety of meanings. In Acts 9:31 and 2 Cor. 7: 4 it is translated "comfort"; "encouragement" in Acts 15: 31 and Rom. 15: 4; "exhortation" in Rom. 12: 8, Heb. 12: 5, and 1 Thes. 2: 3. Comfort appears to be the predominate meaning (the Holy Spirit is called the "***paracletos***", the Helper).

However, as Heb. 12: 5 and 1 Thes. 2: 3 indicate, exhortation can also include the correction of wrong thinking and action based on a better understanding of Scripture. Timothy must give himself to the teaching of doctrine (***didaskalia***), but doctrine is not enough. He must also teach Christians how to apply the doctrine to concrete situations (exhortation). The preacher must never assume that his congregation knows how to apply a passage of Scripture. This does not imply that he should be condescending to his congregation or doubt their spirituality. Understanding the scriptures and applying them are spiritual gifts (cf. ***v. 14***). And while all Christians are given these abilities to some degree, God has given His church the ***gift*** of pastor-teacher for the equipping of the saints for their work of service (Eph. 4: 11-12). This special gift of pastor-teacher implies that the gift is ***needed*** by the church. If all of God's people had this gift, the church would not need elders and overseers. The gift can also be improved and ***must*** be improved. The longer an elder devotes himself to the ministry of the word with humility and dependence upon the Spirit, the more skilled he will become in interpreting its meaning and applying it accurately. Preachers are not only born, but they are made—that is, they are chosen for this purpose, given the necessary gifts, and cultivated throughout life for this purpose. Their training never ends.

This spiritual gift was not imparted to Timothy ***by*** an ordination ceremony of other elders (presbyters) laying their hands on Timothy (***v. 14***) or ***by*** someone's prophesy of Timothy's usefulness in the gospel. These gifts were ***officially recognized*** in Timothy ***through*** prophetic utterance and the laying on of hands. The gifts of the Spirit are exclusively ***His*** gifts, not gifts from others. They are bestowed by the Spirit, not by others. Nevertheless, both the presbytery and the prophetic utterance were present in Timothy's call to the gospel ministry to ***recognize and confirm*** this gift of the Spirit upon his life. Paul's call to the ministry also had been attended through the prophetic utterance of Christ Jesus Himself when He said to Ananias, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake" (Acts 9: 15-16).

Today's ministers of the gospel have no such prophetic utterance concerning their ministry, but it is still necessary that their spiritual gifts are ***recognized by others*** before they are commissioned into the ministry. Some are thrust into a task to which they are not called and for which they are not gifted. Too many men who show an interest in theology and ministry are encouraged prematurely (before the proper time) by their churches and presbyteries to attend college or seminary and jump into the pastoral ministry without the requisite (required) abilities (cf. ***1 Tim. 5: 22***). The consequences can be serious. On the side of the pastor, there can be disillusionment and depression, marriage problems, even doubts about his salvation, etc. (Churches full of true believers can still be ruthlessly cruel. I speak from personal experience.) On the side of the congregation, churches may be split in two, members not being fed the word of God from someone who does not know how to interpret or communicate the scriptures. A young or inexperienced pastor may be overly ambitious of spiritual

progress in his congregation and may come across too harshly in his applications. (I can also personally identify with this error, having committed it myself.)

However, the assessment of someone's abilities can be very subjective and unfair. Some members are difficult to please even when there is solid exposition of the Scriptures. Keep in mind that some of the Corinthians did not even approve of ***Paul's*** preaching! He was not at all the sophistic orator idolized by many Greek audiences of his day who valued ***form over substance*** (2 Cor. 10: 10; 1 Thes. 2: 5-6). Everyone has their own particular opinion—often misguided and ill-informed—about what is "good preaching" and often they dislike ***what*** is being preached more than the ***delivery***. Perhaps the preacher has consistently touched a raw nerve with his pointed exhortation and correction! The pastor should be given the benefit of the doubt about his abilities and his motives. If he has not been in the pastorate a long time, love and respect for the office dictate that he should be given sufficient opportunity to grow in his abilities to interpret and apply the Scriptures through practical experience. How much time should he get? There is no magic formula for this, but woe to the congregation which impatiently removes a man truly called by God. (It is clear from some of Paul's remarks in this epistle that Timothy was being despised for his youthfulness.) If they discard their pastor for insufficient reasons, they will also discard other successive pastors; and they will rob themselves of the continuity of a long and profitable ministry. Or, they may simply stick with a pastor whose preaching is sufficiently general and non-challenging, thus robbing themselves of the spiritual growth they could have had with the pastor they kicked out the door. Small wonder that the writer of ***Hebrews*** exhorts his audience to submit to their leaders for their ***own*** profit (Heb. 13: 17)!

This is the beauty of the Presbyterian system of government ***if*** consistently applied—and that is a big ***IF.*** When a congregation and pastor (or elders) are at odds with one another, neither the congregation nor the elder (or elders) are a law unto themselves. The matter should be brought before the presbytery for consideration and adjudication (judgment), and unless there is clear biblical evidence to the contrary, every party involved in the dispute should submit to the presbytery's decision. Matters can be brought even as far as the General Assembly. With congregational government, on the other hand, the majority vote of the congregation is law, and there is no court of appeals. This does not imply that the congregational system cannot work. When there are cool heads, Christian maturity, and obedience to God's law, any system of government can work; but the Presbyterian system has the advantage of greater checks and balances upon either the tyranny of the leadership or the tyranny of the congregation. (The same system of government was used by the founding fathers of the United States who recognized the need for checking the powers of big government.) The big ***IF*** is whether the presbytery actually functions as a presbytery. Quite often, it doesn't, and the pastor is run off from the congregation for insufficient reasons, or a pastor who has inflated notions of his own power and importance subordinates the local presbytery (session) of his church to his own selfish agenda without being challenged by the larger presbytery consisting of elders from multiple churches.

Timothy must "take pains" with the reading of the Scriptures, teaching and exhortation (***v. 15***). He must ***"persevere in these things"*** (***v. 16***). After a man has been preaching for even a short time, he will readily understand why Paul exhorts Timothy to "persevere". Not only is there often opposition to your preaching, but "the Sunday morning sermon comes around with alarming regularity!" (Quoted from a class lecture by Dr. Robert Strong, Reformed Theological Seminary, one who preached for over forty years). Time is always a limitation for a busy elder, but one elder or a few elders must spend considerable time laboring in the Scriptures and applying them to the daily lives of

the congregation as well as the current problems of the church. These things should be a priority while other important duties must take a back seat or be delegated to others (Acts 6: 1-4).

Timothy must also take heed to ***himself***—that is, his own physical, emotional, and spiritual health—so that he will be a blessing to others. Physical neglect can cause emotional and spiritual problems and vice versa (the other way around). We are both body and soul and they are inescapably intertwined and connected so that one dimension of man always affects the other (Ps. 22).

By the phrase, "for as you do this you will ***ensure salvation*** both for yourself and for those who hear you," Paul is not teaching salvation by works. (The New King James Version renders it "you ***will save*** both yourself and those who hear you", also an accurate translation.) It is quite clear from the analogy of Scripture that neither Paul, Timothy, nor any other mere human can actually "save" anyone else soteriologically, although that is the word used here (***sōzō***). What Paul implies is that by attending to the priorities of the word, ***Timothy will properly apply the normal means of grace*** in bringing men and women to salvation in Christ. God does not save in a vacuum apart from human activity, but uses the labor of others in applying the means of grace to expose sinners to the need for repentance and the saving benefits of the gospel, for "How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher?" (Rom. 10: 14)

The "presbytery" (***presbuterion***) in ***v. 14*** is the body of elders at Ephesus. Presbyterians apply the term to a body of elders representing more than one church. For example, I come from the Mississippi Valley Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in America consisting of dozens of PCA churches in a certain geographical location in Mississippi. When the presbytery meets (usually on a monthly basis), teaching elders (also called "pastors") and ruling elders (not called "pastors") assemble together to discuss certain issues affecting all the individual churches belonging to this presbytery. When someone is ordained to the ministry, he must pass the presbytery exam administered by the teaching and ruling elders of the Mississippi Valley Presbytery. If he passes, he is ordained by a specific PCA church seeking him as a teaching elder. It is a good system of government which exhibits connectionalism between the different churches in this geographical region. Furthermore, "pastors" can develop close relationships with one another based upon their regular attendance at presbytery meetings, and they can learn from each other.

Exegetically, however, it is difficult to prove from this text alone that the presbytery Paul mentions is anything more than the assembly of elders overseeing the local church. Perhaps, and most likely, these elders served as leaders of multiple house churches which together comprised the church of Ephesus; but it was essentially one church and one group of elders. This doesn't mean that the idea of an extended presbytery consisting of several churches is wrong or is a bad idea; it only means that this particular text cannot be used as definitive proof of the Presbyterian system of government consisting of presbyteries with multiple churches. (On the other hand, ***Titus 1: 5*** clearly implies that the church in Crete consisted in multiple congregations in ***different*** cities [see my commentary on ***Titus***]). I will add further that in Presbyterianism, the "senior pastor" of the church and any "associate pastors" (neither of which are positions found in the Bible) who are ordained by the extended presbytery are not actually members of the churches they serve. Rather, they are members of the extended presbytery. For example, any PCA pastor of the Mississippi Valley Presbytery has his membership in the Mississippi Valley Presbytery, not in the church where he has been ordained to serve. Personally, I think this practice is unwise (not to mention exegetically indefensible), and it somewhat isolates the pastor from his congregation as well as the elders with whom he serves. If the

"senior pastor" has his membership in the presbytery and not the local church, why should the other elders in the congregation not have their membership in the presbytery? Theoretically in Presbyterianism, there is parity (equality) of elders within each local church. In other words, each elder is equal in authority to every other elder. One searches the NT in vain to find the concept of the "senior pastor", a common designation in Western churches—even in Presbyterian churches where all elders are supposed to be equal but one elder is a "bit more equal than the others" in practice (expressed with no little sarcasm). In fact, the usual practice of Presbyterianism often resembles Episcopacy with its hierarchy of bishops having authority over other pastors.

No doubt Timothy is used as an example of the senior pastor since Paul has singled him out as the undisputed leader of the Ephesian church. There is one major problem with this theory. There are no living apostles today to appoint "senior pastors". All we have is the governmental system left to us in ***1 Timothy*** and ***Titus*** consisting of elders and deacons with no mention whatever of senior pastors or associate pastors. (Paul did not single out any particular elder in Acts 20 as the senior elder. He does so only in his letter to Timothy, his personal ***apostolic*** representative). In fact, the term "pastor" is not used in Scripture as an office, but only the terms "elder" and "overseer" which are used interchangeably. The term "pastor" or "shepherd" is used by Luke in Acts 20: 28 in recording Paul's instructions to the elders of Ephesus. All the elders of Ephesus should "shepherd" (***poimaino***) the congregation given to their charge in Ephesus. John uses this same word in John 21: 16 when he records Jesus' charge to Peter, "Shepherd [***poimaino***] my sheep." Remembering this charge, Peter does likewise.

> Therefore, I exhort the elders [***presbuteros***] among you, as *your* fellow elder [***sumpresbuteros***] and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, [2] shepherd [***poimaino***] the flock of God among you, exercising oversight [***episcopeo***] not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to *the will of* God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; [3] nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. (1 Peter 5:1-3 NASB)

### *V. Further Instructions about Living in God's Household (5: 1—6: 19)*

### *A. Proper Conduct Toward Different Members of the Household*

The instructions to Timothy also apply to the overseers of the church. As Paul has given Timothy the requirements for overseers, he now presents guidelines on how these elders (and by extension, the whole congregation) should relate to different members of the household. The church is not presented in the Bible as an institution or corporation with a CEO (chief executive officer), staff, and a lower echelon of workers. As indicated earlier in some detail, it is a ***family*** with an organic relationship to one another—fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, and children—as members of the body of Christ. As the earthly family is organically related to one another through a common ***bloodline***, the family of God is related to one another through the ***blood of Jesus Christ***. (For further discussion on the analogy between the church and family, see Vern Poythress, ***"The Church as Family: Why Male Leadership in the Family Requires Male Leadership in the Church",*** in ***Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood—A Response to Evangelical Feminism***, John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds.)

#### *1. Toward older men (5: 1a)*

Although the primary leader of the church in Ephesus (by means of his relationship with Paul), Timothy must not use his status as an excuse to brow-beat the older men into submission. The term

for "older men" is also the term for "elder" (***presbuteros***), but it is unlikely from the context that Paul is referring to those elected to the official office of elder. The proper response toward official elders or overseers is taken up in ***5: 18-21.***

Paul's exhortation is especially interesting in light of the general lack of respect for old age in Western cultures. Thankfully, disrespect for old people is not as common in African cultures except where young people in the cities are becoming increasingly disconnected from their immediate and extended families. (And this is a growing problem on a continent which is becoming increasingly urbanized.) Timothy must obey the fifth commandment to honor father and mother by honoring the older men in the congregation as fathers. There is little merit to the interpretation that Paul is speaking only of older ***elders***, for the context of the passage is the church as the family of God with fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters.

Sharp rebukes have their place for those who are entrenched in their wrong-doing; but if a person is simply mistaken, a softer approach is preferable and generally yields better results (cf. 2 Tim. 2: 24-26). Rather than putting an older man on the defensive and possibly losing the possibility of regaining him, an appeal to his better judgment encourages him to rethink his position. Is it biblical? There is something strange and inappropriate about a son rebuking his father in an unloving way, but there is always a time for a humble appeal. The same propriety (proper order) which should prevail in the home should govern the family atmosphere of the church. Older people should be honored as parents.

***2. Toward younger men (5: 1b)***

No one should be despised for his age, neither the old ***nor*** the young. Timothy himself was relatively young considering the responsibility placed upon him, and Paul has already instructed him not to let anyone look down upon him simply because he is young (***4: 12***). The younger men should not be considered as unworthy subordinates, but as brothers in Christ who equally shared in the redemptive benefits of the kingdom of God.

***3. Toward older women (5: 2a)***

As the older men were considered as fathers, the older women were considered as mothers and due honor given to them according to the fifth commandment. Thus, it was not the societal values placed upon people which must regulate one's conduct within the household of God, but the relationship they sustained to one another as a family, and the law of God which provides the ethical framework for living within the family. Women were generally marginalized (treated as insignificant) in first century Greek culture, but prevailing cultural practices could not dictate one's conduct within the household of God—an entirely new culture within the existing culture. It is not cultural norms and practices which must influence life within the church, but the church which must influence and redeem cultural practices. This does not imply that all traditional cultural practices must be scrapped, but that all traditions must be subjected to the scrutiny of God's word for acceptance or rejection (Mk. 7: 1-13).

***4. Toward younger women (5: 2b)***

Younger women should be treated as sisters. The additional phrase, "in all purity", highlights Paul's realism that Timothy, the other elders, and all the men of the congregation should constantly guard against any inappropriate behavior toward the opposite sex. Any hint of impropriety should be

discouraged. This was especially needed in 1st century Ephesus and all of Greco-Roman culture where sexual immorality was widespread (cf. 1 Thes. 4: 3-8, in which Paul must ***expressly*** condemn sexual immorality among professing Christians). The need for this exhortation is also much needed in our day when sexual standards are deteriorating (falling apart) rather than improving, even in the church. Sexual purity was an important issue for Paul, and he mentions it repeatedly in his epistles (Rom. 13:13; 1 Thess. 4:3; 1 Cor. 5:1; 6:13, 18; 1 Co. 7:2; 2 Cor. 12:21; Gal. 5:19; Eph. 5:3, 5; Col. 3:5; 1 Tim. 1:10).

> In his [Paul's] catalog of vices, forms of sexual immorality are typically placed first: Col. 3: 5-9 begins with "sexual immorality, impurity [and] lust"; Ephesians 5: 3-5, with "sexual immorality [and] impurity"; Galatians 5: 19-21, with "fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes [and] sodomites" (NRSV). So grave is the peril that believers must refrain from fellowship with professing Christians involved in such practices (1 Cor. 5: 6-13). In 1 Thessalonians, the first matter taken up for instructing readers "how to live in order to please God" (4: 1-12) is sexual fidelity in marriage (4: 3b-6), the seriousness of which is accentuated by the enclosing words of verses 3b ("This is the will of God, your holiness") and 7 ("For God did not call us to impurity, but holiness"). In 1 Corinthians Paul successively commands that an incestuous man be excommunicated (5: 1-13); warns that union with a prostitute draws a member of the holy Christ into a most unholy and intimate alliance (6: 15-18); and teaches married believers that habitual attentiveness to the partner' sexual needs provides one safe-guard against marital infidelity (7: 1-9). Such passages make it plain that Paul encourages sexual passion within the marital bond. He declares that "the body is not meant for sexual immorality" (1 Cor. 6: 13); but never does he say that the body as such is not meant for sex. The very reason for his urgent warnings against various kinds of *porneia* is that sex might be received on God's terms and therefore become a source of pleasure—both in itself and in its issue (J. Knox Chamblin, ***Paul and the Self—Apostolic Teaching for Personal Wholeness***, pp. 164-165).

We may ask: Why is sexual purity so important? Given the fact that sexual desire is created by God, why must we suppress it? Animals mate indiscriminately according to periodic biological urges, and it is argued that having sex is like eating; it fulfills a basic biological need. But men and women are not animals—contrary to evolutionistic teaching which has done its share in eroding sexual purity in modern culture. Men and women are created in the image of God which distinguishes them from animals. Sex which is indulged in as casually as eating and drinking is condemned in Scripture. ("This is the way of an adulterous woman: She eats and wipes her mouth, And says, "I have done no wrong"; Proverbs 30:20 NASB). Consequently, men and women are forbidden to ***act*** like mere animals. Furthermore, marriage is a picture of Christ and His church (Eph. 5: 25-32) and the loving relationship which Christ bears to His church and the church to Him. The sexual relationship within marriage reflects the oneness and unity of Christ and His church and the commitment they pledge to one another—a picture which is destroyed by indiscriminate sex without commitment. God has graciously provided the appropriate means of relieving sexual desires (marriage), and singleness is reserved only for those who feel that they can handle the pressures of sexual desire without continual lust (1 Cor. 7: 9).

### *5. Toward dependent widows (5: 3-16)*

#### *(a) Widows indeed (5: 3-8)*

Throughout the Bible, God gives special attention to orphans and widows (Ex. 22: 22; Deut. 10: 18; Deut. 14: 29; 16: 11, 14; 24: 19-21; 26: 12-13; 27: 19; Isa. 1:17; Jer. 7:6; Jer. 22:3; Zech. 7:10; Mal. 3:5; Ps. 146: 9; Prov. 15: 25). Predictably Paul, an expert in OT law, mirrors this concern for the widow by providing practical guidelines for their care in the church—further proof of the ***continuity of the covenantal framework and covenantal law*** for God's people both in the OT and the NT. By

teaching Timothy to honor widows, he is not merely advocating pious respect, but financial assistance (cf. Mk. 7: 8-13, where the same word for "honor" is used, ***timao***).

Everyone knows who a widow is, but who was a "widow ***indeed***"? The next verse gives clarification to this question. A widow indeed had no surviving children or grandchildren who could care for her needs. It should be added that she had no children or grandchildren who were ***willing*** to care for her needs. They may still be living, but if they were negligent unbelievers or negligent believers who sinfully refused to honor their parents or grandparents, the church was responsible for their care. The "widow indeed" was one who was "left alone" in the world and who depended solely on the mercy of God for her needs (***v. 5***). Once again, Paul is reminding Timothy of how each member must conduct himself in the household of God. The body of Christ operates from day to day as a family, and a properly functioning family cares for each of its members. ***God forbid that the body of Christ should live as a dysfunctional family!*** The instructions which follow from ***v. 3*** once again fall under the fifth commandment, "Honor your father and your mother." Honor implies objective financial support for one's aging parents, not merely empty words.

That Paul recognizes the possibility of negligence in this matter is evident from ***v. 8***, "But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever." It is safe to assume that there were some negligent children or grandchildren within the church of Ephesus who were not honoring their dependent widows. It is also safe to assume that such people could have been brought up on charges of neglect and disciplined by the church according to Matt. 18. Even pagans commonly took care of their widows, how much more someone who made claims of being a Christian (***v. 7***)! The practice of piety (***v. 4***) does not consist merely of having morning devotions but includes the activity of caring for people, especially members of one's own family. Children and grandchildren should remember their aged parents and should be willing to make a "return" to them for what they previously did for them (***v. 4***). If our faith ***costs*** us nothing, it ***is*** nothing.

There was one more qualification. "Widows indeed" did not include those who had sufficient means of supporting themselves, especially those who gave themselves to "wanton pleasure" (from ***spatalao***). Paul is not speaking of sexual immorality, but ***luxurious living*** (cf. James 5: 5 where the same word is used). The deacons of the church must be wise. Material help should be given only to those who ***need*** it, not to those who don't. Exactly what constitutes luxurious living is left open to question, but just as "the love of money" must have had some means of assessment, we can be sure that Timothy knew what Paul meant by wanton pleasure or luxurious living. The mention of such a widow who is "dead even while she lives"—i.e. spiritually dead—leads the reader to the opinion that widows indeed could also be women who were not members of the church. Christian children and grandchildren were responsible for their parents and grandparents ***regardless*** of whether they were believers. However, for those whose life-styles gave evidence of sufficient means, there was no necessity of providing any help.

Timothy must be careful to teach such responsibilities to believers in the church of Ephesus to ensure that they—the children and grandchildren of widows indeed—are above reproach (***v. 7***). If the church succeeds in its evangelistic message to unbelievers, Christians must be exemplary (good examples) in the eyes of the watching world. While God saves us on the basis of His mercy alone, not by our good works, this does not imply that good works are unimportant in God's plan of salvation for man (Tit. 3: 5 with 3: 8). Good deeds are "profitable" because they give credibility to the gospel; and one who does not engage in good deeds—in this case the good deed of taking care of needy widows—has

denied the faith and is worse than those who make no claim to the gospel but ***do*** provide for their needy widows (***5: 8***).

***(b) Widows on the list (5: 9-16)***

The common interpretation is that the widows placed on the "list" are identical to "widows indeed". This interpretation is mistaken for the following reasons (adapted from Hendriksen, pp. 172-173).

***(1)*** The widows placed on the list must be at least sixty years old (***v. 9***). If these are the only widows eligible for financial assistance from the church, then younger widows with or without children would be abandoned by the church to provide for themselves in a pagan culture which was very inhospitable to women. It is very likely that the younger widows with children would have a much more difficult time making a living than older widows who had no one to care for but themselves.

***(2)*** The widow placed on the list must have a reputation for good works (***v. 10***). This would imply that any help from the church is not based on grace but merit. If you have proven yourself to the Christian community, you are eligible for help (see 4 below); but if you have made mistakes with your life, and cannot verify your Christian performance, or if you are a new convert without a proven track record, that's tough; you don't qualify. "Only good people need apply!"

***(3)*** A widow must also have been a mother (***v. 10***). But widows who have not been mothers may be just as destitute as those who have. In old age, they would most likely be more destitute since they would have no surviving children to help them; that is, they would most likely fit into the category of "widows indeed".

***(4)*** Widows placed on the list must have "shown hospitality to strangers", "washed the saints' feet", "assisted those in distress", and "devoted herself to every good work" (***v. 10***). But if this widow had been ***able*** to do all these good works, she was most likely a woman of substantial means, not one who was destitute. At any rate, the previous argument ***(1)*** applies. Receiving help from the church is grounded upon how much help she has given others—works, not grace.

***(5)*** Younger widows should not be put on the list since they may wish to be remarried. Once again, the qualification would seem inequitable and unfair for younger widows (even those without children) who have been rendered financially destitute because of their husband's death. It would also put unnecessary pressures on young widows to remarry just to avoid financial distress. Furthermore, since Christians were allowed to marry only believers (1 Cor. 7: 39), and since the Christian community was relatively small in numbers, the number of eligible males would be limited. In this requirement, Paul is not condemning remarriage as a less desirable alternative to serving as a widow on the list. Remarriage was perfectly permissible and advisable for younger widows (***5: 14***).

***(6)*** The "previous pledge" (***v. 12***) is likely a reference to an agreement made by the widow to provide a particular service to the Christian community. This fits well with the qualifications that a widow put on the list must have already proven herself as one who is zealous for ministries of mercy. Thus, the phrase, "sensual desires in disregard of Christ" (***v. 11***), does not imply that the sexual desires of young widows are sinful, but that these sexual desires leading to remarriage may cause them to set aside a previous agreement to devote themselves to the work of the church. Thus, "in disregard of

Christ" means "in disregard of their previous pledge" to serve Christ in a special way. The phrase does not mean apostasy. The sexual desires of young widows and a desire for remarriage are natural and God-given, but they could eventually take priority over their special ministry. This is why Paul advises the young widows to remarry, have children, and fulfill the normal cultural obligations of women without pledging themselves to something they would not be able or willing to fulfill (***v. 14***).

Apparently the church in Ephesus had already encountered problems with the younger widows having too much time on their hands—coupled with too little maturity—leading them to go around the neighborhood as busy-bodies and gossips (***v. 13***). Going from house to house serving those in need would naturally provide many opportunities for intimate conversations which could get out of hand. Some had even turned aside from the faith, but we are given no details of what happened (***v. 15***). This does not imply that older women were less inclined to gossip (sometimes they are much more so) but that older women who had a proven track record of Christian maturity and service would be less likely to do such things.

For all of the above reasons, I'm inclined to believe that "widows indeed" and those placed on the "list" are ***two different groups*** of women in the church at Ephesus. ***The qualifications listed for the second group are appropriate for women who have pledged themselves for special service in the church, but inappropriate for widows who simply need financial help.***

Paul concludes this section by saying that any woman who has dependent widows must first assist them, freeing the church to assist widows indeed who have no one to care for them. This statement seems to be a repetition of the principle found in ***vv. 3-8***, but Paul limits the comment to women. Thus, it could be an additional comment to women who wished to pledge themselves to helping others in the church—i.e. a woman who aspired to being a woman on the list. Lest such a woman—who is a widow herself—overburden herself with helping others; she must realize that her ***first*** concern should be her own widowed mother, widowed mother-in-law, or widowed friend. One argument against this interpretation is that such dependent widows would already be in their late seventies or eighties since this woman would be not less than sixty. This argument would not apply if Paul is only speaking of widowed friends who could be the same age.

***6. Toward elders (5: 17-22)***

The Christian must also learn how to conduct himself properly toward elders in the church. Several practical and important principles emerge.

***(a)*** In the immediate context, "elders" are the same as "overseers". Paul is not introducing a third office in the church distinguishable from the office of overseer for which he has given detailed qualifications.The qualifications mentioned in ***chapter 3*** are particularly suited to one who would exercise spiritual "oversight" of the church (cf. Acts 20: 17, 28 in which Paul calls the same men both elders and overseers).

***(b)*** The responsibility of elders or overseers was that of ruling, preaching, and teaching (***v. 17***). This does not imply that all of them worked ***equally*** at preaching and teaching since Paul singles out those who worked hard at these two tasks for "double honor". It ***does*** imply that all the elders were involved in "ruling" or in making important decisions in the church, particularly those decisions

pertaining to disciplinary matters and spiritual oversight. (Yet, in some way all the elders were involved in teaching since one of the requirements is "able to teach".)

***(c)*** It is certain that ***more than one elder*** in the church labored in the teaching and preaching of the word, not simply "***the*** pastor". Verse ***17b*** reads, "those [plural pronoun, ***hoi***] who work hard at preaching and teaching." From Acts 20: 28, we see that all the elders were responsible for "shepherding" (pastoring) the flock. This principle seems at odds with the common practice of giving one man, the "senior pastor", the full burden of preaching. However, as I said earlier, there were in all probability ***multiple places*** where the church of Ephesus gathered for worship on any given Sunday. Each of the elders in the church may have been assigned to one of these places. At the same time, it is obvious that ***some*** elders worked harder at this task than others since they are set apart by the word "especially" (***malista***) into a special class of those who labored more extensively in the word.

***(d)*** Those who gave a large portion of their time to "ruling well" (***v. 17a***) were considered worthy of double honor or double pay. Paul has already used the word honor (***timao***) as a synonym (a word meaning the same thing) for financial assistance (***5: 3-4***), and it would be exegetically incorrect to interpret it any differently here. Further, the immediate context demands this interpretation. Paul uses an OT case law (***v. 18***) from Deut. 25: 4 to establish the ethical principle of providing support for Christian pastors (cf. 1 Cor. 9: 9-14, where he uses the same case law for the same purpose). He places this case law side by side with Jesus' exhortation to his disciples whom He was sending out on their first missionary expedition (Matt. 10: 10; Lk. 10: 7). Note also that double honor is ***not limited*** to those who work hard at teaching and preaching but is given to "elders" (plural) who "rule well". Thus, an elder is not required to have a heavy preaching and teaching load to be eligible for pay. He may spend a considerable amount of time in personal counseling or discipling believers one-on-one.

***(e)*** If ***double*** honor (or pay) was given to those who gave a considerable amount of time to ruling well, preaching and teaching, then, by implication, ***less*** honor (pay) was owed to those who gave ***less*** time to these activities. This implies that other elders who donated less of their time to the ministry were still eligible for remuneration (pay) from the church but not to the same degree. Thus, it would seem that ***all*** the elders received ***some*** remuneration from the congregation in an amount ***proportionate to their service***. However, another interpretation is that Paul is referring back to the "honor" which was owed to widows indeed. If needy widows were eligible for church assistance, then surely those who labored in the ministry deserved such assistance—"double honor". What Paul is discussing may not be—and probably isn't—equivalent to the practice of paying all elders a regular salary and benefits. However, the important principle must be obeyed—the laborer is worthy of his wages. The church cannot expect men to donate their time to ministry for no remuneration while they could be making money to provide for their families.

The requirement for congregations to provide material support for their elders begs the question of whether elders were, and are, also required to receive it. In Corinth the Apostle Paul refused material support to enhance the impact of his ministry and possibly to prevent burdening the church with his upkeep (1 Cor. 9: 15-19). At the same time, he reserved the right to be supported on the basis of the Law (Deut. 25: 4) and on the basis of Jesus' express commandment to His disciples (1 Cor. 9: 9-14; especially v. 14—"directed", "ordered", or "commanded"; ***diatassō***, the same word used in Acts 24: 23; 1 Cor. 7: 17; Matt. 11: 1). This right was in place even in light of the fact that the church in Corinth was a new church plant made up of people who were, for the most part, of humble means (1 Cor. 1: 26). If material support for elders was a requirement in the early church, even churches which had been recently planted, it goes without saying that it was a requirement for ***established*** churches.

Alternatively, Paul didn't wish for elders to overly burden their congregations or to give the least impression of covetousness. Through tent-making he supported himself and others in Ephesus, thus setting the example of a hard-working pastor and the legitimacy—and in some cases, the advantage—of bi-vocational ministry (Acts 20: 32-35). A careful reading of the text seems to imply that Paul expected the Ephesian elders to be "givers" as well as "receivers" (***v. 35***)—that is, to follow his example in bi-vocational ministry (cf. Roland Allen, ***Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours?***, p. 50, footnote; although I believe Allen goes too far in his application of the passage).

African congregations often do not provide material support for their pastors (my source: personal conversations with African pastors serving Presbyterian, Anglican, and Pentecostal churches). This is a flagrant violation of a biblical principle which is possibly promoted by pastors who refuse material support even when it is offered. This is often a mistake. Individual Christians grow in their faith as they increasingly assume responsibility for their own spiritual development. They must personally avail themselves of the ordinary means of grace—prayer, the study of the Scriptures, fellowship, attendance at worship, etc. No one can do this for them; they must do it for themselves. Likewise, the corporate body of Christ matures as it assumes its God-given responsibilities for one another. This is what ***1 Timothy*** is all about—that is, how one must conduct himself in the household of God, including the support of widows and pastors and their relationships with others. ***Without assuming these corporate responsibilities, congregations remain immature and self-seeking.*** African pastors should, therefore, question whether their refusal of any material support is actually hurting their congregations by hindering their spiritual maturity. If receiving such support is unspiritual, why would Jesus have ordered it, and why would the Apostle Paul have confirmed its practice? No argument is being made here for full-time support which may be unrealistic in many African churches. Yet, it is necessary that congregations free the elders to do the work of the ministry. By failing to do so, they are simply hurting themselves.

We must also ask ourselves this question: Is Western "partnership" a better method of support for African pastors than local support? Paul never once required any church to support the elders of another church; and it is a misrepresentation of 2 Cor. 8: 1-14 to claim that the material support of the Jerusalem church was an ongoing requirement for the Corinthian and Macedonian churches. The specific offering in question would maintain poor believers in Jerusalem for a limited period of time; it was not intended for the continuing support of pastors (cf. Rom. 16: 22-27; 1 Cor. 16: 1-4; Acts 11: 28). Another related question is whether the imposition of Western partnership has actually created as many problems as it has solved. Western partnership has become such a prize that many African men are entering the ministry strictly for the purpose of securing it. Why ride a boda-boda when you can become a pastor and drive a Toyota LandCruiser? While educational partnership—in the form of Western teachers and institutional infrastructure (buildings)—has been a blessing both to American, European, and African Christians alike (both the giving and the receiving is a blessing) the infusion of Western capital into church programs and pastoral support has created jealousy and invited corruption. It is scarcely necessary to cite specific examples, but the amount of corruption involved has been significant even by Western standards—millions of US dollars. The love of money is a root of all sorts of evil (see below); and to our shame, the church is not immune to its devastation (1 Tim. 6: 10; "it" being the ***love*** of money, not money itself).

At the same time, the Western church is clearly implicated (guilty) in the covetousness of many African pastors by providing ***partnerships with little or no accountability***. American churches and individuals have often ***exposed them to extreme temptations*** through donations improperly administered. We would never think of sending prostitutes to African pastors as a test of their moral

purity, but we think nothing of leaving large amounts of cash lying around with seemingly no means of tracing its use. By doing so we have put huge stumbling blocks in front of the African pastor; and when he fails to live up to biblical standards, we self-righteously shake our heads and mutter, "Isn't that terrible!" This is hypocrisy, and Western Christians should repent of it. In the same circumstances, we could fall into the same sin.

Another temptation arises in the way typical Western missionaries live—including me, as much as I dislike bringing up this subject. We live on the same economic level as wealthy Ugandans (excluding members of parliament, army generals, etc, who live quite a bit higher on the "food chain"), and by doing so present a way of life far beyond the reach of the average pastor. By living this way, are we in a sense dangling our affluence under their noses without knowing it, and are we tempting them to believe that such affluence is their right and within their grasp given the proper "connections"? Obviously, many believe that it ***is*** within their grasp; they have pursued it and attained it. Meanwhile, others are looking on waiting for their opportunity—Western sponsors. The question I have is: Have we Western missionaries actually promoted the very materialism we preach against? More open dialogue is needed between missionaries and African pastors who are willing to tell us the truth. Like many other questions, we would rather sweep this one under the rug and forget about it, but the issue is not going to disappear as much as we wish to ignore it (cf. Jonathan J. Bonk, ***Missions and Money—Affluence as a Western Missionary Problem***).

***(f)*** No accusation could be made against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses (***v. 19***). Once again, Paul employs, without apology, an OT case law pertaining to the necessity of two or three witness to confirm guilt (Deut. 17: 6; 19: 15). Considering the responsibility for oversight and discipline, they would become easy targets for disgruntled members who could trump up false charges against them. (I know because I have been the victim of false charges.) Unless those charges could be substantiated with credible witnesses, the accusations should be dismissed for lack of evidence. Hendriksen has pointed out that if witnesses were not available, not only would the elder avoid punishment, but he would not even have to answer the charges. Given their responsibilities and the importance of remaining above reproach, elders must not have their reputations smeared with false accusations (p. 182). How practical this instruction is, and how often it is violated! Elders, especially "senior pastors", are commonly held hostage to unsubstantiated claims of unfitness and inappropriate behavior regardless of the evidence. Yet, the Apostle Paul tells Timothy not even to give such accusations a second thought unless there is substantial evidence of wrong-doing.

***(g)*** However, if an elder's guilt was proven, he should be rebuked "in the presence of all". The "all" may mean the whole congregation or it may mean the session of the church (Hendriksen, p. 183). This may be interpreted largely by whether the interpreter is a Presbyterian or Congregationalist. As the text stands, I see no exegetical reason to avoid interpreting "all" as the whole congregation (cf. Gal. 2: 14 where Peter's offense was against "all" the Gentiles in the Antioch church). It would really depend on whether the offense is public or private. Verse 20 seems to imply a public sin. Public rebuke before the congregation would make other elders "fearful of sinning", lest they too be exposed to public shame (cf. Gal. 2: 14).

Exposing someone to public shame is not necessarily a bad thing. It makes sinners "fearful of sinning" (***v. 20***). Churches often shy away from public rebuke or censure in the name of charity and gentleness, but God doesn't seem opposed to it. By sinning against God the professing believer, especially an elder, ***has exposed God to public shame***, and he should not be surprised if God

responds in like manner. The imposition of shame is a powerful deterrent (hindrance) to sin when other internal means fail (e.g. conscience and the internal conviction of the Holy Spirit). Isn't this the whole premise (assumption) behind church discipline (Matt. 18: 15-20)? (Hendriksen argues from Matt. 18 that "church" refers to the "'locally organized fellowship of believers'"; ***Matthew***, p. 700.) When our brother sins and refuses to repent, Jesus instructs individual believers and even the entire church to get involved for the purpose of reclaiming the "little one" who has gone astray (see the whole of Matt. 18 for context, as well as my commentary in ***Synoptic Gospels***; see also 1 Cor. 5). Self-discipline is the best discipline, but it does not rule out the need for public discipline.

Public shame is also a strong deterrent for unbelievers who don't have the benefit of the Spirit's influence. Capital sins in the OT (murder, rape, flagrant idolatry, abusive disobedience of parents, etc.) were punishable by public stoning. One explicit purpose of public execution was to produce fear (Deut. 21: 18-21), and the modern practice of sequestering (putting in isolation) the execution of criminals may be seriously questioned.

All such cases must be judged in a spirit of justice and equity, showing partiality to no one (***v. 21***). The mention of ***partiality*** is a necessary correction to the common mistake of ***deferential*** (biased) treatment of elders who may be wealthy, or who may have notable reputations, while marginalizing (setting aside) the rights of others who are not as "significant" in the eyes of men (cf. James 2: 1-4). God is not ***impressed*** with anyone, and with Him there is no partiality. Paul is once again alluding to the legislation of the Law which forbade any partiality either in favor of the rich or the poor (Deut. 1: 17; 10: 17). Furthermore, personal relationships can also blind our judgment, for we will be more inclined to leniency for someone we know and love than someone we don't know or someone we dislike. But our personal opinion of this person is irrelevant in determining guilt or innocence. This is a case in which the ad hominem argument, the argument against the man, becomes sinful—"He must be guilty because I don't like him!" (See my commentary on ***2 Timothy***, p. 22, for Paul's righteous use of an ad hominem argument.)

***(h)*** Paul concludes this section on elders with a personal admonition to Timothy to refrain from approving men for the office of elder too hastily (***v. 22***). If an elected elder proves to be delinquent in his duties, or if he is immoral, Timothy implicates himself in the elder's sin ***if he was not adequately examined.*** This does not mean that Timothy is equally guilty, but that he now shares some responsibility for allowing this person to assume an office for which he was not ready or qualified.

This brings up the question of the mode of selection of elders and what form of church government is presented in the NT. According to the Presbyterian view, elders were elected to office by the congregation (Acts 14: 23). The verb in Acts 14: 23, "appointed" (***cheirontoneō***), literally means "to appoint by the show of hands" (***Robertson's Word Pictures***, from ***BibleWorks***). However, the ***context*** of Acts 14: 23 could support the Episcopal view that Paul and Barnabas ("they", v. 23) appointed the elders in these churches. Likewise, Titus 1: 5 specifically says that Paul left Titus in Crete so that ***he*** would "appoint" (different word, ***kathistēmi***) elders in every city. However, Titus 1: 5 is not sufficient proof that Titus and Timothy ***single-handedly*** selected the elders in Crete and Ephesus, respectively (in that order), since the mode of selection is not specifically mentioned in this verse. Titus could have been instructed to appoint elders ***by means of*** a congregational vote, although we would have to read this interpretation into the text. Anglicans, Methodists, and Roman Catholics (Episcopal forms of government) could argue that Timothy and Titus, as apostolic representatives, were given the responsibility to personally hand-pick the elders in Ephesus and Crete. This is a

plausible interpretation and one I can live with as long as the principle of apostolic appointment isn't used today. There is no biblical or historical evidence for apostolic succession—Roman Catholicism notwithstanding—which leaves the modern church with no other plausible mode of selection other than congregational vote. There is also overwhelming evidence that "bishop" (***episcopos***) and "elder" (***presbuteros***) are synonymous for the same office (Acts 20: 17, 28) although Roman Catholicism and Anglicanism distinguish between the two.

***(Parenthetical Statement: Taking care of yourself —5: 23)***

Very briefly, Paul digresses from his main topic—the proper conduct toward elders—to give Timothy some friendly advice about taking care of himself. We don't know why Timothy had been abstaining from wine and drinking water exclusively. Perhaps he wanted to avoid any appearance of drinking too much (***1 Tim. 3: 3***). Paul recognizes that a "little" wine has important health benefits for Timothy's stomach problems and other ailments, some of which could have been caused by contaminated water (Hendriksen, p. 185). There were no medical studies at the time to verify Paul's claims, and the infallibility of scripture should never be questioned if a little wine is allegedly proven to be harmful—but it never will be. When I was young, I remember hearing claims that even a little alcohol killed brain cells, but I never hear such claims any more. There is no such thing as infallible science. As it turns out, however, medical studies have confirmed that wine contains antioxidants which are helpful to the human body, particularly to those who have heart problems. If further experimentation "proves" (in a manner of speaking) that even a little wine is harmful to the body, I will ignore these studies and rest my confidence in the Scriptures. So—here's to your health.

The passage presents an important principle about taking care of one's physical health. The body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, and we are not at liberty to treat it as we please. The Gnostic teaching of Paul's day claimed that true salvation consisted in the liberation of the spirit from the physical body; consequently, the body was not important at all in the broader scheme of salvation. Paul argued that we were not created merely as souls but as body and soul, and that what we do with our bodies is very important (1 Cor. 6: 13-20). While the care of the body is not ***as*** important as spiritual health, Paul never said it wasn't important at all (***4: 8***). One's physical health can have serious implications for his spiritual health and usefulness in this life (cf. 1 Kings 19: 4-5; in which Elijah, exhausted from running from Jezebel, is ready for the Lord to end his life. His fatigue had impaired his thinking and driven him to despair.).

Several months ago I read a book, written by a reputable doctor, which convinced me to lose weight. I lost 30 pounds. I have since regained twenty pounds, but I resolve to lose them again, lest I shorten my life with a heart attack or high blood pressure. I still exercise regularly. Our days upon this earth are surely numbered, and God is acquainted with each day (Ps. 139: 16); yet, knowing this, the Apostle Paul does not bypass human responsibility, but urges healthy habits. In other words, Paul acknowledges the principle of ***cause and effect.*** God generally orders the universe according to natural laws which He has put in place, and we are not at liberty to set them aside flippantly by saying, "Whatever will happen will happen regardless of what I do." Timothy must remember to drink a little wine for his stomach and frequent ailments, for God is not obligated to suspend the laws of physiology to take care of Christians who will not look after their own health.

The prodigious John Calvin accomplished more in his 53 short years than most people with similar intelligence could in three long lifetimes. However, if he had forced himself to get more than four hours of sleep per night (his usual quota) Christ's church may have benefited from twenty more years

of writing. After almost nine years in Uganda, it has been my impression that Ugandans don't get enough sleep. They eat at 9 o'clock at night, go to bed late, and get up early. More sleep may lengthen their lives for longer service to the Savior.

***6. Toward elders (continued) (5: 24-25)***

There is no clear connection between ***v. 23*** and its immediate context, but Paul is writing a letter, not a theological treatise; and we should not be surprised to find occasional parenthetical statements in his letters which may not have a clear connection. In the present case, however, the connection seems to be this: Paul is presently talking about accusations against elders which should not be taken seriously without credible witnesses (***v. 19***). As mentioned already, perhaps Timothy had been drinking water exclusively to avoid any possibility of slander. Paul doesn't wish for Timothy to damage his health by being overly cautious about his reputation, and if someone wishes to accuse Timothy of drinking too much, he will have to prove it. Paul, for his part, is confident of Timothy's character.

On the other hand, "The sins of some men are quite evident, going before them to judgment" (***v. 24a***). According to one interpretation, this verse is connected to ***v. 22***, "Do not lay hands upon anyone *too* hastily and thereby share *responsibility for* the sins of others; keep yourself free from sin." In other words, when some men are being examined (judged) for the office of elder, their unfitness for the office will become immediately apparent. Thus, the "judgment" of ***v. 24*** is not the final judgment when Christ returns but the temporal judgment of a person's fitness for the office. Their sins are, as it were, an open book leaving no doubt about their lack of qualification. On the other hand, "for others, their *sins* follow after" (***v. 24b***); i.e. their lack of fitness for the office of elder is not immediately apparent but only appears after a thorough investigation or examination for ordination. Likewise, one's good deeds or bad deeds cannot remain a secret forever (***v. 25***) (Hendriksen, pp. 186-187).

> The situation with respect to men who are spiritually fit for office is similar in this respect, namely, that also in their case Timothy, as a rule, need not be afraid that hidden qualities will remain hidden. In general, the noble deeds (or excellent works) which adorn the lives of these men will be clearly evident. And even in such exceptional cases in which they are not at once evident, they cannot remain hidden. Proper questioning and investigation will bring them to the surface.
>
> For the encouragement of Timothy, who, as has been shown…was rather timid, Paul is trying to establish this point: if he will but exercise caution, and will not be hasty in ordaining men to office…he will have good elders in the churches of Ephesus and vicinity; the rule being that even in the case of such men whose unfitness or fitness for office is not immediately clear, careful examination will lead to valid conclusions. And, in any case, Timothy will then not become involved in the sins of other men (Hendriksen, p. 187).

Another view is that of Towner (Philip H. Towner, ***The Letters to Timothy and Titus***) who interprets the "judgment" of ***v. 24*** as the final, eschatological judgment.

> The meaning of this statement for Timothy is debated. But it seems to serve two purposes. First, generally, it does place Timothy's ministry of discernment (decisions about discipline and selecting prospective leaders) into an eschatological context. He works in cooperation with the intention of God ultimately to judge human sin. But, secondly, in the process, since Timothy cannot see into the heart of people and is bound to err, Paul explains, by way of consolation or to provide some relief, the reality that God's judgment will eventually pull together all the loose threads that elude human administration (pp. 377-378).

> Consequently, vv. 24-25 function as a unit to locate Timothy's task within an eschatological framework that underlines God's ultimate control over these delicate matters of discipline and, especially, selection of leaders. While surely human error is to be avoided (and perhaps much of it can be) by careful administration (according to the rules laid down above), the messy reality is covered by God's own eschatological purposes (p. 378).

With this interpretation, the grammatical connection goes back to ***vv. 19-22*** rather than ***v. 22*** alone. Paul is referring not only to the ***examination*** of men for the office of elder, but also any ***disciplinary*** action taken against elders. Neither the selection of elders nor their formal discipline will be attended with human infallibility. Nevertheless, the inevitability of mistakes is ***not an excuse*** either for the careless selection of elders or for indulging them in their sins. This much is certain from the ***solemn charge*** given to Timothy to follow Paul's instructions about "these things" or "these principles". In ***v. 21***, he puts Timothy under a ***solemn oath*** to exert the utmost care in ensuring the proper leadership of the Ephesian church. This task will be quite possibly the most important thing he will do in Ephesus and one which would have the gravest consequences for the church's success, even its survival (cf. Towner, p. 373; Hendriksen, p. 183). Considering the gravity (seriousness) of this task, Paul calls upon God the Father, Christ Jesus, and the angels who will participate in the final judgment (Matt. 16: 27) as witnesses to the charge and Timothy's oath to obey it (cf. Hendriksen, p. 184)

### *7. Toward masters (6: 1-2)*

Considering the fact that the Roman Empire had by now conquered most of the civilized world, it is not surprising that there were many slaves. At one time, one-third of the population of Rome consisted of slaves (Hendriksen, p. 191), and I have heard other estimates of one-half. Considering also that there were not many in the church who were "mighty" or "noble" in terms of social standing (1 Cor. 1: 26), we would assume a large number of slaves in the early church. Remarkably, masters and slaves existed side by side in local congregations in which social standing was no longer relevant to those who made up the body of Christ. As far as the gospel was concerned, there was "neither slave nor free man" since all believers were one in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3: 28). Nevertheless, one's social standing was still very relevant to one's ***everyday existence***, and Paul never implied that the Christian faith would eradicate (do away with) the practical implications of one's social status. Christians were citizens of the kingdom of heaven (Phil. 3: 20), but they still lived in a fallen world. He had written to the Ephesian church some three to five years earlier. In that epistle he had addressed both masters and slaves saying,

> Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ; not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men, knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free. And masters, do the same things to them, and give up threatening, knowing that both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him (Eph. 6: 5-9).

Thus, we should not conclude that Paul is not also concerned with the behavior of masters in this letter to Timothy, especially since Roman law allowed cruel and harsh treatment of slaves even to the point of execution, although few masters would wish to do this in light of their monetary investment. It is possible that the Ephesian slaves had not responded adequately or favorably to Paul's instructions three to five years earlier in his ***Epistle to the Ephesians***, and that it was necessary for

Paul to reiterate (repeat) the earlier instructions. For Christian slaves who had Christian masters, there may have been the assumption that they could take more liberties with their Christian masters, giving less obedience to those from whom they feared little reprisal (retaliation and punishment) and expected a large measure of leniency.

Paul makes it crystal clear in this passage that Christians who had believers as their masters were not less, but ***more*** obligated to show them respect ***simply because they were believers.*** Further, believing masters should reap the benefit of faithful service and loyalty which Christian slaves should give more than their pagan counterparts (non-Christian slaves). In other words, Christian slaves should work ***that much harder*** for their believing masters knowing that these masters would be the beneficiaries of their labor and would likewise use the profit for the good of others (***v. 2***). There should, therefore, be no presumption that Christian slaves could be lazy or that their Christian masters could not discipline them appropriately—though not harshly—for negligence of their duties. Corresponding to this obligation was the duty of Christian masters to treat their slaves with dignity and respect and to give up threatening them with flogging or some other severe punishment common among unbelieving masters (Eph. 6: 9). Rather, masters should appeal to their slaves as Christian brothers (Philemon, v. 16), resolving conflicts in a manner pleasing to Christ, "so that the name of God and *our* doctrine will not be spoken against" (***v. 1***).

Modern Christians may read these words with amazement. By appealing to Christian slaves to honor their Christian masters, Paul implies that the institution of slavery can serve as an evangelistic tool for the conversion of the heathen. "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 5: 16). Conversely, if they do not behave in a Christ-honoring manner—specifically toward their Christian masters—the name of God and the doctrine of the church would be dishonored among unbelievers in Ephesus (***v. 1***). The Ephesians must be able to observe the distinct difference between Christian slaves and pagan slaves and between Christian masters and pagan masters. ***The harmony of the family of God must shine even in the darkest corners and institutions of pagan society—even in the institution of slavery.*** By this, the watching world would realize that membership in the family of God always takes priority over everything else and influences every area of life and every relationship—even relationships which result from the sinful human condition. Conversely, the Christian faith must not be influenced or controlled by pagan culture. In Paul's words we have the inextricable (inescapable) link between doctrine and practice. A denial of the ***practice*** of the Christian faith is, in essence, a denial of its ***doctrinal*** truth. If we wish people to take our doctrine seriously, we must consistently practice it even in adverse conditions.

The question remains: ***Why didn't the Apostle Paul categorically (without qualification) condemn the institution of slavery?*** Paul drew his ethical teaching from the OT Law and the gospel of Christ which further clarified the Law. OT Law did not expressly forbid the institution of slavery, but regulated it to prevent flagrant abuses. Without an explicit revelation from Christ abolishing slavery, Paul likewise chose to regulate its practice within the Christian community without categorically forbidding it. This does ***not*** imply that Paul or Christ ***approved*** of the practice, but neither can we prove from Scripture that ***all forms*** of slavery were evil in and of themselves, especially when the Christian life is often framed in the language of slavery (1 Cor. 7: 22). By taking a moderate position, Paul made room for the gospel of Jesus Christ, not ***armed revolution***, to remove the institution of slavery in due time.

> His way toward a solution commends itself by reason of its evident wisdom. It avoids extremes which would have resulted in much harm both to the slave and to his master, and would have reflected dishonor

> upon the cause of the Christian religion. He ***advocated neither outright revolt by the slaves nor the continuation of the status quo.*** Instead of recommending either of these he aimed by the law of indirection to destroy the ***very essence*** of slavery, with all its attendant evils. This method, though for a while maintaining "slavery" in outward form, was, nevertheless, the surest and most commendable way of working toward the final goal of complete abolition of this gruesome, inhuman institution. It aimed to destroy slavery without waging a war to do so! "Let the slave honor his master, and let the master be kind to his slave. Let both bear in mind that with God there is no respect of persons." That was the principle. Thus the ill-will, dishonesty, and laziness of many slaves would be replaced by willing service, integrity, and industry. Thus also the cruelty and brutality of many masters would melt into kindness and love. The grace of Christ, working ***from within outward***—which is ever the way of the kingdom of God!—would become a penetrating leaven, tending to transform the whole lump (Hendriksen, p. 192, emphasis his).

In further answer to this question, the institution of slavery also served as an illustration of God's grace. This is especially true of Hebrew slavery. In OT Israel, Hebrew slaves were required to work for their Hebrew masters for six years or until they were redeemed with a purchase price. The ***seventh*** year (the number of completion) they were permitted to go free without a purchase price or "payment" (Ex. 21: 2). Furthermore, freed Hebrew slaves were not sent home empty-handed and destitute but were given ample provisions to meet their needs until they could provide for themselves. Essentially, the Hebrew slave was not selling his soul and body to his Hebrew master, but only his ***labor***. He would serve as a hired man for only six years, or until the Year of Jubilee (whichever came first) and would then be released (Lev. 25: 39-40). Thus, Hebrew slavery was only ***temporary*** which served as a type of the NT believer who was ***temporarily*** enslaved to sin but in due time was delivered from his bondage and misery to serve a new master. Furthermore, since the Hebrew people belonged only to God, He would not relinquish this ownership except for a specified time of testing.

Pharaoh attempted to usurp God's right to His people by refusing to free them and suffered the dreadful consequences—the loss of all the first-born of Egypt as substitutes for God's people. The paradigm (model) for Hebrew masters, therefore, was God Himself who provided for His enslaved people during their bondage in Egypt and later freed them (Deut. 15: 12-15). Masters who inflicted severe suffering upon their slaves had to release them, for God is a kind master who is patient and longsuffering (Ex. 21: 26-27). Masters in OT Israel must, therefore, imitate the longsuffering of their Master in heaven, and Paul repeats this emphasis in his epistles (cf. Eph. 6: 9; Col. 4: 1). It is not specified in Ex. 21 whether these slaves were Hebrew or foreign; thus, OT law provided a considerable amount of protection even for foreign slaves, a protection not recognized in pagan cultures where masters could kill their slaves with impunity (exemption from legal punishment). Slaves living in Israel were also given the Sabbath Day to rest and refresh themselves (Ex. 20: 1; 23: 12); and just as every Hebrew slave must be set free in the seventh year of his service, he would also be set free in the 50$^{th}$ year or the year of Jubilee after seven Sabbaths of years (Lev. 25: 39-50).

***One can see the typological connection between the institution of slavery, redemption from slavery, and the NT doctrine of salvation.*** Physical slavery is typical of man's bondage to sin, and redemption from slavery is a type of freedom from sin. Jesus refers to the Jubilee Year when teaching in the synagogue in Nazareth, and noted that He was the fulfillment of the principle of freedom found in the Jubilee Year.

> And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read. And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the book and found the place where it was written, "THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS

> UPON ME, BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR. HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED, TO PROCLAIM THE FAVORABLE YEAR OF THE LORD." And He closed the book, gave it back to the attendant and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on Him. And He began to say to them, "***Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing"*** (Lk. 4: 16-21).

Jesus is the Redeemer of those who have sold themselves into the bondage of slavery—slavery to sin. ***Thus the institution of slavery metaphorically demonstrates the horror of sin's bondage and its only release in the redeeming blood of Jesus Christ***. It therefore serves a unique purpose in the providence of God to highlight the necessity of Christ's atoning work and the freedom which He has purchased. The extent to which this type is unveiled in the OT scriptures is evident in the fact that the Mosaic Law makes a radical distinction between Hebrew slaves and foreign slaves. While ***Hebrew*** slaves must serve only ***temporarily*** for six years or until the Year of Jubilee, whichever comes first, ***foreign*** slaves acquired from the pagan nations around Israel could be acquired ***permanently*** and bequeathed (willed) to one's sons as an inheritance. They did not have to be set free according to the rules established for Hebrew slaves (Lev. 25: 44-46). In contrast to Hebrew slaves, who were members of the covenant community and beloved of God for the sake of the fathers, foreign slaves enjoyed no such filial connection and were, by definition "separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world" (Eph. 2: 12b). (This assumes that such foreigners never wished to be proselytized into the Jewish community as did, for example, Ruth and Uriah the Hittite.) Thus, foreigners who were never assimilated into the Jewish faith were, by definition, ***permanent slaves to sin and misery***—cut off from salvation.

On the ***positive*** side, the Hebrew institution of slavery also presents a ***type of the Christian life***. Hebrews who became poor would sell themselves (or more precisely, sell their labor) to another Hebrew who would then be responsible for their livelihood (Lev. 25: 39). It was also possible that the Hebrew slave, observing that he had faired well with his master, would grow to love his master to such an extent that he would relinquish (give up) his freedom to remain with him permanently (Deut. 15: 16-17). ***And so it is with anyone who has given his life to Christ***. He finds, paradoxically, that bondage to Christ is true freedom and liberty and that being the slave of Christ is far better than being a "free" man with regard to the world, resulting only in bondage. The Apostle Paul often referred to himself as the "bond-servant" of Christ or the "bondservant" of God, literally rendered "bond-slave" (***doulos***—Rom. 1: 1; Gal. 1: 10; Tit. 1: 1). One who is fully owned by Christ can rest assured that Christ will take care of him and provide for every need both physical and spiritual. Thus, the Christian life is a paradoxical life. We would not expect that total surrender to a Master would result in freedom and liberty. But it does.

Some of the confusion about the absence of a clear biblical condemnation of slavery results from equating OT slavery with the English, American, and Arab enslavement of black Africans during the 18th and 19th centuries. Such enslavement was the result of ***kidnapping*** Africans against their will. However, kidnapping and human trafficking is forbidden in the OT and punishable by death. "He who kidnaps a man, whether he sells him or he is found in his possession, shall surely be put to death" (Ex. 21: 16. Of course, the kidnapping law was not applied to conquered nations which was part of the theological problem that led to the kidnapping of Africans.) Furthermore, it was forbidden in OT law to return a fugitive slave back to his owner (Deut. 23: 15-16). Both of these OT laws were violated by trafficking in African slaves, and God's judgment upon this evil practice was manifested

in a civil war and the loss of half a million American lives (although only one in 25 southerners actually owned slaves). Part of the problem with American Christians who owned slaves was the lack of sound Biblical theology. They could argue that just as using conquered pagans was sanctioned in the OT, using kidnapped African pagans was similarly sanctioned. Once again, bad theology yields bad practice. The US and Britain are not, and never were, the chosen nations of God; and they were mistaken in their ***retrogressive theology*** (backwards theology) by entertaining the notion that they were the equivalent of Israel. In other words, the theologians of England and America needed more NT theology to balance their OT theology. William Wilberforce, an English gentleman and politician, was able through political maneuvering to lead the English Parliament to abolish the institution of slavery without war and bloodshed. In England, the gospel and the political process—not war—finally triumphed.

Paul makes no effort to condemn slavery here in his letter to Timothy or in his general letters to the Ephesians, Colossians, or the Corinthians. The priority was not a person's social station but how he ***conducted*** himself in that particular station.

> Each man must remain in that condition in which he was called. Were you called while a slave? Do not worry about it; but if you are able also to become free, rather do that. For he who was called in the Lord while a slave, is the Lord's freedman; likewise he who was called while free, is Christ's slave. You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men. Brethren, each one is to remain with God in that *condition* in which he was called (1 Cor. 7: 20-24).

Commenting on this passage Simon J. Kistemaker remarks,

> For Paul, the vocation of the individual Christian is to live before God in ***any circumstance***. He realizes that with the entrance of the gospel into the world, society and culture need to change. Yet he calls ***not for a revolution but for stability***. The gospel itself must effect a change. In whatever place in life the Christian finds himself, there he must live honorably before his God. "It is clear that Paul considers vocation the determining factor in a Christian's life. He issues the warning to avoid circumstances which might endanger this vocation." A Christian practices the teachings of Christ, whether his or her roots were in Judaism or in paganism and whether he or she is enslaved or free (***1 Corinthians***, p. 235, emphasis mine).

Paul was not condemning upward social mobility, but assuring the Christian community that whether master or slave, male or female, rich or poor, each Christian must remember that pleasing Christ was the ultimate goal, not social mobility or material success. ***As the body of Christ, all Christians are united together and should function together in harmony in order to send the proper message to a lost world in which race and social status create deep divisions and hostility between people.*** The class warfare between the rich and the poor and between the employer and employee has no place in the Christian church. Using a current example, the Christian employee should earn his living with hard work and loyalty to his employer and company while the employer and management team should do whatever they can to be fair in the distribution of pay and benefits, making the productive worker feel that he is appreciated as a valuable asset to the company. Too often—most often—this mutual appreciation is lacking, creating manifold problems in the workplace, organized labor strikes, and sometimes even bloodshed. Karl Marx constructed an entire political philosophy (communism) based upon the conflict between the working class (the proletariat) and the ruling class (the bourgeoisie) which he believed irresolvable. But, as usual, Christ is the solution—

assuming we obey what He says. Christians should do their work heartily as unto the Lord knowing that in the final analysis their reward will come only from Him (Col. 3: 23-24).

Besides provocative discussions about slavery, this text presents us with equally provocative questions concerning church planting and church growth strategies. Donald McGavran (***Understanding Church Growth***, 1970) popularized the "homogeneous" church growth movement espousing the principle that churches grow faster when they are made up of homogeneous (like) groups of people from the same socio-economic status. Following this principle, churches would be planted consisting only of laboring families with limited education and others would be planted consisting of wealthier, more educated families. Differentiation of race was not as important as one's social class. However, the critical question emerges as to ***what kind*** of churches are being planted with these guidelines, and do they resemble the true body of Christ with its immense diversity of gifts and people? Would the Apostle Paul have been comfortable in such churches? David Wells offers this critique.

> There are some mission contexts in which this strategy seems to make sense. In multilingual settings, for instance, attempting to deal with multiple translations of the written and spoken word may simply prove to be too cumbersome and unworkable. [As a personal note, I have found that even a translation into ***one*** additional language robs the preacher of momentum and continuity.] And certain immigrant enclaves may feel it very important to remain in a distinct ecclesial community as they seek to preserve their language, customs, and memories in the midst of much that is foreign. But an unrestrained extension of this principle can lead to mischief. Should churches seek out only those of the same class, the same cultural tastes, the same income level? Undoubtedly, they will feel more comfortable with people of the same class, tastes, and income, but ***how can they witness to the gospel's truth that in Christ all barriers have fallen***—those of race, education, class, profession, and social status—if they are carefully and deliberately preserving these barriers as part of their mission strategy?
>
> …some critics charged McGavran with being interested only in the numbers of converts gathered into the churches and not in other kinds of growth—growth in character and understanding, commitment and service, for example—that could not be reduced so easily to numbers (David F. Wells, ***God in the Wasteland***, pp. 70-71).

### *B. The Proper Response to Doctrine (6: 2b-5)*

"Teach and preach ***these principles***" (v. 2b) refers specifically to Paul's instructions to slaves who may have constituted a sizeable portion of the Ephesian church (see above). The "different doctrine" in ***v. 3*** is a more general reference to the false Gnostic doctrines which have been the focus of attention.

The different doctrine being taught in Ephesus was ***not*** the kind of doctrine "conforming to godliness" (***v. 3***); consequently, Paul would not accept it and would not allow it to be taught. The progress of sanctification among the members would be arrested by preoccupation with speculative theology (see "speculation"; ***1: 4***) which had no value in helping people fight the world, the flesh (personal temptation resulting from fleshly desires), and the devil. Nothing good could be expected from theological wrangling which stimulated only the ***imagination*** but did not stimulate ***evangelical obedience***. It would only produce "envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions, and constant friction between men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth" (***vv. 4b-5a***). Again, one's doctrine is important and practical for the Christian life; bad theology produces bad practice. So much, then, for being tolerant of a wide variety of teaching in the name of being ***open-minded***. Paul was not so

open-minded, calling the false teachers "conceited" and accusing them of understanding "nothing" (***v. 4***). The Christian faith does not allow us to politely ignore people whose teaching can produce serious spiritual harm. They must be dealt with lovingly but firmly (***1: 20***; 2 Tim. 2: 25).

Speculative theology can take a variety of forms in the Christian church. It need not be heretical, but may become imbalanced or too theoretical. One example is the emphasis on the millennial question and the events surrounding the return of Christ. No one should suggest that eschatology be banned from the teaching of the church or seminary, for this would oppose the teaching of Christ and the apostles (Matt. 24; 1 Thes. 3-4; 2 Thes. 2; 2 Pet. 3; etc.)! Taught with the proper emphasis, the doctrine of eschatology is one of the most encouraging doctrines of scripture focusing on the hope of the resurrection and the renewal of the heavens and earth at the return of Christ. Such great doctrines help us endure the struggles of life and put them in proper perspective. However, when such study becomes entirely a theoretical endeavor which separates Christians into different camps suspicious of one another, then we have missed the whole point. The same can be said of the study of the law of God—whether we find ourselves in the "theonomy" camp or the "anti-theonomy" camp. Accusations of legalism or antinomianism are often hurled back and forth against our fellow brothers in Christ rather than productive dialogue and clarification. Good theology should not produce "envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions, and constant friction between men", especially if these men are ***not*** "of depraved mind and deprived of the truth." ***We must learn to distinguish between family squabbles and warfare between belief and unbelief.*** In a functional biological family, brothers and sisters often argue with one another, but they still love one another as brother and sister. And so it should be in the church, the household of faith.

In Ephesus, however, the battle over ideas was ***not a family squabble***, but between the family of God and false teachers whose doctrine was not remotely Christian. The OT Scriptures would be wrenched out of their historical and grammatical context robbing them of their redemptive purpose. The heretics were skilled in the art of oration, spinning their tales in such a fascinating, convincing way that they could keep their audience spell-bound. It was not the ***substance*** of their teaching but their ***rhetorical effect*** which endeared them to their audience ***who apparently paid them well for their teaching*** (cf. ***v. 5b***—"who suppose that godliness is a means of gain."). The word "religion" could be substituted for "godliness" (even though the same word is used) since Paul may be using sarcasm (cf. ***2 Tim. 3: 5***). These clever teachers had found that they could make a good living from religion just by "wowing" the crowds. They were therefore, the NT counterparts of many current popular "preachers"—if such they can be called—who have a lot of flair and ***form***, but no ***substance***. They are entertaining, but their teaching does not have the effect of deepening one's knowledge of Christ for the purpose of conforming his life to the obedience of Christ.

There is truly nothing new under the sun (Ecc. 1: 9). Thousands of people listen and contribute regularly and generously to popular speakers who are "conceited and understand nothing" (***v. 4a***) about sound biblical teaching. They are popular for two reasons**:** first, because they often have extraordinary speaking skills, and second, because the masses of people who follow them are too biblically ignorant to know the difference between sound doctrine and entertaining nonsense. They ***sound*** convincing, so people think they must be correct in what they are saying. Such false prophets are spiritual predators who prey upon the ignorance of the masses. "To the law and to the testimony!" Isaiah declares, "If they do not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn" (Isa. 8: 20)! The only remedy against being duped (fooled) by nonsense is to be a good student of the word of God, like the Bereans who "received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily

*to see* whether these things were so" (Acts 17: 11). No one would purchase a house, automobile, or cow without first examining it closely; yet people will "buy into" popular ministries uncritically without even a cursory (hasty) examination. If he sounds good, they think, what he says must be true. At any rate, many naïve believers in Ephesus and beyond were being "skinned" by false teachers who were padding their pocket books with the hard-earned money of their converts. They not only ***supposed*** that godliness was a means of gain, but they thought they had ***hard evidence*** for it. But the "godliness" they were peddling was only religion, not true godliness; and the gains they were making would be short-lived. This thought leads Paul to the discussion of ***real gain*** and the relative difference between spiritual contentment and material success.

### *C. The Proper Attitude about Money (6: 6-10, 17-19)*

***Genuine*** godliness—one that includes ***contentment***—actually ***is*** a means to great ***spiritual*** gain. If one is content with the basic essentials of life—e.g. "food and covering" (a ***synecdoche***, the ***part for the whole*** of all that we essentially need)—then the whole world belongs to him. ("Better is a little with righteousness than great income with injustice" (Proverbs 16:8 NASB). He is truly a liberated man who can enjoy fellowship with God without yearning for material things he doesn't have. Satisfaction with whatever God has chosen to give us is the greatest gain, for it influences everything we do for the better (1 Cor. 3: 21-23; Matt. 6: 19-24). We have brought nothing into this world at birth (not even scant clothing), and we cannot take anything out of it at death. Furthermore, our fleeting life on this present earth is only a mere breath compared to life eternal, so what does it matter that we have not enjoyed an abundance of wealth for such a relatively short period of time? The world's wealth is only a passing cloud; and sitting in the presence of Christ in the new heavens and earth, will we remember deprivations and disappointments ten thousand years ago, one hundred thousand years ago? Even a wealthy man's life does not consist in the abundance of his riches (Lk. 12: 15).

The Apostle Paul was content whether he had much or little (Phil. 4: 12-13). His physical and financial circumstances did not govern his life; his faith in Christ ***did.*** This is the fundamental principle whether you are rich, poor, or in between: What governs your life? Anyone's life can be unduly influenced by his financial circumstances. If we desire riches, those desires can cause us to do things we would not do otherwise, from the most mundane sins to the most sophisticated (complex). We may invest money in business opportunities which are unnecessarily risky or which may compromise ethical principles. We may be tempted to lie or steal in a variety of ways—from pilfering the money box at work to "cooking the books" through false accounting techniques, making corporate earnings look much bigger than they actually are. This was the scheme of WorldCom and Enron executives, two giant US companies which later declared bankruptcy and lost billions of shareholder's dollars, including those of their middle and low-level employees. Since the downfall of these two companies (schemes never last forever), Bernie Madoff (ironically pronounced "made-off") in the US has "made off" with $65 billion of investors' dollars (some of them charities) through a "pyramid scheme" in which only a few who invested in the scam early were able to make money off stolen investments. The thousands of people and companies lower on the pyramid lost billions. (Madoff, 71, has recently been convicted and is facing a maximum of 150 years in prison and $170 billion in restitution.) Africa does not have a monopoly on powerful people who are corrupt.

To give a less egregious (remarkably bad) example, employers may refuse to pay their workers fairly in order to bolster the profits of their businesses. Making a profit is necessary, but one doesn't have to

be greedy to make it. CEO's (chief executive officers) of huge companies may decide to lay off modestly paid workers depending upon their monthly check for groceries seeking to boost corporate earnings and stock prices—all the while making excessive salaries, from $20 million to $150 million per year, and enjoying exorbitant (excessively luxurious) business conferences at stockholders' expense. The US government has now provided billions of dollars in bailout money at taxpayer expense for ***failing*** US businesses whose chief executive officers were making in excess of $100 million per year—each! Only in the US can a businessman make that much money while dragging his company into bankruptcy. (In Africa, heads of state can make more than this while dragging their countries into hyper-inflation and famine.) If the low-level employee fails to do ***his*** job, he gets fired; but if the high-level CEO fails to do his, he gets millions of dollars in severance pay. It truly strains one's imagination how such idiotic corporate and fiscal spending can be. Some corporate elites from AIG (the name has been changed to Chartis) celebrated the recent bailout by attending a multi-million dollar retreat at an exotic resort, spending tens of thousands of dollars on food alone (Fox News). Corporate elites in the US "just don't get it" (don't understand) and neither does the US government. But God does get it, and to Him they will one day be accountable for every dollar they wasted or stole from stock holders and US taxpayers.

The history of war is the history of one powerful ruler after another attempting to acquire exportable commodities (gold, silver, diamonds, oil) and land at the expense of a conquered nation—and especially at the expense of their own people. Since independence from colonial powers, African national leaders have stolen literally billions of dollars of Western foreign aid to enrich themselves at the expense of their own people. Daniel arap Moi of Kenya (a professing Christian) stashed billions into foreign bank accounts. Three billion dollars of his have been recently traced to foreign accounts by the British firm, Kroll (George B. N. Ayittey, ***Africa Unchained—the Blueprint for Africa's Future***, p. 37, citing ***The Economist***, July 10, 2004, p. 42). This money could have benefited the average Kenyan from the capitalization of manufacturing businesses which create thousands of jobs and from the improvement of roads, electrical power facilities, schools, and medical care. The exploitation of Kenyans by their own president is typical of what has happened in many Sub-Saharan African countries since independence in the 1960's. Mobutu of Zaire (modern Democratic Republic of Congo) absconded with $8 billion, more than Zaire's entire foreign debt of $6 billion (Ayittey, p. 103), and his wife was known to use government jets on shopping trips to Paris (source unknown). (Mobutu's wife reminds me of the recent example of al Assad's wife in Syria who was shopping for jewelry in Europe while her home town of Homs was being bombed by Syrian troops.) People commonly die on the highways of Africa from accidents caused by ever-present pot holes in the tarmac resulting from the chronic pilfering of road improvement funds.

The list of African leaders who have become fabulously wealthy from "kleptocracies" (bureaucracies based on theft of public funds) is staggering. Some, but not all, of the pilferers of public funds below are taken from Ayittey, pp. 406-407, cited from the ***French Weekly***, 1997.

- General Sani Abacha of Nigeria ($20 billion)
- President H. Boigny of Ivory Coast ($6 billion)
- General Ibrahim Babangida of Nigeria ($5 billion)
- President Mobutu of Zaire ($4 billion, estimated at $8 billion by some sources)
- President Mousa Traore of Mali ($2 billion)
- President Henri Bedie of Ivory Coast ($ 300 million)
- President Dennis N'guesso of Congo ($200 million)

- President Omar Bongo of Gabon ($80 million)
- President Paul Biya of Cameroon ($70 million)
- President Mengistu Haile Miriam of Ethiopia ($30 million)
- President Hissene Habre of Chad ($3 million)

The amount stolen by each "vampire elite" or "suitcase bandit" (Ayittey's pejoratives, not mine) differs according to the amount of Western money flowing into the country and/or the money from exportable commodities like oil, as well as the leader's ability to steal it. At only $3 million, the President of Chad apparently didn't have the knack. Considering the billions which are waiting to be stolen from public funds, is it any wonder why only 20 out of 198 African leaders of state have left office voluntarily since independence from colonial powers? (Ayittey, page unknown) Becoming president of an African country is like acquiring a license to steal.

When it comes to managing wealth from their own countries, African leaders are no better. Money stolen from their own backyard spends just as well as money stolen from Western democracies. In Nigeria, $400 billion has been generated from oil sales since 1970, but the average Nigerian hasn't received a single benefit. In fact, Nigerian peasants closest to the oil fields have suffered the most, having their fishing grounds and farmland polluted by oil spills and their health ruined by acid rain and toxic air pollution. Meanwhile, wealthy Nigerians receiving these oil revenues boast the biggest bank accounts and some of the finest properties in the world (Ayittey, pp. 34, 39-40).

I have emphasized African corruption only because I am writing primarily for Africans, but there is also plenty of corruption in Western contexts. Back in the US, the governor of Illinois, Rod Blagojevich, was indicted (legally accused) in 2008 for trying to sell the Illinois senate seat, vacated by President-elect Obama, to the highest bidder. In 2009 he was impeached from the governor's seat but insists that he has done nothing wrong. Political corruption is not the monopoly of African leaders; nevertheless, the problem of political corruption appears to be more prevalent on African soil, and fewer culprits are ever prosecuted and convicted. The "Corruption Perception Index" compiled by the German-based Transparency International utilizes the experiences of businessmen, academics, and specialists in risk analysis to determine the degree of corruption in various countries. "The [CPI] index is a composite of 15 different surveys compiled from nine different institutions. It examined 102 countries and ranked each on a scale of Highly Clean (10) to Highly Corrupt (0). Fifty-two of the 102 countries surveyed were found to be in the most highly corrupt range of the index. Sixteen of these were African nations." Uganda scored 2.6 out of 10, indicating large-scale corruption (Darrow L. Miller with Scott Allen, ***Against All Hope: Hope for Africa***, pp. 27-28).

Thus far, I have primarily highlighted the sins of the rich and powerful which are generated by the love of money. The poor, however, are by no means guiltless. Farmers within an hour of Kampala, Uganda have sold their daughters for as little as two sacks of corn; three, if their daughters are pretty (Ayittey, p. 14, citing the ***The Washington Times***, December 25, 1997; original source, Charles Onyongo-Obbo, editor of ***The Monitor***). Women in the Sesse islands in Lake Victoria have sold their bodies for as little as 500 Ush a night (less than 50 cents US currency), and even some Ugandan teachers are supplementing their teaching incomes with prostitution (***The New Vision***, exact publication dates unknown). Recently a missionary friend of ours in Uganda witnessed the "necklacing" of a fourteen-year- old boy who was known for petty larceny (theft) in the neighborhood. He was caught stealing some plumbing parts from a local hardware store. A used tire filled with kerosene was draped over his head and ignited, burning him to death. Our friend came by

just in time to witness his charred and smoldering remains. All kinds of excuses can be made—and will be made. The fathers selling their daughters may have experienced successive crop failure; the women on the Sesse islands were trying to survive starvation; teachers are underpaid; there is no employment in Uganda for young teen-age boys; the store owners have little protection from the police for petty larceny, and they also have families to feed. But is any of this human trafficking and carnage really justified? Absolutely not. In the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord Jesus gave the poor no excuses when He said to them,

> "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth. For this reason I say ***to you***, do not be worried about your life, *as to* what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, *as to* what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and *yet* your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? And who of you by being worried can add a *single* hour to his life? And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is *alive* today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, *will He* not much more *clothe* you? You of little faith! Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?' For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own (Matt. 6: 24-34).

Although the words, "You cannot serve God and wealth" apply to both rich and poor, Jesus was speaking primarily to ***poor*** people in the Sermon on the Mount, people who were worried about food and clothing (v. 25). (The rich were in seriously short supply in ancient Palestine.) To the ***believing poor*** He says, "Don't worry about food and clothing. Your ***heavenly Father*** has not forgotten you, and He knows what you need. Therefore, keep your priorities in order—the kingdom of God and His righteousness—and everything else will fall into place."

Easily said rather than done? For us, yes; for God, no. What He ***says,*** He can just as easily ***do***; but He will not circumvent (go around) our faith. We are required to actually believe what He says in the verses cited above, a belief verified (shown to be true) by our actions. God the Father demands faith in His providential care whether we are rich or poor. If we are rich, He demands that we give generously for the proclamation of the gospel and mercy ministries that bring glory to God (***1 Tim. 6: 17-19***). This requires that we are not fearful of the future. For wealthy westerners or Africans, it forbids socking ***excessive*** portions of our income into 401k plans designed to make us ***comfortably lazy in retirement.*** (Who told us that we could retire? Better to drop dead while working than to pamper ourselves in old age and die a slow death.) It requires that we curb our selfish life-styles and learn to live on less than we are able to afford in order to have something left over to share with those in need, both domestically and internationally (Eph. 4: 28). For the poor, Jesus requires that they ***resist desperate attempts to feed and clothe themselves***—including theft, murder, prostitution, and child trafficking. The godless may see no other solutions, but those who are called sons and daughters have access to His table and must make use of it without resorting to human means which dishonor Him.

The love of money (not money by itself) is surely a root of all sorts of evil—apathy about the things of God (Prov. 30: 8-9a), neglect of the poor (Lk. 16; the rich man and Lazarus), murder, genocide,

the illegal drug trade, prostitution, forced slavery. Virtually every evil on the face of the earth—including the extravagant evils of African despots—can be traced to the love of money in some way or other. Professing Christians are not immune to the lure of riches or misplaced priorities; otherwise, Paul would not have considered it necessary to issue this stern warning. Countless Christians "by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs" (***6: 10b***). By focusing on money, material things, and financial security rather than the kingdom of God and sanctification, they have arrested their spiritual growth, missed precious opportunities for ministry, lost their marriages, neglected their families, and lost the joy of their salvation (if they ever possessed it). "But seek first ***His kingdom and His righteousness***", not ***your kingdom and worldly success***—not even necessary food and clothing (Matt. 6: 31-33).

Christians often fall prey to the same warped world-views and value systems as their non-Christian counterparts. Our definition of "success" is often the same as theirs and conditioned by their world-view. Whoever has substantial material assets is considered successful and worthy of attention when he speaks on ***any*** subject—whether politics, economics, or theology—regardless of expertise. In the church, wealthy Christians are often considered more spiritual than others, presumably because God has "blessed them" according to their superior merit—the mistaken theology of Job's three friends. Even many reformed churches in the West select elders on the basis of worldly success rather than proven spiritual discernment. (I don't know many carpenters, plumbers, and truck drivers who are elders in ***wealthy*** reformed churches, but there are many lawyers and wealthy businessmen who hold these positions.)

The end result is that the corporate spending of many congregations resembles the same alarming, materialistic priorities as their individual members. The individual members build extravagant houses to keep themselves comfortable and to build monuments to their success; the congregations build unnecessarily lavish auditoriums for the same reasons. (For a scathing criticism of Christian materialism written over 150 years ago to affluent southern Presbyterians, see Robert L. Dabney, ***Discussions***, Vol. 1,***"Principles of Christian Economy"***. Quite evidently, no one was listening to Dabney since the South was thereafter decimated by the Civil War with the North—massive antebellum homes destroyed and expensive European furniture burned for firewood—the appropriate end of useless affluence, ashes.)

Turning to the African continent, the love of money has also been the occasion for bickering and infighting among African pastors—those who have financial connections to the West and those who don't; those who have more of it and those who have less of it. While meant to be a blessing to the African church, American money has in many instances become a curse instead. Money has not solved the spiritual problems of the ***American*** church, nor has it won the culture wars against secular humanism and modernism; so why do Africans believe that American money will solve ***their*** problems? Money is a neutral commodity, but the very presence of it always poses a danger. Money is like explosives which must be used with extreme caution. Wisely used, money can move mountains that hinder the progress of the gospel. Unwisely used, it can destroy its handlers.

Paul instructs those who are rich not to be conceited (***1 Tim. 6: 17***), a very necessary admonition since many rich Christians are, indeed, conceited (partly because they are admired by almost everyone). The reason for humility is partially given in the last part of the same verse: God "richly supplies us with all things to enjoy." In the final analysis everything we have is a gift to be received with gratitude, not a prize to be won with autonomous self-effort and cleverness. There are plenty of

people in this world who are more intelligent than we are, and harder-working than we are, who have very little material success to show for it. I can show you one such hard-working woman only a half mile from my former home in Kampala. She crushes stone for a living with a small hammer. Every day she makes multiple trips one kilometer up a large hill to a rock quarry with one twenty-five liter jug and another five liter jug, both cut out on one side to serve as basins. She then fills her jugs with stones, puts both of them on her head while balancing herself with a walking stick as she slowly gets to her feet. She then carries them down the hill to her 8 foot by 8 foot mud hut where she once lived with her two children, one crippled. It probably takes her two weeks to crush enough stone to make a ton of crushed gravel yielding her 40,000 Ush or $20 US. "But by the ***grace*** of God [we are] what [we are]" (1 Cor. 15: 10a), "For who regards you as superior? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, ***why do you boast*** as if you had not received it?" (1 Cor. 4: 7).

Riches are also uncertain (***v. 17***) and can be more easily lost than gained, as the downward plunge of the US and other Western economies have proved in 2008—the US Dow Jones Industrial average plunging from over 13,000 to under 7,000 in only weeks. Truly the wise man was correct when he said, "He who trusts in his riches will fall, But the righteous will flourish like the *green* leaf" (Prov. 11: 28); and "Do not weary yourself to gain wealth, Cease from your consideration *of it.* When you set your eyes on it, it is gone. For *wealth* certainly makes itself wings Like an eagle that flies *toward* the heavens (Prov. 23: 4-5).

The ***riches of the rich*** should consist in good works and generosity (***v. 18***), treasures that are stored up in heaven and cannot be lost (***v. 19***; cf. Matt. 6: 19-20). This is the very purpose for which God has given wealth—not for personal comfort (consumerism), recognition, or an inflated sense of self-importance, but to employ it for the good of others so that men may glorify "[their] Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 5: 16b). The reward for good works and generosity is presented in ***v. 19b***, "so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed." This is not a promise of eternal life based on works of generosity or philanthropy. Rather, it is a promise of ***realizing in the present the eschatological life of the future***. "Life indeed" is exclusively life in the Son, Jesus Christ, who gave Himself even to the point of death that others may live. Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and ***the life***" (Jn. 14: 6a), thus there is no true life apart from life in the Son. When we depart this earthly life, and especially at the restoration of all things when Christ returns, we will better understand what Jesus meant by saying, "I am…the life" because we will be able to experience the full benefit of living in the favor of God through Christ.

Yet, we need not wait to experience a ***foretaste*** of this life in the "here and now" by "taking hold of that which is life indeed", that is, by being obedient to the commandments pertaining to generosity and reaping the temporal rewards which attend them—rewards which foreshadow eternal rewards. Our Lord Jesus also promised, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20: 35b). This includes a temporal blessedness which we experience every time we give to those in need.

### *VI. Final Admonitions (6: 11-16; 20-21a)*

This final section (***vv. 11-21a***) is interrupted by further instructions for the rich in ***vv. 17-19***. Timothy is admonished to "flee these things"; specifically, the love of money which plunges men into spiritual ruin and apostasy. Generally, however, "these things" may refer as well to the doctrinal heresies which are plaguing the Ephesian church. The verb "flee" (***pheugō***) is imperative, "Flee!!!!!", the same imperative verb used in Matt. 2: 13 ("flee to Egypt") and 2 Tim. 2: 22 ("flee from youthful lusts"). The verb is also used in Jn. 10: 12 (a hired hand fleeing from a wolf). See also Matt. 10: 23 (fleeing bodily harm or death); 1 Cor. 6: 18; 10: 14 (fleeing immorality and idolatry). Thus, Paul is

***urgent*** in his admonition. Timothy is to flee these harmful and soul-destroying doctrines and sinful desires as he would a raging, ravenous wolf.

All self-confidence and false security must be set aside. Self-reliance must be discarded and grace embraced afresh each day. The means of grace must be employed to fight against the world, the flesh, and the devil. Timothy must be ever vigilant to avail himself of those means—the word of God, fellowship (especially with fellow elders), prayer, worship, the Lord's Supper, etc. The Christian faith is a fight, not a vacation. Believers will not sail into heaven on luxurious ocean cruise ships, but will fight their way through bloody spiritual battlefields. "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14: 22b).

Such words to Timothy sound strange in the Western ears of those who know little of sacrifice and spiritual warfare. Too many Western Christians are like soldiers who remain at a fortified camp complaining about the food while their Developing-World comrades are dodging bullets in the trenches—sometimes literally, as in Sudan and Congo. If we as Christians know little of hardship and sacrifice in our own Western contexts, then we must take up the battle with our brothers and sisters in Africa and Asia. If the fight is not coming to us, we must go to the fight (2 Tim. 1: 8). But there is always a fight anywhere we are if we open our eyes and choose to participate. Otherwise, we are blind to the warfare raging on all sides of us. The battle of the mind and heart is ubiquitous (in all places).

The negative side of fleeing is ***pursuing*** (***v. 11b***), and Paul gives Timothy a long list of worthy pursuits: "righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance *and* gentleness." Fighting the fight includes both fleeing and pursuing—turning ***from*** sin ***to*** righteousness. It is not enough simply to avoid a list of negative traits; one must at the same time cultivate positive characteristics to fill the void, lest seven more demons occupy the house and our last state become worse than the previous one (Matt. 12: 43-45). Once again, Paul is not urging upon Timothy a salvation by works when he says, "take hold of the eternal life to which you were called" (***v. 12***), but rather to experience in the present the eschatological life to be consummated (completed) in the future. The Apostle Paul was always a man living with one foot in this life and the other firmly planted in the life to come, and his mind was on eternal things (Col. 3: 2). By fighting hard as a soldier of Christ (a theme Paul continues in ***2 Timothy***), Timothy could also be a man who tasted of heaven while still living on earth (cf. ***5: 19,*** "take hold of that which is life indeed"). Christians must be those who live ***in*** the world but are not ***of*** the world (Jn. 15: 19).

Timothy had professed his allegiance to this radical faith in the presence of many witnesses (***v. 12b***), possibly another reference to his ordination to service by the presbytery (cf. ***4: 14***). On the other hand, this could be a reference to his initial conversion in Lystra and his profession of faith before the congregation which existed in this city; and thus, exegetical support for the practice of making a profession of faith in Christ publicly before an entire congregation. Our faith is not a private affair or an embarrassment to be hidden away behind closed doors, but a light to shine in the presence of all (Matt. 5: 15-16). The content of Timothy's confession is qualified in ***v. 13***. It is the same "good confession" which Christ Jesus testified before Pontius Pilate who asked Him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" (Jn. 18: 33). After quizzing Pilate concerning the source of this question, He eventually responded, "You say *correctly* that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice" (v. 37). A true convert to Greco-Roman skepticism which denied the possibility of absolute truth, Pilate mumbles,

"What is truth?" and walks out the door without waiting for the answer sitting right under his nose—the person of Jesus Christ who ***is*** the truth incarnate (v. 38).

Timothy, on the other hand, had heard Jesus' "voice" (Jn. 8: 37) and embraced Him who is ***the*** way, ***the*** truth, and ***the*** life—the only way to the Father (John 14:6; in which the definite article, "the" is before each word. Jesus is not one way among many, nor one truth system among many, nor one viable philosophy of life among many.). Included in this testimony was the truth that Jesus is the "King of kings and Lord of lords" who has come to reclaim the created universe from sin and ruin "at the proper time" (***v. 15***; cf. Rev. 19).

But what does Paul mean when he says of Christ, "whom no man has seen or can see" (***v. 16***)? Surely, Christ is real flesh and blood who dwelt on earth among his disciples who beheld His glory (Jn. 1: 14). The Docetist heresy (a form of Gnosticism) held that Christ could not have possessed a material body; otherwise, His divine nature would have been contaminated by material flesh (cf. Earle E. Cairns, ***Christianity Through the Centuries***, pp. 74, 98-99). But Paul is not speaking of Christ's ***human body*** which was beheld by everyone who saw Him personally (1 Jn. 1: 1). However, His true humanity veiled the full glory of His absolute deity and power (cf. Matt. 17: 2, the transfiguration of Christ in which ***part*** of this veil was momentarily removed). Rather, Paul is speaking of the full complement (measure) of Christ's deity which consists in all the divine, incommunicable attributes that only God possesses. ***The divine nature of Christ fully revealed***, no one on earth has ever seen, for had Christ manifested the fullness of His deity on earth, no one would have been able to stand in His presence and live (Ex. 33: 20). Even the revelation of the ***divine name*** in the Garden of Gethsemane caused His captors to fall to the ground, for the power of the name had been unleashed upon sinful men (Jn. 18: 4-6).
One last time (***v. 20***), as if to leave Timothy with the most important point of his whole letter, Paul urgently instructs Timothy ("O Timothy") to guard what is true and avoid the errors which have led some astray from the faith.

### *VII. Benediction (6: 21b)*

Paul closes the letter with a brief benediction characteristic of his years of association with Timothy and his fatherly love, "Grace be with you."

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