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THE PLACE OF GOD'S PRESENCE:
A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF 1 TIMOTHY

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THE PLACE OF GOD'S PRESENCE:
A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF 1 TIMOTHY

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I lovingly dedicate this project to my family and my church.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BDAG	W. Bauer, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich (3 rd ed.; rev. by F. W. Danker), <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the NT</i>
BNTC	Black's New Testament Commentaries
<i>BSac</i>	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>
BSTC	The Bible Speaks Today Commentary
CGTC	Cambridge Greek Testament Commentary
ECC	Eerdmans Critical Commentary
<i>HBT</i>	<i>Horizons in Biblical Theology</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentary
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JBMW</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Manhood and Womanhood</i>
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
NAC	New American Commentary
NAC-SBT	New American Commentary Studies in Bible and Theology
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
<i>NPNF</i>	<i>Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers</i>
NSBT	New Studies in Biblical Theology
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
<i>SBJT</i>	<i>Southern Baptist Journal of Theology</i>
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentary
<i>TRINJ</i>	<i>Trinity Journal</i>

UTBC Understanding the Bible Commentary
WBC Word Biblical Commentary

PREFACE

This work would not have been possible without the loving support of my wife, Abby. Thank you for your encouragement, your patience, and your willingness to spend a small fortune on coffee so that I would keep writing. I should also thank Diana Charrier, for volunteering to be my proofreader, critic, and encourager. Without Diana's help, this paper would be full of misplaced commas. I also owe a great debt of gratitude to the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, especially Dr. James Hamilton, Dr. Miguel Echevarria, and my Biblical Theological cohort. Finally, I should thank Redemption Church for allowing me the great privilege of being your pastor. It is one of my great joys that we get to share life together as the house of God.

Jamie Caldwell

Annapolis, Maryland

May 2017

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

While answering his own question, *What's Wrong with the World?*, G. K. Chesterton mentions a problem as old as humanity itself: “It is not so much that we are too bold to endure rules; it is rather that we are too timid to endure responsibilities.”¹ So perhaps Adam and Eve did not sin because of some passionate boldness, but because they could not endure the monotonous responsibility inherent in abstaining from forbidden fruit. Likewise, maybe the modern church is not nearly as full of drastic and terrible rebellions as it is of small and timid irresponsibilities (which themselves amount to a terrible rebellion). If true, then rightly understanding Paul's first letter to Timothy, which teaches the church how to responsibly behave as God's House is imperative.

Unfortunately, Paul's first letter to Timothy is surrounded by debate. Many New Testament scholars and commentators argue that this letter is not a genuinely Pauline epistle.² Others acknowledge Paul's authorship but assume that his words have

¹G. K. Chesterton, *What's Wrong with the World?* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1994), 142-43.

²The debate over Pauline authorship is not new, nor is it ancient. Writing in 1897, E. Y. Hincks recognized that the earliest major challenge to the traditional assumption that Paul authored the first letter to Timothy was Schleiermacher's essay, *Ueber den sogenannten ersten Brief des Paulus an den Timotheos*. Edward Young Hincks, “The Authorship of the Pastoral Epistles,” *JBL* 16 (January 1, 1897): 94–117. Since that article, challenges to Pauline authorship have moved forward in very predictable patterns. I. Howard Marshall summarizes the current state of affairs: “A significant minority of scholars hold that the PE are the work of Paul. . . . Nevertheless, most other scholars now take it almost as an unquestioned assumption that the PE are not the work of Paul.” I. Howard Marshall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, ICC (London: T & T Clark International, 1999), 57-58. Some of the scholars who do accept the Pauline authorship of this letter include Luke Timothy Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 35A (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001); Philip Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2006); and George W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1992). I agree with the minority and accept the text's own witness that 1 Timothy was written by Paul and addressed to Timothy and the church in Ephesus.

little relevance to the modern church.³ Adding to the vehemence of these theological debates is the fact that Paul also addresses several culturally contentious issues within the scope of this short document. These difficult topics include money, gender roles, ecclesiology, the person and work of Christ, and much more. Hopefully, this biblical-theological study of 1 Timothy will help to clarify some of the misunderstanding and confusion that surrounds the letter; but first, one must define the discipline of *biblical theology*.

Defining Biblical Theology

Biblical theology is notoriously difficult to define.⁴ In fact, for too many, it seems to be thrust into the now infamous category of Justice Potter Stewart: “I can’t define it, but I know it when I see it.”⁵ The authors of the book *Understanding Biblical Theology* acknowledge that “biblical theology has become a catchphrase, a wax nose that can mean anything.”⁶ Barry Webb goes a bit further in his critical explanation of the current state of affairs:

Biblical theology is something of an ugly duckling in biblical studies. It has ‘turned up’, so to speak, in the world of academia and seems to think that it belongs there. But the other members of the brood have been thrown into a degree of alarm and consternation by its presence, for they are not at all sure that it is really one of them.⁷

Nevertheless, some intrepid academics continue to put forward possible definitions.

³For example, Gordon Fee argues that the occasional nature of 1 Timothy greatly diminishes its applicability. Gordon D. Fee, “Reflections on Church Order in the Pastoral Epistles, with Further Reflection on the Hermeneutics of Ad Hoc Documents,” *JETS* 28, no. 2 (June 1, 1985): 141–51.

⁴For a simple but helpful summary of how the phrase “biblical theology” has been defined historically, see Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), 17.

⁵This phrase summarizes Justice Stewart’s reaction to the inherent difficulty of defining pornographic material in the U.S. Supreme Court case, *Jacobellis v. Ohio*, 378 U.S. 184 (1964).

⁶Edward Klink III and Darian R. Lockett, *Understanding Biblical Theology: A Comparison of Theory and Practice* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), loc. 80, Kindle.

⁷Barry G. Webb, *Five Festal Garments: Christian Reflections on The Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes and Esther*, ed. D. A. Carson, NSBT 10 (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 2000), 14-15.

The best definitions of biblical theology begin with the phrase itself.⁸ The first word, “biblical,” reveals that any definition of this discipline must seriously reckon with the Bible. Edmund Clowney argues,

If we are to have a genuine biblical theology, however, we must accept biblical presuppositions and reject the anti-supernaturalism that is so often assumed to be inherent in the historical method. It is futile to give free scope to the negative criticism of such a method and then hope to build a biblical theology either with the remaining rubble or in the clouds of a noumenal dimension where faith has fled from science.⁹

So, biblical theology begins with accepting the Bible on its own terms, but one must not stop there. The second word, “theology,” indicates that this pursuit must also be a thoroughly “theological” endeavor. Thus, this discipline is not ultimately concerned with using the Bible to make archeological or anthropological discoveries about biblical places or peoples, gather scientific evidence to understand God’s role in creation, or cultivate a history of world religions. Instead, biblical theology is a discipline that seeks to learn theological truths from the story of the Bible.

According to Charles Scobie, “Biblical theology thus ought to mean something like the ordered study of what the Bible has to say about God and his relation to the world and to humankind.”¹⁰ James Hamilton offers a more nuanced definition.

[Biblical theology is the] interpretive perspective reflected in the way the biblical authors have presented their understanding of earlier Scripture, redemptive history, and the events they are describing, recounting, celebrating, or addressing in narratives, poems, proverbs, letters, and apocalypses.¹¹

Scobie's simple definition regards biblical theology as a way to approach the text of Scripture. Hamilton's definition seems to regard biblical theology as something

⁸Contra James Barr, who argues that biblical theology is best defined as a “contrastive notion,” i.e., by what it is not. James Barr, *The Concept of Biblical Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 5.

⁹Edmund Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2002), 13.

¹⁰Charles H. H. Scobie, *The Ways of Our God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 5.

¹¹James M. Hamilton Jr., *What is Biblical Theology?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), loc. 120, Kindle.

that is inherent within the text; both men are correct. Thus, it seems that a good definition of biblical theology would combine these ideas. Therefore, biblical theology is the study of what the Bible has to say about God and his creation, ordered and structured by the interpretive perspective of the biblical authors.

Biblical Theology and Preaching

About fifty miles southwest of Paris sits the magnificent Chartres Cathedral, a breath-taking example of the beauty conceived when architecture marries theology. In the south transept of this cathedral, a stained glass window immortalizes an image made famous by Bernard of Chartres. The image in the cathedral reveals the four evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, standing on the shoulders of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, four major prophets of the Hebrew Bible. In 1159, John of Salisbury, the Bishop of Chartres, wrote about this image.

Bernard of Chartres used to compare us to dwarfs perched on the shoulders of giants. He pointed out that we see more and farther than our predecessors, not because we have keener vision or greater height, but because we are lifted up and borne aloft on their gigantic stature.¹²

Bernard's image illustrates two key elements in the proper exercise of biblical theological preaching: antecedent theology and canonical context.¹³ Simply put, antecedent theology is the body of theological information which precedes a writer, and canonical context involves seeing each part of scripture in light of the whole Biblical canon. In Bernard's image, antecedent theology is revealed by the prophets who provide the evangelists with a theological foundation upon which to stand, while canonical context is hinted at by the image's inclusion of authors from both testaments who are looking into the distance in order to "see more and farther" into God's story. Thus,

¹²John of Salisbury, *The Metalogicon: A Twelfth Century Defense of the Verbal and Logical Arts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1955), 167.

¹³The concepts of canonical context and antecedent theology are drawn from Thomas Schreiner, "Preaching and Biblical Theology," *SBJT* 10, no. 2 (Summer 2006): 20-29.

preaching informed by biblical theology involves standing on the shoulders of the biblical authors, striving to apprehend the whole story of God and his world through their interpretive perspective(s).

In Paul's first letter to Timothy, the apostle's interpretive perspective is revealed not only by the content of the letter, but also by the antecedent theology which informed his writing and the canonical context into which he wrote. Written near the end of Paul's life, 1 Timothy is one of the latest books in the New Testament. Thus, it has a wide scope of antecedent theology. For our present purposes, this large body of theological information will be limited to a singular focus: the house of God. In 1 Timothy 3:15, Paul makes a big theological point when he uses this small phrase to describe the church in Ephesus.¹⁴

The household language of Paul's letter is more than a clever literary device; it actually plays a major part in rightly interpreting this letter's ecclesiology. Paul, as a student of the Hebrew scriptures and the LXX, would have been very aware that the place of God's presence, from Bethel to the tabernacle and the temple, was commonly referred to as “the house of God.”¹⁵ It is likely, then, that Paul used this household language specifically to connect the church to the idea of God's presence, which would consequently highlight the importance of right behavior.¹⁶ Thus, the antecedent theology of 1 Timothy includes every place in the Old Testament, and the appropriate portions of

¹⁴Luke Timothy Johnson persuasively argues that the household language found throughout this letter is most appreciated when considered alongside of Pauline authorship. See Luke Timothy Johnson, “Oikonomia Theou: The Theological Voice of 1 Timothy from the Perspective of Pauline Authorship,” *HBT* 21, no. 2 (1999): 87–104.

¹⁵See for example, Gen 28:17; Judg 18:31; 1 and 2 Chr passim; Ezra 1-10 passim; Neh 6-13 passim; Pss 42:4, 52:8; Eccl 5:1; Dan 1:2, 5:3. See also Jesus's usage of the phrase in Matt 12:4 (and parallels), Paul's usage in Eph 2:19, Peter's usage in 1 Pet 4:17, and the unnamed author's usage in Heb 10:21.

¹⁶Paul makes a similar argument to the church in Corinth (1 Cor 3:16, 6:19; 2 Cor 6:16), where he argues that the individuals who compose the church are the temple of God and should act appropriately.

the New Testament, where the biblical authors connect the idea of God's presence to household language.

The canonical context of this letter is discovered by recognizing the historical situation of the letter and placing that small(er) story within the grand narrative of Scripture. Clearly, Paul's first letter to Timothy is not a traditional narrative, but it does tell a story. This particular story begins with Saul, a young and zealous persecutor of the church (Acts 7:58). Following a dramatic conversion experience, Saul, the persecutor of churches, becomes Paul, the planter of churches (Acts 9). Paul travels extensively (Acts 13-18), and eventually, he makes his way to Ephesus where he preaches the gospel and plants a church (Acts 19). It is obvious that Paul loves this church (Eph 1:15ff.), and he becomes troubled when false teachers arise within it (1 Tim 1:6-7); so troubled, in fact, that he dispatches his trusted young cohort, Timothy, to handle the situation (1 Tim 1:3-7, 18-20). Paul then sends an encouraging letter to Timothy that provides him and the church with loving instructions and paternal care. This story of Paul, Timothy, and the church in Ephesus is the immediate context of Paul's letter, but there is more to the story.

Good biblical theology does not stop with the immediate context; it also “focuses on the storyline of scripture — the unfolding of God's plan in redemptive history.”¹⁷ In other words, biblical theology recognizes that the story of Paul and Timothy is not the only story being told in this letter. There is also another greater story that is being revealed. This is the grand story of God, and it stretches from Eden to Ephesus and beyond. It is the story of humanity's creation, rebellion, and redemption. Paul understands that the church in Ephesus is not just a local physical entity, but an eternal spiritual mystery. As Paul writes his letter to Timothy, he also writes his letter to the churches which have not yet been planted and the pastors who have not yet been called.

¹⁷Schreiner, “Preaching and Biblical Theology,” 22.

A scene near the end of Tolkein's epic classic *The Lord of the Rings* illustrates the place of biblical theology in rightly understanding the story of Scripture. Sam and Frodo stand in the shadow of Mordor, a terrible volcanic mountain. These two heroic little hobbits have come to this horrific place to save the world. They have battled terrifying enemies, survived many dangers, and seen much beauty but now, they find themselves nearing the end of their quest, and they wonder what kind of an end it will be. As the two hobbits contemplate what lies before them, Sam gazes into the distance and says, rather hopefully, "I wonder what sort of tale we've fallen into."¹⁸

Like Sam, humanity is wondering about deep and glorious things. Is this life a comedy? Or, is reality a tragedy? Will there be a happy ending, or will it be sad? These questions carry an eternal weight in God's story, and they are rightly answered only by sound biblical theological preaching which stands on the shoulders of those who have gone before in order to see more clearly how our story connects to the greater story of God.

Familiarity with the Literature

For many years, the commentary most referenced by scholars was the work of H. Conzelmann and M. Dibelius, *The Pastoral Epistles*.¹⁹ This German work was made available in English via the Hermeneia series in 1972. Conzelmann and Dibelius argued that the letter's author (not Paul) was primarily focused on promoting a bourgeois Christianity more concerned with maintaining the church's status quo than following Christ. This idea gained traction for several years, but was convincingly rejected by Philip Towner's work, *The Goal of our Instruction*.²⁰ The work of Dibelius and

¹⁸J. R. R. Tolkein, *The Two Towers: The Lord of the Rings, Part 2* (New York: Ballantine, 2012), 362.

¹⁹D. A. Carson, *New Testament Commentary Survey*, 7th ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 129, Kindle.

²⁰Philip Towner, *The Goal of Our Instruction: The Structure of Theology and Ethics in the Pastoral Epistles* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), 9-16, 201-5.

Conzelmann also eschewed Pauline authorship in favor of “an unbelievable reconstruction of early church history.”²¹

Following the work of Dibelius and Conzelman, there was, for many years, a paucity of scholarly work devoted to the Pastoral Epistles.²² This state of affairs changed with the solid offering of I. Howard Marshall in 1999, since which there has been a consistent stream of quality work devoted to 1 Timothy and the other Pastoral Epistles. Marshall's weighty commentary, approximately 850 pages, sets the bar high. Writing for the International Critical Commentary, he digs into the Greek and provides a thoughtful exegesis of the text. Concerning Paul's instructions to women, Marshall argues along typical egalitarian lines. Elsewhere, Marshall summarizes the hermeneutic that informs his exegesis and his egalitarianism: “We must go beyond the letter of scripture when the trajectory of scriptural teaching takes us further than what scripture explicitly states and requires us to recognize that some culturally specific scriptural teachings and commands are no longer mandatory.”²³ Marshall offers a unique, but unconvincing, contribution to the study of the Pastoral Epistles with his theory of “allonymity.” According to Marshall, allonymity refers “to the activity of writing in another person's name without intent to deceive . . . and offers the most plausible solution to the enigma of their [the Pastoral Epistle's] origin.”²⁴

One year after Marshall's *The Pastoral Epistles* was published, William D. Mounce offered his contribution on the Pastoral Epistles to the Word Biblical Commentary series. Mounce's work functionally serves as a more conservative response

²¹Carson, *New Testament Commentary Survey*, 129.

²²See Carson, *New Testament Commentary*, 127; and I. Howard Marshall, “The Pastoral Epistles in Recent Study,” in *Entrusted with the Gospel: Paul's Theology in the Pastoral Epistles*, ed. Andreas J. Köstenberger and Terry L. Wider (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2010), 268, Kindle.

²³I. Howard Marshall, “Mutual Love and Submission in Marriage,” in *Discovering Biblical Equality*, ed. Ronald W. Pierce and Rebecca Merrill Groothuis (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2005), 201-2.

²⁴Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 84.

to Marshall's. For instance, Mounce argues that Paul authored the letters with the aid of an amanuensis. He also accepts that Paul's admonition against women teaching men remains applicable; his work on 1 Timothy 2 stresses that one's role is not determinative of one's worth. Ultimately, Mounce's work is not as detailed as Marshall's, but is still well done.

Quinn and Wacker's work for the Eerdmans Critical Commentary series, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, is somewhat handicapped by formatting issues. Thankfully, a clear table of contents renders this commentary somewhat more useful to readers who struggle with the format of the series. The reader will find that Quinn and Wacker have provided a wealth of information in this commentary, but at times, it seems that their work is just too exhaustive to be unified or useful. This critique is understandable when one considers the difficult task that faced Wacker following Quinn's untimely death. Marshall explains, "Wacker was apparently faced with a task of almost insuperable difficulty in that what he inherited was a continuous exposition (with masses of added annotations) with no indication of how material was to be divided up."²⁵ In spite of an unfriendly organizational structure and a seeming overabundance of data, this commentary retains its value by offering numerous lexical insights about the biblical text, including LXX and NT word usage, patristic and secular citations, etymological studies, and more.

Originally, Quinn's work on the Pastoral Epistles was destined for the Anchor Bible Commentary series. However, after Quinn's death the editors turned to Luke Timothy Johnson. Johnson's work is a refreshing read. It is clear, well-organized, and insightful. Johnson carefully accepts the hypothesis of Pauline authorship, and he rightly exegetes Paul's admonition concerning women. Then, inexplicably, he seems to assume that Paul is simply wrong on this issue. Johnson argues that the apostle's statement is

²⁵Ibid., 271.

“based solely on Paul's individual authority . . . and that the warrant for the injunction is, in fact, a faulty reading of Torah.”²⁶ In his own words, the “only truly viable hermeneutical option, . . . engage[s] the words of Paul in a dialectical process of criticism within the public discourse of the church, both academic and liturgical.”²⁷ Johnson goes on to explain how this process reveals Paul's mistaken assumptions. On the other hand, Johnson makes two contributions of exceeding value in this work. First, he provides an informative history of interpretation. Second, Johnson's work reveals the importance of the household metaphor within the letter.²⁸

Written for the New International Greek Testament Commentary, George Knight's work *The Pastoral Epistles* manages to combine scholarly depth with brevity. The nature of this commentary series is such that readers will benefit from familiarity with the Greek text. However, Knight's work remains accessible even if this linguistic familiarity is slight. Knight's commentary is typically conservative; it argues for a complementarian reading of 1 Timothy 2 along with Pauline authorship of the text. One of the few drawbacks of Knight's work is that the arguments, which are often convincing, are not always proven. For instance, his reaching interpretation of Timothy's timidity.²⁹ Still, Knight's work on these epistles is one of the most helpful and accessible original language commentaries in print.

Philip Towner's magisterial work *The Letters to Timothy and Titus* is the fruit of a lifetime spent studying these epistles. Marshall calls it “probably the most important work from the 'conservative' side.”³⁰ Likewise, D. A. Carson says that Towner's work is

²⁶Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, 210-11.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid., 148-52.

²⁹Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 8.

³⁰Marshall, “The Pastoral Epistles in Recent Study,” 274.

“perhaps the best commentary on the Pastorals based on the English text.”³¹ Truly, Towner's helpful contributions and intellectual insights are too numerous to mention in the confines of this paper; however, a few points of interest must be mentioned. Towner eschews the title, Pastoral Epistles, choosing instead to focus on the individuality of the letters. He cautiously accepts Pauline authorship and offers an egalitarian perspective on Paul's instructions to women that is culturally conditioned.

In addition to these lengthy critical commentaries, several shorter commentaries, along with several monographs and collections, are worth reading.³² First, *Entrusted with the Gospel: Paul's Theology in the Pastoral Epistles*, edited by Köstenberger and Wilder, is an excellent resource. The chapters in this handy little volume cover the most important topics relating to the Pastoral Epistles, including authorship, purpose, Christology, structure, and ecclesiology. Secondly, the work of Köstenberger and Schreiner, *Women in the Church: An Analysis and Application of 1 Timothy 2:9-15*, offers a sound and authoritative exegesis of a very contentious passage. Towner's published dissertation, *The Goal of our Instruction*, is also a helpful read focusing on the theology and ethics of the Pastoral Epistles. Finally, Andrew Lau's *Manifest in Flesh* is a detailed examination of the often overlooked Christology of the Pastoral Epistles.

First Timothy and Redemption Church

Paul's first letter to Timothy uniquely intersects the particular circumstances of Redemption Church in a number of practical ways. Throughout church history, 1 Timothy has served to provide those called to leadership in God's house with insight and guidance

³¹Carson, *New Testament Commentary Survey*, 128.

³²See especially John Stott, *The Message of 1 Timothy and Titus: The Life of the Local Church*, BSTC (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996); Gordon D. Fee, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, UTBC (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988); and Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles: An Introduction and Commentary*, rev. ed., TNTC (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1990).

that transcend its first century context.³³ Unfortunately, many modern scholars discount the applicability of 1 Timothy (and the other Pastorals) to the modern church; they argue that these are *ad hoc* letters written to confront a particular issue, and, as such, have a very limited usefulness.³⁴ Thankfully, this interpretation is being challenged by a growing group of scholars. As Tomlinson points out,

Some commentators, including Köstenberger, argue that Paul's purpose for writing had a twofold dimension: (1) an *ad hoc* personal dimension, namely, to instruct Timothy on how to deal with false teachers at Ephesus; and (2) a more general dimension, to provide guidance related to a variety of issues facing not only the church at Ephesus but the church as a whole in perpetuity.³⁵

If these scholars are correct, then it seems wise to pay attention to the Pastoral Epistles in general, and 1 Timothy in particular, so that followers of Jesus might “know how one ought to behave in the household of God” (1 Tim 3:15). The fact that this letter is written by Paul for his young protégé only makes it more significant. Who in history is more qualified to teach a pastor and the church that he planted how to follow Jesus than the apostle Paul? To be even more personal: Who in history is more qualified to teach Redemption and her young pastor about how we should behave in the house of God than Paul?

As stated earlier, there are a number of practical concerns which Paul addressed in his first letter to Timothy that directly connect to the needs and desires of Redemption Church. First, the letter connects with Redemption because she is a young church with a young pastor. Timothy was a young delegate (1 Tim 4:12) tasked with

³³See John Chrysostom, *On the Priesthood*, trans. and ed. Philip Schaff, *NPNF*, vol. 9 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2014); and Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Commentary on the Minor Pauline Epistles*, trans. and ed. Rowan A. Greer, *SBL Writings from the Greco-Roman World*, vol. 26 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010).

³⁴Again, see Fee, “Reflections on Church Order;” for a representative presentation of this argument.

³⁵F. Alan Tomlinson, “The Purpose and Stewardship Theme within the Pastoral Epistles,” in *Entrusted with the Gospel: Paul's Theology in the Pastoral Epistles*, ed. Andreas J. Köstenberger and Terry L. Wilder (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2010), 53, Kindle.

leading a young church. Second, many of Redemption's most urgent questions are answered in this letter, namely: Who can be a pastor (1 Tim 3:1-7)? What can women do (1 Tim 2:8-15)? What is included in the role of a deacon (1 Tim 3:8-13)? How should church members relate to one another (1 Tim 5:1-8)? How should Christians handle their wealth (1 Tim 6:6-10)? Finally, the reality of the wealthy, egalitarian, and pluralistic culture in which Redemption does ministry resembles the culture of first century Ephesus.³⁶ Redemption is a new church asking old questions of a young pastor. It is imperative, especially at this formative stage, that she submit to the authority of God's Word in general and that she embrace the practical teaching of 1 Timothy in particular.

Overview of Series

Arguably, 1 Timothy, like all Scripture, can be properly understood only by employing a biblical theology that “seeks to do justice to all dimensions of reality to which the biblical texts testify.”³⁷ Once all of the dimensions of this text are considered, it becomes clear that Paul wrote his first letter to Timothy with a dual purpose. First, Paul used this apostolic letter to inform the Ephesian church about her identity as the house of God. Secondly, the letter would help to set things right in Ephesus by reminding the church of her responsibility to behave appropriately within God’s presence. The title for this study is “The Place of God’s Presence.”³⁸

The House of God (1 Tim 3:14-16)

In 1 Timothy 3:14-16 Paul reveals the identity of the church. She is the “house of God” (1 Tim 3:15) The point will be made that Paul is consciously drawing on his

³⁶See C. E. Arnold, “Ephesus,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1993), 249-53.

³⁷Gerhard Hasel, “Biblical Theology: Then, Now, and Tomorrow,” *HBT* 4 (1982): 66.

³⁸Arguably, this title alludes to the meaning of the important, and often overlooked, household language that is found throughout this letter.

understanding of the Old Testament's use of “house of God” as a metaphor for the place of God's presence. The apostle reminds the church that because she is the place of God's presence she carries the responsibility to behave appropriately (1 Tim 3:14). The church's identity and responsibility are then celebrated in Paul's hymnic confession of the mystery of godliness (1 Tim 3:16).

False and True (1 Tim 1)

In 1 Timothy 1 Paul reminds his young coworker of his identity as the steward of God's house (1 Tim 1:3-4). As such, it is Timothy's responsibility to protect God's people by wielding the truth of the gospel in a good fight against the false teachers and their false teaching (1 Tim 1:18). To this end, the apostle encourages Timothy to lovingly confront the silly speculations of the enemy with his own faithful stewardship of God's message (1 Tim 1:5).

Prayer and Pray-ers (1 Tim 2)

In 1 Timothy 2, Paul teaches the church in Ephesus about prayer. This chapter opens with the apostle's command that the church should pray, “first of all” (1 Tim 2:1). Then, Paul teaches the church how to pray properly. In this section, the apostle gets more personal as he moves beyond the general command and issues specific instructions, first to men (1 Tim 2:8-9) and then to women (1 Tim 2:10-12). Paul, the consummate biblical theologian, grounds his instructions regarding proper gender roles on an interpretation of the opening chapters of Genesis (1 Tim 2:13-15).

Overseers and Deacons (1 Tim 3:1-13)

In 1 Timothy 3:1-13, Paul identifies and describes two leadership offices in the church: overseers and deacons. George Knight offers the working hypothesis that these titles imply the scope of work involved in each office. Thus, an overseer is responsible for “carrying out a ministry of oversight,” while a deacon is responsible for “carrying out

a ministry of service.”³⁹ In the first half of chapter 3, Paul explains what type of men are qualified to lead the church as overseers (1 Tim 3:1-7). Then, the apostle discusses the type of men and women who are qualified to serve as deacons (1 Tim 3:8-13).

Yourself and Your Hearers (1 Tim 4)

In 1 Timothy 4, Paul reminds his young coworker that he needs to steward himself as he stewards God's house. The enemies of the gospel will make this work difficult and dangerous, but Timothy will be a good servant if he trains himself for godliness (1 Tim 4:6-10). This chapter concludes on a serious note as Paul encourages Timothy to be faithful so that he might rescue himself and his hearers from the danger of heresy (1 Tim 4:16).

Family (1 Tim 5:1 – 6:2)

In 1 Timothy 5:1-6:2, Paul teaches Timothy how to practice godliness by rightly relating to the Ephesian church as though they were family. Paul begins with a general rule that requires older men to be treated as fathers, older women as mothers, younger men as brothers, and younger women as sisters (1 Tim 5:1-2). Then, the apostle teaches Timothy about rightly relating to three culturally difficult demographics within the church: poor widows (1 Tim 5:3-16), wayward elders (1 Tim 5:17-25), and Christian slaves (1 Tim 6:1-2).

Work and Wealth (1 Tim 6:3-21)

Finally, in 1 Timothy 6:3-21 Paul concludes his letter with a discussion of desire that focuses on money. First, Paul indicts the false teachers for their disordered pursuit of wealth (1 Tim 6:3-5). Then, he encourages Timothy to flee from such false desires (1 Tim 6:11-12) and to find contentment with godliness (1 Tim 6:6-8). Paul never

³⁹Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 151.

condemns wealth outright, nor does he celebrate it uncritically. Instead, he warns Timothy and the church in Ephesus about the inherent danger of money as he instructs them about the true value of wealth (1 Tim 6:17-19).

Conclusion

Biblical theology seeks to understand what the Bible says about God and his creation, ordered and structured by the interpretive perspective of the biblical authors. A biblical theological reading of 1 Timothy, reveals that the church is the place of God's presence and that she should, therefore, behave responsibly. Her behavior should include contending for the truth against the lies of the enemy, praying properly as redeemed men and women, finding and following the right leaders, confessing the finished work of Christ while engaging the ongoing work of the church, consistently training oneself for godliness, honoring strangers as though they were family, and choosing contentment over covetousness.

CHAPTER 2

THE HOUSE OF GOD

In his brilliantly entertaining lecture “Lost in the Cosmos,” philosopher Peter Kreeft discusses Walker Percy’s satirical book of the same title, which purports to be “The Last Self-Help Book” that humanity will ever need. Kreeft and Percy both rightly discern that the sad existential reality of mankind is that “we are all discontent.”¹ In other words, every man, woman, and child longs for something that they do not have. This is not new news and Drs. Kreeft and Percy are not the first to offer this true diagnosis. More than a millennia has passed since Augustine articulated this same idea in his memorable confession that “our heart is restless, until it rest in Thee.”²

Need

Augustine, Kreeft, and Percy (all Catholic Christians) recognized that the source of humanity’s discontent is our separation from the presence of God. Mankind desperately longs for the intimate relationships of Eden that were lost when Adam sinned and humanity was exiled from God’s presence. Men unsuccessfully try to soothe universal discontent in a variety of ways: Amazon Prime, Facebook, and Netflix were unnecessary accoutrements to the glory of Eden. Thankfully, the situation is not hopeless. There is an answer to humanity’s problem, a solution to man’s longing, and a fulfillment to our desires. Men may be exiled from God’s presence, but that does not mean God is

¹Peter Kreeft, “Lost in the Cosmos” (lecture, C. S. Lewis Institute, 1993), accessed September 30, 2015, http://www.peterkreeft.com/audio/13_lost-in-the-cosmos.htm.

²Augustine, *The Confessions of St. Augustine*, trans. E. B. Pusey (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1996).

absent.

Main Idea

In Paul's first letter to Timothy, he acknowledges that the church is "the household of God." Paul faithfully reappropriates this very important Old Testament metaphor in order to teach that the church is the place of God's presence. Thus, the church is the true answer to humanity's discontent, because the church provides followers of Jesus with the ability to participate in the great mystery of true community with God and with each other. However, Paul warns us that the great gift of God's presence bears with it an enormous responsibility to behave appropriately.

Preview

The text for this sermon is 1 Timothy 3:14-16; several scholars note the importance of this section, and at least one recognizes it as "the heart of the epistle."³ Verse 14 places this letter in a larger context by implying Paul's absence from the church in Ephesus and indicating his desire to return. It also informs his readers that the apostle is about to reveal his purpose for writing the letter. In verse 15, Paul explains that his purpose is to instruct the church about her responsibility to behave in a manner that befits the reality of her identity. After discussing the church's identity and responsibility, verse 16 marks an abrupt change in style and extols the "mystery of godliness" via a hymn about Jesus Christ. This hymn reveals the Christological motivation and means by which the church might respect her identity and fulfill her responsibility as the place of God's presence in these last days. It seems, then, that there are three major ideas in these three short verses: Identity, Responsibility, and Mystery.

³For example, Spicq argues that the expression, "household of God," found in 1 Tim 3:15, is "the very key to the Pastorals." C. P. Spicq, *Les Epîtres Pastorales* (Paris: Librairie Lecoffre, 1947), 103. Also, Mounce titles this section of the letter as "The Heart of the Corpus." William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, WBC (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 212-32.

Context

A brief survey of Paul's historical situation will help to make sense of this letter's context. Paul has been released from his Roman imprisonment and is preparing for a fourth missionary journey.⁴ However, before the apostle can set out on this next journey he must respond to a deteriorating situation in the Ephesian church. To this end, Paul dispatches Timothy, his trusted coworker, to Ephesus. After Timothy's arrival, Paul sends a letter that will bolster the young man's authority. It is important to note that Paul was not merely a concerned Christian brother offering wise counsel from a distance. Paul was an apostolic steward of the mysteries of God who had the authority to give commands to a church whom he dearly loved.

3:15b: Identity

The text reveals that Paul clearly hopes to visit Timothy and the church in Ephesus, but he anticipates a possible delay (1 Tim 3:14). He is writing this letter so that if he is delayed, the church in Ephesus "may know how one ought to behave in the household of God" (1 Tim 3:15a). Before digging into the idea of responsibility inherent in Paul's desire for proper behavior, it would be helpful to first study the identity of the church, which Paul reveals through a series of appositive metaphors. In his book *What is Biblical Theology?*, James Hamilton explains the purpose and provenance of New Testament metaphors—like the one Paul uses here. He writes,

Following the Old Testament precedent of speaking of God's people metaphorically, Jesus and the apostles spoke of the church metaphorically. Metaphors identify things with what they are not. The point of a metaphor is to capture a truth about the thing metaphored.⁵

⁴For support of this view, see George W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1992), 17-20.

⁵James M. Hamilton Jr., *What Is Biblical Theology? A Guide to the Bible's Story, Symbolism, and Patterns* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 99.

By surveying how the house of God metaphor was used in the Old Testament, one will gain insight into the particular truth that Paul is teaching about the church through this metaphor. While it is possible that Paul is using the metaphor in a way that is not drawn from the Old Testament, it is extremely unlikely, because the apostle is so steeped in the Hebrew scriptures that its patterns, stories, and ideas pervade much of his writing—including 1 Timothy.⁶

Genesis 28 records the story of Jacob’s hasty flight to Haran, undertaken so that he might escape the murderous rage of his aggrieved older brother. While on the road Jacob, using a stone as a pillow, sleeps and dreams. In Jacob’s dream the young patriarch sees a temple-like structure upon which angels are ascending and descending.⁷ At the top of this structure stands the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who extends the promises of the Abrahamic covenant to include Jacob. Scripture records what happens next:

Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, “Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it.” And he was afraid and said, “How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.” (Gen 28:16-17)

In Genesis 28:17 the phrase אֵם-בַּיִת אֱלֹהִים (*oĩxoc3 qeooĩ* in the LXX), is used for the first time in Scripture and is translated “house of God.” As can be seen from the context, it is clear that this phrase is used to describe the place of God’s presence. Thus, one finds in this passage the birth of Paul’s metaphor.

Over time, “house of God” and the related phrase “house of the LORD” became common metaphors used throughout the Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings in

⁶Concerning the presence of the Old Testament in Paul’s works generally, see E. Earle Ellis, “Paul and His Bible,” in *Paul’s Use of the Old Testament* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1981), 10. Concerning the presence of the Old Testament in the Pastoral Epistles specifically, Philip Towner notes, “The role of the OT in its Greek translation (LXX) within these letters is greater than often is perceived. Setting aside explicit quotations and citations for the moment (often set off by introductory formula), we note that intertextual echoes of OT texts were accomplished by means of lexical choice and the repetition of thematic patterns in a degree sufficient to catch the hearers’ attention.” Philip Towner, “1-2 Timothy and Titus,” ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), loc. 34539, Kindle.

⁷For a convincing explanation of why Jacob’s ladder is better understood as a temple presented in contrast to Babel, see G. K. Beale, *The Temple and The Church’s Mission*, NSBT (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), esp. pp. 100-103.

reference to divine dwelling places like the tabernacle (Exod 23:19; 34:26; Deut 23:18; Josh 6:24; Judg 18:31; 19:18; 1 Sam 1:7, 24; 3:15; 2 Sam 12:20) and the temple (1 Kgs 3:1; 6:1, 37; 7:12, 40, 45, 48, 51; 8:10).⁸ One of the most significant of these later occurrences, for the purposes of this work, is found in the fifth chapter of Ecclesiastes. “Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. To draw near to listen is better than to offer the sacrifice of fools, for they do not know that they are doing evil” (Eccl 5:1). Just as the author of Ecclesiastes uses this metaphor to remind the Israelites that the temple is God’s house and they must behave accordingly, Paul likewise uses the metaphor to enjoin the Ephesian church to a higher level of holiness.⁹

First Timothy 3:15 isn’t the only place that Paul uses the house metaphor to describe how the church is the new temple and the dwelling place of God.¹⁰ In Paul’s letters, the apostle normally uses the word “temple” to describe the church (cf. 1 Cor 3:16-17 and 2 Cor 6:14-7:1). However, in Ephesians 2:19 the apostle tells the church in Ephesus that they are “members of the household of God.” As Paul concludes this

⁸James Hamilton’s exhaustive argument concerning God’s dwelling place in the Old Testament reveals that the presence of God in the tabernacle and the temple is a literal reality and not just a religious metaphor. James M. Hamilton Jr., *God’s Indwelling Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Old and New Testaments* NAC-SBT 1 (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2006), 34-38.

⁹While this passage does support one element of the paper’s thesis, it also contains an ostensible challenge in the very next verse. The author of Ecclesiastes seems to deny that God is present in his house when he writes, “Be not rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word before God, for God is in heaven and you are on earth. Therefore, let your words be few” (Eccl 5:2). Obviously, the fact that “God is in heaven and you are on earth” seems to challenge the claim that the house of God metaphor is primarily a referent to the place of God’s presence. This challenge may be answered by recognizing that Solomon, the author of Ecclesiastes, understood the difference between God’s transcendent omnipresence and his immanent dwelling among men. In fact, this paradox is explicitly acknowledged by Solomon and YHWH at the temple’s dedication. In his dedicatory prayer, the King says, “But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you; how much less this house that I have built!” (1 Kgs 8:27). Then, in the very next chapter, God appears to Solomon and makes him a promise. “And the Lord said to him, ‘I have heard your prayer and your plea, which you have made before me. I have consecrated this house that you have built, by putting my name there forever. My eyes and my heart will be there for all time’” (1 Kgs 9:3). Putting all of this together, it becomes clear that the Old Testament understands the house of God to be the place of God’s presence on this earth, but that it does not limit the omnipresence of God, nor does it contain the divine presence in all of its unmediated fullness.

¹⁰Nor is Paul the only New Testament author to employ the metaphor. Peter (1 Pet 2:4-5) and the author of Hebrews (Heb 3:1-6) both use the house metaphor in conjunction with ideas connected to the temple and/or the presence of God.

thought, he explicitly connects the idea of the church as God’s household with the church as the new temple and the place of God’s dwelling.

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. (Eph 2:19-22)

In light of the fact that Paul so clearly and intentionally connects the idea of God’s house with the temple and the place of God’s presence in his letter to the Ephesians, it seems likely that he would use the same metaphor in the same way when he corresponded with his young protégé who is leading the Ephesian church.¹¹

This idea is supported by the other metaphors that Paul uses in apposition to “house of God”: namely, “the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth” (1 Tim 3:15). When Paul describes the “house of God” as “the church of the living God,” he is again using an Old Testament idea with links to God’s presence.¹² This idea is clearly presented in Paul’s second letter to the Corinthian church, he writes, “For we are the temple of the living God” (2 Cor 6:16). Following this declaration of identity, Paul appeals to two Old Testament passages (Lev 26:12 and Exod 29:45) which connect the reality of God’s living presence with the responsibility of proper behavior in the church—just as he does in 1 Timothy.¹³

¹¹Concerning this passage, Schreiner writes, “The church is also conceived of as a household (Eph. 2: 19), which in the context of Eph. 2 most likely refers to the temple, . . . This household is inclusive, so that both Jews and Gentiles are citizens. The cornerstone of the house is Christ, from whom the entire house takes its shape (Eph. 2: 20), and the teaching of the apostles and the NT prophets functions as the foundation of the house. The church corporately is a ‘holy temple’ (Eph. 2: 21), the place where God specially resides with his people.” Thomas R. Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 574, Kindle.

¹²According to Marshall, “The phrase [living God] occurs in quotations of OT material (Rom 9.26 [Hos 2.1]), and can be used to emphasize God’s presence with his people (Num 14.28; Josh 3.10).” I. Howard Marshall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, ICC (London: T & T Clark International, 1999), 509.

¹³Schreiner writes, “The OT promises of the Lord dwelling with his people (Exod. 29: 45; Lev. 26: 12) through the tabernacle are now realized in the church as God’s temple. The church of the living God must not tolerate partnership with idols, for the true and living God dwells in the church, as he did in the temple under the old covenant. The temple theme confirms that the Lord did not merely come to save

Furthermore, it is likely that the next two descriptions of the church are connected to the idea of God's presence. Paul writes that the church is “a pillar and buttress of the truth.” The word translated as “buttress” by the ESV is a unique word with little attestation in any other ancient documents. Jerome translated this mysterious word as *firmamentum* in the Vulgate, providing early evidence that it was understood as “foundation.” If one accepts that Jerome’s interpretation is proper, then this descriptor is likely connected to Old Testament temple language and the idea of God’s presence through the LXX and the writings of the Qumran community.¹⁴

The word “pillar” also connects Paul’s vocabulary with the temple via 1 Kings 7: “He [Hiram] set up the pillars at the vestibule of the temple. He set up the pillar on the south and called its name Jachin, and he set up the pillar on the north and called its name Boaz” (1 Kgs 7:21). The temple’s pillars were probably meant to serve as a visual reminder of God’s faithful presence with his people from the Exodus until the present day.¹⁵ Paul likely recognizes a similar purpose for God’s newest pillar, the church. Thus, it is likely that Paul’s use of the word “pillar” refers to “a towering sign rather than a support” and is best understood as an intentional literary allusion to the pillars of the

individuals. He desired to reflect his glory through a corporate people, through the church of Jesus Christ, as the church enjoys the beauty and joy of God’s presence, as they see and know the King in his beauty. Clearly, the temple connotes the holiness of the people of God.” Thomas R. Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 574, Kindle.

¹⁴Bertil Gärtner connects this descriptor to the idea of the temple and God’s presence via the Qumran community. See Bertil Gärtner, *The Temple and the Community in Qumran and the New Testament: A Comparative Study in the Temple Symbolism of the Qumran Texts and the New Testament*, SNTSMS 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 66-71. A. T. Hanson also accepts that “foundation” is the preferable translation and connects this passage to the idea of God’s presence via 1 Kgs 8. Hanson’s argument follows Spicq, who finds a cognate of this *hapax legomenon* in a lesser known LXX translation (Codex Coislinianus) of 1 Kgs 8:13. A. T. Hanson, *Studies in the Pastoral Epistles* (London: SPCK, 1968), 5-20.

¹⁵Paul House writes, “It is not entirely clear what these pillars represent. Keil believes they symbolize the strength and stability of the kingdom of God in Israel. Gray suggests they ‘may symbolize the presence and permanence of Yahweh and the king.’ Jones combines these two ideas, for he argues that the pillars ‘symbolized the covenant between God and his people, and especially between him and the Davidic dynasty.’ Certainly worshipers would see the impressive monuments and reflect on all these ideas.” Paul R. House, *1, 2 Kings*, NAC 8 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995), 133.

temple and the pillars of fire and cloud that signified God's presence in the days of Moses (cf. Exod 13:21-22).¹⁶

According to the evangelists, it is probable that Jesus understood himself to be the true temple of God, the house of God, and the place of God's presence.¹⁷ In the opening chapter of John's gospel, Jesus reveals evidence of his divine knowledge to Nathanael, who responds to this sign with an abrupt turn to faith. The Savior replies to Nathanael by promising that the disciple "will see greater things than these" (John 1:50). Jesus then expounds on the nature of these greater things with an allusion to Genesis 28:12 that replaces the temple of Jacob's vision with the Savior himself: "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man" (John 1:51).¹⁸ Based on the way John presents Jesus' allusion to Jacob's vision, it seems likely that Jesus (and John) understand that the Christ is the dwelling place of God.

In the synoptic gospels, Jesus cleanses the temple near the end of his life and ministry (Matt 21:12-16; Mark 11:15-18; and Luke 19:45-47). In each of these accounts, Jesus overturns the tables of the moneychangers, and justifies his actions by quoting from Isaiah 56:7: "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer, but you make it a den of robbers.'" In so doing, Jesus directly challenges the temple cult and complex that has corrupted the house of God. Additionally, John records a temple cleansing near the beginning of his gospel. In John 2:13-17 Jesus zealously cleanses the temple. Then, in John 2:18-22 Jesus's actions are challenged, and the Savior replies,

¹⁶Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 515.

¹⁷The constraints of the present work require this examination of the temple in the Gospels to be excessively brief. For a more detailed treatment, see Peter Head, "The Temple in Luke's Gospel," and Bill Salier, "The Temple in the Gospel According to John," in *Heaven on Earth: The Temple in Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Simon J. Gathercole (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2004), 101-35.

¹⁸Gärtner writes, "This text has been interpreted as a Johannine exposition of Jesus' baptism, the implication being that the Spirit now rests upon Jesus instead of the temple." Gärtner, *The Temple and the Community in Qumran*, 118.

So the Jews said to him, “What sign do you show us for doing these things?” Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” The Jews then said, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you will raise it up in three days?” But he was speaking about the temple of his body.¹⁹

Jesus’s cleansing of the temple is by no means a simple text to interpret,²⁰ but it seems that the intent of Jesus’ cleansings (both the one recorded in the synoptics and the one from John’s gospel) was not to purify the old house of God, but to prophetically assert that the Messiah was the new dwelling place of God.

In summary, the phrase “house of God” was used by Jacob to describe the place of God’s presence and later became a popular name for both the tabernacle and the temple. In the gospels, Jesus’s words and actions confirmed that the temple in Jerusalem was no longer the place of God’s presence, but that he was the new dwelling place of God on earth, because he was the new house of God and the new temple. Following Christ’s death and resurrection, when Paul wrote that the church was the “household of God,” he was implying that, as such, she was also the temple of God and the dwelling place of God.²¹ The truth that the church was the temple of God was also made clear in Paul’s letters to the church in Corinth and by the appositive metaphors he used in 1 Timothy 3:15. Clearly, Paul, along with the author of Ecclesiastes, used the “house of God” metaphor as an allusion to the sacred identity of the church as the dwelling place of God and to enjoin a certain level of responsibility upon those who would enter into God’s

¹⁹Jesus’ reference to the destruction of the temple in John is most likely the source of the false testimony brought against him in Matt 26:61 and Mark 14:58.

²⁰Gärtner offers a feasible explanation of temple cleansing. He writes, “I consider it unlikely that Jesus wanted to purify the worship of the temple as it was organized at that time; his desire was to demonstrate a temple criticism in the context of the better worship of the eschatological temple (cf. Isa 61 and Jer 7).” Gärtner concludes, “Thus it seems to me that the cleansing of the temple belongs in the context of those actions and words through which the leaders of the people were informed that something new was coming. The temple building was soon to go and to be replaced by better fellowship with God.” Gärtner, *The Temple and the Community in Qumran*, 110.

²¹Hays offers criteria for identifying Old Testament allusions in the New Testament. See Richard Hays, *The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel’s Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2005). Based on these criteria, it seems reasonable to read the household of God metaphor in 1 Tim 3:15 as an intentional echo – or at least a contextually faithful reappropriation – of these (and other) Old Testament passages. The validity of this echo is strengthened by the fact that this Old Testament metaphor is also appropriated by the Qumran community, who saw themselves as the new dwelling place of God, replacing the Jerusalem temple as the true house of God.

presence. Furthermore, the reality Paul described is still in effect. In other words, the church is still the house of God; she is still the temple of God; she is still the place of God's presence in these last days.

3:15a: Responsibility

Sadly, the idea of responsible behavior in the church is too often relegated to rules about a building. When I was a child, those rules included no running in the church, no jeans on Sunday morning, and no gum in the sanctuary. A modern congregation might be more familiar with the unwritten eleventh commandment: no lattes without a lid in the newly remodeled worship area. Thankfully, these are not the sorts of things which occupy the apostle's thoughts in 1 Timothy 3:15.

For Paul, the responsibility of proper behavior is intimately connected to the reality of the church's identity as the place of God's presence.²² This should be a sobering reality for the church, because Scripture clearly reveals that the presence of God can be quite dangerous to sinful humanity.²³ Thus, it is likely that Paul is summoning the troubled Ephesian church to proper behavior because he is concerned for their well-being. Such a charitable reading of Paul's intentions flies in the face of much modern scholarship that sees the author of this letter (and his instructions) in the worst possible light.²⁴

²²Magee draws a similar conclusion about this passage. He argues that "Paul's key point in 3:14-16 is that *godly Christian practice must be consistent with the church's sacred identity and the greatness of God's revealed mystery*" (italics added). Gregory S. Magee, "Uncovering the 'Mystery' in 1 Timothy 3," *TRINJ* 29NS (2008): 255.

²³See, for instance, the tragic stories of Nadab and Abihu (Lev 10), Uzzah (2 Sam 6), and Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5).

²⁴See, for instance, the work of Margaret Davies, who believes that the pseudonymous author of 1 Timothy is guilty of committing fraud. She writes, "I have no evidence, therefore, to explain how the author reconciled his theological ethics and his actual fraud. All I can do is to appeal to the common human failing of contradiction. I think that it is bad to tell lies, but this understanding has not always prevented my doing so. Moreover, reflection is often necessary to recognize something as a lie. The author of the Pastorals may have noticed and deplored many instances of lying without recognizing his own activity as such an instance." Margaret Davies, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 116. Also see the work of A. T. Hanson, who argues that the most brilliant theological sections of this letter must have been borrowed by a pseudonymous author who "does not exhibit a genius equal to such

Until modern times, the church has largely responded to the instructions of 1 Timothy by accepting them. However, the current trend in scholarship is to deny the applicability, the propriety, or the authority of these commands.²⁵ Ultimately though, readers must understand that the instructions which Paul issues in this letter are not bound to a specific culture or situation, they are not antiquated relics of a bygone era, and they are not oppressive burdens seeking to harm certain demographics. No; these instructions are theologically grounded, culturally relevant, and lovingly protective revelations that God has graciously given to his church. They exist to protect sinful men and women from the dangerous presence of a holy God. The church needs to become aware of the reality that God is present, and she need to embrace the responsibility to behave appropriately in the presence of her Savior. Christians must understand, for their own sake and the sake of their mission, that disobedience in the presence of a holy God is a deadly thing.

3:16: Mystery

Now that Paul has established the identity of the church as the place of God's presence and called her to an appropriate level of responsibility, he turns his attention to the mystery of godliness. At the beginning of 3:16, Paul confesses that "the mystery of godliness is great," and then quotes a Christological hymn. It is possible that Paul's

insight[s]." Hanson, *Studies in the Pastoral Epistles*, 19.

²⁵This issue is most clearly seen in discussions regarding 1 Tim 2 and the role of women in the church. Some scholars argue that the applicability of these instructions be limited to the specific cultural milieu from which they originated: Linda L. Belleville, *Women Leaders and the Church: Three Crucial Questions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000), 162–80; Gordon D. Fee, "Reflections on Church Order in the Pastoral Epistles, with Further Reflection on the Hermeneutics of Ad Hoc Documents," *JETS* 28, no. 2 (June 1, 1985): 141–51; Richard Clark Kroeger and Catherine Clark Kroeger, *I Suffer Not a Woman: Rethinking 1 Timothy 2:11–14 in Light of Ancient Evidence* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1992). Others deny the propriety or authority of such commands and choose to simply reject them: Linda M. Maloney, "The Pastoral Epistles," in *Searching the Scriptures*, vol. 2, *A Feminist Commentary*, ed. Elisabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza (New York: Crossroad, 1994), 361–80; Young, *The Theology of the Pastoral Letters*, 145–47.

acknowledgment of the greatness of this mystery is a polemic against Artemis, whose worshippers were known to shout “Great is Artemis of Ephesus,” (as seen in Acts 19:28 and 34).²⁶ In effect, Paul is reminding the Ephesian Christians that God alone is great and that he has revealed his greatness via the mystery of godliness. Understanding this cryptic phrase will help the reader better understand the hymn which follows.

For many, the word *mystery* conjures up images of Sherlock Holmes sleuthing his way through a crime, but, throughout Scripture, the word mystery connotes a more theological idea. A mystery is a divine secret hidden for a time, but subsequently revealed.²⁷ Paul seems especially fond of this idea and uses the word mystery extensively.²⁸ In fact, he uses it twice in this chapter. In 1 Timothy 3:9 Paul writes about the “mystery of the faith” and in verse 16 about the “mystery of godliness.”

Paul also uses the word *godliness* several times in this letter.²⁹ Broadly speaking, godliness means “piety, reverence, loyalty [exhibited towards parents or deities], fear of God.”³⁰ James Hamilton explains how Paul uses this word throughout his letter:

The Greek word for godliness has to do with keeping an appropriate distance between oneself and others. With relationship to God, this means that a person worships well (*eusebia*, good worship) by showing proper reverence and not transgressing his holiness. With relationship to other people, godliness means

²⁶Ben Witherington III, *Letters and Homilies for Hellenized Christians*, Vol 1, *A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on Titus, 1-2 Timothy and 1-3 John* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), loc. 3237, Kindle.

²⁷For instance, Beale and Gladd write, “We will define mystery generally as the revelation of God’s partially hidden wisdom, particularly as it concerns events occurring in the ‘latter days.’” G. K. Beale and Benjamin L Gladd, *Hidden but Now Revealed: A Biblical Theology of Mystery* (Nottingham: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 20, Kindle.

²⁸See Rom 11:25; 16:25; 1 Cor 15:51; Eph 1:9; 3:3, 4, 6, 9; 5:32; 6:19; Col 1:26, 27; 2:2; 4:3; 2 Thess 2:7; 1 Tim 3:9, 16. The remaining uses are found in Revelation (1:20; 10:7; 17:5, 7).

²⁹The remainder of this paragraph draws heavily from the lexical work presented in James M. Hamilton Jr., “Godliness and Gender: Relating Appropriately to All (1 Timothy 2:9-12),” *JBMW* 15, no. 1 (Spring 2010): 27-32.

³⁰Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, rev. and ed. Frederick W. Danker, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), s.v. “εὐσέβεια.”

recognizing who we are, where we stand, how we fit with respect to other people, and then behaving appropriately.³¹

Thus, it seems that Paul is introducing this hymn, at least in part, in order to illuminate the revealed mystery of right relationships – especially as they relate to the ministry of Christ and the church.

The hymn, like many things in this letter, is a source of significant debate.³² Its poetic and theological natures combine to create a great deal of interpretive difficulty; so before proceeding, allow a warning about how this hymn should (and should not) be used. Billy Collins, a former U.S. poet laureate, once wrote a poem entitled “Introduction to Poetry” about the right and wrong ways to approach a poetic text. He writes,

I ask them to take a poem
and hold it up to the light
like a color slide

or press an ear against its hive.

I say drop a mouse into a poem
and watch him probe his way out,

or walk inside the poem’s room
and feel the walls for a light switch.

I want them to waterski
across the surface of a poem
waving at the author’s name on the shore.

But all they want to do
is tie the poem to a chair with rope
and torture a confession out of it.

They begin beating it with a hose
to find out what it really means.³³

³¹Hamilton, “Godliness and Gender,” 28.

³²For a helpful summary of the various ways that this hymn is interpreted, see Robert H. Gundry, “The Form, Meaning and Background of the Hymn Quoted in 1 Timothy 3:16,” in *Apostolic History and the Gospel: Biblical and Historical Essays Presented to F. F. Bruce*, ed. W. Ward Gasque and Ralph P. Martin (Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1970), 203-22.

³³Billy Collins, “Introduction to Poetry.” *The Apple that Astonished Paris* (Fayetteville: The University of Arkansas Press, 2006), 58.

Interpreters of this letter's poetry, should proceed with caution. If not, they may find that they have tortured a false confession out of this ancient hymn.

Even the smallest parts of this hymn are marked by controversy. In the original Greek, between the hymn proper and Paul's opening exclamation concerning the greatness of the mystery of godliness, the apostle places a relative pronoun (ὅς), which translates as "Who." The apostle's unusual use of this pronoun as a lexical transition led some ancient scribes to try and improve upon the text by replacing this tiny Greek pronoun with θεός, the Greek word for God. The outcome of this scribal modification is an explicit affirmation that God is the subject of the hymn. Thankfully, this unnecessary edit has been rejected by a majority of modern translations.³⁴ One commentator celebrates retaining the particle because it supports the fact that "the mystery of godliness is Christ himself; that godliness, hidden in ages past, has now been revealed, and is seen not to be an abstract ideal, a mere attribute of a personality, but actually a person, the Lord Jesus Christ."³⁵

Currently, the most popular interpretation of this passage is to read the hymn as three couplets containing two lines each. In favor of this reading is the argument that each of these couplets contains an interesting chiasmic structure (*a/b b/a a/b*) marked by antithesis and a spatial contrast.³⁶ Thus, the hymn would be schematized as follows:

³⁴Alford explains why the particle is more appropriate than the noun. "Let me say in passing, that it should be noticed . . . how completely the whole glorious sentence is marred and disjoined by the substitution of *Theos*. It is not the objective fact of *God being manifested*, of which the Apostle is speaking, but the life of God lived in the church. . . . The intimate and blessed link, furnished by the *os*, assuring the Church that it is not they that live, but Christ that liveth in them, is lost if we understand *mystery* merely as a fact, however important, historically revealed." Henry Alford, *The Greek Testament*, vol. 3, *The Epistles to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians, -to Timotheus, Titus, and Philemon* (Cambridge: Deighton, Bell, and Co, 1865), 333.

³⁵Martin O. Massinger, "The Mystery of Godliness," *BSac* 96, no. 384 (October-December 1939): 481.

³⁶This argument is plainly explained by J. N. D. Kelly, *The Pastoral Epistles*, BNTC (London: Continuum, 1963), 92. This is also the reading accepted by Beale and Gladd, *Hidden but Now Revealed*, 245.

a earthly “flesh” (1st line)
b heavenly “spirit” (2nd line)

b heavenly “angels” (3rd line)
a earthly “nations” (4th line)

a earthly “world” (5th line)
b heavenly “glory” (6th line)

However, the hymn might make more sense when read as two stanzas of three lines each.³⁷ For instance:

a earthly “flesh” (1st line)
b heavenly “spirit” (2nd line)
b heavenly “angels” (3rd line)

a earthly “nations” (4th line)
a earthly “world” (5th line)
b heavenly “glory” (6th line)

The latter reading seems to be the better option. It retains an interesting chiasmic structure (*a/b/b a/a/b*) as well as the antitheses and contrasts found in the aforementioned reading, but it also makes more sense chronologically and theologically. In this reading, one sees a clear distinction between the already completed work of Jesus’s earthly ministry (the incarnation, resurrection, and victorious ascension) in the first stanza and the not yet completed work of the church (proclaiming the gospel so that the elect from all nations will believe before her glorious reunion with Christ) in the second.

One thing is abundantly clear about this hymn: this text, however one chooses to dissect it, is about Jesus and his church. The first line, “He was manifested in the flesh,” is a very basic statement about Jesus’ incarnation.³⁸ The next line is less clear; “vindicated by the Spirit” could mean many things, but it is most likely a reference to Jesus’ resurrection.³⁹ The third line, “seen by angels,” is notoriously difficult, but seems

³⁷Gregory Magee tentatively asserts that the two-stanza view “has slight structural and thematic advantages.” Magee, “Uncovering the ‘Mystery,’” 263.

³⁸In support of this claim, see Gundry, “Form, Meaning and Background,” 209.

³⁹According to Marshall, “In the early church’s tradition this is associated with Jesus’ entry into the heavenly sphere by his resurrection from the dead (Dibelius-Conzelmann, 62; Klöpper, 347-53). However, the essential point is not his entry into the heavenly sphere but rather his vindication by God (Hofius, 14 n.48). By his resurrection Jesus is confirmed to be what he gave himself out to be despite his

to refer to a post-resurrection manifestation of Christ to the angels.⁴⁰ The opening line of the second stanza shifts attention to the ongoing ministry of the church. Thus, “proclaimed among the nations” is a reference to the church’s great commission. Line five reveals the ultimate outcome of the previous proclamation; Jesus was proclaimed in the nations and “believed on in the world.” Finally, the hymn ends with the clear affirmation that Christ was “taken up in glory.” This final line may very well serve as a double entendre, communicating the truth that just as Christ ascended into glory, one day the church will join him in glory. This double meaning is not surprising, given the nature of poetic discourse.⁴¹

Conclusion

In this text, Paul teaches that the church is the place of God’s presence in these last days by identifying the church as the household of God. Having identified the church thusly, Paul encourages her to behave responsibly. To paraphrase Spiderman’s Uncle Ben, “With great presence comes great responsibility.” Paul then breaks into song as he quotes from an ancient hymn. This hymn summarizes the mystery of God’s grand redemptive plan as revealed in Christ and his church. The opening line teaches that the Son of God became a man by being manifested in the flesh. He then bore upon his own body the punishment for our sin by dying on the cross. Thankfully, death did not get the last word, as Jesus was vindicated by the Spirit when he rose from the tomb. Victoriously Jesus then

purely human appearance (Holtzmann, 331).” Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 525. Contra Gundry, “Form, Meaning and Background,” 212.

⁴⁰Gundry writes, “The most common view is that line 3 refers to the exaltation of Christ over all angelic powers at his ascension and installation at God’s right hand (cf. 1 Pet. 3:22; Col. 2:15; Phil. 2:9-11; Heb. 1:3, 4; Rev. 5:8-14; Polycarp to the Philippians 2:1). If the angels to whom Christ appeared are actually or potentially hostile powers in the lower heavens through which he ascended, line 3 indicates his triumph over them.” Gundry, “Form, Meaning and Background,” 214-15. He then too quickly dismisses this common view, which seems to be the most correct meaning.

⁴¹For similar interpretations that allow reference to both the ascension and glorification of Jesus in line 6, see Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 528-29; and Gordon D. Fee, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, UTB (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 94.

appeared to the angels as the King who conquered death. Now, the church is responsible for completing the work that Jesus began. She manifests Christ in the flesh by preaching the gospel in all the world, hopeful that the nations might repent and believe, awaiting the day when she will be taken up in glory to spend eternity with her Savior.

The presence of God offers this church a sacred identity which carries with it a great responsibility to relate rightly to God and neighbor. The nature of this responsibility is a grand and glorious mystery of godliness that is being revealed by the ministry of Christ and his church. May the church honor God's presence by behaving appropriately. May she honor his presence by behaving like Jesus, rightly relating to her glorious God and the men and women whom he created in his image. Amen.

CHAPTER 3

FALSE AND TRUE

G. K. Chesterton once quipped, “The Bible tells us to love our neighbors, and also to love our enemies; probably because generally they are the same people.”¹ The universality of this truth invades even the sacred space of the church, but this should not be a surprising revelation; Jesus, himself, warned that his church would be infiltrated by wolves in sheep’s clothing and that the tares will grow alongside the wheat until the very end (Matt 7:15; 13:24-30).² Knowing this biblical truth, it is quite likely that Chesterton’s witty repartee was Timothy’s unhappy reality. In other words, the church in Ephesus was full of Timothy’s neighbors, some of whom also happened to be his enemies. Sadly, the same is possibly true of this church as well.³

Need

How should the church respond to the reality that there may be enemies in her midst? First, she must not allow a judgmental suspicion of neighbors to destroy her unity.

¹Gilbert Keith Chesterton, *The Collected Works of G. K. Chesterton: The Illustrated London News, 1908-1910* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987), 563.

²For similar promises concerning the rise of false teachers/prophets within the church, see also Matt 24:11, 24; Mark 13:22; Luke 6:26; Deut 13:1-3; Jer 14:14; 23:16; 2 Pet 2:1; 1 John 4:1.

³G. K. Beale offers a convincing biblical theological statement concerning the present and ongoing reality of the church’s end-time tribulation. He writes, “If false teaching is a part of the inaugurated end-time tribulation that continues throughout the whole epoch before Christ’s final parousia, then Paul’s prohibitions are a response not just to a local situation but rather to that situation as it is an expression of the broader end-time trial. Since the inaugurated latter-day trial means that the churches will be either affected or, at least, threatened by false teaching and deception, Paul’s prohibitions are always valid. Therefore, Paul’s prohibitions are a part of eschatological ethics pertinent to the entire church age.” G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 821.

Neither should the church bury her head in the sand. Instead, she should lovingly wield the truth as a weapon against the lies of the enemy.

Main Idea

In 1 Timothy 1, Paul teaches the church and her leaders to love her enemies by wielding the truth as she fights a good fight against that which is false. In Timothy's particular case, this means following Paul's example of fighting the false teachers' silly speculations and their unlawful use of the law with faithful stewardship and the truth of the gospel. In our case, this also means following Paul's example and fighting the lies of the enemy with God's truth.

Preview

The text for this sermon is the opening chapter of Paul's first letter to Timothy. There are five sections within this chapter. The letter begins with a standard salutation (1:1-3). Following this greeting, Paul explains the reason why he sent Timothy to Ephesus and clarifies that his young coworker's responsibility to set things right (1:4-7). Once Timothy's role has been made clear, Paul attacks the foolish teaching of the false teachers regarding the law of God (1:8-11). The apostle then highlights the difference between the false teaching and the true gospel by sharing his exemplary experience (1:12-17). Finally, Paul concludes this section of the letter on a serious note by reminding Timothy of his charge and of the heavy cost of disobedience (1:18-20).

The five sections within this passage largely correspond to the main points of this sermon. First, there are wolves in the Ephesian flock. Second, Timothy is charged with stopping these wolves by being a faithful steward of God's plan in God's house. Third, these false teachers are lost in silly speculation and the unlawful use of the law. Fourth, Paul's story is an example of God's gracious gospel that saves even the most ardent enemies. Finally, this situation is deadly serious.

Context

The contextual realities behind Paul's first letter to Timothy become evident within the first three verses of this chapter. Clearly, Paul has dispatched Timothy to Ephesus because the Ephesian church is in theological trouble: "As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine" (1:3). Unfortunately, it is quite possible that this doctrinal struggle was not entirely unexpected. To support this claim, the origin story of the Ephesian church can be found in the book of Acts (18:18-20:38).

According to Luke, the Apostle Paul and two coworkers, Priscilla and Aquilla, arrive in Ephesus after leaving Corinth (Acts 18:18). Paul soon departs from Ephesus, but Priscilla and Aquilla stay behind in order to establish the church (Acts 18:19-21). Some time later, a Jewish man named Apollos arrives and begins preaching about Jesus (Acts 18:24). After hearing his message, Priscilla and Aquilla realize that he is somewhat confused concerning the baptism of John and the baptism of the Holy Spirit (18:25); so, the couple begins to teach him more fully the things of Jesus (18:26).

Following these events, Paul returns to Ephesus and discovers the same theological confusion among some of the believers (Acts 19:1-7). At this point, Paul chooses to stay and minister in Ephesus. God greatly blesses his ministry during this time as the gospel is preached with great power and to great effect (Acts 19:8-10). Unfortunately, this revival causes a great uproar (Acts 19:21-41); when things finally settle down, Paul realizes that it is time for him to depart from Ephesus (Acts 20:1). Several months later, on his way to Jerusalem, the apostle arranges to have a final conversation with the Ephesian elders, who travel to meet him in Miletus (Acts 20:16-17). During this very emotional goodbye, Paul informs the church that tough times are on their horizon: "I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not

sparing the flock; and from your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things to draw away the disciples after them” (Acts 20:29-30).⁴

1:1-2: The Salutation

The letter begins with a standard epistolary greeting, a New Testament version of “Dear Timothy,” which explains Paul’s apostleship as a divine command requiring obedience. Emphasizing the authoritative nature of his divine calling, may be Paul’s way of juxtaposing his ministry, which originated in God’s command, with that of the false teachers who entered the ministry according to their own base desires. Paul also refers to God as Savior and to Christ Jesus as our hope, which may feel out of place to the ears of a modern church. However, it is a good reminder that the Trinitarian God is the source of salvation; Jesus’ mission and ministry were not (and are not) solo projects. Paul then describes Timothy, the letter’s recipient, as his “true child in the faith” (1 Tim 1:2) This reveals the depth of love that permeates the relationship between Paul and Timothy. However, it also highlights the significant difference in authority that exists between Paul, the apostle, and Timothy, the faithful coworker.⁵ Finally, Paul offers a short blessing that “God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord” would grant Timothy (and the Ephesian church) “grace, mercy and peace” (1 Tim 1:2) This is not a rote prayer, but a true request made by the apostle on behalf of a dear friend in a difficult situation.

1:3-7: Timothy’s Responsibility

This situation in Ephesus is difficult because Paul’s words concerning the Ephesian elders have come true. For this reason, the apostle commands Timothy to go

⁴According to Mounce, “There are so many hints in this passage concerning the later Ephesian situation reflected in the PE that either Paul was prophetic or the PE were written in light of Acts (or vice versa).” William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, WBC 46 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), lii.

⁵On the implications and meaning of the Father/Child theme in this letter, see Jerome D. Quinn and William Wacker, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy: A New Translation with Notes and Commentary*, ECC (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2000), 55-56.

handle the situation. The letter implies that Timothy is operating with the fullness of Paul's apostolic authority. Therefore, Timothy is not asked to entreat or instruct the false teachers; he is told to “charge” (1 Tim 1:3) them in order to make them stop teaching different things. The fact that Paul dispatches Timothy with such a command hints at the depth of concern that Paul has for the Ephesian church and her errant leadership. The difficulty of Timothy's mission further reveals the great deal of respect that Paul has for this young man.⁶

Paul uses a single Greek word, ἐτεροδιδασκαλέω, that literally translates as “different teaching” (1 Tim 1:3) to sum up what the false teachers are doing.⁷ In just a few chapters, the apostle will describe the enemy's “different teaching” as that which “does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness” (1 Tim 6:3). The exact nature of this heretical teaching has been extensively debated by scholars for centuries, but no one knows exactly what the Ephesian heresy is, because Paul does not define it.⁸ The apostle does, however, characterize the teaching and describe its negative results.

Paul disparagingly refers to the Ephesian teaching as “myths and genealogies” (1 Tim 1:4). Taken together, these terms reveal the character and content of the false teaching. The categorization of the heresy as a myth reveals it to be an essentially false and unworthy system of belief. The further designation of genealogies implies the content of the false teaching. While some argue that the mention of genealogies reveals a

⁶Paul's respect for Timothy is revealed by the extent of their working relationship as seen in the New Testament. For a brief overview of this relationship, see George W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1992), 6-8.

⁷Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, rev. and ed. Frederick W. Danker, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), s.v. “ἐτεροδιδασκαλέω.” Also, Karl Heinrich Rengstorf, “διδάσκω, κτλ.,” in TDNT, ed. Gerhard Friedrich, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1968), 2:135-65.

⁸For a fair treatment of the heresy that does not overreach the evidence, see I. Howard Marshall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, ICC (London: T & T Clark International, 1999), 46-51.

connection to gnostic thought, it seems more likely that it is aligned with the Jewish myths that Paul condemns in his letter to Titus (Titus 1:14).

The outcome of the enemy's different teaching is endless "speculation" (1 Tim 1:4). The nature of Paul's language forces readers to interpret this phrase pejoratively. Paul is not happy with what is passing for religious discourse in Ephesus these days. The false teachers are reveling in the types of arguments, questions, and conversations that never arrive anywhere. However, one should not read Paul's condemnation of these fruitless discussions as an authoritarian fundamentalism that does not allow questions which seek clarity. Paul is not denying the Ephesian church the right to explore theology. The apostle is simply condemning silly speculations that never arrive at a conclusion and, thus, create more questions than answers.

After this brief characterization of the false teaching, Paul describes what the false teachers are neglecting and, by implication, what Timothy's instructions should promote: "the stewardship from God that is by faith" (1 Tim 1:4).⁹

The first word in the phrase, *οἰκονομία* (translated as stewardship) is another example of household language.¹⁰ Just as the household language of 1 Timothy 3 bore connections to the temple language of the Old Testament, so too does the language of this passage.¹¹ In the LXX of Isaiah 22, *οἰκονομία* is used in a narrative that bears striking similarities to the situation addressed in Paul's letter to Timothy. In Isaiah 22:15-25, the prophet is told by God to condemn Shebna, a wicked steward over God's house, and

⁹The importance of this phrase is recognized by several scholars. See especially Luke Timothy Johnson, "Oikonomia Theou: The Theological Voice of 1 Timothy from the Perspective of Pauline Authorship," *HBT* 21, no. 2 (1999): 87–104; and Luke Timothy Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 35A (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), esp 147-53; also Philip Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2006).

¹⁰BDAG, s.v. "οἰκονομία."

¹¹For support of this claim, see J. Reumann, "OIKONOMIA: Terms in Paul in Comparison with Lucan Heilsgeschichte," *NTS* 13 (1966-67): 162

prophesy that Eliakim will replace him. Isaiah then promises that God will give Shebna's οἰκονομία to Eliakim (Isa 22:21). In both the Isaiah and the Timothy passage, one sees a situation in which a wicked steward in the house of God is to be replaced by an obedient steward who manages God's house faithfully.

Based on the way οἰκονομία is used throughout Scripture, it clearly has more than one possible meaning. The primary meaning of οἰκονομία is (1) "the office of household administration and the discharge of this office;" however, it could also mean (2) the "plan of salvation," "administration of salvation," "order of salvation."¹² Because Paul himself uses the word in both ways, there is some debate about which of these meanings is intended by the apostle in this passage.¹³ Convincing arguments have been put forward that solve this dilemma by reading the phrase as a double entendre.¹⁴ In other words, Paul means both meanings. The apostle is instructing Timothy to act as a household manager, a steward, over the house of God and to replace the endless speculation of the false teachers with a faithful understanding of God's plan of salvation.

In the next verse Paul describes the way in which Timothy should go about his task: "The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith" (1 Tim 1:5). In other words, Timothy is going to Ephesus so that he can love his enemies. Paul knows that the only kind of love qualified for such a difficult undertaking is divine in nature, so he reminds Timothy and the church in Ephesus that

¹²O. Michel, "οἰκονομία," in TDNT, 5:151-53.

¹³In 1 Cor 9:17 Paul writes that God has entrusted him with a "stewardship," and in 4:1 he mentions that he and Apollos are "stewards of the mysteries of God." In Col 1:25 Paul acknowledges that he became a minister of the church "according to the stewardship from God." Writing to the church in Ephesus (the same church where Timothy has been sent), he uses οἰκονομία to refer to God's plan (Eph 1:10). In these last two references, it seems that Paul is no longer using the phrase in reference to the office, authority, or responsibility of a steward (as he did in his first letter to the Corinthian church), but in reference to God's plan of salvation and its outworking in human history.

¹⁴See Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 75ff.; also Moule makes a similar argument concerning Colossians and Philemon. C. F. D. Moule, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Colossians and to Philemon*, CGTC (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957).

this confrontation is not motivated by pride, evil desires, or hypocrisy. Instead, Timothy's love is to be marked by purity, goodness, and sincerity.

By "pure heart" (1 Tim 1:5), Paul is likely making a theological reference to a heart that has been cleansed by the new covenant blood of Jesus Christ.¹⁵ Likewise, when Paul exhorts Timothy to have a "good conscience" (1 Tim 1:5), he is not promoting the moralistic therapy of Jiminy Cricket. Instead, he is picturing the sanctifying work of Christ's new covenant which redeems a man's conscience. For Paul, the opposite of a good conscience is not an evil conscience, but a "seared" conscience (1 Tim 4:2). Normally in modern America, searing refers to the cooking of meat, but this word had a very different meaning for Paul. Paul's meaning would be better served if translated with an English word like "branded;" to brand something is to mark it in order to signify ownership.¹⁶ So a bad conscience is one which belongs to Satan, but a good conscience is that has been freed from Satan's grip and belongs to the Savior. Finally, when Paul mentions a "sincere faith" (1 Tim 1:5), he uses ἀνυπόκριτος, a word which literally means a not-hypocritical faith.¹⁷ Thus, Paul is both exhorting Timothy to display a faith that is genuine, and he is condemning the hypocritical machinations of the false teachers and their cauterized consciences.

¹⁵In Ezek 36, the prophet seems to connect the New Covenant promise cleansing with the promise of a new heart. "I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh" (Ezek 36:25-26). This same dynamic is seen in David's plea for a clean heart in Ps 51. In Acts 15, Peter explains to the Jerusalem Council that God "made no distinction between us [Jews] and them [Gentiles], having cleansed their hearts by faith" (Acts 15:9). Confer also the reference to "hearts" which have been "sprinkled clean" in Heb 10:19-25.

¹⁶According to Schneider "At 1 Tim. 4:2 the false teachers are described as men who have been branded in their consciences, i.e., who bear the mark of slaves. The meaning is that they are in bondage to secret sin. Proclaiming a doctrine which makes strong ascetic demands, they are themselves controlled by self-seeking and covetousness. They are secretly the slaves of satanic and demonic powers which make them their instruments. In the background stands the custom of branding slaves and criminals. Among the Greeks branding was mainly a punishment for runaway slaves. But at his own whim the owner could punish other offences in the same way. The mark was usually put on the forehead with an iron." J. Schneider, "καυστηριάζομαι" in TDNT, 3:644-45.

¹⁷BDAG, s.v. "ἀνυπόκριτος."

After describing the pure heart, good conscience, and sincere faith which motivates Timothy's ministry, Paul accuses his enemies of "swerving from these" and wandering "away into vain discussion" (1 Tim 1:6). The apostle then accuses the false teachers of both arrogance and ignorance after he mentions their inappropriate desire to be "teachers of the law" even though they do understand "the things about which they make confident assertions" (1 Tim 1:7). It seems that Paul is trying to establish that there exist major differences between Timothy and the false teachers. One of those differences is love; another is truth.

In summary, these opening verses reveal that Paul is sending a letter to the house of God in Ephesus for Timothy, who is there at the apostle's direct command to lovingly serve as God's steward. The reason for this command is the sad state of affairs in the local church. Wolves who desire to be "teachers of the law" have arisen, and are attacking the Ephesian flock with false and different teachings focused on "myths and genealogies." These pseudo-religious musings are dangerous because they are unloving and they engender nothing but confusion and "endless speculation." Timothy's responsibility is to lovingly stop the speculation of these teachers by being a faithful steward of God's plan in God's house.

1:8-11: The Enemy's Folly

Having just condemned his enemies for their desire to be "teachers of the law," Paul now wants to assure Timothy (and the Ephesian church) that the fault lies with the false teachers and not with the law.¹⁸ Paul puns, "Now we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully" (1 Tim 1:8). But, what exactly does Paul mean by a lawful use of the

¹⁸Several commentators rightly discern that Paul is talking about the Mosaic Law specifically in this passage; see Johnson, *First and Second Letters to Timothy*, 175; also Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 374-75. Contra William Barclay who interprets law as pertaining to a generic moral code. William Barclay, *The Letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, 3rd ed., The New Daily Study Bible (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 39-41.

law? First, he means that the law is inherently good.¹⁹ Secondly, Paul is teaching that the law is good only so long as it is used in accordance with its original purpose. In other words, Paul is saying that the law is good as long as it is used to lead sinners to their savior, Jesus Christ, not toward endless speculations.²⁰

Having condemned the wrong use of the law by the false teachers, Paul continues his explanation of the law's proper use with a vice list that teaches who the law is intended for. Paul's vice list is very interesting; for starters, it lists sinners, not sins.²¹ In other words, it condemns "murderers" instead of just murder. Also, the list seems to bear a striking similarity to the Decalogue (see table 1), which implies that it is not simply a random catalog of sins.

The correspondence between Paul's list and the Ten Commandments begins with Paul's reference to "the lawless and disobedient." These offenders are grouped together because they refuse to recognize any authority other than their own. Thus, they invest themselves with god-like status and stand guilty of breaking the first commandment, which prohibits having any other gods before Yahweh. Paul then turns his attention to "the ungodly and sinners," which is another way of referring to idolaters who break the second commandment.²² The third and fourth commandments prohibit taking

¹⁹Paul also acknowledges the inherent goodness of the law in Rom 7, esp 7:12, 14, and 16.

²⁰Thomas Lea, explains this passage clearly. "What is the right use of the law? . . . First, the Bible resembles a locked door to restrain individuals from trespassing onto the wrong territory (Rom 7:7; Ps 19:13). Second the law resembles a mirror to reveal sin and lead us to Christ (Rom 3:19-20; Gal 3:24). Third, the law serves as a rule and guide to point out the works that please God (Rom 13:8-10). The errorists whom Paul was addressing did not know the needed restraint, a mirror for their sins, or a guide in life. They used the law as a launchpad to turn out spellbinding tales about ancestors and thereby robbed the law of its convicting power. If these teachers had used the law as a means of leading their hearers to Jesus, that would have been fine with Paul." Thomas D. Lea, *1 and 2 Timothy*, NAC 34 (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1992), 71.

²¹This is in keeping with the way that the Old Testament explains the law in the Torah. According to Knight, "Furthermore, that some, indeed most, of the sins are stated in aggravated forms leads one to Exodus 21:15ff (and elsewhere) where the commandments of Exodus 20 are specifically applied and worked out. . . . By using these aggravated forms from Exodus 21, Paul may be showing the false teachers and the church that when the OT applied and worked out the principles of the law, it did so in this very specific way of dealing with people's sins." Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 83.

²²According to Knight, the second commandment which prohibits idolatry corresponds to Paul's mention of "sinners" because this word is connected to the idea of idolatry in the

Table 1. Comparison of Exodus and 1 Timothy

	<i>The Commandments in Exodus</i>	<i>The Commandment Breakers in 1 Timothy</i>
Offenses against God	Prohibition against other gods	The lawless and disobedient
	Prohibition against idolatry	The ungodly and sinners
	Prohibition against taking God's name in vain	The unholy
	Command to honor the Sabbath	The profane
Offenses against Man	Command to honor mother and father	Those who strike fathers and mothers
	Prohibition against murder	The murderers
	Prohibition against adultery	The sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality
	Prohibition against stealing	The enslavers
	Prohibition against bearing false witness	The liars, perjurers
	Prohibition against coveting	Whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine

God's name in vain and failing to keep the Sabbath holy, respectively. Those who fail to keep either of these commandments could be classified as "unholy and profane." These first four commandments are commonly classified as offenses against God, which may be why Paul uses more generic descriptions for the law breakers in this section of the vice list.

New Testament. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 84.

In the case of commandments 5-9, Paul's generic descriptions give way to more specific condemnations. It seems evident that "those who strike their fathers and mothers" is an extreme form of breaking the fifth commandment to honor your parents. The connection between "murderers" and the sixth commandment, "thou shall not kill," is obvious. The seventh commandment prohibits adultery, which corresponds to Paul's condemnation of "the sexually immoral" and "men who practice homosexuality." The apostle's reference to "enslavers" could also be translated as "kidnappers" or even "procurers." Thus it corresponds to the eighth commandment: "You shall not steal." The prohibition against "bearing false witness" connects to both "liars" and "perjurers" in Paul's list. There is not an exact correspondence in Paul's list to the tenth commandment, but the apostle completes his list with a "catch-all" phrase ("whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine") which would include coveting.²³

To summarize, Paul is laying bare the enemy's folly. These false teachers are both ignorant and arrogant, and Paul condemns them and their unlawful use of the law. Paul believes that the law is good, as long as it is used in the way that God intended for it to be used.²⁴ That means the law should be used to reveal sin, but not to redeem sinners. The redemption of sinners requires more than a rule book. Redemption requires "the gospel of the glory of the blessed God" (1 Tim 1:11), which Paul has experienced in an exemplary fashion.

²³Towner notes that this omission is not unusual in Paul's vice lists and may be explained by the more general nature of coveting. See Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 129. Knight offers several explanatory proposals for this absence. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 87.

²⁴A great deal of debate surrounds Paul's theology of the law. Towner effectively reveals that this theological debate has very little to do with the passage at hand. He writes, "It need only be said that this is a limited discussion of the law's function in relation to determining what is morally right and wrong. . . . The law as a topic is not central to this letter; where it is briefly under the microscope, the point of comparison is Romans 7, which shares an interest in its moral usefulness. Once this correspondence is seen, it is unnecessary to differentiate this positive evaluation of the law from the similar understanding of the law that occurs in Romans." Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 123. However, for further study of Paul's theology of the law, see Jason C. Meyer, *The End of the Law: Mosaic Covenant in Pauline Theology*, NAC-SBT 6 (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2009).

1:12-17: Paul's Example

Having dealt with issues concerning the Mosaic law, Paul now explains the gospel which the false teachers have neglected. Paul does not, however, launch into a didactic theological explanation of the *ordo salutis* or the competing theories of the atonement.²⁵ Instead, he tells a story, his story, about Jesus. There is a point of application here for the church: Follow Paul's example and tell your story! If Jesus has turned you from life to death, from seed of the serpent to seed of the women, then you have a story that is worth telling. Make Jesus the star of your story and tell it over-and-over-and-over, and over again.

Paul begins his story by recounting his gratitude for Jesus, who "judged me faithful, appointing me to his service" (1 Tim 1:12). The reason that Paul is so grateful for his call to ministry is found at the beginning of verse 13: "though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent." Paul understands that he was an enemy of the gospel; he was a false teacher who unlawfully used the law. Still, God saved him; in his own words: "But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus" (1 Tim 1:13b-14). Paul is not trying to say that he somehow deserved mercy because of his ignorance. In fact, that notion seems to be the opposite of what he is saying in this passage. Instead, Paul is likely referencing the difference between those sins which Scripture refers to as intentional, or high-handed, with those sins that are unintentional (cf. Num 15:27-31).²⁶ Paul is simply sharing the story of his salvation, a good paraphrase

²⁵This sentence is not meant to denigrate the validity and usefulness of such theological discussions, but to emphasize the importance of testimony within the modern church.

²⁶Marshall seems to agree with these claims. He writes, "The sinfulness of the pre-enlightened apostle's persecution of the church is not downplayed here in the least – on the contrary it serves to heighten the response of wonder and thankfulness at the experience of grace. Paul's actions . . . were done in unbelief. . . . The heretics, however, are depicted as having been enlightened and having chosen to reject the faith . . . which may not put them beyond the reach of forgiveness." Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 393-94.

that captures Paul's meaning might be: "I was an evil and ignorant sinner, but God graciously saved me through Jesus."

In the next verse, Paul explains the reality that lies behind his redemption: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Tim 1:15b). Paul precedes this statement with the words: "The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance."²⁷ Paul concludes verse 15 with the acknowledgment that he is the "foremost" of sinners. This is not false humility on the apostle's part. In modern parlance, the world would refer to Paul's pre-conversion activity as terrorism. He was a fundamental religious zealot who was involved in the martyrdom and imprisonment of the early church. But, Paul recognizes that his great sin is a testimony to God's greater grace. In other words, Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, even the really and truly terrible ones.

Paul also recognizes that his status as "foremost" sinner makes him an example for others who may fear that they lie beyond the reach of God's love. Paul writes, "But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those were to believe in him for eternal life" (1 Tim 1:16). This verse begins with the same phrase found in the middle of verse 13, "But I received mercy because I" In verse 13, Paul is looking back at his own life and marveling that God would save such a sinner. In verse 17, Paul uses the same phrase, but now he is looking forward to the effect that God's salvation of such a sinner will have on those who hear his story.²⁸ Paul is so amazed by how God is using him and the story of his salvation that he breaks into a doxology.²⁹ Paul writes, "To the King of the ages,

²⁷This formulaic introduction is one of the unique elements in Paul's pastoral letters. For further study, see George Knight III, *The Faithful Sayings in the Pastoral Letters* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979).

²⁸The distinction between a forward look and a backward look is from Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 401.

²⁹This is not unusual for Paul, whose theology often gives way to doxology (Rom 1:25; 9:5; 11:33-36; 16:25-27; Gal 1:4-5; Eph 3:20-21; Phil 4:20; 1 Tim 6:15-16; 2 Tim 4:18).

immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen” (1 Tim 1:17). This impromptu moment of praise highlights the real wonder with which the apostle apprehends the gospel. For Paul, the truth of Jesus Christ is not some doctrine to be played with. It is the difference between life and death.

1:18-20: The Cost of Disobedience

This final section begins with a reminder that Timothy is in Ephesus because he has been entrusted with a charge to stop the false teachers. The idea of trust is conveyed by *παρατίθημι*, a Greek word which literally means to “place before or beside.”³⁰ It is used by Paul in 1 Corinthians to refer to food that has been “set before” men at a meal (1 Cor 10:27). However, it may also have a more serious usage. From the cross, Jesus uses this word when he “commits” his spirit before God: “Father into your hands I commit my spirit” (Luke 23:46). Again in Luke, Jesus uses this same word when he speaks about a wise and faithful steward who has been “entrusted” with a great responsibility (Luke 12:48). Arguably, Paul, in this passage, is using this word in this more serious Lukan fashion.³¹ Thus, he is reminding Timothy that he has been entrusted with the great responsibility of being a faithful and wise steward over the house of God who stays prepared for the Lord’s return.

The reason that Paul is able to trust Timothy with such an important charge is because of “the prophecies previously made about” this young man. Obviously, Paul has not just dispatched Timothy to Ephesus as an act of nepotism. Instead, this verse indicates that there has indeed been some confirmation by the spirit of Timothy’s role in the Ephesian situation. It is quite likely that the prophecies which Paul refers to are those he mentions in chapter 4 of this letter: “Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given

³⁰BDAG, s.v. “*παρατίθημι*.”

³¹Quinn and Wacker acknowledge that the sense with which *παρατίθημι* is used in Luke “coincides with that in the PE.” Quinn and Wacker, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, 141.

you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you” (1 Tim 4:14).

Unfortunately, Scripture does not offer any more details on these prophecies. Thus, the modern reader may only infer the most basic fact that Timothy has been set apart by the will of God to handle the charge given him by the apostle.

Timothy’s ability to handle this situation will be strengthened in the difficult times by remembering and trusting these prophecies. For, it is “by them” that Timothy will “fight the good fight” (1 Tim 1:18 KJV). With this phrase, Paul exposes the confrontational nature of Timothy’s charge. This young man has been called by God, and charged by Paul, to lovingly steward God’s house, but this charge will require confrontation. There are enemies in Ephesus, and they will not simply disappear upon Timothy’s arrival. In order to stop the false teachers, Timothy is going to have to fight against that which false, but he is going to have to fight a good fight. In modern combat sports when two opponents meet in the center of the octagon, the referee exhorts them to fight a “good, clean fight.” In essence, that is what Paul is doing here for Timothy. The apostle is saying something like this:

Timothy, there are enemies in Ephesus. They are hurting people, and it is your job to stop them. The reason that you are going to stop them is because you love them and you love the people they are hurting. This fight isn’t going to be easy, but God has set you apart for this, and I trust that you can do it. But remember, I want a good, clean fight.

Paul then describes a good fighter as a man who fights while “holding faith and a good conscience” (1 Tim 1:19). Interestingly, these two descriptors of a good fighter are mentioned earlier in the passage as characteristics from which the false teachers have swerved (cf. 1 Tim 1:6). It seems that Paul is warning Timothy against fighting like a false teacher. They may have swerved away from “a good conscience and a sincere faith,” but Timothy must not. Timothy must hold fast because the price of letting go is simply too high. According to Paul, the price paid by those who reject faith and a good conscience is a devastating “shipwreck of their faith” (1 Tim 1:19). This terminology may be very personal to Paul, who has lived through a great many ordeals,

including a shipwreck. Paul is not content to let this serious warning exist as an abstract or idle threat. So, he mentions two men, presumably known by Timothy and the church in Ephesus, who have already shipwrecked their faith.³²

According to Paul, Hymenaeus and Alexander are guilty of the type of offense which he wants Timothy to avoid. The consequence of their action is that Paul has “handed [them] over to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.” This is a terrifying, but not unprecedented, turn of events. In his dealing with a discipline issue within the church at Corinth, Paul commanded those believers to follow his lead and “deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh” (1 Cor 5:5). These statements reveal the seriousness of sin. The church should be filled with men and women who have stopped trying to manage their sin and have begun mortifying it. Sin is a deadly danger, and an unrepentant heart might very well remove anyone from the presence of God and place that brother or sister under the power of Satan. However, the repentant need not despair. In both instances of this severe disciplinary action, the desired result is restoration – not retribution. Hymenaeus and Alexander have been handed over to Satan so “that they may learn not to blaspheme” (1 Tim 1:20). Paul’s reason is similar in the case of the Corinthian brother, who was delivered to Satan “so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord” (1 Cor 5:5). Paul does not delight in discipline; he rejoices in repentance.

Conclusion

Clearly, Paul cares about this Ephesian church. He may not be surprised by the difficulties which they face, but neither is he indifferent. Paul recognizes that his final words to the Ephesian elders have come true. There are wolves within the Ephesian flock.

³²The name Hymenaeus also occurs in 2 Tim 2:18. Towner accepts that these two names likely refer to one false teacher. Concerning Hymenaeus he writes, “From the latter reference, it seems that, despite the action taken against him, he apparently continued to operate in opposition to the Pauline mission in the later setting reflected in 2 Timothy.” Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 160. There are four references to Alexander in the NT, and all are connected to Ephesus (Acts 19:33 [twice], 2 Tim 4:14). Again, Towner sees a “plausible” connection between the Alexander mentioned here and the one mentioned in 2 Timothy. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 160.

Paul, therefore, dispatches Timothy, a young man set apart by God and trusted by the apostle, to handle the situation. Timothy's main responsibility is to stop the false teachers by lovingly and faithfully stewarding God's plan in God's house. This stewardship begins by confronting the enemy's unlawful use of the law with the truth of God's glorious gospel. This truth is clearly seen in Paul's own testimony. Paul, the terrorist-turned-apostle, understands that he is an example of God's glorious grace. He also understands that this situation is serious. This is not simply a benign disagreement that requires tolerance and charity. This is an epic battle between truth and falsehood that Timothy must engage. This young man needs to fight the good fight so that he can protect both himself and his hearers. In other words, Timothy needs to love his enemies by wielding the truth as he fights a good fight against that which is false, and he needs to prepare the Ephesian church to continue that fight in his absence. May God also arm today's church with the truth and prepare her to fight a good fight against that which is false.

CHAPTER 4

PRAYER AND PRAY-ERS

While working on my master’s degree at Southwestern Seminary, I was required to take a class on spiritual formation. The class had a reputation: it would be a waste of time. After all, most seminary students had been following Jesus for quite a while; many had even worked in ministry. Clearly, a class on basic spiritual disciplines was too elementary. Even the professors knew of the class’s reputation; thankfully, some of them worked hard to make it a worthwhile experience.

I had just such a professor. His plan to redeem this class began with humbling his students, reminding us that we were not yet so advanced in the mysteries of God that we need not continue to develop the elementary disciplines – like prayer. Prayer was the topic of the first plenary session. Dozens of men and women sat in the auditorium as the professor took his place at the front of the room. He began that class by delivering a hard truth: too many Christians (including the spiritually mature students in that room) were very bad pray-ers.¹

He explained that this scenario was not entirely the fault of the individual. Too many evangelical churches were so busy getting people to pray that they forgot to teach people how to pray. Thus, we end up with a variety of bad prayer habits. He enumerated several of these habits. First, there are the name-drops, these prayers are too generously peppered with divine names or titles. Then, there are the thesaurus prayers, which are marked by the overuse of synonyms, like someone asking God to “lead, guide, and

¹Throughout this paper, the word “pray-ers” will be used in reference to people who are praying; the word without the dash (prayer, prayers) will be used to describe the actual prayer.

direct” their path. The professor presented several more humorous caricatures (e.g., the King James prayers, full of “Thee” and “Thou,” and the religious cliché prayers, which request things like “hedges of protection”), then he taught us how to pray.

Need

Unfortunately, totally depraved humans are not born with the ability to pray rightly. Thus, when someone becomes a follower of Jesus he must learn to pray. In his book on prayer, Tim Keller shares the struggles that novelist Flannery O’Connor had with prayer. At one point, O’Connor recorded in her prayer journal a thought that many of us have probably shared: “Can’t anyone teach me how to pray?”² The answer to that question is a resounding, “Yes.” God, through the biblical authors, can teach his church how to pray.

Main Idea

In fact, in 1 Timothy 2, Paul teaches the church in Ephesus both the priority and the propriety of prayer. In other words, the apostle commands the church to pray. Then, he instructs the church regarding the right way to pray.

Preview

This is a relatively straightforward passage on prayers and pray-ers. In the first half of this passage, Paul focuses on the priority of prayer. The apostle begins by issuing a command, then he justifies this command. The second half of the passage deals with the proper and improper ways to be a pray-er. In this section, the apostle gets more personal as he moves beyond the general command and issues specific instructions, first to men and then to women.

²Timothy Keller, *Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God* (New York: Penguin, 2014), 12, Kindle.

Context

In the middle of Paul's first letter to Timothy, the apostle states his purpose for writing: "I am writing . . . so that you know how to behave in the household of God." In the letter's opening chapter, Paul reveals the immediate context of the Ephesian situation: there were false teachers, and they needed to be dealt with. So, Timothy was sent to Ephesus to lovingly confront these enemies by replacing the unhelpful speculations of the false teachers with the true stewardship of God's house. Now, in the second chapter, the apostle offers the first of several sections devoted to instructions about proper behavior.

2:1-7: The Priority of Prayer

Paul begins the second chapter of his letter to Timothy with a phrase that reveals the priority of prayer in the life of the church: "First of all." This Greek phrase, *πρῶτος πᾶς*, can be used to indicate either first in importance or first in sequence.³ In this context, either interpretation seems to emphasize the priority of prayer because the item mentioned first in a sequence is usually the first in importance as well.⁴

Having sounded this note of importance, Paul continues with a command to pray: "First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving be made for all people" (1 Tim 2:1). The Greek word, *παρακαλέω*, translated "I urge" is also used in 1:3 when Paul commands his young coworker to remain in Ephesus, but here it is used to address the whole Ephesian church, not just Timothy.⁵ Following his

³BDAG, s.v. "πρῶτος." Johnson argues that this phrase "means here simply the first in a series, not necessarily that which is most important." Luke Timothy Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 35A (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), 188. Mounce, on the other hand, argues that this phrase "should be understood as first in importance and not as first in time;" accordingly, his translation reads: "above everything else." William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, WBC (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 78.

⁴After arguing that the predominate Pauline usage of this phrase refers to the first in a sequence, Knight offers the following conclusion: "In the light of Paul's predominant usage, we should probably understand the word in a sequential sense here, but with the qualification that what is placed first in sequence may be so placed because it is also considered first in importance." George W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1992), 114. Marshall arrives at a similar conclusion. I. Howard Marshall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, ICC (London: T & T Clark International, 1999), 418-19.

⁵According to Quinn and Wacker, "The shift in tense suggests that one is moving from *ad hoc*

command, Paul offers a fourfold description of prayer. It is most likely that the apostle uses these four terms in this way to “characterize [prayer] in its totality and emphasize the scope of the responsibility which has ‘all people’ in view.”⁶

First Timothy 2:2 continues the thought of the previous verse by designating a particular subset of “all people” for whom prayers must be offered: “for kings and all who are in high positions.” It should not be surprising that Paul encourages the Ephesian church to pray for her leaders. In Romans 13:1-7, Paul teaches that God has given those leaders their positions of authority and that Christians should be subject to them.

First Timothy 2:2 concludes with Paul’s practical explanation about why Christians need to pray for their leaders: “that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.” This verse has led some commentators to conclude that the letter’s author is acquiescing to cultural pressure and calling the church to embrace a tame and timid Christianity marked by good citizenship.⁷ This is, however, a terrible misinterpretation of Paul’s letter.⁸ A far better interpretation emerges by reading Paul’s instructions in light of Jeremiah’s command to the Israelites being exiled to Babylon: “Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf; for in its welfare you will find your welfare” (Jer 29:7).⁹ Paul, like

guidance to Timothy (and through him to the believers in Ephesus) to materials that are of permanent significance for all.” Jerome D. Quinn and William Wacker, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy: A New Translation with Notes and Commentary* ECC (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2000), 171.

⁶Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 419. However, this does not mean that believers cannot draw any conclusions about how to pray from this description. In fact, “these four terms delineate aspects of what should mark prayers: δέησεις, making requests for specific needs; προσευχάς, bringing those in view before God; ἐντεύξεις, appealing boldly on their behalf; and εὐχαριστίας, thankfulness for them.” Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 115. Ultimately though, readers should remain aware that the primary meaning behind Paul’s command is not that believers should pray in a variety of ways, but “that all prayers, of all types, should be for all people.” Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 79.

⁷See Martin Dibelius and Hans Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), 35-48, esp 39-40.

⁸For an excellent rebuttal of this interpretation, see Philip H. Towner, *The Goal of Our Instruction: The Structure of Theology and Ethics in the Pastoral Epistles* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), 9-16, 201-5.

⁹Philip Towner persuasively argues for a thematic connection between these passages. He

Jeremiah, is writing to a group of people who are living in exile; just as Babylon was not home for the children of Israel, this world is not home for the church (cf. Heb 13:14; 1 Pet 2:11-12).

When Paul's instructions are read in connection with Jeremiah's, it becomes clear that the apostle is teaching the church that her welfare is increased by praying for the welfare of "kings and all who are in high positions."¹⁰ Furthermore, this welfare includes lives marked by peace and quiet.¹¹ However, the apostle does not stop there; Paul goes on to point out that these peaceful and quiet lives should lead to godly and dignified lives.¹² Thus, peace and quiet are not the goal of Paul's instruction, they are simply the means by which the church might display her godliness and dignity to a watching world and a watching God.¹³

writes, "The precedent for the practice of God's people praying for pagan rulers goes back to Israel's exile experience. In this context we find the prophetic instruction to display loyalty to the surrounding power structure [cf. Jer 29:7]. . . . This could perhaps be dismissed as an expedient measure designed to help the displaced Jewish people make the best of temporary difficulties. But lying behind the prophetic instruction and evident in the prophetic and wisdom writings was a developing theological (and eschatological) awareness that with the exile the lines of Israel's religious world were begin redrawn. YHWH now accomplished his will through pagan leaders whom he called his 'ministers' and 'servants' In exile Israel's vision had to expand to encompass the nations. . . . It was a logical (and theological) step for Paul to interpret the church's prayer responsibility on the basis of the prophetic instruction, because he knew that the very existence of the church was linked to the universal promises that came to expression in writings of those times." Philip Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2006), 168. Knight also sees a plausible connection between 1 Tim 2:2 and Jer 29:7. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 117.

¹⁰Truly, one must understand that Paul is not promoting prayer as a manipulative tool by which the church can guarantee themselves peace and quiet. Instead, the apostle (like Jeremiah) seems to be explaining his command with a proverbial truth.

¹¹Knight comments on the missional importance of peace and quiet in the life of Paul. He writes, "An evaluation of Paul's own life leads one to realize that this 'quiet' does not mean a sheltered life but rather freedom from the turmoil that threatened to thwart his ministry. A good example is the disquiet of the riot in the very city that he was writing to, Ephesus (Acts 19:23-41), which the rulers finally quieted. After this quiet came, Paul was able to gather and exhort the disciples (20:1; cf. also the case at Corinth 18:12-18)." Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 117.

¹²According to Knight, "The two terms [godliness and dignity] may well provide, as Bernard and Lock suggest, the more Godward and reverential perspective and the more manward and ethical perspective respectively." *Ibid.*, 118.

¹³Towner offers a similar interpretation of this verse. He acknowledges that this verse "divides into two parts. The first part depicts an ideal set of circumstances or environment in which the church might live: 'that we might live peaceful and quiet lives.' The second part describes the observable manner in which such a life is to be lived: 'in all godliness and holiness.'" Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 169.

In 2:3 Paul affirms the goodness and rightness of what he has just laid before Timothy and the Ephesian church with another allusion to the Old Testament.¹⁴ He writes, “This is good and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior” (1 Tim 2:3). Paul’s language in this verse alludes to the Deuteronomic affirmations of activities which God sees and considers good: “Do what is pleasing and good in the LORD’s sight” (Deut 6:18; 12:25, 28; 13:19; 21:9). The reference to sight in these affirmations calls to mind the idea of rightly behaving in God’s presence where he can *see* you.¹⁵ First Timothy 2:4 concludes the affirmation of 2:3. Paul writes, “This [prayer for all people] is good and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim 2:3-4). It seems then that there is a twofold impetus behind Paul’s instruction that the Ephesian church should pray for all people (especially leaders): first, such prayer leads to greater missional effectiveness, and, second, it pleases our watching God who desires the salvation of all people.

There are three popular ways to understand what Paul is saying in this passage. The first interpretation appeals to the difference between the two wills of God. Theologians through the ages have posited that there is a distinction between God’s decreative (or general) will and his desirous (or subsequent) will.¹⁶ In other words, God may desire something that he does not decree. The second interpretation argues that Paul is not speaking about God’s desire for the salvation of all individuals, but for all types of people. In other words, the apostle is declaring that God’s desire to save includes both

¹⁴Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 424-25; also, Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 176. Hanson sees a further Old Testament allusion in Paul’s reference to God as “Savior.” Hanson opines that “the liturgical material in vv. 4-5 here may originally have formed a sort of Christian midrash on Isa 45:21-22.” A. T. Hanson, *The Pastoral Epistles*, The New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1987), 67.

¹⁵Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 425.

¹⁶Marshall seems to accept that this passage refers to God’s desirous, not decreative will. He writes, “The reference is to God’s desire that all people should be saved, whether or not they actually respond to his gracious offer. There can be little doubt that this is the right interpretation.” *Ibid.*, 426. Also, see J. N. D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, BNTC (London: A. and C. Black, 1963), 62-63.

Jews and Gentiles.¹⁷ Either of these interpretations are possible, but the second seems contextually preferable.¹⁸ The third interpretation is that Paul is here affirming the universal salvation of all men; this position is made impossible by Scripture's acknowledgment that some people will deny Christ and suffer eternal judgement (cf. Matt 25:41-46).

In 1 Timothy 2:5, Paul continues his explanation regarding the priority of prayer. The apostle maintains the note of universality that has been presented throughout the passage with the use of the word "all." In 2:1-2 Paul commands that prayers are to be offered for all people. In 2:3-4 he explains that prayers are offered for all people because God's desires the salvation of all people. Now, in 2:5-6 Paul declares that there is only one savior for all people. He writes, "For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time" (1 Tim 2:5-6). There are five important theological statements in these verses which deserve attention: (1) one God; (2) one mediator; (3) the man, Christ Jesus; (4) ransom for all; and (5) the testimony.

Paul begins 2:5 with the familiar Jewish affirmation that "there is one God."¹⁹ It is likely that Paul's monotheistic statement has a twofold purpose. First, the apostle is further explaining the validity of praying for all peoples by pointing out that there is only one God for Jews and Gentiles.²⁰ Second, Paul is implying that because there is one God

¹⁷See Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 119. Towner also accepts this view; he acknowledges that this statement is problematic and then appeals to other Pauline passages to resolve the issue. He writes, "As a statement of the breadth of God's will about salvation, it echoes Paul's statements in Rom 3:27-31 and 11:26-32. There and here the chief concern is to clarify that God's salvific intentions fully include the non-Jewish world, and that Paul's unique mission to reach that world is indeed God's means to fulfill his universal redemptive promises (v.7)." Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 178.

¹⁸Mounce seems to accept this view as well, and he acknowledges the importance of context in drawing theological conclusions from difficult passages. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 85-86.

¹⁹According to Towner, "'There is one God' (v. 5a) is a formulaic abbreviation of the *Shema* (Deut 6:4) that goes back to the Jewish mission and the polemics of Diaspora Judaism against the many gods of the Gentiles." Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 180.

²⁰Marshall notes that Paul uses this formula in both polemic (1 Cor 8:6) and apologetic ways (Rom 3:29; Gal 3:20; Eph 4:5f); he writes, "Its use here resembles Rom 3:29f., where the affirmation of

for Jew and Gentile, there is one salvation for Jew and Gentile; thereby setting the stage for his next statement.

Just as there is only one God, Paul asserts that “there is one mediator between God and men” (1 Tim 2:5). Paul, with this phrase, balances the universality of God’s desire to save all people with the exclusivity of his salvific demands. In other words, the one God wants to save all people, but there is only one way in which he offers that salvation. Paul’s use of the word “mediator” is interesting, for it is not a word commonly used in reference to the work of Christ. In the New Testament (Gal 3:19-20; Heb 8:6; 9:15; 12:24), the word has definite covenantal overtones. It is possible that Paul is contrasting the mediatorial work of Moses to bring God’s covenant to the Jewish people with the mediatorial work of Christ which brings God’s new covenant to all people.²¹ Interestingly, in the LXX, the word is found in Job’s plaintive cry, “I wish there were our mediator and reprove” (Job 9:33, LXX). According to Paul, the mediator whom Job so desperately needed and desired does, in fact, exist.²²

Paul concludes his theological explanation by revealing the identity of this mediator and the salvific work that he has accomplished. The one mediator of the one God is none other than “the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim 2:5). By using the word “man,” Paul is not commenting upon the gender of the mediator but upon his nature. In other words, Paul is emphasizing that the mediator is a human.²³ But, he is not just any human;

‘one God’ for Jews *and* Gentiles demonstrated that the Gentiles have equal access to God.” Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 429.

²¹Ibid., 430.

²²Hanson argues “that the origin of the use of *mesitēs* is to be found in the LXX version of Job 9:32-33. In that passage Job expresses the wish that there was a mediator between God and man. . . . A Christian reading his Job in LXX could easily take this is a prophecy of the mediator who was to come.” Hanson, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 68.

²³Johnson writes, “The noun *anthrōpos* must be translated here as ‘human being’ or ‘human person’ not only because it is the humanity of Jesus, rather than his maleness, that defines him as mediator, but also because translating *anthrōpos* as ‘man’ invites confusion with verse 12, where Paul does mean a male and uses *anēr*. For ‘the human being Christ Jesus,’ see, especially, Phil 2:7 and Rom 5:12–21. The humanity of Jesus is critical to the understanding of him as mediator.” Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, 192. See also Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 88; Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 121;

the mediator is also the Christ, the anointed one, the messiah who redeems his people, even at the cost of his own life. Paul concludes his description of the mediator with an echo of Jesus's own description of his life and work: "who [Christ Jesus] gave himself as a ransom for all."²⁴ The substitutionary force of Jesus's words are increased in Paul's language.²⁵ The apostle is making the gospel very clear for the Ephesian church and her erring leaders: There is one God and one plan of salvation that he extends to all people, namely, the mediator Jesus Christ, who has given his life in order to ransom condemned sinners from the just wrath of God. In other words, Jesus died to offer you salvation. Do not scorn his grace and do not doubt the universal extent of his love. Instead, repent and believe Jesus. He is the mediator that you desperately need and truly desire.

First Timothy 2:6 ends with the following words: "which is the testimony given at the proper time." The correct interpretation of this phrase is problematic because its grammatical relationship to the surrounding context is somewhat unclear.²⁶ This lack of clarity is further compounded by lack of a clear referent for the word "testimony." In the New Testament, a testimony might refer to "either the content of the testimony (equivalent to the gospel; 1 Cor 1:6) or the act of giving testimony (proclamation; 2 Tim 1:8; Acts 4:33; 2 Thess 1:10)."²⁷ So, "the testimony given at the proper time" could be saying that Christ, himself, is the testimony given at the right time, or it may be

Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 430-31; Quinn and Wacker, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, 184; and Towner, *Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 181.

²⁴Mounce acknowledges the difficulty in classifying the style, but not the source, of Paul's statement. He writes, "Most commentators, using terms such as 'echo' (Spicq, 1:367; Guthrie, 67), 'free version' (Kelly, 63), and 'reminiscence' (Lock, 28), agree that this idea in some way goes back to the thought of Mark 10:45." Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 89.

²⁵Marshall states that the Greek compound word which Paul uses to convey the idea of ransom "may intensify the thought of substitution" which was already present in the original statement. Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 432.

²⁶Towner explains the grammatical confusion: "The problem is caused largely by asyndeton, since (lit.) 'the testimony (made, given) at the right time' is simply appended without connectors to indicate the relation to the preceding statement (vv. 5-6a)." Towner, *Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 185.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 185-86.

communicating the idea that Paul is giving testimony about Christ at the right time. The best interpretation seems to be recognizing that these two options are not mutually exclusive. Consequently, Paul is saying that Christ's offering of himself as the ransom for all men is the testimony from the one God who desires that all men (both Jew and Gentile) be saved, but the apostle is also saying that he has been called to offer continuing testimony to this fact.²⁸

In 1 Timothy 2:7 the apostle writes, "For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth." Paul's defense begins by pointing out that he was appointed for "this." Most likely, "this" refers to the testimony Paul just explicated in 2:6. In other words, Paul was appointed as a preacher and an apostle so that he might bear testimony to the world about God's testimony to the world. Paul's defense also supports the fact that God desires all men to be saved by explicating the fact that Paul was appointed to be a faithful and true teacher to the Gentiles. The necessity of such a defense was certainly not for Timothy's benefit; its inclusion is best understood as a reminder to the false teachers and those who are erring that Paul is an apostle, and that his command to pray for all people is, therefore, authoritative.

In summary, 1 Timothy 2:1-7 reveals that prayer should be a priority of the church. Paul explains that all prayers should be offered for all men, including those in positions of authority. Knowing that some of his readers may be offended at the thought of praying for pagan rulers and gentile neighbors, Paul offers reasons intended to justify why the church should obey his command. First, praying for the welfare of rulers may increase the welfare of the church; the resultant peace and quiet should allow the church

²⁸Knight offers the following "solution" to this interpretive problem: "The solution is probably to be found in a both-and rather than in an either-or understanding. . . . The act of Jesus' self-giving for all bears witness to the desire of the one God that all be saved, and Paul was appointed to continue to bear testimony to this act." Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 124.

more opportunities to live godly and dignified lives before a watching world. Second, praying for gentile neighbors pleases God because God wants all men to be saved. God's desire for all men is affirmed by the following facts: there is only one God and there is only one mediator between God and man. This mediator is none other than Jesus Christ who gave himself as a ransom to save all men. The section closes with a reminder that Paul is an apostle. Consequently, his commands are invested with divine approval and authority.

2:8-15: The Propriety of Pray-ers

Having proclaimed the priority of prayer, Paul now turns his attention to the propriety of pray-ers. He first discusses the way that men in the church should and should not pray. Then, Paul turns this discussion to the women of Ephesus. The apostle begins by telling women how they should and should not pray in the church. Having broached the subject of proper (and different) gender roles, Paul presses on and teaches the women of Ephesus that there is one role that they may not assume in this church, namely, that of authoritative teacher. While some choose to read this discussion as a disruption or digression, it is not.²⁹ Contextually, Paul precedes his instructions regarding those things that women are not allowed to do with a discussion about what men should not do (2:8). He then follows his instructions to women with a discussion about the type of men who are and are not allowed to be elders (3:1-7). This section is, in turn, followed by Paul's instructions to men and women who desire to be deacons (3:8-13). Thus, in the second and third chapters of this letter, Paul outlines the variety of ways that men and women

²⁹Hanson seems to understand that this passage is a digression from the surrounding context when he writes, "By the time we reach v. 10 the context of worship has been forgotten and the author is giving advice to women about their behavior in general." Hanson, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 71. Contrary to Hanson, Towner acknowledges the unity of this passage. He writes, "But this span of text is not an addendum treating a separate topic; it occurs within the textual frame indicated by repetition of the key term 'propriety' in vv. 9 and 15 (*sōphrosynē*) and within the cultural frame of the expectations governing the behavior of women in public." Towner, *Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 190.

may and may not serve the local church, but he begins with the priority and propriety of prayer.

How Men Should Pray

Paul's instructions to male pray-ers are found in 1 Timothy 2:8. The apostle writes, "I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling." As has already been seen, Paul's expressed apostolic desire is tantamount to an apostolic imperative.³⁰ Clearly, Paul is here commanding men to pray. He is also continuing the theme of universality from the preceding verses when he writes that these prayers are to be offered, "in every place," by which he means in every nation.³¹ However, it is possible that "in every place" has a much narrower focus and simply means in every house where the Ephesian church gathers.³² The case for the former interpretation is strengthened by the recognition that Paul's use of this phrase alludes to yet another Old Testament passage.³³

In the opening chapter of Malachi, the prophet speaks of a future time when Gentiles will worship the God of Israel.³⁴ "For from the rising of the sun to its setting, my

³⁰Knight asserts that the Greek construction of this phrase "expresses an apostolic demand in the language of personal desire." Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 128.

³¹Marshall's comments that "ἐν παντί τόπῳ, 'everywhere', may continue the theme of universal gospel. . . . In the NT, the phrase is Pauline (1 Cor 1.2; 2 Cor 2.14; 1 Th 1.8), and usually associated with the gospel ministry or prayer." Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 444.

³²This is how Knight understands the passage. He writes that this phrase "may simply indicate that Paul wants prayer to be as universal as its objects; but it is more likely that he is referring to the various meeting places of the church in, perhaps, house churches or other groups (cf. Rom. 16:3-5; 1 Cor 16:19; [Ephesus]; Col 4:15)." Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 128.

³³According to Marshall, "It [the phrase ἐν παντί τόπῳ] was probably developed in some way from Mal 1.10f. which belongs to the prophetic stream of a promised blessing to the Gentiles, and which was understood in the Targum as a reference to prayer. This background requires something more than a simple local reference to prayer 'in all the house churches'. A line back to Mal 1.11 would be in keeping with the unique Pauline consciousness of being one through whom the promise to the Gentiles was being fulfilled. Such an allusion also ties in with the argument for the universality of the gospel in 2:1-6 and with the claim that the Pauline apostolate to the nations plays an instrumental part in God's salvation plan (v. 7)." Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 444-45; Contra Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 108.

³⁴Richard A. Taylor and E. Ray Clendenen, *Haggai, Malachi*, NAC 21A (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2004), 275-79.

name will be great among the nations, and in every place incense will be offered to my name, and a pure offering. For my name will be great among the nations, says the LORD of hosts” (Malachi 1:11). Notice that Malachi’s use of the phrase “in every place” parallels the phrase “among the nations.” Paul uses these words in the same way. Thus, the apostle is commanding the men of the church to pray for people of all nations, in every place among the nations.

Paul is not just commending the universality of prayer in these verses. He is also instructing how such prayers should be offered. The proper prayers of male pray-ers should be marked by “lifting holy hands” and should avoid “anger or quarreling.” Lifting holy hands is not a statement about the correct posture of a pray-er, but his correct character.³⁵ In other words, the focus should be on the word “holy,” not the word “lifting.” This focus on character is seen throughout the biblical tradition, where hands are often raised or extended in prayer as a symbolic expression of the cultic practice of hand washing found in the Old Testament.³⁶ This focus on the hands as revealers of character is also seen throughout literature; one of the more famous examples would be Shakespeare’s Lady Macbeth who just cannot seem to wash the stain of blood from her guilty hands.

While a pray-er’s character should be marked positively by the presence of holiness, it should be marked negatively by the absence of anger or quarreling. Several commentators note that the absence of anger implies the presence of forgiveness, which

³⁵Contra Quinn and Wacker: “After prescribing that the Christian men are to be found in every assembly for public prayer, the next directive turns to their external conduct and demeanor.” Quinn and Wacker, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, 210-14.

³⁶According to Towner, “Within Israel’s cultic regimen, the actual outward act of washing the hands was a fundamental preparatory step for priest to enter the Tent of Meeting [which was the place of God’s presence] (Exod 30:19-21). The visible public act of purification signified the presumed inward condition of purity/holiness of those about to engage in ministry. From the act and its significance, the image of ‘purified hands’ acquired metaphorical status in its reference to moral purity (e.g., *1 Clement* 29:1; *LXX Pss* 25:6; 72:13) just as the image of ‘bloody’ or stained hands signified metaphorically the reverse (Isa 1:15). The combination of the adjective ‘holy/pure’ and the symbolic gesture depicts one who is completely (outwardly and inwardly) ready for ministry.” Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 202.

is often seen as a prerequisite to effective prayers.³⁷ Paul’s condemnation of quarreling is best understood as an attack upon the false teachers who were promoting disputes and divisions within the church body.³⁸ Summarily, in this section of the letter Paul is calling men to pray in all places for all people with prayers marked by personal holiness and void of querulous anger.

How Women Should Pray

In the next verse, Paul turns his attention to the propriety of female pray-ers: “Likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, but with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works” (1 Tim 2:9-11). Paul uses the word, “likewise,” to transition the discussion from men to women. The interpretation of this verse (and those following) depends on how one connects this important word to the surrounding context. The first interpretive option is to read this verse as teaching that men are supposed to pray in the proper way while women are supposed to dress in the proper way.³⁹ The second, and better, option is to read the text as follows: men are supposed to pray in the proper way (i.e., with holy hands and without anger or quarreling); likewise, women are supposed to pray in the proper way (i.e., with proper dress that reveals godliness).⁴⁰

³⁷See Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 445; and Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 202.

³⁸See Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 446; and Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 202.

³⁹See Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 132-33; Towner, *Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 204-5.

⁴⁰Marshall argues for the correctness of this view over the other when he writes, “The weakness of the [first] view is that the introduction of the reference to women’s adornment is an unmotivated digression if it is not related to prayer in some way or other; after an injunction to the men about how they are to worship, it would be strange if something parallel was not being said to the women. . . . In this case the sense would be ‘I desire women also to pray begin adorned [appropriately].’” Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 447; See also Dibelius and Conzlemann, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 45; and Ben Witherington III, *Women in the Earliest Churches*, SNTSMS 59 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 119, 263n203.

Notice that Paul's instructions for propriety in female pray-ers are similar to his instructions regarding male pray-ers, in that both sets of instructions are concerned more with the internal, not the external, situation of the pray-er. However, it is clear that Paul understands that the internal character of the person praying will be manifested in external ways, so the apostle wisely begins both sets of his instructions by focusing on those actions that reveal character. Specifically, Paul begins this section by admonishing women to avoid ostentatious attire like "braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire" (1 Tim 2:9; cf. 1 Pet 3:1-6). This injunction should not be read as a simple condemnation of braids, or gold, or pearls, or expensive things; instead, it must be seen, in light of the biblical and cultural context, to be a condemnation of misusing these things. Writing about the cultural realities of the time, A. H. M. Jones reveals that sometimes "clothing could cost as much as 7000 denarii, which equaled more than nineteen years' wages for an average day laborer."⁴¹ In a society of such rampant materialism, it is no wonder that Scripture condemns the idea that a woman's value before God or anyone else is more dependent on her clothes than her character. Similar to what he did with men previously, Paul, in this section of the letter, calls women to pray in all places for all people with prayers marked by godliness and good works, not excessive decoration.

Further Instructions to Women

Having discussed the propriety of male then female pray-ers, Paul continues further into his discussion about the appropriate role of women within the household of God.⁴² This section of Paul's letter to Timothy is probably the most contentious in the epistle. Truly, Scripture has much to say about the relationship between men and women. While some of these sayings work easily in a modern western context, others do not. For

⁴¹As quoted by Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 115.

⁴²It is helpful to read Paul's instructions to women as part of the larger discussion of gender roles within the church that stretches from 1 Tim 2:8-3:13.

instance, Paul's statement to the church in Galatia that, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28) rings clear and true in most ears. But in this letter, the apostle writes, "I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man" (1 Tim 2:12); this prohibition tends to grate on modern sensibilities and proves difficult to accept.⁴³ As readers approach this section of Scripture, they might ask three questions that will help to rightly understand and apply 1 Timothy 2:11-15. 1) What exactly did Paul say? 2) Why did Paul say this? Or, to put the question another way, what is the biblical theology behind Paul's instructions? And, 3) How should the modern church apply his teaching?

What exactly did Paul say? In 1 Timothy 2:11 Paul writes, "Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness." Paul, as he has done in previous verses, here uses the singular noun *γυνή* in reference to women in general. He then issues a command that a woman should learn.⁴⁴ The frequent charge from feminist interpreters that Paul is a misogynist is shown to be groundless by the Apostle's enjoinder that woman must learn.⁴⁵ Paul is not some conservative chauvinist authoritarian who desires women to be barefoot and pregnant. His desire is that both men and women behave appropriately in the house of God by utilizing their distinctive gifts to the fullest.

Having given the command that women should learn, the apostle now qualifies it. According to Thomas Schreiner, these qualifications are Paul's "main concern"; thus, "the focus of the command is not on women learning, but the manner and mode of their

⁴³It should be noted that Paul's prohibition is given to the church. Thus, his prohibition should not be construed as necessarily delimiting female behavior in the work force or society at large.

⁴⁴Knight recognizes that the "imperative *μανθανέτω*, 'learn,' is used here in the literal sense of learning through instruction." Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 139.

⁴⁵Thomas R. Schreiner, "The Valuable Ministries of Women in the Context of Male Leadership," in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 212-13, deals with this charge.

learning.”⁴⁶ According to the text, women are to learn quietly and submissively. Ben Witherington eloquently reveals the thoughts behind Paul's imperative and its qualifications.

Nothing whatsoever is said about absolute silence here, nor is anything said about women being subordinate to men in general or even about wives being subordinate to husbands. The context here is different from that in 1 Corinthians 14. The issue is submitting to the teaching of others and quietly and intently listening to it so that one might learn.⁴⁷

In 1 Timothy 2:12 Paul issues a prohibition: “I do not permit a woman to teach or have authority over a man.” This verse begins with a Greek particle (δέ) which indicates a contrast with what has gone before. Thus, it has the sense: women may learn, but they may not teach.⁴⁸ Some commentators try to interpret Paul’s choice of language, “I do not permit,” as a personal preference and not an apostolic command.⁴⁹ However, as

⁴⁶Thomas R. Schreiner, “An Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:9-15: A Dialogue with Scholarship,” in *Women in the Church: An Analysis and Application of 1 Timothy 2:9-15*, ed. Andreas J. Köstenberger and Thomas R. Schreiner (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), loc. 2160, Kindle.

⁴⁷Ben Witherington III, *Letters and Homilies for Hellenized Christians*, vol. 1, *A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on Titus, 1-2 Timothy and 1-3 John* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), loc. 2957, Kindle.

⁴⁸See Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 140 and Witherington, *A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on Titus, 1-2 Timothy and 1-3 John*, loc. 2958, Kindle.

⁴⁹Thomas Oden argues that this phrase “inserts a matter of personal instruction from Paul, as if it could be parenthetical. . . . ‘I permit’ is arguably a personal opinion as distinguished from a formal apostolic instruction.” Thomas Oden, *First and Second Timothy and Titus*, Interpretation (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1989), 97. Additionally, Phillip Payne, in response to Douglas Moo, argues that “ἐπιτρέπω, particularly in the first person singular present active indicative usually does not refer to a continuing state and can only be determined to have continuing effect where there are clear indicators to that effect in the context.” Philip B. Payne, “Libertarian Women in Ephesus: A Response to Douglas J. Moo’s Article, ‘1 Timothy 2:11-15: Meaning And Significance,’” *Trinity Journal* 2, no. 2 (Fall 1981): 171. William Mounce ably responds to each of these interpretations. Concerning Oden's argument, Mounce offers an extensive list of other passages to support his claim that “Paul uses ‘I’ throughout his writings” to speak “with absolute authority;” he goes on to say, “Paul can mix the indicative and imperative, and both forms carry his full authority.” Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 121. In response to arguments about the verb's tense, Mounce appeals to Paul's use of the present active indicative form throughout the Pastoral Epistles. He writes, “In the PE there are 111 present-tense indicative verbs. If all of these were relegated also to the author's present situation, then the PE would no longer teach that the law is not for the just (1 Tim 1:9), that God wishes that all could be saved (1 Tim 2:4; 4:10), that it is a good thing to pursue the office of elder (1 Tim 3:1), that the mystery of the Christian religion is great (1 Tim 3:16), that physical exercise is of some value but godliness is infinitely more valuable (1 Tim 4:8), that children should take care of their parents and grandparents (1 Tim 5:4), that there is great gain in godliness (1 Tim 6:6), that those desiring to be rich fall into temptation (1 Tim 6:9), that the love of money is the root of all evils (1 Tim 6:10); and the list goes on” (121-22). Thus, the grammatical structure of this verse does nothing to mitigate the universality of Paul's apostolic command.

has been seen numerous times in this chapter, Paul’s use of preferential language does not diminish the weight of his apostolic authority. Paul’s prohibition, like his command in v.11, is given literally to “a woman;” the singular noun here stands as a referent to all women. However, some interpreters unsuccessfully seek to restrict the injunction even further.⁵⁰

New Testament scholar Thomas Schreiner recognizes the important fact that “the prohibition against women teaching is not absolute. . . . The object of the infinitive 'to teach' (διδάσκειν) is 'man' (ἄνδρός), indicating that women teaching men is what is forbidden.”⁵¹ Even with Schreiner's helpful qualification, there are at least two questions which remain unanswered. First, which men are the object of this prohibition? Or to say it another way: Is Paul commanding women not to teach their husbands, their pastors, any man, or just those men gathered in the church?⁵² Because the letter is written to a church

⁵⁰ Alan Padgett argues that this word refers only to those women who have been deceived by the false teachers. “It is these particular women rather than women in general that Paul was not allowing authority over men, nor teaching positions, in the church services (v. 12).” Alan Padgett, “Wealthy Women at Ephesus: 1 Timothy 2:8-15 in Social Context,” *Interpretation* 1, no. 41 (January 1987): 25. Similarly, I. Howard Marshall argues, “Although, then, the prohibition may appear to be universally applicable to women, it is in fact meant for a specific group of women among recipients of the letter.” Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 455. Quinn and Wacker limit the prohibition by translating this word as wife, not woman. They conclude that “the singular γυνή of verses 9-11 is meant to narrow the exposition to a married woman, a wife.” Quinn and Wacker, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, 221. Mounce offers a simple response, “A decision here is usually made by one's general approach to the passage and by how tightly one sees 8-15 tied to the specific teachings of the opponents, but the text makes the statement general. . . . Grammatically, the anarthrous noun functions generically.” William Mounce, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 123. Mounce's conclusion is correct. Without a specific article, the most natural reading of γυναῖκι is “woman” not “wife.”

⁵¹ Schreiner, “An Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:9-15,” loc. 2237, Kindle.

⁵² Quinn and Wacker, in keeping with their decision to translate γυναῖκι as “wife,” see the object of this prohibition as the woman's husband. Thus, their translation: “Moreover, I do not allow a wife to teach in the public worship and to boss her husband.” Quinn and Wacker, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, 223. Contra George Knight, who writes, “Ἄνθρωπος is used here, as in v. 8, to refer to 'man' in distinction from woman, not in its more restricted sense of 'husband.' The singular refers to men in general, just as γυνή refers here and v. 11 to women in general.” Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 142. Mounce is another commentator who disagrees with Quinn and Wacker. He offers a different interpretation that sees the object of the prohibition as overseers. After outlining several “contextual hints” that limit the scope of the object, he concludes “Women may not, therefore, authoritatively teach the men in authority.” Mounce, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 124. Dorothy Patterson limits the prohibition to a group of men, most likely within the gathered church. She writes, “In the New Testament, the Greek word διδάσκειν, with its derivatives, occurs almost one hundred times, of which only three seem to refer to individual instruction, making it clear that the reference here is probably to the teaching of a group of men.” Dorothy Kelley Patterson, “What Should a Woman Do in the Church? One Woman's Personal Reflections,” in *Women in the Church: An Analysis and Application of 1 Timothy 2:9-15*, ed. Andreas J. Köstenberger and Thomas R. Schreiner (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), loc. 3574, Kindle.

about proper behavior within the house of God, it seems that Paul's prohibition should also be limited to the house of God.⁵³ So, Paul is not saying that no woman can ever instruct any man, he is saying that women cannot assume the authoritative role of teacher over a group of men within the house of God.

The second question is related to the first: what specific type of teaching is Paul prohibiting?⁵⁴ The apostle is surely not restricting any and all instruction that a woman might give to men, for there are ample New Testament texts which seemingly encourage women to teach. Consider the case of Priscilla and Aquilla teaching Apollos (Acts 18:24-28). Readers must also reckon with Paul's command in Colossians 3:16 that members of the church should teach one another, for there is nothing inside that text that would limit this command to men only. Finally, look to Jesus' great commission. Before His ascension the Lord gave his church one final command, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations . . . *teaching* them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matt 28: 20, emphasis added). Paul's recognition of Junia, Euodia, and Syntyche as partners in ministry clearly reveal that the apostle is not limiting the great commission to men only. So, exactly what is Paul prohibiting in 1 Timothy 2?

There are some who argue that Paul's aim is to prohibit two negative activities: heretical teaching and a usurpation of authority.⁵⁵ This interpretation would, ostensibly,

⁵³Knight argues, "Just as v. 11 was not a demand for all learning to be done in silence, as an unqualified absolute, but was concerned with women's learning in the midst of the assembled people of God, so also the prohibition of teaching here has the same setting and perspective in view." Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 140-41.

⁵⁴According to BDAG, the word "διδάσκω" can refer to teaching in either a "formal or informal setting." BDAG, s.v. "διδάσκω." As will be seen, context determines which type of teaching is being referred to.

⁵⁵For instance, Phillip Towner answers this question by appealing to the heresy which prompted Paul's letter and the assumed social context in which the Ephesian church was doing ministry. He argues that women were being caught up in an emancipation movement spawned by an over-realized eschatology and encouraged by false teachers, see Towner, *The Goal of our Instruction*. In his commentary, Towner concludes that Paul's prohibition is aimed at certain wealthy women who were teaching men. He goes on, "If, on top of this [the public teaching of men], they were responsible for communicating (or, by their behavior, seeming to endorse) elements of the heresy" then Paul's injunction is "understandable." Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 220. Along these same lines, Marshall also connects the prohibited teaching to the condemned heresy. Though he does acknowledge that "in itself the term says nothing as to the acceptability or otherwise of the teaching," he still concludes that "the context makes it

allow women to teach, provided their content and attitude is appropriate. However, this position is unconvincing because Paul does not use any of the available language to reveal the inappropriate nature of teaching or exercising authority. In fact, the grammatical structure of this Greek text seems to indicate that both the activity of teaching and that of exercising authority are viewed positively by Paul.⁵⁶ Consequently, the prohibition against teaching should not be limited to heretical teaching, and the prohibition against exercising authority should not be limited to an exercising of negative authority marked by usurping or domineering characteristics.⁵⁷

Obviously, there has been an enormous amount of ink spent on this issue, with a host of differing conclusions. The most convincing is “that Paul is prohibiting two separate but related events: teaching and acting in authority. The relationship that exists between the two is that of a principle and a specific application of that principle.”⁵⁸ In

clear that the prohibition is stated because there was something wrong with the teaching given by the women.” Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 455.

⁵⁶Andreas Köstenberger offers a detailed analysis of this verse which opposes interpretations (like Towner's and Marshall's) that understand the prohibited teaching in a negative light. His analysis suggests that the grammatical construction of v. 12, “negated finite verb + infinitive + οὐδέ + infinitive . . . can be grouped into two patterns,” and that “in both patterns, the conjunction coordinates activities of the same order, that is, activities that are both viewed either positively or negatively by the writer or speaker.” Köstenberger goes on to argue that “διδάσκειν, when used absolutely, in the New Testament always denotes an activity that is viewed positively by the writer,” and that “he [the writer] would in all likelihood have used the term ἐτεροδιδασκαλεῖν” if he desired to reveal the content of the teaching as heretical. Andreas J. Köstenberger, “A Complex Sentence: The Syntax of 1 Timothy 2:12,” in *Women in the Church: An Analysis and Application of 1 Timothy 2:9-15*, ed. Andreas J. Köstenberger and Thomas R. Schreiner (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), loc. 1640, Kindle.

⁵⁷The meaning of the second part of Paul's prohibition, ἀθηντέω, is also highly contested. In his magisterial study, H. S. Baldwin reveals that this *hapex legomena* has a range of four possible meanings (with multiple variations under the second and third meanings) centering around the idea of authority. H. S. Baldwin, “An Important Word: Ἀθηντέω in 1 Timothy 2:12,” in *Women in the Church: An Analysis and Application of 1 Timothy 2:9-15*, ed. Andreas J. Köstenberger and Thomas R. Schreiner (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), loc. 918, Kindle. The two most popular interpretations of ἀθηντέω tend to view authority in either a positive or a negative light. Knight argues for the former: “Contrary to the suggestion of KJV's ‘to usurp authority’ and BAGD's alternative, ‘domineer’ (so also NEB), the use of the word shows no inherent sense of grasping or usurping authority or of exercising it in a harsh or authoritative way, but simply means ‘to have or exercise authority.’” George Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 141. In light of Köstenberger's work (see preceding note), which proves that both διδάσκω and ἀθηντέω, “teaching” and “authority,” are either positive or negative, and his conclusion that διδάσκω is positive, there seem to be no good exegetical reasons to deny Knight's conclusion that ἀθηντέω is positive as well.

⁵⁸William Mounce, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 130. Contra Philip Payne, who has argued that οὐδέ is a coordinating conjunction, but concludes that “seventeen of the twenty-one οὐδέ coordinating conjunctions in the accepted letters of Paul make best sense conveying a single idea.” Philip Payne, “1 Tim 2.12 and the Use of Οὐδέ to Combine Two Elements to Express a Single Idea,” *New Testament Studies* 54,

other words, Paul does not permit a woman to have authority over a man, which entails that she not teach in an authoritative way. Schreiner also acknowledges that Paul's use of διδάσκω hints at a particular type of authoritative teaching: he writes, "Teaching here involves the authoritative and public transmission of tradition about Christ and the Scriptures (1 Cor. 12:28-29; Eph. 4:11; 1 Tim. 2:7; 2 Tim. 3:16; James 3:1)."⁵⁹ Within this context, διδάσκω can, and should be, translated as the type of authoritative teaching commonly done by an elder in service of the gathered church.

Having issued his prohibition against women exercising authority via teaching, Paul now explains what he expects from women in the church. He concludes v. 12 with the phrase "rather, she is to remain quiet." This phrase begins with an "adversative participle ἀλλά [which] indicates that this clause is contrasted with what precedes."⁶⁰ So Paul is prohibiting women from teaching, but encouraging them to be silent. However, as Schreiner argues, "It seems more likely that Paul [is referring] to a quiet and nonrebellious spirit instead of absolute silence."⁶¹

To summarize, Paul enjoins women to learn (2:11a), but he expects their learning to be accompanied by a quiet submission to the authoritative teacher (2:11b). He then issues a prohibition against women exercising authority over men (the general principle) via teaching (the specific application) (2:12a). Following his prohibition, Paul once again encourages women toward quietness (2:12b).

Why did Paul say this? Following the command of v. 11 (women should learn) and the prohibition of v. 12 (women should not assume the role of authoritative

no. 2 (April 2008): 236. Similar to Payne, James Hurley argues that the two infinitives form a hendiadys, a grammatical construction where two different terms are used to denote one concept. James B. Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2002), 201.

⁵⁹Schreiner, "An Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:9-15," loc. 2246, Kindle.

⁶⁰Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 142.

⁶¹Schreiner, "An Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:9-15," loc. 2186, Kindle.

teacher in the church), Paul ties his understanding of divinely appointed gender roles to a biblical theological interpretation of Genesis 1-3. As will be seen, Paul's reference to Adam being created first is not about primogeniture, but about man's headship and responsibility. Likewise, his reference to Eve's deception is not about some presumed ontological inferiority in women, but about the enemy's subtle attack on God's ordering of creation. Ultimately, the reader will see that Paul's biblical theological interpretation of Moses forces him to see women as daughters of Eve and servants of Christ who are called to many roles within the church, but prohibited from one.

In 1 Timothy 2:13 Paul writes, "For Adam was formed first, then Eve." The most natural reading of this verse (and the next) is that it provides the reason(s) behind Paul's prohibition. However, this reading is often disputed.⁶² Overall though, it does seem that in verse 13 Paul is transitioning from instruction to explanation.

On the surface, it appears that Paul is offering an argument for Adam's superiority based on primogeniture.⁶³ However, the simple primogeniture argument may not be the best way to understand Paul's prohibition. At least one commentator understands that "the ground for the prohibition . . . is the order of the creation of Adam and Eve as the archetypes of man and woman and the implication of this order for headship and submission in such relationships."⁶⁴ Thus, Paul is not simply arguing that Adam was made first, but that Adam was made to exercise authority as the head.

⁶²Towner argues, "The connecting particle ($\gamma\alpha\rho$) can emphasize logical reasoning or simply introduce something more on the order of explanation, but its presence alone gives little to go on." Towner, *Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 225. Contrary to Towner's assessment, Schreiner appeals to Paul's other usages of $\gamma\alpha\rho$ in the Pastoral Epistles to illuminate its meaning here. He writes, "When Paul gives a command elsewhere in the Pastoral Epistles, the $\gamma\alpha\rho$ that follows almost invariably states the reason for the command." Schreiner, "An Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:9-15," loc. 2350, Kindle.

⁶³Marshall goes so far as to say, "Thus the intended conclusion, 'the first is best,' seems unmistakable." Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 462. James Hurley also recognizes primogeniture as the basis of this argument and expects that Paul's original hearers would have also. Hurley, *Man and Woman*, 207-8.

⁶⁴Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 142.

The notion of Adam's headship is further supported by the roles and responsibilities given to Adam before Eve's creation. In Genesis 2:15, Adam is placed in the garden of Eden and commanded "to work it and keep it." James Hamilton, citing Gordon Wenham, offers an insightful understanding of this verse. "The language used to describe Adam's 'working and keeping' the garden (Gen. 2:15) is used elsewhere in the Pentateuch to describe the priests' 'working and keeping' the tabernacle. And this language is used for no other purpose."⁶⁵

Thus, it seems highly likely that Adam was given a priestly role in the Edenic temple.⁶⁶ After Adam is placed in the garden, as a priest he is also given the responsibility of naming the other created beings. This responsibility "echoes God's naming activity in chapter 1 and thus shows human dominion."⁶⁷ However, it is important to recognize that Adam's naming of Eve "does not stress mastery," but "denotes ontological equality."⁶⁸ Ultimately, Paul's reference to Adam's being formed first is best understood as shorthand referring to Adam's authoritative headship, which is highlighted by his kingly responsibility to name the other created beings (including Eve) and the priestly role he was given before Eve's creation.

In the next verse, Paul completes his thought: "and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor" (1 Tim 2:14). Some interpretations of this verse see Eve as an unwitting victim whose transgression was due to Adam's failure to properly instruct her.⁶⁹ However, if the focus is on Adam's failure,

⁶⁵James Hamilton, *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), loc. 1508, Kindle.

⁶⁶T. Desmond Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem: An Introduction to Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008), 20-31.

⁶⁷Stephen G. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Theology of the Hebrew Bible*, NSBT, vol. 15, ed. D. A. Carson (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 65.

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹Witherington writes, "Adam alone was formed and present for God's original instructions about what was prohibited. Eve was not there for proper divine instruction, and thus she was more susceptible to deception." Witherington, *A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on Titus, 1-2 Timothy and 1-3*

then it seems unlikely that Paul would use this argument to prohibit women from exercising authority.⁷⁰

A better reading of this text sees that Paul is continuing to express Adam's headship and Eve's role as a helper. James Hamilton is worth quoting at length on this verse.

Now this argument, I think, is Paul's way of saying that there was in the garden a structure of authority, and that structure of authority grows out of the fact that God had given the command not to eat of the fruit of this tree to the man (Gen 2:17). . . . The man's responsibility was to keep the garden (2:15). . . . So this statement that Adam was not deceived but the woman was deceived (1 Tim 2:14) is Paul's way of saying that Satan subverted the created order by approaching the woman.⁷¹

Thus, in 1 Timothy 2:13-14 Paul is not basing his injunction against women exercising authority on primogeniture or a female proclivity to deception, but on God's natural ordering of creation. Adam was created to exercise authority as the head and Eve was created as the helper. The fall came as a result of Satan's deceptive subversion of God's natural order.

In 1 Timothy 2:15 Paul concludes his argument: “Yet she will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control.” This perplexing verse can be easily misinterpreted. Certainly, Paul, the champion of justification by faith, is not arguing that women are saved through their fertility. Instead, it seems likely, that Paul is commenting about the role of women in the promises made to Adam and Eve; in other words, the Genesis narrative is the interpretive key to this verse. In the *protoevangelium* (Gen 3:15), salvation is promised via the seed of “the woman” who crushes the head of the serpent. As Knight argues, “The one about whom it [the passage] speaks is 'the woman' (ἡ γυνή), Eve, and this one is the natural subject to be

John, loc. 3001, Kindle.

⁷⁰See Schreiner, “An Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:9-15,” loc. 2514, Kindle.

⁷¹James M. Hamilton Jr., “Godliness and Gender: Relating Appropriately to All (1 Timothy 2:9-12),” *JBMW* 15, no. 1 (Spring 2010): 31.

understood in v. 15, 'she will be saved' = the woman, Eve, will be saved."⁷² Which means that the opening reference to the salvation of a woman is referring to the spiritual salvation to be brought about by the promised Messiah, who will be the seed of the woman (Gen 3:15). Knight concludes, "There is thus a transition from Eve (ἡ γυνή, singular σωθήσεται) back to women in general (μείνωσιν, plural); in this way the passage serves to show women the importance of their role and of carrying it out in an obedient way."⁷³ Paul concludes his prohibition against women exercising authority over men with an encouragement for women to faithfully and lovingly engage in the most feminine activity possible—the bearing of children.

To summarize, Paul's biblical theological reading of Genesis 1-3 highlights that Adam was created to exercise authority as the head of Eve. Eve, on the other hand, was created to be a helper. In no way should Eve's subordinate role lead to the conclusion that she was ontologically inferior. Adam and Eve were both created in God's image and they were both commanded to be fruitful and multiply. Adam and Eve are equal, but they are distinct. Men are sons of Adam granted headship and authority in the church and the home. Women are daughters of Eve and servants of Christ tasked with a subordinate role of helpful submission in the church and the home.

How should the church apply what Paul has said? This sermon would be woefully incomplete if it stopped simply at understanding what Paul said and why he said it. In order to arrive at a wholesome completeness, it is incumbent to explore a third and final question: How should Paul's teaching be applied in the modern church? However, as is often the case with contentious passages like this one, a simple answer will not suffice.

⁷²Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 146.

⁷³Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 146.

First, one must prove that this passage should be applied in the modern church and discuss any potential limits to that application; only then can the text be applied.

One of the most effective ways to limit the applicability of Paul's teaching on gender roles within the church is to point out the "occasional nature of 1 Timothy."⁷⁴ In other words, if scholars can prove that Ephesus was a unique situation and that Paul's commands were intended to be ad hoc, then the apostle's directives would be limited to similar situations. The argument for the ad hoc nature of 1 Timothy typically runs as follows: (1) The author wrote this letter because of a specific situation; (2) that situation was heretical teaching in Ephesus; (3) all of the commands in the letter were given to combat this specific heresy; (4) therefore, the commands are only applicable to a situation in which the Ephesian heresy is being promulgated. The problem with this view is that its logical conclusion removes the applicability of most of the New Testament, "since it is probable that many New Testament books were addressed to particular communities facing special circumstances."⁷⁵ First Timothy was written to combat a specific false teaching in a specific local church, but that is not its sole purpose. It was also written to provide a set of instructions that would help the church to behave appropriately in the household of God.

Another issue to be explored is cultural relativity. Truly, evangelicals are right to relegate some texts to cultural change; the New Testament does contain some texts that have a limited modern applicability.⁷⁶ However, one must not jump to the conclusion that all texts are, therefore, inapplicable. The applicability of the text should be determined based on the exegesis of the text, not on the difficulty of its application. Concerning the text at hand, it is clear that the prohibition of 1 Timothy 2:11-12, while difficult to apply,

⁷⁴See Schreiner, "An Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:9-15," loc. 1908, Kindle.

⁷⁵Schreiner, "An Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:9-15," loc. 1908, Kindle.

⁷⁶Gordon Fee, *Gospel and Spirit: Issues in New Testament Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1991), 60.

must not be construed as culturally relative, because Paul grounds his command on the culturally transcendent creation account.

If one is going to rightly apply this text, it is necessary to do so within the entire context of Paul's writings. First, Paul commands men and women to pray appropriately (v. 8-10). Then the apostle commands that women should learn (v. 11). Therefore, it is incumbent on the church that women are given opportunities to pray and learn. It also seems necessary that these opportunities not be limited to feminine concerns. Daughters of Eve need to be taught how to pray, how to read and interpret Scripture, how to do theology, how to defend their faith, and how to respond to objections so that they might be proper servants of Christ. Once given opportunities to pray and learn, it is necessary that women be given appropriate opportunities to exercise their gifts. What, then, counts as an appropriate opportunity?

Based on Paul's prohibition (v. 12), the only role that a woman cannot be given is that of an elder, because the only responsibility she is denied is that of exercising authority through teaching men within the church, which belongs to the elder. Clearly, it is not enough to simply shuffle the women of the church into their culturally conditioned traditional roles: childcare and hospitality. Instead, they must be invited to serve in any way that honors God and their gender. For instance, older women can teach younger women, women can teach children, they can teach other women, they can even teach and admonish other members in the church (provided this teaching is not the authoritative teaching which the elders are to undertake), and they can fulfill the Great Commission by teaching both men and women to obey Jesus (Titus 2:3-5; Col 3:16; Matt 28:20). Arguably, women can also teach men in private, but this most likely is limited to married couples (cf. Acts 18:24-28). Women in the church should be encouraged to pray and prophesy appropriately, like Anna (Luke 2:36-38). They may serve as deacons, like

Phoebe (cf. Rom 16:1).⁷⁷ They might exercise their apostolic gifts like Junia (cf. Rom 16:7), and they should be recognized as valuable co-laborers, like Euodia and Syntyche (cf. Phil 4:2). Practically, this means that women can do ministry in a variety of settings, so long as these settings do not require them to exercise authority via teaching over a group of men within the church.

Conclusion

In 1 Timothy 2 Paul commands the church to pray. He teaches both men and women the proper way to pray. Then, he enjoins women in the church to learn quietly and submissively. Finally, he prohibits women from exercising authority over men. He specifically applies this prohibition to the function of (authoritative) teaching, which effectively bars women from becoming elders. Paul bases his instructions on a biblical theological reading of the creation account that sees Adam as the head and Eve as the helper. Because Paul's prohibition is based on the creation account, it remains applicable and authoritative. The apostle concludes his argument with a reference to the salvation which comes through the seed of the woman, and he encourages women to embrace, not forsake, their proper role as daughters of Eve and servants of Christ.

⁷⁷For more on this, see the discussion of 1 Tim 3:11 below.

CHAPTER 5

OVERSEERS AND DEACONS

As Paul composed his letters to Timothy, Nero ruled the world as the fifth Roman emperor. Later generations primarily remember the ruler as the infamous madman who fiddled while his city burned, but Nero's contemporaries viewed his reign in a far more positive light—at least for a while. As Nero rose to power, he garnered political support by reversing some of the most unpopular practices of his predecessor. He then continued to court good will by showing abundant generosity and clemency to his people. Unfortunately, it seems that Nero's early decisions were motivated by Machiavellian political considerations and not an authentic moral code.

Nero's slide into infamy began in earnest following the suspicious deaths of his mother and half-brother (who was a rival claimant to the empire's throne). After their murders, Nero openly embraced the hedonistic and immoral lifestyle that he had secreted away during the first years of his reign. The Caesar's legendary depravity drove away even his most loyal supporters, and when Rome caught fire, Nero was the obvious scapegoat for the people. In order to clear his own name, Nero blamed Roman Christians and instigated a time of terrible persecution against the church which resulted in the crucifixion of Peter, the beheading of Paul, and the tragic deaths of countless others. In an ironic twist, the Roman Senate condemned the emperor to a fate similar to the Christians he persecuted. Nero was to die the death of a slave: on a cross and under the whip. Upon hearing of his punishment Nero was abandoned by his servants and soldiers, and the ruler of the Roman empire stabbed himself in the throat with a dagger.¹

¹Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars* (New York: Penguin, 2007), 207-42.

Need

The story of Nero is a story marked by moral corruption instead of moral conviction. Nero's life and death illustrate that a leader's true character will always be revealed. Consequently, truly great leaders must be men and women of truly great character.

Main Idea

In 1 Timothy 3, Paul teaches that there are two types of leaders in the church: overseers and deacons. These leaders should not be chosen because they are unusually eloquent, charming, good looking, or gifted. In the church, leaders should be chosen because they are qualified.

Preview

This passage is neatly separated into two nearly equal pieces. In the first half of chapter 3, Paul explains what type of men are qualified to lead the church as overseers. Then, the apostle discusses the type of men and women who are qualified to serve as deacons. As will be seen, these titles imply the scope of work involved in each office, but Paul wisely refuses to offer a detailed job description. While both lists of qualifications are very similar in style and content, there are several important differences between the two.

Context

Before attending to the text at hand, it would be wise to look back at what this letter has already taught. Remember that Paul's first letter to Timothy is an immensely practical letter built upon a solid theological foundation. It was written so that the church would know how to behave rightly in the presence of God. In the opening chapter, Paul gives Timothy his marching orders: this young man has been sent to lovingly confront the false teachers and to properly steward the house of God in Ephesus. In the second chapter, Paul commands the church to pray, and then teaches them how they should pray,

for whom they should pray, and why they should pray; this section ends with a discourse about the proper role of women in ministry. Chapter 3 commences with a word about the qualifications of men who desire to be pastors and continues with a similar discussion of the qualifications necessary for men and women who wish to serve as deacons. At the conclusion of this chapter, Paul will ground all of his instructions upon a grand theological reality: the church, as the house of God, is the place of God's presence in these last days. Thus, the church must behave appropriately.

3:1-7: Teachers in the House of God

Paul begins his discourse on leadership with another trustworthy saying (cf. 1 Tim 1:15): "The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task" (1 Tim 3:1).² It is likely that the false teachers in Ephesus have destroyed the reputation of the church's leaders, and that men may be wary of assuming the mantle of responsibility which the office of overseer entails. In response, Paul offers the church a trustworthy saying which reminds them that the work of pastoring is a work worth doing.³ Sadly, the cultural antipathy against the pastoral role which Paul is

²As he does in 1:15 (and elsewhere in the Pastoral Epistles), Paul uses a formulaic introductory statement ("The saying is trustworthy") in 3:1a that lends credence to what he is about to say. Several questions surround this statement: (1) What exactly is the trustworthy saying? In other words, does the introductory formula refer to what follows or to what precedes it? (2) Is the saying a quotation from an extant traditional source or something else? And (3) What is the purpose of using the introductory formula within this text? According to Knight, it seems best to understand this saying as referring to that which follows it in 1 Tim 3:1b: "If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task." George Knight III, *The Faithful Sayings in the Pastoral Letters* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), esp 52-55. The second question defies certainty. However, Mounce asserts that it seems unlikely that this is a traditional saying within the church or a quote from a specific source. William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, WBC (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 167. There is a greater likelihood that Paul's saying is just an explicit (and trustworthy) statement about a commonly held belief. Finally, with reference to the purpose of the introductory formula, Hanson's argument that Paul has employed it here in order to bolster the truth of his assertion seems correct. A. T. Hanson, *The Pastoral Epistles*, NCBC (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1987), 75.

³The New Testament authors use the terms pastor, elder, and overseer interchangeably in reference to a single office. In Acts 20:17 Paul calls for "the elders of the church" of Ephesus to come to him. Later in this passage he exhorts them to "pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood" (Acts 20:28). In this verse, it is clear that Paul refers to the elders as overseers who have the pastoral (i.e., shepherding) responsibility of caring for the flock of God. A similar combination of these titles is seen in 1 Pet 5:1-2 where Peter exhorts the "elders" to "shepherd [pastor] the flock of God" by properly "exercising oversight." For further defense of this interpretation, see Benjamin Merkle, "Ecclesiology in the Pastoral Epistles," in *Entrusted with the Gospel: Paul's Theology in the Pastoral*

confronting in ancient Ephesus remains alive and well in America today. Eugene Peterson exposes this enduring reality by reflecting on the waning strength of the word “pastor.” In his book *The Contemplative Pastor*, Peterson writes,

A healthy noun doesn't need adjectives. Adjectives clutter a noun that is robust. But if the noun is culture-damaged or culture-diseased, adjectives are necessary. “Pastor” used to be that kind of noun—energetic and virile. . . . But when I observe the way the vocation of pastor is lived out in America and listen to the tone and context in which the word *pastor* is spoken, I realize that . . . in general usage, the noun is weak, defined by parody and diluted by opportunism.⁴

In modern America, as in ancient Ephesus, there exists a great need for men to do the great work of pastoring, and Paul's trustworthy saying remains as true and timely as ever: “If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task” (1 Tim 3:1).

Even though the desirability of the pastoral vocation has been seemingly diminished in Ephesus, Paul seems to believe that there are some men who still aspire to this work. However, the apostle wants them to know that the path to this office is not easy. To this end, Paul uses a colorful Greek word, ὀρέγω, to describe the potential overseer's aspiration that paints a vivid picture of a man who has the discipline necessary to reach out and grasp hold of that which he desperately desires.⁵ Truly, a man aspiring to the office of overseer needs more than an excited infatuation with the prospect of pastoring; he needs a disciplined desire that will sustain him through the difficulties of providing the church with oversight.

The fact that oversight is the main responsibility of the overseer seems rather obvious. After all, Paul, in this passage, refers to the office as that of the “overseer.”

Epistles, ed. Andreas J. Kostenberger and Terry L. Wilder (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2010), loc. 5507-6379, Kindle.

⁴Eugene H. Peterson, *The Contemplative Pastor: Returning to the Art of Spiritual Direction* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1993), 23–24.

⁵Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, rev. and ed. Frederick W. Danker, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), s.v. “ὀρέγω.” See also H. W. Heidland, “ὀρέγομαι, ὀρεξίς” in TDNT, ed. Gerhard Friedrich, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1968), 5:447.

However, he does not list the specific tasks for which the overseer will be responsible. The most likely reason for the apostle's lack of precision is that the duties of this office are not precise. The overseer's responsibilities will vary depending on the type of church and the needs of the moment, but no matter what the task at hand is, the apostle makes it clear that the work of oversight is a noble work; as such, it requires a noble man. The worthiness of aspirants to this office are to be judged by their ability to meet the criteria of church leadership which Paul puts forward. First, an overseer must be above reproach. He should manage his own household well, and he should not be a recent convert. Finally, he must be well thought of by outsiders.

The man called to be the church's overseer must be, first and foremost, "above reproach" (1 Tim 3:2). This primary qualification is further elaborated upon by the eleven characteristics which follow: the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. The first of these explanatory qualifications is also the most debated. There is a minority view which sees the phrase, "the husband of one wife" (1 Tim 3:2) as a prohibition against an unmarried pastor.⁶ Others see the remark as a prohibition against polygamy.⁷ A third interpretive option agrees that this is a prohibitive statement, but reads the phrase as a prohibition of divorce among the overseers.⁸ However, the most likely interpretation recognizes that Paul is commending marital

⁶Dibelius-Conzelmann argue that "the author wished to commend marriage to the 'bishop' (ἐπίσκοπος)." Martin Dibelius and Hans Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), 52.

⁷Lock argues that the phrase "certainly implies—not a polygamist." Walter Lock, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles (I & II Timothy and Titus)*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1924), 36.

⁸Hanson writes, "We take it to mean 'someone who has not been divorced.'" Hanson, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 75.

fidelity and condemning anything that falls short of that goal, including unbiblical behaviors like sinful divorce and polygamy.⁹

Paul also calls for potential overseers to display sobriety in both thought and action, by commanding sober-mindedness (1 Tim 3:2) and prohibiting drunkenness (1 Tim 3:3). Following Paul's prohibition of drunkenness, the apostle also prohibits greed, violence, and quarrelling (1 Tim 3:3). As a juxtaposition to violent behavior, Paul mentions that overseers should be gentle (1 Tim 3:3), a quality which the apostle elsewhere attributes to Christ.¹⁰ Additionally, the apostle expects candidates to possess self-control and respectability (1 Tim 3:2). Notice that Paul does not necessarily require the candidates to be respected, just to live lives worthy of respect. The apostle's command to be hospitable (1 Tim 3:2) is more than a command to be a good host; it is a command to show kindness towards strangers. Paul also requires that those who desire to oversee the church must be able to teach the church (1 Tim 3:2). Arguably, this is more than an aptitude for instruction. Paul is likely commanding that the potential overseers should be able to do the very work which he earlier prohibited women from doing: the authoritative teaching of the church which is commonly called preaching.¹¹

⁹See Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 158-59; Philip Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2006), 250-51; and I. Howard Marshall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, ICC (London: T & T Clark International, 1999), 478.

¹⁰Towner writes, "The link between this quality and Christ (cf. 2 Cor. 10:1) assures us that Paul's notions of ethics are theologically determined (Titus 2:11-12)." Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 253.

¹¹According to Mounce, "Chap. 3 is a continuation of the preceding discussion. In 1 Tim 2:11-15 Paul discussed women and leadership. He now turns to men and leadership, spelling out the personal qualities necessary for effective church leaders . . . and workers." Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 152. Calvin also sees a connection between the teaching prohibition given to women and the teaching requirement given to potential overseers. He writes, "Saint Paul, in that which went before, forbade women to teach. And lest we might think that all men may without making any matter be admitted to this office, he shows now that it is not for all men. And therewith he gives the woman to understand by the way, that they may not think much of it or be unnecessarily grieved, if God does not suffer them to have their mouths open, and take upon them this so honorable state, because the men themselves are not sufficient nor appropriate for it. For (as Saint Paul shows), he must be an outstanding fellow that must be chosen to this office. Therefore we may not think it strange if women are shut out from it." Ray Van Neste and Brian Denker, eds., *John Calvin's Sermons on 1 Timothy* (n.p.: Amazon, 2016), loc. 4574-8, Kindle.

Having described the life of a man who is “above reproach,” Paul now moves on to the second qualification. The potential overseer “must manage his own household well” (1 Tim 3:4a). This management must be handled with dignity, for it would be unseemly for an overseer or a household manager to discharge his duties by coercion, manipulation, or intimidation. The outcome of such dignified management should be, according to Paul, submissive children (1 Tim 3:4). Paul is not limiting the office of overseer to householders with children; rather, he is limiting the office to a certain type of man who would be a certain type of householder. This qualification is shown to be relevant by a comparison drawn from the lesser responsibility of household management to the greater responsibility of overseeing the house of God (1 Tim 3:5).

Also, any man who desires to do the work of an overseer should not be recently converted (1 Tim 3:6); this is the third requirement. There are certainly some very practical reasons to be offered in support of this wise counsel, but Paul offers only a dire warning. “He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil” (1 Tim 3:6). Paul does not want a potential overseer to let his appointment go to his head, lest in his pride he finds the same condemnation as Satan.¹² Paul’s final qualification carries a similar warning.

Paul concludes his list by stating that any man who desires this office must also “be well thought of by outsiders” (1 Tim 3:7). This last qualification should be seen in the light of the missional imperative of the church; it is most certainly not an apostolic capitulation to the world outside the church. The overseer must live in such a way that he

¹²There is some debate about whether the condemnation of Satan should be considered an objective genitive (i.e., the condemnation that Satan received for his own act of pride) or as a subjective genitive (i.e., the condemnation which Satan brings upon the prideful overseer). Knight finds that the phrase is an objective genitive: “When one correlates ‘conceit’ or ‘pride’ (τυφωθεῖς) with falling into κρίμα, the OT passage that has just been in Paul’s mind in 2:13–14, namely Genesis 2 and 3, particularly Gen. 3:14, 15, would seem to provide the background for our text. In Genesis the serpent receives condemnation because he tempted Eve to be like God (Gen. 3:5). That act reflected his own previous pride, arrogance, and enmity against God. In the light of all these considerations, τοῦ διαβόλου is more likely to be objective genitive.” Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 164.

will not disgrace the people of God by his actions within or without the church. Paul describes the disgrace to be avoided as a “snare of the devil” (1 Tim 3:7). In other words, Paul is warning that Satan is seeking to trap overseers by means of their relationships with outsiders. So, it is doubly important (both for the church and for the overseer) that outsiders are able to respect an overseer because he is a humble and mature believer who is capable of managing his home and his church while staying above reproach.

3:8-13: Servants in the House of God

Having outlined the requisite qualities of an overseer, Paul now turns his attention to a second church office, that of the deacon. Just as the word “overseer” reveals the primary function of that office, so does the word “deacon” – even if this is not immediately clear to English readers. The word “deacon” is a transliteration of *διάκονος*, a Greek word which means servant or service.¹³ Overseers, then, are those who oversee the church, and deacons are those who serve the church.¹⁴

Paul then uses a very important word: “likewise.” This word signals both a continuity and a discontinuity with what has gone before. It is Paul’s way of telling the Ephesian church that deacons are like overseers, but they are also not overseers. The similarities between the offices are most obviously seen in connection to their requirements. As he does with the overseers, Paul puts forward certain qualifications for those who wish to serve as deacons, and they bear striking similarities to the requirements placed upon potential overseers.

Firstly, those who wish to be deacons “must be dignified” (1 Tim 3:8). Paul elaborates on what this dignity entails as he describes qualified candidates as “not

¹³BDAG, s.v. “διάκονος.”

¹⁴According to Mounce, “The words used suggest that the *ἐπίσκοποι*, ‘overseers,’ were responsible for general oversight and the *διάκονοι*, ‘deacons,’ dealt with the day-to-day needs of serving the church.” Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 159.

double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience” (1 Tim 3:8). The apostle makes a nearly identical requirement for women who wish to serve as deacons: “Women, likewise, must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things” (Tim 3:11).¹⁵ Both male and female deacons must be dignified (1 Tim 3:8, 11). This command for deacons to be dignified is an overarching requirement followed by a series of behaviors that elaborate on this qualification; in this way, it is similar to Paul’s command that overseers be above reproach. The commands to not be addicted to much wine and to not be greedy (1 Tim 3:8) correspond clearly to the earlier commands to not be a drunkard nor a lover of money (1 Tim 3:3). The command for female deacons to be sober-minded (1 Tim 3:11) is the same command given to overseers (1 Tim 3:2). There is not a direct connection between the command to not be double-tongued (1 Tim 3:8) with anything in the section on overseers, but it does correspond to the command for female deacons to avoid slander (1 Tim 3:11). However, if a deacon were to say one thing to one person and something different to another, clearly such behavior would not be considered sober-minded, self-controlled, or respectable (1 Tim 3:2). The quality of holding the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience (1 Tim 3:9) corresponds to the requirement that female deacons should be faithful in all things (1 Tim 3:11) and speaks to the fact

¹⁵The ESV includes the translation quoted above in a footnote; the text reads: “Their wives, likewise, must. . . .” This interpretive gloss reveals an ongoing debate about whether this verse is referring to women who are deacons or wives of the deacons. Towner, Johnson, Marshall, and Quinn-Wacker argue for the former reading. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 265-66, esp fn 28; Luke Timothy Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, (AB) 35A (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), 228; Marshall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, 492-95; and Jerome D. Quinn and William Wacker, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy: A New Translation with Notes and Commentary* ECC (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2000), 285-86. Mounce and Knight both accept the reading of “wives.” Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 202-4; Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 170-72. There are 3 primary arguments which convince me that Paul is referring to female deacons and not deacon’s wives. First, there is no possessive pronoun or definite article limiting the term γυναίκα to wife. Secondly, if Paul is talking about deacon’s wives, then the absence of similar requirement for the wives of overseers is very curious. Thirdly, the reference in Rom 16:1 to “Phoebe, a deacon of the church” demonstrates the existence of female deacons within the first century church.

that a deacon, like an overseer, must be a believer whose faith is solid.¹⁶

The second qualification for potential deacons is a requisite time of testing. Paul writes, “And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless” (1 Tim 3:10). While there is not a specific time of testing required for potential overseers, Paul does command that they be not too recently converted (1 Tim 3:6). Paul’s third requirement for deacons repeats language used in the section concerning overseers: “Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well” (1 Tim 3:12). Paul concludes this section about potential deacons by promising them a reward if they serve well: “For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus” (1 Tim 3:13).

Interestingly enough, the promised reward for deacons (1 Tim 3:13) is one of the four significant differences that separate deacons and overseers. The overseers, unlike the deacons, are not to be motivated by a promised reward for faithful behavior. On the contrary, the potential overseers are motivated by warnings about the high cost of their failure (1 Tim 3:7). At the risk of stating the obvious, another significant difference between overseers and deacons is found in their titular duties. As mentioned earlier, overseers are primarily responsible for overseeing the church, and deacons are primarily responsible for serving the needs of the church. The third difference is that potential overseers must be able to teach, but deacons need not possess this ability. This reveals that one of the primary tasks of the overseer will be the authoritative teaching of the church – a task which Paul withholds from women in chapter 2. The final significant

¹⁶Marshall explains that “μυστήριον, ‘secret, mystery’, was used in Cl. Gk. to apply to the so-called ‘mystery religions’ and their esoteric teachings. However, its use in the NT is generally held to reflect the Aram. ܡܫܚܐ (Dan 2:18 *et al.*) and to refer to the secret plans of God which he reveals to his servants. . . . The thought is of God’s secret plan which is not accessible to reason but which has been revealed in the church and is the content of faith.” Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 490. Knight simplifies the mysterious phrase with his paraphrase: “the revealed truth of the Christian faith.” Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 169.

difference between these passages flows logically from the previous difference: because elders must exercise authority via teaching, women are able to serve as deacons, but not as overseers. Again, the text reveals that Paul is limiting the office of elder to only men. However, the inverse of this statement is also true: Paul is only limiting the office of elder to men. Thus, women can faithfully fulfill any other God given ministry role within the church, including that of a deacon.

Conclusion

The work of ministry is a noble work. As such, it demands a noble worker. The men who desire to be teachers who oversee the church are expected to be above reproach, faithful to their wives, dignified managers of their homes, and mature believers. If they fail to meet these requirements, they risk falling into the trap and condemnation of Satan. The men and women called to serve the physical needs of the church as deacons are held to an equally high standard. Potential deacons must be dignified and faithful believers who have proven themselves worthy of the task at hand. However, it must be remembered that no man or woman is worthy to serve in the house of God apart from the redeeming work of God. In fact, it is imperative that this section of Scripture remain connected to the gospel of Jesus Christ so that it does not just become another morality tale. Sin is prevalent in the heart of every man and woman, and it makes everyone an unworthy servant. Thankfully, Jesus Christ redeems humanity's brokenness by freeing men and women from their slavery to sin and inviting them to follow him. As believers follow Jesus, they become like him. It is this process alone that transforms the wicked seed of the serpent into a willing servant of the Savior who is capable of living up to the high calling of leadership and service within the church.

CHAPTER 6

YOURSELF AND YOUR HEARERS

In his book *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat*, Dr. Oliver Sacks, a neurologist and author, tells a story about a seemingly sane man who mistook his wife for a hat. The man, known as Dr. P., was referred to the neurologist by an ophthalmologist who recognized that there was some trouble with the visual parts of Dr. P's brain. Dr. Sacks began a neurological examination that revealed something was indeed amiss with his patient. Dr. P. could see, but he could not see rightly. In order to determine the extent of the problem, Dr. Sacks decided to perform a simple test; he produced a *National Geographic Magazine* with a picture of the Sahara on the cover and requested that his patient describe the picture. Dr. P. happily obliged, "I see a river," he said. "And a little guest-house with its terrace on the water. People are dining out on the terrace. I see coloured parasols here and there. . . ." ¹ Following this failed examination, Dr. Sacks recalls that his patient decided the meeting was over "and started to look around for his hat. He reached out his hand and took hold of his wife's head, tried to lift it off, to put it on. He had apparently mistaken his wife for a hat!" ²

One can recognize both the comedy and the tragedy inherent in Dr. P.'s insane malady. There truly is something both terribly funny and terribly sad about someone who is able to see the world, but not able to recognize its reality. As Dr. Sack's story implies, an important element in being considered sane is the ability to recognize reality; or, to

¹Oliver Sacks, *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat: And Other Clinical Tales* (n.p.: Odyssey Editions, 2010), 10, Kindle.

²Ibid.

state the inverse, a common mark of insanity is the inability to see things as they truly are.

Need

If the church is going to realize her full potential in this fallen world, she must not fall prey to Dr. P's insanity. Instead, she must recognize the reality of her situation. The church is the house of God, the place of His presence, in these last days. As such, she has become a prime target for Satanic attacks. This should not be a surprising revelation for the church, because it was clearly foretold by the Spirit of God. Such a high calling in such a perilous time requires good servants of Jesus who will recognize their reality and faithfully lead their brothers and sisters toward salvation.

Main Idea

These last days are full of danger. God needs faithful servants who will recognize this danger and obediently lead his people to safety.

Preview

In 1 Timothy 4 Paul begins with a description of the perilous situation confronting the church in the last days; this description gives way to a denunciation of the heretics (and their heresy) who have brought about this current state of affairs. In the second section of the chapter, the apostle encourages Timothy to be a good servant of Jesus Christ who will "train himself for godliness." The remainder of the chapter elucidates what this training will entail before Paul concludes by reemphasizing the seriousness of Timothy's calling.

Context

The opening chapter of this letter reveals that Paul has sent Timothy to Ephesus to lovingly confront false teachers there, while serving as a good steward in the house of God. This stewardship requires that Timothy teach the people about the priority

and propriety of prayer, which Paul explains in the second chapter. In the next chapter, Paul defines what leadership and service in the church should look like. Then, the apostle explains the larger purpose behind this letter: he is writing so that the church might behave rightly in the place of God's presence. Paul's description of right behavior is then illustrated with a hymnic confession that extols Jesus Christ, who is the mystery of godliness. Now, in the fourth chapter, Paul explains that the church is under Satanic attack, and he lovingly commands Timothy to care for himself and his hearers in the midst of this dangerous situation.

4:1-5: The Dangerous Situation

In 1 Timothy 4:1-5, Paul begins his commentary on the Ephesian situation with an appeal to the words of the Spirit. The opening phrase, "Now the Spirit expressly says," begs some questions. First, what exactly did the Spirit say, to whom did the Spirit speak, and where does one find this specific oracle? Second, to what end does Paul quote the Spirit in this passage? The answer to the first set of question has created consternation among those who wish to locate the exact source of this spiritual oracle. However, it seems doubtful that Paul is quoting a particular prophecy or prophetic passage.³ It is far more likely that he is alluding to all of the types and texts of Scripture through which the

³At one extreme of this scholarly debate stands A. T. Hanson, who argues against the authenticity of this oracle. Accordingly, he advises that readers "must ask ourselves whether it [the prophecy of the Spirit] ever actually took place." He continues, "Is it not more likely to be the sort of thing that the author imagined must have happened during Paul's lifetime." A. T. Hanson, *The Pastoral Epistles*, NCBC (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1987), 87. George Knight's findings are diametrically opposed to Hanson's. Knight locates the oracle's origin in the teachings of Jesus: "The numerous occurrences of τὸ πνεῦμα λέγει in Revelation (2:7, 11, 17, 25; 3:6, 13, 22) demonstrate that this phrase can be used to refer to the revelation given by Jesus Christ (cf. Rev 1:1-3, 9-20, especially vv. 1, 19, 20). Such usage brings to mind the warning of Jesus concerning apostasy in Mt. 24:10, 11 and Mk. 13:22. The warning of Jesus is conceptually the closest to this clause in that both speak of 'falling away'. . . . It is therefore most likely that Paul has this source in view." George W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1992), 188. Philip Townner expresses a bit less certainty in his effort to locate the source of the prophecy. He writes, "Paul does not indicate clearly whether this was a prophetic word revealed directly to him, in the past or immediate present (Acts 16:9; 18:9-10; 2 Cor 12:1), or whether he passes on revelation that has come by way of Christian prophets and has circulated in the churches for some time (1:18; 4:14; Acts 21:9; 1 Cor 14:29; Rev 2:7; 14:13; 22:17). Both options are possible, and the more important feature of the statement is the affirmation of the authority of the Spirit's prophetic word." Philip Townner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2006), 288.

Spirit of God foretells a time of tribulation and apostasy which will befall the church in these “later times.”⁴ In answer to the second question, one must recognize that the reason for Paul’s allusion in the first place is not to draw the reader’s attention to a particular passage of Scripture, but to locate the reader’s experience within the plan and providence of God. In other words, Paul wants the church to know that God is not surprised, nor caught off guard, by the apostates, the false teachers, and the demonic enemies attacking his people; in fact, he foretold this very situation through the Spirit.

A second issue related to these prophetic words concerns the time of their fulfillment. What exactly does Paul mean by “later times?” Is the apostle warning this church about a present or a future reality? Paul’s use of the phrase “later times” denotes the entirety of the church age, which began at Pentecost following the resurrection and ascension of Christ and will continue until the Savior’s return.⁵ Because the church is continuing to wait for the return of Christ, this prophecy reveals both a present and a future reality. In other words, the dangerous situation which Paul here reveals was a real

⁴William Mounce acknowledges that “the idea of apostasy and a proliferation of evil in the end times is found throughout Jewish literature (Dan 12:1; *1 Enoch* 80:2-8; 100:1-3; *As. Mos.* 8:1; 4 Ezra 5:1-12; 2 *Apoc. Bar.* 25-27; 48:32-36; 70:2-8; 1QpHab 2:5-10; 1QS 3:19-21; 1 QH 4:9; CD 12:2-3), the Gospels (Mark 13), Paul (1 Cor 7:26; 2 Thess 2:1-12), the PE (2 Tim 2:16-18; 3:1-9, 13; 4:3-4), and elsewhere in the NT (2 Pet 3:3-7; 1 John 2:18; Jude 17-18).” William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, WBC (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 234. Additionally, G. K. Beale cogently argues that there is a typological pattern of Satanic deception throughout Scripture which reveals that the church should expect tribulation in these last days. He writes, “As we have seen, Jesus experienced selective tribulation throughout his ministry, which climaxed with the absolute tribulation of death at the cross, after which he rose from the dead. Likewise, Christ’s followers ‘follow the Lamb wherever He goes’ (Rev. 14:4). The ‘body of Christ’ will suffer tribulation selectively during the church’s ministry of the interadvent age. Then, at the close of the age, Christ’s followers will endure universal tribulation (i.e., persecution), in which many will die and others will go underground to continue to worship as a church. Thus, the great tribulation has been inaugurated with Jesus and the church.” G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 219. Beale offer this further explanation: “Satan’s deception of Adam and Eve that characterized the beginning of history has been typologically reproduced, so that Satan’s primal deception comes to characterize the end of history, the age of the last Adam, not merely that period directly before Christ’s second coming but the time extending from Christ’s first coming until his last coming” (223). Finally, he concludes, “The same onslaught of devilish deceptions is directed against the church as was directed against Adam and Eve and Jesus. The same kind of deceptions that entered the garden . . . also enter the church today” (223).

⁵According to Knight, Paul’s use of the phrase “later times” (1 Tim 4:1) and his use of the phrase “last days” (2 Tim 3:1) are “virtually synonymous”; furthermore, “the NT community is conscious of being ‘in the last days’ (Acts 2:16, 17), i.e., the days inaugurated by the Messiah and characterized by the Spirit’s presence in power, the days to be consummated by the return of Christ.” Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 188.

problem for the Ephesian church to whom he wrote, and it remains a real problem for every church, to whom the apostle also writes.

Paul recognizes that within every church there are those who claim to be followers of Jesus but are false. These apostates are revealed by their willingness to “depart from the faith” (1 Tim 4:1). Paul’s use of the word “faith” here is similar to his use elsewhere in this letter where “the faith” is used objectively to refer to Christian teaching. In place of the apostolic teaching, the departed will devote themselves to “deceitful spirits and teachings of demons” (1 Tim 4:1). Paul here hints at the high priority of correct theological belief by juxtaposing “the faith” with the deceitful machinations of demons who promote their false beliefs “through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared” (1 Tim 4:2). Truth is not an academic pursuit for the apostle; it is, instead, the very lifeblood of the church and must be defended because it is constantly being bombarded by the deceiver called Satan and the lying teachers whom he has marked as his own.⁶

After he reveals the presence of dangerous teachers within the church, Paul rebuts their heretical teaching. Apparently, Paul’s opponents “forbid marriage and require abstinence from [certain] foods” (1 Tim 4:3). As he has done before in this letter, Paul responds to this wrong teaching with a biblical-theological appeal to the creative work of God, as recorded in the opening chapters of Genesis.⁷ Paul’s rebuttal is elegant in its simplicity. He argues that the wrongly prohibited foods were “created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth” (1 Tim 4:3). The truth to which

⁶Paul uses the image of a seared conscience as both the cauterization of the conscience which makes it insensitive and the idea of marking or branding which displays ownership. Hanson notes that the best use of the image is achieved by paraphrasing the translation as “anesthetized (because cauterized).” He continues, “The false teachers are liars; they deliberately deceive, because they have managed to anaesthetize their consciences, no doubt by means of their constant habit of deceit. This means that they do not believe their own ideology, but propagate it from the lowest motives.” Hanson, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 87.

⁷Paul made a similar biblical theological appeal to the creation narrative in 1 Tim 2:13-15.

Paul herein refers is that “everything created by God is good” (1 Tim 4:4). This claim is an allusion to the creation narrative, in which God repeatedly declares the goodness of his creation.⁸ Paul goes on to explain that because God made (and declared) all things good, “nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving” (1 Tim 4:4). Paul concludes his argument with a summary statement explaining that the good things which God created are “made holy by the word of God and prayer” (1 Tim 4:5). For Paul, the solution to the debate concerning food is to recognize that all of creation is a good gift from our good God, to be rightly received with grateful prayers from grateful people.

4:6-16: The Good Servant

Having exposed the dangerous situation brought about by the demonic teachers and their deceitful teachings, Paul turns his attention to Timothy. The apostle begins this section of Scripture by reminding Timothy about his role and responsibility in Ephesus: Timothy is to be a good servant who teaches truth to the Ephesian church. Paul writes, “If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed” (1 Tim 4:6).⁹ After encouraging Timothy to teach, “these things,” the apostle further defines what it means for the young man to be a good servant. In Paul’s view, a good servant of Jesus Christ believes the right things (because they have been “trained in the words of

⁸Luke Timothy Johnson clearly acknowledges that this passage is alluding to the creation narrative when he writes, “Paul’s response is rooted entirely in his understanding of creation, specifically his reading of the creation account in Genesis. His categorical statement in 4:4, ‘every creature [*pan ktisma*] of God is good [*kalon*],’ clearly echoes the LXX of Gen 1:31: ‘And God saw everything [*ta panta*] that he had made [*epoiēsen*], and behold, it was very good [*kala*].” Luke Timothy Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 35A (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), 247. This textual relationship is also noted by Jerome D. Quinn and William Wacker, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy: A New Translation with Notes and Commentary* ECC (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2000), 362.

⁹Mounce comments, “It is Paul’s practice in the PE and elsewhere (cf. 1 Tim 3:4) to sum up a previous discussion though the use of ταῦτα, ‘these things.’ He does so three times in this section (1 Tim 4:6, 11, 15). Although 1 Tim 4:1-5 is an important part of the epistle, it is not so important as to warrant this threefold repetition, so Paul is probably thinking of the entire epistle up to this point. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 248. Knight also agrees that “these things” could possibly serve as a reference to the whole letter. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 193.

faith”) and behaves in the right way (as evidenced by their willingness to follow good doctrine). To ensure that Timothy continues to be a good servant, the apostle fires off a series of commands to his young coworker.¹⁰ This command-centric approach hints at the true danger of Timothy’s mission and the depth of Paul’s concern for his much beloved coworker.

The first command is encountered in verse 7: “Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness” (1 Tim 4:7). Clearly, the command contains both a negative action to be avoided and a positive action to be pursued. Negatively, Timothy must reject the different teaching of the false teachers which is nothing more than irreverent and silly myths. Positively, Timothy must actively pursue godliness. Timothy’s rejection of false teaching is to be total and complete. In order to be a good servant of Jesus Christ, there must be an active, ongoing, and willful rejection of the enemy’s lies.¹¹ Likewise, Timothy’s pursuit of godliness should be just as intense. The Greek word, γυμνάζω, which means “to train,” introduces an athletic metaphor.¹² Timothy should train himself for godliness in the same way that top-tier athletes train themselves to excel in their chosen sport.

The goal of Timothy’s training is εὐσέβεια, “godliness,” but what exactly is “godliness”? As mentioned in the first sermon of this series, godliness means “piety, reverence, loyalty [exhibited towards parents or deities], fear of God.”¹³ James Hamilton elaborates, “With relationship to God, [godliness] means that a person worships well. . . .

¹⁰In fact, there are a total of twelve imperatives within the next ten verses; ten of these are paired together, resulting in seven distinct thoughts. See Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 246.

¹¹According to Mounce, “Timothy is to stay away from, actively ‘reject,’ the opponents’ interpretation of the gospel. The linear aspect of the tense underlines the continual need for Timothy’s attention at this point.” *Ibid.*, 250.

¹²Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, rev. and ed. Frederick W. Danker, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), s.v. “γυμνάζω.”

¹³BDAG, s.v. “εὐσέβεια.”

With relationship to other people, godliness means recognizing who we are, where we stand, how we fit with respect to other people, and then behaving appropriately.¹⁴

It seems, then, that Paul's first imperative to Timothy is that the young man should not pursue false teaching, which is characterized by irreverent and silly myths, but instead he should pursue right relationships which are characterized by an appropriate posture towards God and others.

It is important to recognize the nature of "godliness" as Paul describes it. Godliness is not simply an avoidance of worldliness. It is not holiness by subtraction. If you grew up in church, this understanding of godliness was often celebrated by youth group meetings which culminated in the destruction of not "Christian" music. Paul's charge to Timothy is far more than this. Paul is calling his young coworker to holiness by addition. Timothy's duty is not just rejection; it is also redemption. Timothy should separate from that which is evil, but his separation is not an end in itself. For Paul and Timothy, rejecting evil is only one small part of rightly relating to our God and our neighbor.

In verse 8 Paul continues his athletic metaphor by comparing training for godliness to "bodily training." The point of this comparison is not to defend nor to denigrate bodily exercise. The point is to highlight the incredible value of training oneself for godliness. Bodily exercise promises only meager benefit because it is limited to this life. Training for godliness, on the other hand, holds out promise for "the present life and also for the life to come" (1 Tim 4:8). In verse 9 Paul mentions that what he has just said in verse 8 is actually another of the faithful and trustworthy sayings which appear throughout this letter.¹⁵ In verse 10, Paul resumes his line of thinking from verse 8; he

¹⁴James M. Hamilton Jr., "Godliness and Gender: Relating Appropriately to All (1 Timothy 2:9-12)," *JBMW* 15, no. 1 (Spring 2010): 28.

¹⁵There is some scholarly debate concerning the referent of the trustworthy saying (as there was in 1 Tim 3:1). Some argue that the saying should be limited to vv. 8b-10, but others claim that the faithful saying is v. 8 in its entirety. Knight makes a convincing case for the latter position. George Knight III, *The Faithful Sayings in the Pastoral Letters* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), esp 62-65.

further elaborates on the difficulty of training oneself for godliness and then offers another motivating reason to undertake such an arduous pursuit.

Paul uses two words which hint at the difficulty of godliness: “toil and strive.” Together these words reveal that becoming godly is not a passive or tranquil pursuit. In fact, the word translated “strive,” *ὀνειδίζω*, indicates that training oneself for godliness might even result in suffering.¹⁶ At this point, it may be wise to ask, “So why in the world would Timothy choose such a challenging path?” Paul answers that question: “because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe” (1 Tim 4:10). The reason that Timothy will undertake the agonizing toil of training himself for godliness is because Timothy, like Christ, understands the greatness of the joy set before him (cf. Heb 12:1). In other words, Timothy knows that God is his only hope in this life and the next, and that no challenge is too great when compared to the infinite promise of an eternity spent in the presence of God. Timothy also knows that if God is indeed the only hope for this life and the life to come, then those who do not know him as Savior are rushing headlong into an eternal and terrible punishment. Timothy will toil and strive toward godliness so that others might come to believe.

Paul’s language at the end of 1 Timothy 4:10 has created some theological concern throughout the history of the church. Men and women continue to debate what exactly Paul meant when he wrote that God “is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.”¹⁷ The word “especially” is the most common translation of the Greek

¹⁶BDAG, s.v. “ὀνειδίζω.”

¹⁷Mounce helpfully outlines the five major interpretive options for this passage. “(1) Those who hold to the doctrine of universal atonement use this verse as one of the strongest scriptural supports for their position that God as savior has done something for all people, albeit more for believers. . . . (2) Those who hold to the doctrine of particular (limited) atonement often understand *πάντων ἀνθρώπων*, ‘all people,’ as ‘all kinds’ or ‘all groups,’ interpreting the verse as reflecting the growth of the church from Judaism to the Gentile world. . . . (3) Skeat translates *μάλιστα* as ‘to be precise,’ ‘namely,’ here and in 2 Tim 4:13 and Titus 1:10, . . . the second phrase is understood as repeating and filling out the first. . . . (4) Calvin and others hold that Paul is speaking not of salvation, but of common grace, God’s care for all people. . . . (5) There is no fifth option of universalism.” Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 256-57.

word *μάλιστα*.¹⁸ However, there are convincing proposals which argue that the word should be translated, “to be precise, namely, I mean.”¹⁹ This translation would clarify that the text’s purpose is to teach that God is the only potential Savior of all people, but the actual Savior of those who believe. Such an interpretation nicely parallels the similar text from the letter’s second chapter: “This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim 2:3-4).

The second imperatival idea in this passage follows Paul’s explanation of godliness. The apostle commands Timothy to “Command and teach these things” (1 Tim 4:11). Again, Paul is urging Timothy to exercise his stewardship of God’s house by rightly teaching the apostolic doctrines. Obviously, Paul understands that Timothy’s youth might be a barrier to the proper execution of his authority. So the apostle offers a third command: “Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity” (1 Tim 4:12). Too often, discussion of this verse centers around Timothy’s probable age instead of Timothy’s calling to serve as a *τύπος*, “a type, pattern, or model” for the church in Ephesus.²⁰ Expounding on this idea of Timothy as a model, Mounce quotes Cranfield: “It, *τύπος*, ‘denotes a mark made by striking, . . . an impression made by something, such an impression used in its turn as a mould [sic] to shape something else.’” Mounce continues, “The word picture it paints is not so much that Timothy is an example that others can emulate but that he is a mold that should be pressed into the lives of others so that they can attain the same shape.”²¹ It is

¹⁸BDAG, s.v. “*μάλιστα*.”

¹⁹T. C. Skeat, “Especially the Parchments: A Note on 2 Timothy IV 13,” *JTS* 30 (1979): 173–77.

²⁰BDAG, s.v. “*τύπος*.”

²¹Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 259.

interesting to note that the areas in which Timothy is called to serve as such an example are the same areas in which the false teachers have fallen short of this high calling.²²

The fourth imperative reads: “Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching” (1 Tim 4:13). As he did in 1 Timothy 3:14, Paul again makes reference to his plan to visit Timothy in Ephesus. In the meantime, however, Paul wants his young delegate to be devoted to the right practices. First, Timothy must commit himself to reading the Scriptures publicly. Timothy must then follow his reading with sound exhortative preaching. In addition to Timothy’s preaching, which should “reprove, rebuke, and exhort” (2 Tim 4:2), the young man should also provide a more in-depth teaching about the text at hand. Historically, these three tasks were understood to be the primary duties of every pastor.²³ These duties were not Pauline innovations, nor were they church inventions; instead, they were likely

²²Mounce writes, “Even though 6-16 are personal, the Ephesian situation is never far in the background; each one of these qualities is sadly lacking in the opponents. . . . It is in contrast to them that Timothy is to maintain a good example. . . . λόγος, ‘speech,’ refers to everyday speech (cf. 1 Tim 4:6); the opponents’ speech was mere babble about what they did not know. ἀναστροφή, ‘conduct,’ is a general word referring to one’s entire way of life, one’s general conduct; . . . the opponents’ conduct was so reprehensible that it had brought disrepute to the church. On ἀγάπη, ‘love,’ . . . the opponents had no love, just greed. πίστις, ‘faith,’ could refer to Timothy’s personal faith . . . or to his general trustworthiness; the opponents’ faith was insincere (1 Tim 1:5).

Timothy is also to have ἀγνεία, ‘purity’ . . . This word has sexual connotations, giving the meaning ‘chaste’ . . . Paul was all too aware of the sexually perverse activities of the opponents (cf. 2 Tim 3:6) and of the problems with the younger widows in Ephesus (1 Tim 5:11-15).” Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 259-60.

²³In a sermon on 1 Timothy 4:12-13, John Calvin writes, “Now when Saint Paul has thus spoken, he adds, ‘Till I come, be diligent in reading, and exhortation, and doctrine.’ He exhorts Timothy in plain words to do his duty. But there is no doubt that he had greater regard to the whole Church, than to one man alone, who had no great need to be pricked forward, because he ran well enough of himself, as we have showed you before. And therefore, the Holy Spirit puts forth a general doctrine which concerns all the shepherds of the Church of Christ.” Ray Van Neste and Brian Denker, eds., *John Calvin’s Sermons on 1 Timothy* (n.p.: Amazon, 2016), loc. 7795, Kindle. Gordon Fee, on the other hand, argues that “it is too narrow a view to see this as intending to provide a model. . . . Rather than providing an example of the pastor’s specific duties in worship, these three items basically refer to the same thing . . . and as such are to be Timothy’s positive way of counteracting the erroneous teachings.” Gordon D. Fee, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, UTB (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), loc. 2440, Kindle. Fee is right when he asserts that public worship involves far more than these three activities. However, according to Justin Martyr’s early account of what transpires in Christian worship, it is clear that these three activities are given a place of primacy. “On the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles and the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has finished, the president speaks, instructing and exhorting the people to imitate these good things.” Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, trans. A. W. F. Blunt, Cambridge Patristic Texts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911), I. 67.

inherited from the synagogue.²⁴ In fact, a close reading of Ezra's activities, as recorded in Nehemiah 8, reveals that these are ancient practices. The Bible says, "They read from the book, from the Law of God, with interpretation, and they gave a sense, so that the people understood the reading" (Neh 8:8).²⁵ Thus, it seems that Nehemiah 8:8 delineates the three activities which Paul puts before Timothy. Both Timothy and Ezra engage in the public reading of Scripture; both Timothy and Ezra follow their reading with interpretation, also known as exhortative preaching; finally, both Timothy and Ezra teach the text by giving its sense so that the people can understand.

Paul rightly understands that Timothy's public duties will only be effective inasmuch as they flow out of his spiritual giftedness. Thus, Paul's next command: "Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you" (1 Tim 4:14). This is a difficult command because it is hard to know exactly how Timothy should go about not neglecting his spiritual gift. Thankfully, it is quite possible that Paul intends the next imperative to provide the means of accomplishing this difficult task. He writes, "Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress" (1 Tim 4:15). As discussed earlier, Paul often uses the phrase "these things" to refer to both his near and far context. Thus, Timothy is to practice all of the commands found throughout this letter. By doing so, it will be hard, if not impossible, for Timothy to neglect the spiritual gift which he has received.²⁶

²⁴That these practices are not Pauline innovations is proven by the grammar of the text. For, the presence of definite articles before each activity reveal that these are common practices which would have been recognized by the church; see Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 260. Quinn and Wacker argue that "the synagogal *ordo servandus* certainly seems to lie behind the terminology and the functions designated at this point in the PE, and the importance of the Scripture reading in that service can hardly be overestimated." Quinn and Wacker, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, 390. According to Hanson, Nauck also "maintains that all three activities are inherited from the synagogue." Hanson, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 93. Other commentators acknowledge a connection between the public reading of Scripture in the church and the synagogue. See Towner, *Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 317; and Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 563.

²⁵In the ESV, there is a footnote that offers "with interpretation" as an alternative translation to the word "clearly" which appears in the text.

²⁶It is important to recognize that the gifts which Timothy possesses were given by God, not by the men who laid their hands upon him. According to Mounce, "The prophecy Paul refers to is not the

Another benefit to practicing and immersing himself in these commands is that Timothy should make noticeable spiritual progress. This progress will likely increase his authority within the church and allow him to be a more effective steward over God's house.

Unfortunately, Paul seems to know that Timothy's progress will also make him a target. The enemies who have infiltrated the church in Ephesus will not easily be defeated; so, Paul issues one final command: "Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers" (1 Tim 4:16). Timothy must serve as a watchman over his own soul. In his private devotion and his public duty, this man of God must remain vigilant lest he stumble and give ground to the enemies. However, Timothy's focus must not remain on just his behavior. Paul commands this young man to maintain a vigilant watch over his teaching also.

If Timothy can somehow manage to persist in his vigilance, the promised reward is great: the steward of God's house will save himself and his hearers. This is not to say that Timothy is the source of his own salvation via the right works, nor is he the source of atonement for those who listen to his message. Paul's promise is that Timothy has a great responsibility, but if he is faithful to discharge his duties obediently, then God will bless his ministry with a great reward; namely, God will allow Timothy to serve as a conduit of saving grace.

Conclusion

It is far too easy to forget about the church's true reality. The church has both a great mission and a terrible enemy. The mission of the church is to engage the great

efficient cause of Timothy's gifts; that is God's role. It is even doubtful that any idea of intermediate agency is intended since in the parallel passage (1 Tim 1:18) the prophecy simply indicates that Timothy possessed certain spiritual gifts." Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 262. Knight seems to agree with Mounce's conclusion, and reasons that the apostle mentions the prophecy and the laying on of hands not to define agency, but to encourage Timothy. He explains that "Paul points to those public episodes that were associated with the recognition of Timothy and with his having received this gift from God, i.e., the prophetic utterances and the laying on of hands, and he does so as an encouragement for Timothy." Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 208.

cosmic battle that rages on between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. It is the duty of the church to storm the strongholds of Satan and to rescue the enslaved souls of men and women by bringing them to their Savior. The enemy opposes this mission at every turn.

This enemy seeks to do us harm. Nothing would provide Satan with greater pleasure than the undoing of God's redemptive work. Heed this warning church: "If you do not believe that an enemy is present, even though he really is, then you will not worry about protecting yourself from that enemy."²⁷ However, believers must not forget that the enemy has already been defeated, and they are already more than conquerors. Vigilance must not give way to anxiety. This is a dangerous reality, but God is calling and equipping his church to be good servants who make disciples for the glory of God.

²⁷Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 224.

CHAPTER 7

FAMILY

J. D. Vance is the author of the New York Times #1 Bestseller *Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis*.¹ Vance's book is a true and terrible story about growing up in the midst of violence, poverty, and drug addiction, but, it is also a hopeful story about the power of family. Throughout the book it is clear that Vance loves his family. This is not, however, a saccharine story. Vance's family seems more like the Sopranos than the Brady Bunch; like Vance himself, they are severely broken. The author does not shy away from the awful narratives that shaped him, but he does not deify them either. Instead, he recognizes that who he is and what he has accomplished in this world are a product of his family. In other words, Vance honors his family and the role that they play in his life. In 1 Timothy 5, Paul commands Timothy to do much the same. The apostle urges Timothy and the Ephesian Christians to recognize that they are family, and while that might make things fairly messy, seeing the church as a family is the only way for the church to truly accomplish all that God has called her to do.

Need

The church of God cuts across demographic lines. She is composed of both rich and poor, old and young, male and female, fervent and falling away. But, there is one thing that all of these disparate church members have in common: they are sinners who have been redeemed by the grace of God, adopted into their Father's family, and given a mission to make disciples. In order for this mess of humanity to accomplish her mission

¹J. D. Vance, *Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis* (New York: Harper, 2016).

and glorify her Father, she must figure out how to work and worship together as a family.

Main Idea

Church members must honor one another because they are family.

Preview

In this passage Paul reveals that the church's identity shapes her responsibility. According to the apostle, the church is more than just a group of strangers who share a common creed; the church is truly a family. Individuals within the church, then, must honor one another as they would their own family members.

Following his opening admonition to treat the various groups within the church as family members, Paul instructs Timothy in more detail about what honor looks like for several particularly difficult demographics in Ephesus: widows, elders, and slaves. Paul's treatment of these groups offers key practical and theological criteria about how the church should behave in specific situations. From the apostle's instructions, broad and timeless principles about benevolent ministry, accountability, and mission can be drawn.

Context

The church in Ephesus seems to have forgotten that she is the house of God, which is to say that she is the place of God's presence in these last days. Paul writes this letter to remind the Ephesian Christians of their identity and responsibility. To that end, the apostle encourages Timothy and the church to behave properly and to pursue godliness by revealing that Christ, the mystery of godliness, is both their means and their model for such an undertaking.

In chapter 1, Paul explains that Timothy was sent to Ephesus to serve the church as a proper steward who lovingly confronts the false teachers with the true gospel. Chapter 2 begins with Paul's instructions about how the church should pray, and concludes with Paul's admonition that women should not serve as elders, but should

serve in ways that promote godliness. In the third chapter, Paul lists the requisite qualifications for a man to serve as an elder, then he offers a second, very similar, list detailing the qualifications for men and women who wish to serve as deacons. In chapter 4, Paul commands Timothy to train himself for godliness. Now, in chapter 5, Paul will show Timothy and the Ephesian church what godliness in actions looks like by commanding them to relate to one another as a family.

5:1-2: The Church's Identity

Given that Paul spent most of chapter 4 commanding Timothy to train himself for godliness, it is likely that Paul intends the fifth chapter to serve Timothy as a blueprint for putting godliness into action. In other words, Paul commanded Timothy to train himself for right relationships in the last chapter; now, he teaches his young coworker what those relationships should look like: family.

The apostle's instructions begin on a very practical note: "Do not rebuke an older man" (1 Tim 5:1a). It is notable that this is the only negative statement in these two verses. Timothy is not told how not to treat younger men, older women, or younger women, but Paul explicitly tells him to avoid a particular behavior with older men. Why?

Most likely, the cultural realities of Timothy's difficult situation lie behind Paul's command. Timothy was a young man (cf. 1 Tim 4:12), and he was given the difficult task of setting right the wrongs in Ephesus. It is likely that a number of the erring elders that Timothy was sent to confront were older men. This creates an uncomfortable theological and cultural reality for Timothy, for the Jewish world in which his mother raised him required one to respect the elderly (cf. Lev 19:32), and the Greco-Roman cultural world in which he was ministering was a world also marked by deference to elders.²

²According to Hanson, "Many examples could be cited from contemporary Greek literature for the requirement that one should treat elderly people as parents and contemporaries as siblings." A. T. Hanson, *The Pastoral Epistles*, NCBC (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1987), 95.

It is important to see that the prohibition against rebuking an elder is not a prohibition against disagreement, but a prohibition against disrespect. The word “rebuke” is translated from ἐπιπλήσσω, a Greek word with the primary meaning of “to strike at.”³ At least one commentator acknowledges that this word “suggests the use of very severe censure.”⁴ Paul is not calling on Timothy to tolerate the intolerable behavior of these older men. He is simply encouraging Timothy to respect his elders as he loves his enemies (cf. 1 Tim 1:5). Instead of rebuking an older man, Timothy should “encourage him as you would a father” (1 Tim 5:1b). To encourage someone is to pour courage into the heart of the other. Encouragement edifies; rebuke destroys. This is a poignant reminder that the church is called to a ministry of building up and not tearing down.

Paul also instructs Timothy to apply this familial pattern of relationships to other demographics within the church. Timothy must treat “younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, in all purity” (1 Tim 5:1c-2). In dealing with this final relationship, “Paul encourages Timothy and thus ministers of later times to take special care in preserving the integrity of their ministry by avoiding those areas that so often are part of the downfall of both minister and church.”⁵

It is vital that Paul’s admonition to understand the familial identity of the church is not interpreted as merely pious platitudes. This is an actual command. It is also an extremely difficult command that requires a great deal of courage and self-sacrifice. Loving strangers as though they were family is the kind of love that Jesus shows his church.

³Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, rev. and ed. Frederick W. Danker, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), s.v. “ἐπιπλήσσω.”

⁴I. Howard Marshall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, ICC (London: T & T Clark International, 1999), 573.

⁵William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, WBC (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 271.

In some ways, it was also the kind of love that motivated a normal guy named Arland Williams to become a hero. Arland worked as a federal bank examiner who spent his life avoiding risk. Then, on January 13, 1982, Arland sat in a Boeing 737 as it fell out of the sky. Air Florida Flight 90 slammed into the 14th Street Bridge in Washington, D.C., before it crashed into the Potomac River. As the airplane slowly sunk into the water, news crews arrived to cover the tragedy. It seemed clear to most viewers that there would be no survivors, but one by one six passengers broke the surface of the icy water and desperately clung to the tail of the aircraft. The awful weather, which contributed to the plane's crash, also slowed first responders. Finally, after twenty minutes rescuers arrived and lowered a life ring into the water, one of the survivors grabbed the ring and was rescued. The helicopter crew then dropped the ring a second time. Shockingly, a man named Arland Williams took hold of the ring and then gave it away. Arland did this until each of the other survivors had been rescued. When the helicopter returned to rescue Arland, it was too late. Arland had disappeared into the water.

Except for one man, Benjamin Franklin Webster, the world seemed stunned by Arland's heroism. Webster, who had been Arland's college roommate at the Citadel (one of the most difficult military colleges in America) explained that he was not shocked by Arland's heroic sacrifice because of "the iron law" that they learned at the Citadel: "Always take care of your people first," Webster says. "That's an unbreakable code. You go last. Your people go first." . . . To Arland, the survivors around him in the water weren't competitors in a battle for survival. They were family."⁶ Arland helped save the lives of those who survived the crash of Flight 90 because at the Citadel he had trained himself to honor strangers like they were family. Arland's heroism was godliness in action, which is exactly what Paul demands of Timothy and the church in Ephesus.

⁶Christopher McDougall, *Natural Born Heroes: Mastering the Lost Secrets of Strength and Endurance* (New York: Vintage Books, 2016), 114-15, Kindle.

5:3-6:2: The Church's Responsibility

Now that Paul has commanded Timothy and the Ephesian Christians to pursue godliness by relating to each other as family, he goes on to show what such a relationship would look like. For Paul, these relationships will be marked by one key idea: honor. Throughout the remainder of chapter 5 and the first two verses of chapter 6, Paul will command the church to honor widows and elders and for Christian slaves to honor their masters.

Honor is not a novel idea created by the apostle, but rather a theological concept rooted in the Old Testament which Paul applies to the church. His use of this term is most likely meant to echo Moses' fifth commandment: "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you" (Exod 20:12).⁷ The word τιμάω, "honor," connotes both an attitude of respect and activity of material recompense.⁸

⁷Philip Towner writes, "Paul may intentionally echo the similarly framed fifth commandment ('Honor you father and mother') that in Greek translation utilizes the same verb (Exod 20:12; Deut 5:16; Mark 7:10; 10:19; Luke 18:20; Eph 6:2). . . . If in our passage an allusion to this commandment seems more pertinent to 5:4 and 8; where blood relatives are in view, it should be recalled that 5:1-2 already extended family relationships and responsibilities in a way that allows Timothy and the rest of the church here to view 'real widows' as mothers. As we will see, the responsibility to provide for widows falls first to actual blood-family members; but in the absence of family members, the church is to view 'real widows' within the framework of the fifth commandment." Philip Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2006), 338. This possible allusion to the Decalogue is also noted by Jerome D. Quinn and William Wacker, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy: A New Translation with Notes and Commentary* ECC (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2000), 430; George W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1992), 216; Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 278; and Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 582.

⁸BDAG, s.v. "τιμάω." Johnson rightly argues for a translation that gives credence to the idea that Paul's command to honor encompasses both respect and material support. He writes, "The translation of *tima* is critical to the entire discussion of 5:3-16. The RSV and other translations have 'Honor widows who are real widows,' and the verb *timaō* definitely bears that meaning (e.g., Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 4.3.13; John 5:23; 8:49). But such honor could take the specific form of financial support (see *timē* in Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 5:72; Sir 38:1). Indeed, the biblical commandment 'Honor your father and mother' (Exod 20:12; Matt 15:4; 19:19; Mark 7:10; 10:19; Luke 18:20; Eph 6:2) bore with it the corollary of supporting one's parents in their old age. An allusion to that expectation appears in 5:4: the children who practice godliness by giving back to their parents do something that is pleasing to God. Compare Eph 6:2: 'This is the first commandment with a promise, 'so that it might go well with you and you might live long on the land'' (quoting LXX Deut 5:16). Likewise, financial support for parents is the point at issue between Jesus and the Pharisees in Mark 7:9-13: he accuses them of voiding the commandment to honor parents by sequestering the funds they would have used to support them and declaring them *corban*. Notice, furthermore, that in 1 Tim 5:17, the direction that elders who govern well should receive 'double honor' (*diplēs timēs*) is clearly meant to be understood as financial support, as the two citations of Scripture adduced in its support makes obvious (5:18). Finally, the entire theme of the passage concerns which widows the *ekklēsia* should support financially (see, above all, verse 16). The translation, 'Provide financial support,' therefore is not only possible, but demanded." Luke

Widows

1 Timothy 5:3-16 is the lengthiest New Testament passage concerning the proper care of widows. With such a lengthy passage, it is important that one does not lose sight of the forest in examining the trees. The main idea underlying Paul's instructions regarding widows is that the church has a responsibility to care for her family members, but that responsibility requires discernment.

Paul begins with the unsurprising command to honor true widows. The proper treatment of widows is a common subject addressed throughout Scripture.⁹ Jesus's younger brother James even defines true religion as "caring for orphans and widows in their distress" (Jas 1:7). So, clearly, Paul's command that the church should honor widows is not unexpected or surprising. However, Paul does not assume that the burden to care for widows should fall entirely on the church. Instead, he calls on the family of the widow to do their duty. Paul places this responsibility in the context of godliness: "But if a widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show godliness to their own household and to make some return to their parents, for this is pleasing in the sight of God" (1 Tim 5:4). Just a few verses later, Paul excoriates those families who fail to take care of their own widows. He writes, "But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Tim 5:8). These are strong words, and they are not meant to

Timothy Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 35A (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), 260-61.

⁹William Mounce helpfully collects and ably summarizes the biblical teaching concerning the proper care of widows. He writes, "Care for widows plays an important role throughout the OT (Exod 22:22; Deut 10:18; 24:17, 19-21, 29; 25:17-21; 26:12-13; 27:19; Job 24:3; 29:13; Pss 68:5; 94:6; 146:9; Prov 15:25; Isa 1:17; Jer 7:6; 22:3; Mal 3:5; including levirate marriage [Deut 25:5-10]) and in early Christianity as reflected in the NT (Luke 2:37; Acts 6:1-6, 9:36, 39, 41, Jas 1:27) and the early church fathers. . . . Repeatedly God is pictured as the provider and protector of widows and orphans (Exod 22:22; Deut 10:18; Pss 68:5; 146:9; Isa 1:17), Israel is called to defend widows (Deut 24:17-21; 25:5-9; 27:19; Jer 7:6; 22:3; Zech 7:10), and mistreatment of widows is often given as an example of sin (Job 24:21; Ps 94:6)." Mounce, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 278.

be diminished via an appeal to hyperbole.¹⁰ It was common practice in Paul's days for Roman families to care for their own, so imagine how detrimental it would be to the church's testimony if her members were to behave in a way that even idolatrous pagans found appalling.¹¹

Having placed the primary responsibility to care for widows within the family, Paul now explains how the church should help those who remain in need. He does this by contrasting true and false widows. Paul defines true widows in terms of desperation and devotion. True widows are left alone and have no other means of support. Such a difficult situation has led these women to place their hope on God and pray constantly.

Additionally, true widows should not be younger than sixty years of age, they should have been faithful to their marital vows while their husbands were alive, and they should have good reputation which includes: raising godly children, being hospitable, serving other believers, and caring for those in need.¹²

The false widows, by contrast, are described as self-indulgent and not truly in need. They are young women who desire to remarry, even if it means that they must abandon their faith. Furthermore, these false widows sow dissension and discord in their church and community because they spend their days idly gossiping with neighbors. Paul does not wish to ignore the needs of these younger widows, but he does not think that

¹⁰Towner writes, "Assuming that the attached assessment is not hyperbole, Paul not only identifies neglectful relatives of widows with 'unbelievers' . . . but actually makes them morally 'worse' than those outside the church. The condemnation is a shocking wake-up call." Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 345.

¹¹According to Mounce, "Throughout the PE there is a concern that Christians be at least as good as pagan society. . . . Paul uses strong language not merely because the Ephesians are not living up to the social norms. They are disobeying the teachings of the church, teachings going back to the fifth commandment. . . . This is why their negligence is worse than that of the non-believers: they are knowingly breaking God's law. . . . For a person to claim to be a believer and yet not live up to even pagan standards of decency is virtually to deny the meaning of the Christian faith and live as an unbeliever." Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 285.

¹²The qualification that a widow must have "been the wife of one husband" should be interpreted parallel to the similar command placed on elders and deacons to be "the husband of one wife." Thus, the phrase is not prohibiting remarriage (under appropriate circumstances) or polyandry. Instead, as Knight argues, "the phrase demands a life of sexual and marital fidelity." Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 223.

they should qualify for long term church benevolence. Instead, Paul urges these young women to remarry, raise children, take care of their homes, and not create opportunities which the enemy might exploit.

One must be careful to avoid seeing an ungenerous and misogynistic edge in Paul's instructions. Paul does not dislike the younger widows, but neither does he want to enable them to continue sinning. It is the apostle's desire that every member of the church pursue godliness, which means that family members should care for their own, and younger widows without family should remarry. Paul even mentions the possibility that some wealthy women (probably widows themselves) might have the means to support other needy widows. If such is the case, Paul encourages these women to do just that, in order to ease the financial burden upon the church.

How does this teaching apply to the modern church? As one seeks to apply Paul's instructions to a modern setting, it is necessary to remember that Paul is not speaking about all benevolent gifts which the church might give to those in need. In this passage, the apostle is focused solely upon how to properly offer long term support to a certain class of people.¹³ In such a situation, the apostle is stipulating that long term support should be given with discernment to those whose life is marked by faithful devotion and not sinful dissipation, for giving financial support to such a worthy person who is truly in need will benefit that person and the church as the recipient can then use their gifts to serve the church.¹⁴ This application matches well with the sort of benevolent

¹³Knight cautions that one should read this passage holistically. For, "Noting all the dimensions of this arrangement keeps one from drawing the false conclusion that the church does not help other widows who are either younger [than sixty] or who do not fully meet the requirements. But the passage does imply that the church enters into this *permanent arrangement* only with certain qualified widows and with mutually accepted commitments and possible responsibilities" (italics mine). Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 223. Mounce also acknowledges that the instructions of this passage do "not mean that the church could not help younger widows who were truly in need." Mounce, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 275.

¹⁴Dibelius and Conzelmann incorrectly argue that Paul's enrollment of widows implies an "order" of working widows who receive a wage, not charity. They write, "This passage illustrates the development of the technical use of the term, a process which led to the definition of the office 'widows of the congregation,' but which at the same time allowed the continued use of the word as a designation for anyone who had been widowed. The situation is very similar to that of 'elder.'" Martin Dibelius and Hans

charity that is lauded in books like *Toxic Charity* and *When Helping Hurts*, which argue that it is better to help someone find a way to earn a living instead of relying on handouts.¹⁵

Elders

Having discussed the church's responsibility in regard to widows, Paul now turns his attention to the honor of elders. As with the previous section of Scripture, it is important that the main idea of this passage is not demoted to a place of secondary importance. Paul's main idea is that those men who serve the church as elders are worthy of receiving honor, which includes both respect and remuneration, but this honor does not negate the necessity of accountability.

Paul begins by stating that elders are worthy of "double honor" if they rule well by laboring in preaching and teaching.¹⁶ There are some who read into this verse at least four types of elders: older men, older men who lead, older men who lead well, and older men who lead well by preaching and teaching.¹⁷ It seems more suitable to see only two types of elders: older men in general (as mentioned in 1 Tim 5:1) and those men who serve as elders/overseers/pastors. Paul is undoubtedly referring to the second group.¹⁸

Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), 74. Mounce ably refutes this idea. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 273-75.

¹⁵Robert D. Lupton, *Toxic Charity: How Churches and Charities Hurt Those They Help, And How to Reverse It* (New York: HarperOne, 2012). Steve Corbett et al., *When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty Without Hurting the Poor . . . and Yourself*, New Edition (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2014).

¹⁶The interpretation reflected in this sentence does not see two classes of elders, one ruling and one teaching, but one class of elders who rule and teach. Commentator George Knight supports such a reading. He writes, "The phrase beginning with *μάλιστα* gives a further delineation of these elders. The phrase may indicate a special subgroup of elders that is especially in view (*μάλιστα* taken as 'especially'). But if Skeat is correct ('Especially the Parchments'), as I think he is, that *μάλιστα* can at times have the meaning 'that is,' then Paul is giving here a further description of those he has already mentioned. In this case *οἱ καλῶς προεστῶτες πρεσβύτεροι* [elders who rule well] are *οἱ κοπιῶντες ἐν λόγῳ καὶ διδασκαλίᾳ* [those who labor in preaching and teaching]." Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 232.

¹⁷Meier raises then rejects this interpretation. John P. Meier, "Presbyteros in the Pastoral Epistles," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 35, no. 3 (1973): 323-45.

¹⁸Knight responds to the argument that Paul here refers to honoring older men in general with the assertion that "it is more likely that he [Paul] is referring to church officers because he refers to those

Thus, the apostle is not saying that all of the older men in the church should receive “double honor,” but only those older men who qualify as overseers (cf. 1 Tim 3:1-7) and rule well by ably preaching and teaching.

What does the apostle mean by “double honor”? He means that elders are worthy of both respect and remuneration. It is clear from the context, though, that Paul has in mind primarily financial compensation, for, he quotes two passages of Scripture which directly address this issue. The first quotation is derived from Deuteronomy 25:4, which Paul also quotes in his letter to the Corinthian church: “For it is written in the Law of Moses, ‘You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain.’ Is it for oxen that God is concerned?” (1 Cor 9:9). Having asked this rhetorical question, Paul goes on to explicitly claim that Deuteronomy 25:4 refers to the reaping of material benefits for spiritual work:

Does he not certainly speak for our sake? It was written for our sake, because the plowman should plow in hope and the thresher thresh in hope of sharing in the crop. If we have sown spiritual things among you, is it too much if we reap material things from you? (1 Cor 9:10-11)

The second quotation, “the laborer is worth his wages,” is identical to the words of Jesus as recorded in Luke 10:7. There is some debate about whether or not Paul would classify Jesus’ words as Scripture, but the context supports and urges just such an understanding.¹⁹

Having made his case that elders should be honored, Paul now argues that they should also be held accountable. As he did in the previous passage dealing with widows, Paul supports his instructions about elder accountability with a citation from the Old Testament: “A single witness shall not suffice against a person for any crime or for any

who ‘rule well’ and those who ‘labor in preaching and teaching.’” Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 231. So also, Marshall: “The author’s concern is with those of them [the elders] who actually serve the church.” Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 611.

¹⁹According to Mounce, “It only seems natural that Paul would view the teaching of Jesus, his resurrected Lord, as on an equal par with the OT (cf. 1 Cor 7:10; 10:23-25).” Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 311. So also, Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 234; and Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 615.

wrong in connection with any offense that he has committed. Only on the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses shall a charge be established” (Deut 19:15). The purpose of such a rule is not to provide elders an extra layer of protection, but to grant them the same opportunities for repentance that any other church member would receive (cf. Matt 18:15-20).²⁰

If an accused elder is guilty and refuses to repent, Paul commands Timothy to “rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear.” The word ἐλέγχω, “rebuke” means “to bring a person to the point of recognizing wrongdoing.”²¹ Johnson notes that in this passage, “rebuke” carries “an unavoidable confrontational tone.”²² The public nature of the rebuke is in keeping with both Old and New Testament practice (cf. Deut 19:17-18; Matt 18:17). “All” most likely refers to the entirety of the church, including the other elders, while “the rest” refers specifically to the other elders who see the outcome of unrepentant sin and learn to fear a similar consequence.²³

Having outlined the procedure of accountability for an elder, Paul now concentrates on the person who is overseeing this action, namely, Timothy. Paul places a solemn charge upon Timothy to handle disciplinary proceedings with the utmost propriety and justice. Timothy must not prejudge those accused of sinful misconduct, nor is he to show any partiality at all. Paul also inserts a word of caution: Timothy should recognize the seriousness of a sinning elder, and therefore, be not hasty in appointing someone to this task. The apostle argues that hastiness is unwise in this scenario because

²⁰Black draws a similar conclusion: “Paul requests Timothy not to entertain a charge against an elder except on the evidence . . . of two or three witnesses. This was a standing principle of Jewish legal procedure (Deut. 19:15), and was evidently valued in the apostolic Church: cf. Mt. 18:16; Jn. 8:17; 2 Cor. 13:1. . . . Paul’s point is that church leaders should not be at the mercy of frivolous or ill-natured complaints, but should enjoy at least the protection which any ordinary Jew could claim under the law.” J. N. D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, BNTC (London: A. and C. Black, 1963), 126.

²¹BDAG, s.v. “ἐλέγχω.”

²² Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, 279.

²³Jerome D. Quinn and William Wacker, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy: A New Translation with Notes and Commentary*, ECC (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2000), 466.

not all sins or good works are immediately visible. Furthermore, Paul warns that if Timothy does rush into granting authority to someone who is unworthy, then he will have some share in their guilt.²⁴

Paul's final admonition to Timothy is personal. The apostle encourages Timothy not to abstain from wine, which has a medicinal value for the young man's frequent ailments. Contextually, it seems likely that this word of advice is connected to the apostolic command to remain pure which immediately precedes it. Some commentators see Timothy's abstinence in light of the opponents' ascetic teaching regarding foods.²⁵ Others argue that Timothy is trying to distance himself from the drunkenness of the opponents.²⁶ Either way, readers can be confident that Timothy is seeking to be faithful to his calling by abstaining from alcohol and that Paul tells him such a sacrifice is unnecessary.

How does this teaching apply to the modern church? The application of this passage to the modern church is significantly more straightforward than was the passage concerning long term benevolent care. The reason is simple: the church is no longer the

²⁴The ESV's translation (quoted above) of this verse indicates that Paul is concerned that Timothy may participate in the sins of the other elders. While the NASB's translation ("Do not lay hands upon anyone too hastily and thereby share responsibility for the sins of others; keep yourself free from sin") indicates that the apostle's concern is for his coworker not to culpably promote an unworthy elder. I agree with Mounce that the latter interpretation is preferable. He writes, "Paul does not think that Timothy will start committing the same sins as the opponents; rather he is concerned that by commissioning a sinner to leadership Timothy may to some degree be responsible for their ministry and the sins they may commit." Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 317.

²⁵Hanson writes, "We can only follow the line of argument suggested by most modern editors, beginning with Bernard: 'Do not put yourself in a position where you may be held responsible for another man's sins. Keep yourself pure. By this I do not mean the pseudo-ascetic purity of the false teaches. On the contrary, use wine occasionally, since it is good for your health.'" Hanson, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 104.

²⁶Mounce argues, "It is interesting to ask why Timothy was abstaining since it obviously was detrimental to his health. The answer lies in the Ephesian situation. Paul's opponents were drunkards, and to disassociate himself totally from them and their teaching, Timothy apparently had chosen to abstain to the point that it was hurting him physically. His abstinence was an example of not exercising his Christian liberty when it might damage another's faith (cf. 1 Cor 8:13; Rom 14:15, 21). While this is admirable, Paul did not want Timothy to think that the preceding statement was an endorsement of his decision to abstain, and in fact Paul thought that Timothy should change his habit and use a little wine because of his physical problems." Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 319.

primary source for long term benevolent care, but elders still sin. The procedures for dealing with a sinning elder are the same today as they were when Paul wrote them so long ago: 1) elders are to be accused by no less than two witnesses; 2) they are to be given opportunities for repentance; 3) if repentance is refused they are to be rebuked in front of the entire church as a warning to other elders. Underlying these procedures is the enduring reality that elders are not above the law; they are to be honored, but they must also be held accountable.

Christian Slaves

Paul now turns his attention to a third and final demographic: Christian slaves.²⁷ The apostle begins with the command for slave to honor their masters, then he explains what form such honor would take and why such a task should be undertaken. Paul's command that slaves should honor their masters in no way negates his statement in Galatians regarding equality in Christ. In other words, Paul truly believes that "there is neither slave nor free" in Christ Jesus (Gal 3:28). Why, then, would the apostle command slaves to honor their masters? His answer is in the text: "so that the name of God and the teaching may not be reviled." Paul is not primarily concerned about personal freedoms; rather he is concerned about the reputation of God and the spread of the gospel.²⁸

²⁷Given the cultural context at the time of writing, it is necessary to digress into a small conversation regarding social justice and the apostle Paul. First, one must recognize that Paul never praises, nor does he argue for the validity of, the institution of slavery. Nor, however, does he explicitly condemn it. Rather, he seeks to subvert it.

Craig Keener ably summarizes how Paul handles this issue throughout the New Testament. He writes, "Sometimes we are annoyed that Paul did not attack slavery more directly. But we should not forget that these few sentences were not meant to address the institution of slavery itself. . . . Paul's letters to real congregations addressed slaves in the situation they were in. These letters do not reveal Paul's views on the larger question of slavery. . . . Paul not only believes . . . that slavery is against nature; he calls for Christian ethics that ultimately subvert it." Craig Keener, "Slaves and Slaveholders – Ephesians 6:5-9," *Bible Background Research and Commentary* (Blog), October 17, 2013, <http://www.craigkeener.com/slaves-and-slaveholders-ephesians-65-9/>.

²⁸Mounce asserts, "Slaves are to respect their masters not because slavery is a proper institution or because Paul supposedly has no social conscience. Rather, the success of the gospel is more significant than the lot of any one individual, and therefore slaves should behave in a way that does not bring reproach on the gospel." Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 327.

Having called on all Christian slaves to honor their masters, Paul now focuses specifically on those Christian slaves who have Christian masters. He encourages them not to take advantage of their brotherhood, but to serve respectfully in a way that benefits their masters even more, because of their brotherhood. Ben Witherington beautifully expresses the meaning and intention of these verses. He writes,

Believing masters are not to be despised. . . . They are beloved, and they benefit from the slave's work. "Slavery was to be quietly undermined not by eliciting a spirit of abrupt insubordination among vulnerable bonded servants but by seeking to engender the spirit of love in the relation of oppressor and oppressed." The undermining here comes from reversing the benefaction language's flow, suggesting that slaves operate from a position of honor and strength with something to give their masters, including a Christlike example; and notice that Paul also characterizes the masters as "beloved," perhaps hinting at what the relationship should be between brothers who are part of an unequal social relationship.²⁹

How does this teaching apply to the modern church? The application of this passage to the modern church is fraught with difficulty because of America's grotesque involvement in the African slave trade of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. However, application is not impossible. Given that slavery is illegal in America, the closest parallel to Paul's situation is the modern workforce. If his statements regarding slaves and masters are applied to employers and employees, then applications become more obvious: (1) employees must work hard to honor their employers; (2) Christian employees with believing employers should work doubly hard to benefit their beloved brothers (or sisters); and (3) Christian employees should not take advantage of their faith relationship with their Christian employer.

There is also one final overriding application to this section: within these two short verses Paul teaches that the spread of the gospel is more important than personal entitlements. This truth is clearly seen in the lives of the first Moravian missionaries, a

²⁹Ben Witherington III, *Letters and Homilies for Hellenized Christians*, vol. 1, *A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on Titus, 1-2 Timothy and 1-3 John* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), loc. 3697-702, Kindle.

potter named Dober and a carpenter named Nitschmann. These two men were confronted by the tragic story of a slave named Anthony Ulrich who was broken hearted that his fellow slaves on the Caribbean island of St. Thomas would never hear the gospel “unless one was willing to assume their condition” as slaves, and so, on August 21, 1732, Dober and Nitschmann sold themselves into slavery for the sake of the gospel.³⁰ That two free men would choose to become slaves because they count the spread of the gospel as more significant than their own rights is a decision that the apostle Paul would heartily commend.

Conclusion

Paul teaches Timothy and the Ephesian Christians that they are a family. As such, they need to embrace their manifold responsibilities. The church members need to honor and care for those who are truly in need like they would care for their own mothers. The church members need to honor their leaders and hold them to a high standard, just as they would their fathers. The church members need to honor and serve one another joyfully, even if it entails great sacrifice on their part. The church has a great and glorious mission to achieve, and in order to accomplish it, she must learn to work and worship as a family.

³⁰Martin I. Klauber, Scott M. Manetsch, and Erwin W. Lutzer, *The Great Commission: Evangelicals and the History of World Missions* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2008), 39-40.

CHAPTER 8

INDICTMENT AND ENCOURAGEMENT

In 2013 *Forbes Magazine* published an article about the problem of widespread financial fraud within the modern church.¹ In 2014 Pastor David Yonggi Cho was convicted of embezzling \$12 million from the largest megachurch in the world, the Yoido Full Gospel Church, which he founded.² In 2015, Kong Hee and five other leaders of the City Harvest Church in Singapore were convicted of fraud in a case worth \$35 million because they illegally used church funds to promote the pop music career of Hee’s wife.³ Sadly, such greed is not new. Shortly after the Israelites left Egypt, God revealed to Moses that coveting was a sin – a truth which was then repeated and enlarged upon in numerous Old and New Testament passages. Then, sometime in the mid 50s AD, Paul wrote Timothy a letter warning him about false teachers in Ephesus and their prosperity gospel, which wrongly proclaimed that godliness was a means of financial gain.

Need

Money is not evil, but it is dangerous. In fact, it might be the most powerful and prevalent danger facing today’s church. In his book, *Living in the Light: Money, Sex,*

¹Walter Pavlo, “Fraud Thriving in U.S. Churches, But You Wouldn’t Know It,” *Forbes*, November 18, 2013, accessed November 15, 2016, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/walterpavlo/2013/11/18/fraud-thriving-in-u-s-churches-but-you-wouldnt-know-it/#4d0e33156fea>.

²Ruth Moon, “Founder of World’s Largest Megachurch Convicted of Embezzling \$12 Million,” *Christianity Today*, February 24, 2014, accessed November 15, 2016, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/gleanings/2014/february/founder-of-worlds-largest-megachurch-convicted-cho-yoido.html>.

³Tessa Wong, “Inside Singapore’s City Harvest Megachurch Scandal,” *BBC News*, October 21, 2015, accessed November 15, 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-34589932>.

and Power, John Piper eloquently exposes and warns his readers about the perils of money. He writes, “Who has not felt the pull of the power to have stuff, to buy, to own? It is very deep, and very dangerous. It blinds someone to what is truly beautiful and truly desirable and truly satisfying. It substitutes a dollar bill for the divine.”⁴

C. S. Lewis argues that such a paltry tradeoff seems like a good idea only because our desires are weakened by sin. In his sermon “The Weight of Glory,” Lewis writes,

. . . it would seem that Our Lord finds our desires, not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.⁵

Like the Ephesian elders, too many Christians today are far too easily pleased, and they willfully embrace a disordered love for money that convinces them to substitute dollars for the divine.

Main Idea

Paul’s indictment of the false teachers and his encouraging call for Timothy to “fight the good fight” must stir the modern church out of her affluent slumber before it is too late.

Preview

Paul’s closing words in this letter are not just a random collection of leftover thoughts, as some might argue.⁶ Rather, they are a cohesive two-part discourse on desire.

⁴John Piper, *Living in the Light: Money, Sex and Power* (n.p.: The Good Book Company, 2016), loc. 603-9, Kindle.

⁵C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory: And Other Addresses* (New York: HarperOne, 2001), 27.

⁶Dibelius-Cozelmann claim that throughout this chapter, pericopes are only “superficially connected” and that they display “a lack of logical coherence.” Martin Dibelius and Hans Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), 83-93, esp. 84 and 90. Marshall disagrees. He acknowledges that “the closing section of the letter is at first sight a set of miscellaneous instructions and injunctions,” but, he concludes that “the section falls fairly clearly into defined sections.” I. Howard Marshall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral*

First, Paul indicts the false teachers for their covetous desires. Then, he encourages Timothy to flee such false desires and to find contentment with godliness. Throughout this discussion, the apostle has much to say about wealth. Interestingly, Paul neither condemns nor praises wealth in this passage; he does, however, warn Timothy and the church in Ephesus about its danger.

Context

As Paul nears the end of this letter, the apostle reminds Timothy why he is in Ephesus. Timothy must “charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, not to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith” (1 Tim 1:3b-4).

In the second chapter, Paul establishes the priority of prayer for the Ephesian church by commanding them to pray “for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions” (1 Tim 2:2a) because “this is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior” (1 Tim 2:3). Paul then begins to discuss who can serve in what capacities within the church. Women are called to pray with propriety, but are not permitted “to teach or exercise authority over a man” (1 Tim 2:12a). In the next chapter, Paul continues his discussion of proper church leadership by describing the type of man who is qualified to teach and exercise authority over the church as an overseer. Then, the apostle offers a similar set of qualifications for men and women who desire to serve as deacons.

The third chapter concludes with Paul stating his purpose for the letter: “I am writing these things to you so that, if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the house of God” (1 Tim 3:14b-15a). Paul uses the common Old Testament phrase “house of God” to reveal the true identity and responsibility of the church: she is the place of God’s presence in these last days. The church’s example for how to live

Epistles, ICC (London: T & T Clark International, 1999), 633.

appropriately as the presence of God in this world is Jesus Christ, whose life reveals the mystery of godliness. This mystery is then extolled in a hymn that celebrates the work of the Savior and the mission of his church.

Staying with the theme of godliness, which has been so prevalent in this letter, Paul speaks directly to his young coworker in chapter four and commands Timothy: “train yourself for godliness” (1 Tim 4:7b). Following this command, from 1 Tim 5:1-6:2, Paul shows Timothy what godliness in action will look like by teaching the younger man how he should relate to various demographics within the church.

Now at the final chapter, the apostle turns his attention once again to the false teachers. Paul’s words in this chapter are not a reasoned apologetic directed at the teacher’s errors. His words are, instead, an impassioned indictment of their dangerous and disordered loves followed by a solemn and powerful encouragement to Timothy to avoid the errors of these enemies.

6:2b-10: Indictment

Paul begins the final section of this letter with a familiar command: “Teach and urge these things” (1 Tim 6:2b). The importance of proper teaching is hinted at by Paul’s habit of returning to this issue time and again throughout this letter. In the opening chapter, Paul excoriates the false teachers for their different teaching. In the second chapter, Paul prohibits women from usurping the authoritative teaching role within the church. In the third chapter, Paul demands that men who desire to serve as overseers must be apt teachers. In the final three chapters, Paul repeatedly commands Timothy to teach. However, Timothy is not just to teach; he must also urge. In other words, Timothy must not become a heavy-handed instructor, but a helpful encourager. Chrysostom elucidates this point when he writes, “A teacher has need not only of authority, but of gentleness, and not only of gentleness, but of authority.”⁷

⁷John Chrysostom, “Homily 17,” in *Saint Chrysostom: Homilies on Galatians, Ephesians,*

Once again, the content of Timothy’s teaching is summed up with the phrase, “these things,” which appears initially in 1 Timothy 3:14. The same Greek word (ταῦτα) is then used seven more times by Paul in the remaining three chapters of this letter (1 Tim 4:6, 11, 15; 5:7, 21; 6:2, and 11). The frequent and strategic use of this saying within 1 Timothy suggests that the “things” which Timothy must teach the church in Ephesus are meant to include the totality of Paul’s instructions within this document.⁸

Having commanded Timothy to teach “these things,” Paul now turns his attention to “anyone” who “teaches a different doctrine” (1 Tim 6:3a). The apostle begins his indictment of these false teachers by briefly describing their different doctrine as that which “does not agree with the healthy words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness” (1 Tim 6:3b).⁹ Most likely, Paul does not have in mind specific words of Jesus which the false teachers have denied, but an overall disagreement with the gospel message that does not promote godliness.¹⁰ Having thus explained the nature of the false teaching, Paul turns his attention from the heresy to the heretics.

The apostle begins his scathing indictment by portraying the false teacher as

Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus, and Philemon, translated and edited by Philip Schaff, NPNF, vol. 13 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), loc. 422377, Kindle.

⁸Commenting on 1 Tim 4:11, Mounce writes, “ταῦτα ‘these things,’ is Paul’s usual term for summing up all that has preceded. It is used three times in this section and refers to all the instruction in the epistle (cf. 1 Tim 4:6).” William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, WBC (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 257. Mounce makes a similar point when discussing the same phrase in 1 Tim 3:14. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 219. Fee also sees an extended reference to this phrase. He writes, “As before (3:14; 4:6, 11; 5:7, 21), ‘these things’ refer to what has already been said, in this case at least to 5:3–6:2, although given the concluding nature of what follows it may go all the way back to 2:1.” Gordon D. Fee, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, UTB (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), loc. 3114, Kindle.

⁹In the ESV, the word “healthy” is given in the footnotes, but the word “sound” is used in the actual verse. The footnoted text is quoted here because it better fits the extended metaphor of healthy versus unhealthy teaching in this passage.

¹⁰Knight helpfully explains the relationship between the gospel and the “sound words” of Jesus. He writes, “That which the false teacher does not agree with is ‘sound words’ . . . ‘sound’ in the sense of ‘correct,’ i.e., true in contrast with that which is incorrect or false. The ‘words’ are those of Jesus. . . . Paul also uses this kind of language to refer more generally to the message from the Lord, i.e., the gospel. . . . Therefore, here, where ‘sound words’ are said to come from Jesus, they ‘emanate from the Lord, either directly, or through His apostles and teachers’ (Ellicott; cf. Jn. 14:26; 16:12-15).” George W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1992), 250.

one who “is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing” (1 Tim 6:4a). This accusation parallels the one Paul made in 1 Timothy 1:7 where he describes the false teachers as “desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions.” From these verses, it is clear that the false teachers’ desires are driven by their arrogance and unhampered by their ignorance.

Furthermore, according to Paul, the false teacher “has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words” (1 Tim 6:4b), so, in addition to their conceited desire for recognition, the false teachers also possess a nauseating desire for contention. This sick desire stands in marked contrast to the healthy teachings of Jesus. The teaching of Jesus promotes godliness, defined as right relationships, but the false teachers promote speculations and *λογομαχία*, literally, “word battles.”¹¹ Again, Paul’s critique in this chapter is similar to the one he levels at the opponents in the first chapter; in 1 Timothy 1:4 Paul accuses the false teachers of promoting “speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith.”

Having denounced the sinful character of the false teachers, Paul now reveals the depraved outcome of their false teachings upon their followers. Apparently, the promulgation of these different doctrines “produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, and constant friction” (1 Tim 6:4c-5a). In other words, this heresy produces nothing good, but neither does it produce anything surprising. According to at least one commentator, “This is a natural progression. Where there are speculations and word battles, one naturally finds envy and strife; envy and strife naturally develop into slander and evil suspicions, and where these are present there is constant irritation.”¹²

¹¹Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, rev. and ed. Frederick W. Danker, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), s.v. “λογομαχία.”

¹²Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 339.

The negative results of the opponents' teachings are not limited to their followers. The teachers themselves suffer because of their heresy. At the end of 1 Tim 6:5, the apostle describes his opponents as those "who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain." The word translated "depraved" is διαφθείρω and means, "to cause the destruction of something;" it is used to describe the effect "of rust eating into iron [and] of moths that eat clothes."¹³ Quinn and Wacker colorfully describe the corrupted teachers as "men whose minds are a shambles and have been robbed of the truth."¹⁴ But, what has corrupted the minds of the false teachers and robbed them of truth? The answer is their disordered desire for money. The opponents have become lovers of money who ignorantly exchange an eternally profitable form of godliness for a powerless counterfeit (cf. 2 Tim 3:5).

Paul's condemnation of the false teachers begins with a blistering critique of his opponents' character and conduct. According to the apostle, these men are arrogant and ignorant teachers who love to fight. Then Paul points out the tragic consequences of the enemies' antics: their different doctrine produces envy, dissension, slander, suspicion, and friction. Paul concludes his indictment by revealing that the opponents are lovers of money whose motivation lies in the mistaken notion that godliness is a means of financial gain. Scholars debate whether Paul's final accusation reveals more about the character of the false teachers or the content of their false teaching. In reality, it is probably aimed at both; Paul is most likely condemning an attitude in Christian teachers that seeks to get rich through religious activity and a prosperity gospel that encourages followers to similarly seek God for the sake of wealth.¹⁵

¹³BDAG s.v. "διαφθείρω."

¹⁴Jerome D. Quinn and William Wacker, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy: A New Translation with Notes and Commentary* ECC (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2000), 493.

¹⁵Guthrie acknowledges that one cannot be certain which interpretation is correct. He writes, "Whether the meaning is that these false teachers charged high fees for their specious teachings, or used their garrulous religious profession as a cloak for material advancement is not clear." Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles: An Introduction and Commentary*, rev. ed., TNTC (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans

Having exposed the base greed of the false teachers and their followers, Paul's personal indictment gives way to theological instruction as the apostle warns Timothy and the Ephesian church about the dangers of avarice and the proper relationship which exists between godliness and gain.¹⁶ Paul begins his transition from indictment to instruction by noting that "godliness with contentment is great gain." In other words, the godliness of the false teachers is worthless because it is corrupted by their covetous hearts, but the godliness which Paul extols is of great value because it is coupled with contentment. For the apostle, contentment is not self-sufficiency, as the Stoics might teach. Rather, Christian contentment is Christ-sufficiency.¹⁷ Unfortunately, such contentment is not the natural state of the sinner's heart. So, Paul launches into a theological discourse which encourages Timothy and the Ephesian church to pursue contentment.

Paul basically offers two reasons for choosing contentment over covetousness. First, when one dies their wealth becomes worthless. Second, while one lives their wealth is dangerous. Paul summarizes his first point with an echo of a common Old Testament idea: "for we brought nothing into this world, and we cannot take anything out of the world." Similar statements are made by Job and the Preacher of Ecclesiastes (cf. Job 1:21 and Eccl 5:15). John Piper says it this way: "There are no u-hauls behind hearses."¹⁸ In

Publishing, 1990), loc. 1337-40, Kindle. Oden, on the other hand, seems to agree that Paul's condemnation is against both the false teachers who inordinately desire wealth and their materialistic followers. He writes, "Does godliness ensure upward mobility? Many try to tell us so—'Give today to my ministry and tomorrow you will prosper.' Such ploys damage the reputation of preaching. Even in Ephesus it was already being falsely taught that godliness would be a means of gain. The gospel was backlit with the color of money. They may already by this time have developed the habit of charging fees for their pastoral 'counsel.' Once again religion had become a step toward upward mobility." Thomas Oden, *First and Second Timothy and Titus*, Interpretation (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1989), 104.

¹⁶Johnson comments on the seriousness of Paul's indictment and the significance of Paul's instructions in this section. He writes, "A sign that something more than stereotypical slander is at work here, however, is that the desire by some to find religious profession a source of financial gain (6:5) receives the most elaborate theological response in the letter." Luke Timothy Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 35A (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), 297.

¹⁷Fee, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, loc. 3181, Kindle.

¹⁸John Piper, "Money: Currency for Christian Hedonism" (Sermon, Bethlehem Baptist Church,

other words, since physical wealth cannot traverse the great divide between life and death, one should be content to possess only that which is necessary and appropriate for this life. Thirty years ago, the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization created a document entitled, “Evangelical Commitment to Simple Lifestyle,” which described such a contented life and called Christians “to renounce waste and oppose extravagance in personal living, clothing and housing, travel and church buildings” for the sake of mission.¹⁹

Paul’s second motivation for pursuing contentment instead of covetousness is found in the danger that accompanies a desire to be rich. There are a multitude of temptations which accompany wealth, and each of these temptations is a snare that can trap the soul of the unsuspecting. Even worse, once trapped ever greater temptations will present themselves, and, eventually, the victim will become a happy participant in his own destruction. As evidence for the truth of his claims, the apostle offers a well-known proverb: “for the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.”²⁰ The history of the world is full of stories where an inordinate desire for wealth has led men and women to commit truly heinous acts. Yet, the greatest evil spawned by the love of money is that it robs men of the truth and leads them away from the Christian faith to a place of great pain. Ben Witherington accurately captures the tragic pathos of Paul’s language when he writes: “Paul adds that this sort of sick love has led some away from the faith, and then in essence (using a dramatic metaphor) they have become like a creature that has impaled

Minneapolis, MI, October 9, 1983), accessed December 8, 2016, <http://www.desiringgod.org/messages/money-currency-for-christian-hedonism>.

¹⁹Cited in David Platt, *Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*, Christ Centered Exposition Commentary (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2013), loc. 2103, Kindle.

²⁰Dibelius and Conzelmann offer several citations for this proverbial saying. Dibelius and Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 85-86.

itself on a spit over an open fire, causing itself no end of agony.”²¹ Paul wants better for his young protégé.

6:11-21: Encouragement

Having indicted and exposed his enemies and their sinful behaviors, Paul now encourages Timothy to be different. To that end, the apostle commands this “man of God” to engage in four activities: “flee,” “pursue,” “fight,” and “take hold of.” The title “man of God” has a rich biblical history. It appears sixty-eight times in the LXX in reference to men like Moses, David, Elijah, and Elisha. Most likely, Paul uses the title here to further distinguish Timothy from the false teachers and bolster his standing before the Ephesian church as a true prophet worthy of emulation.²²

Paul’s first command to his young coworker is to flee: “But as for you, O man of God, flee these things” (1 Tim 6:11a). Instantly, the reader can sense the urgency with which the apostle writes. Timothy is not commanded to simply avoid the false teachers’ sin and their ensuing condemnation; he is told to run away from it. The command to flee is a translation of the Greek word *φεύγω*, which literally means “seek safety in flight.”²³ George Knight comments that “such an action would be an appropriate response, given Paul’s presentation of the extreme peril.”²⁴

But, Paul is not content to have Timothy running away from evil. The apostle also commands this young man of God to run toward holiness. Timothy should “pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness” (1 Tim 6:11b). This specific set of virtues is not listed together anywhere else in the New Testament, “but this

²¹Ben Witherington III, *Letters and Homilies for Hellenized Christians*, vol. 1, *A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on Titus, 1-2 Timothy and 1-3 John* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), loc. 3826, Kindle.

²²Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 353.

²³BDAG, s.v. “*φεύγω*.”

²⁴Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 261.

list shares a number of key words and concepts with five other Pauline lists (2 Cor 6:6-7; Gal 5:22-23; Col 3:12-14; 2 Tim 2:22-25; 3:10).²⁵ The uniqueness of this list implies that it should not be read as a random collection of good things which Christians should pursue, but a strategic plan of spiritual growth for those who, like Timothy, are called to serve God in the face of opposition.

Many commentators understand these six pursuits as three paired activities which transition from virtues aimed toward God to virtues aimed toward other men.²⁶ Ellicott suggests that the first pair refers to a “general conformity to God’s law,” the second denotes “the fundamental principles of Christianity,” while the third reveals “the principles on which a Christian ought to act towards his opponents.”²⁷ If such a breakdown is true, then “righteousness and godliness” (1 Tim 6:11) are paired together to reveal that Timothy should pursue a right relationship to his God and his neighbor. The second pair of pursuits, “faith and love” (1 Tim 6:11) describes the wellspring from which Timothy’s obedience will flow. “Steadfastness and gentleness” (1 Tim 6:11) round out this list with an encouragement towards proper perseverance.

Paul’s third command encourages Timothy to “fight the good fight of the faith” (1 Tim 6:12a). This is Paul’s second use of the verb ἀγωνίζομαι, “fight,” in this letter; the first was in 1 Tim 4:10, where Paul commanded Timothy to “train himself for godliness.” Scholars debate whether Paul’s metaphor is primarily athletic or militaristic; the New Testament uses the word in both senses. However, the provenance of the metaphor is not nearly as important as its purpose. Paul’s command calls Timothy to

²⁵Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 261.

²⁶According to Knight, “These six virtues seem to group themselves into pairs (so Bernard and others, contra Hendriksen): δικαιοσύνη and εὐσέβεια represent one’s relationship with God, πίστις and ἀγάπη are the animating principles of the Christian life, and ὑπομονή and πραῦπαθία are terms for the right ways of acting in relation to a hostile world.” Ibid., 262. Lock asserts a similar conclusion. Walter Lock, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1924), 71.

²⁷C. J. Ellicott, *The Pastoral Epistles of St. Paul* (London: Longman, 1864), 92.

struggle through adversity.²⁸

Paul's final imperative in this section of the text encourages Timothy to "take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and to which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses" (1 Tim 6:12b). This call to "take hold" is about more than mere possession of a future promise; it also implies an idea of present ownership. According to John Stott, "Eternal life means the life of the age to come, the new age which Jesus inaugurated. He defined its life in terms of knowing him and knowing the Father. Consequently, it is both a present possession and a future hope."²⁹ Thus, it seems that Paul, who is aware that Timothy has already accepted the promise of eternal life, is now calling on his young friend to "seize it, grasp it, lay hold of it, make it completely his own, enjoy it and live it to the full" in the here and now.³⁰ Paul completes this command by reminding Timothy of God's calling and his own public confession. Such a reminder grounds Timothy's salvation experience on the gracious work of God but does not minimize the young man's responsibility.

Having called to mind Timothy's confession which was made in the presence of many witnesses, Paul now charges Timothy and reminds him that there is a greater witness present and a greater example of confessional faithfulness to be inspired by. Paul's apostolic charge is no mere suggestion; it is indeed a solemn command.³¹ The solemnity of this command is revealed by its witnesses: God the creator and Christ Jesus the confessor. The power of God to give and sustain life and the faithfulness of Christ even in the face of death serve as reminders to Timothy that no matter what happens he is expected to "keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach" (1 Tim 6:14).

²⁸Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 263.

²⁹John Stott, *The Message of 1 Timothy and Titus: The Life of the Local Church*, BSTC (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), loc. 2877, Kindle.

³⁰Ibid., loc. 2891, Kindle.

³¹Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 661.

The “commandment” is most likely a reference to the work which Paul has commanded Timothy to undertake in Ephesus.³² The timeframe for Timothy’s expected faithfulness to his task is “until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Tim 6:14). In other words, Paul is charging Timothy to be faithfully obedient until Christ returns, because God is watching. As Paul considers the future promise of Christ’s return, he breaks into a breathless doxology that extols the greatness and glory of God and the faithfulness of his returning King over and against all worldly pretenders.

Quinn and Wacker make a compelling case that this doxology lies behind an interesting episode from the history of the early church that was recorded in the *Acts of the Scillitan Martyrs of North Africa*. According to Roman court records, on July 17, 180 AD, a dozen Christians were arrested and found to be in possession of certain writings of the Apostle Paul, likely including 1 Timothy. Speratus, acting as the groups spokesman, may have alluded to Paul’s doxology when he responds to the proconsul’s accusation with an announcement that he does not “recognize the empire of this world. . . . Rather, I serve that God who no man has seen, nor can see with these eyes. . . .”³³ For Speratus it seems that Paul’s doxology was not a misplaced conclusion to an ad hoc letter. It was a genuine expression of praise that perfectly fits the context of Paul’s command that Timothy, the man of God, should keep his confession even in the face of suffering.

Earlier, Paul’s indictment of the false teachers gave way to theological instruction regarding money. Now, Paul’s encouragement to Timothy does the same. After his doxology, Paul returns to the theme of money, but this time, Paul’s discussion is about the proper use of wealth, not its danger.

Paul’s previous words about the dangers of wealth were directed at those who had an unhealthy desire to be rich. Here, though, the apostle speaks to men and women

³²Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 414.

³³Quinn and Wacker, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, 542-43

who are already “rich in this present age” (1 Tim 6:17). Paul commands Timothy to charge the wealthy “not to be haughty” (1 Tim 6:17). The idea of haughtiness here is not so much arrogance, but a judgmental scorn of those who have less.³⁴ Timothy must also instruct those who are rich to place their hope in God, not money (cf. Luke 12:13-21). Thankfully, God is not a miser. On the contrary, “he richly provides us with everything to enjoy” (1 Tim 6:17). It is Paul’s desire that the rich emulate the generosity of God by richly doing good works and generously sharing with those in need. In so doing, the rich will store up future heavenly treasures for themselves. Yet, they will also experience the joy of generosity in this present age as they “take hold of that which is truly life” (1 Tim 6:19).

Paul concludes this letter to Timothy with a final command to his young coworker, a final condemnation of the enemy, and a final prayer for the church in Ephesus. “O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you. Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called ‘knowledge’ for by professing it some have swerved from the faith. Grace be with you” (1 Tim 6:21). This is the second time that Paul has commanded Timothy to guard what has been entrusted to him (cf. 1 Tim 1:18). Ben Witherington notes that “guard” means “to preserve unchanged and unharmed.”³⁵ The deposit which Timothy must guard most likely refers to the Christian faith itself.³⁶ Leo the Great beautifully explains the idea of a deposit in his Sermon 85:

What is meant by the deposit? That which is committed to you, not that which is invented by you; that which you have received, not that which you have devised; a thing not of wit but of learning; not of private assumption but of public tradition; a thing brought to you, not brought forth from you; thus you must not be an author, but an authorized keeper; not a leader but a follower. Keep the deposit.³⁷

³⁴C. P. Spicq, *Les Epîtres Pastorales* (Paris: Librairie Lecoffre, 1947), 103, quoted in Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 671.

³⁵Witherington, *A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on Titus, 1-2 Timothy and 1-3 John*, loc. 3960, Kindle.

³⁶Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 276.

³⁷Quoted in Witherington, *A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on Titus, 1-2 Timothy and 1-3*

One of the means of guarding Timothy's ministry will be avoiding the errors of his opponents. Paul's final description of these teachers is reminiscent of his opening description. They were and they remain irreverent babblers whose false knowledge has caused them to swerve from the faith. Finally, Paul prays for the Ephesian Christians. This is no mere platitude; Paul knows that the situation is dire and that Timothy has a difficult task, so the apostle asks God to give them grace.

Conclusion

As Paul concludes his first letter to Timothy, he once again indicts his opponents. These men are not simply misguided, they are malign. Their influence on the church is a deadly danger. Paul does not seek to deal with them politely, but decisively. As part of his indictment, Paul skewers the prosperity gospel that they are preaching for sordid gain and offers a more biblical perspective on wealth. The apostle also encourages his young coworker to be better than his opponents by laying upon him a solemn charge to be faithful until Christ returns and reminding him that God is watching. Paul ends his letter by asking God to give Timothy and the Ephesian Christians the grace which all men stand in desperate need of.

John, loc. 3964-7, Kindle. See also Oden, *First and Second Timothy and Titus*, 126.

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ABSTRACT

THE PLACE OF GOD'S PRESENCE: A THEOLOGY OF FIRST TIMOTHY

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Paul's first letter to Timothy is a personal, yet theologically robust, letter which reminds the church of her identity and responsibility. The connection between identity and responsibility is the theme which ties the seemingly disparate sections of this letter together. In the heart of the epistle (1 Tim 3:14-16) Paul uses a metaphor, "house of God," to identify the church as the place of God's presence. In 1 Timothy 1, Paul reminds his young coworker that since he is the steward of God's house, he must utilize the truth of the gospel in a battle against the false teachers. In the second chapter, the apostle teaches the church about the priority and propriety of prayer. In 1 Timothy 3, Paul concludes a discussion about proper roles for men and women in the context of church leadership. The fourth chapter calls Timothy to train himself for godliness, and the fifth reveals what such godliness will look like in practice. In the letter's final chapter, Paul indicts the false teachers concerning their love of money before encouraging Timothy to recognize the true value of wealth. The reality that the church is the place of God's presence lies behind each of Paul's exhortations.

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