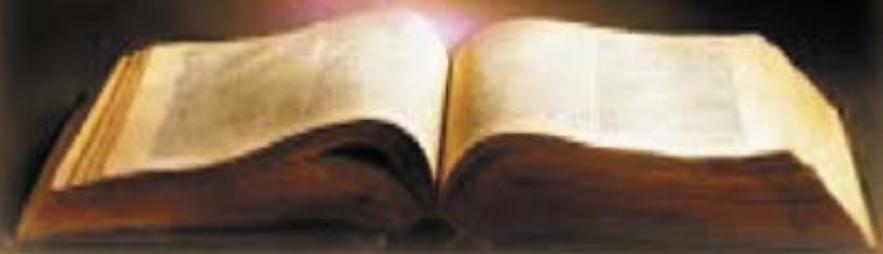


GOSPEL TEACHER



**DEVOTIONAL COMMENTARY
OF PAUL'S FIRST LETTER
TO THE BELOVED TIMOTHY**

DICKSON

Gospel Teacher

Devotional Commentary Of Paul's First Letter To The Beloved Timothy

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INTRODUCTION

On his second missionary journey, Paul came to the cities Derbe and Lystra that were about fifty kilometers from one another (At 16:1). This was his second mission trip to these two cities, plus the city of Iconium to the north of Lystra. He previously visited these three cities with Barnabas on his first mission journey out of Antioch of Syria (At 13:1-3).

While on this second mission to the three cities about two years after the first trip, he encountered a young disciple in the city of Lystra by the name of Timothy. We are not told how long Timothy had been a disciple, though we assume that from the influence of his mother he was a disciple for at least two years, assuming that his mother became a believer during the first mission trip. She was “*a certain Jewish woman who believed*” (At 16:1).

Timothy’s father, however, was a Greek. When Luke recorded this historical information concerning Timothy, he did not state that the father was a believer, as was the mother. We thus assume that the father was not a believer, for he had some religious influence over the household because Timothy was not circumcised. Therefore, Timothy grew up in a religiously divided family, assuming that the father carried on after the

heritage of Greek mythology. Nevertheless, though Timothy was young, his mother and grandmother did a good work by influencing him to believe in Jesus as the fulfillment of all Old Testament prophecies concerning Jesus as the Messiah. Contrary to the religious influence of his father, Timothy’s mother taught her young the religious heritage of Israel.

On his mother’s side of the genealogy, Timothy was a Jew. His grandmother, Lois, and mother, Eunice, handed down to Timothy a “genuine faith” from his Jewish heritage and knowledge of the Old Testament Scriptures (2 Tm 1:5). Paul wrote that “*from a child you [Timothy] have known the Holy Scriptures*” (2 Tm 3:15). There is no historical evidence of a synagogue existing in the city of Lystra, and thus, we assume that both Lois and Eunice, as Jews, carried on with their teaching of the Scriptures in the home concerning the prophecies and fulfillment of Jesus as the Messiah.

Since Timothy’s father was a Gentile, and his mother a Jew, he grew up in a culturally mixed family. When one grows up in such a family, the child usually has to make a decision as to which culture he or she belongs. In this situation, Timothy eventually during his childhood had to determine

whether he was a Greek after the influence of his father, or a Jew after the influence and teaching of his mother's religious heritage. It seems that Timothy made this decision before the arrival of Paul on his second visit, for he was already an active disciple. From the time of the first visit of Paul two years before, until Timothy encountered Paul on the second visit, Timothy had grown to be a very active believer in the area of Lystra and Iconium.

Nevertheless, there was still some Gentile influence of his father that had to be overcome before Timothy could join in the ministry of Paul to the Jews. So Paul *"took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those regions, for they all knew that his father was a Greek"* (At 16:3). It is not recorded in the New Testament, nor is there any archaeological evidence, that there was a synagogue of the Jews in either Derbe or Lystra. Nevertheless, there were certainly many Jews living in the area. The Gentile father was known in the region, and for this reason, and in order for Timothy to be accepted among the Jews to whom Paul was going to preach, Timothy had to conform to the religious rite of circumcision, though the Sinai law with circumcision had already been nailed to the cross (Cl 2:14).

What is interesting concerning

the commitment of Timothy before the arrival of Paul was the great reputation Timothy had with the church that existed in Lystra and Iconium. Timothy *"was well spoken of by the brethren who were in Lystra and Iconium"* (At 16:2). Iconium is about twenty-five kilometers north of Lystra, Timothy's home town. Timothy was known by the church in both of these cities, and thus we must assume that he made the journey between the two cities on a regular basis. His faith and dedication as a young disciple had moved him to go beyond Lystra in order to reach out to those in Iconium. When Paul was made aware of this faith and dedication, he *"wanted to have him go with him"* (At 16:3). We must note, therefore, that Timothy had already proved his commitment to evangelistic work long before Paul showed up.

When Paul asked that Timothy go with him and Silas on the remainder of the second mission journey, Timothy knew the hardships that he would have to endure. From what happened to Paul on his first visit to Lystra two years before, Timothy knew that struggle was in the future if he signed on with Paul.

On his first missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas went to Lystra. On that occasion Paul healed a crippled man who had not been able to walk from the day of his birth (At 14:8).

The people of Lystra were overwhelmed. They cried out, “*The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men*” (At 14:11). They subsequently called Barnabas, Zeus, and Paul they called, Hermes (At 14:12). But then some antagonistic Jews showed up from Antioch and Iconium. These persuaded the residents in Lystra to stone Paul, which thing they did, dragging “*him out of the city, supposing him to be dead*” (At 14:19). Now notice what Luke recorded in the following historical statement concerning this incident: “*As the disciples stood around him [Paul], he rose up and came into the city. And the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe*” (At 14:20).

Young Timothy was in that group of disciples who looked on the body of Paul as if he were dead. Many years after the incident, Paul wrote to Timothy, “*But you have fully known my ... persecutions, afflictions, which came to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra—what persecutions I endured*” (2 Tm 3:10,11). Timothy undoubtedly stood there in the crowd of the brethren looking on what they assumed was the dead body of Paul. And then Paul moved a little, stood up, brushed off the dust, and then had a good night’s sleep. With all the bruises from the stoning, he and Barnabas then walked about fifty kilometers over to Derbe. We might

assume that Timothy witnessed a direct resurrection from the dead, for they all assumed that Paul was dead on that occasion.

It was not that Timothy did not have an example of persecution that would result from following Jesus as a disciple. He had the example of the former persecution of Paul. He had the example of what it meant to be a determined gospel preacher. If a stoned disciple could get up the next day to continue on his mission to another city, then certainly he could at least walk several times back and forth between Lystra and Iconium. He too could live the committed life. For some reason, he was a highly motivated young man. Paul could see this in Timothy when he arrived on his second visit to Lystra, and thus Paul wanted him to go with him.

For some reason on this second journey Paul had already rejected a young man named John Mark because he formerly did not continue with him to the work on the first mission (At 15:37,38). John Mark turned back when he saw the snow-covered mountains of Pamphylia. Timothy, on the other hand, worked alone in his mission to go back and forth between Lystra and Iconium. One young man was initially a follower, but turned back. The other was an initiator who set out on his own.

There certainly was not that

much difference in age between Mark and Timothy. But on the second mission journey, Paul did not want to have Mark with him (At 15:37,38). On the other hand, Paul desired that Timothy come on a journey where he was going alone with Silas into difficult territory where the gospel had not yet been preached. Paul simply judged Mark not ready at the time, whereas he judged Timothy ready because he had proved himself.

If we take about a fifteen-year leap into the future from the time Paul began his second mission trip, things had changed in the life of both Mark and Timothy. It is interesting to note that when Paul was in prison in Rome in A.D. 60,61, Mark had finally caught up with Paul. By this time in his spiritual growth, Mark was able to stand by Paul in a Roman prison. But this was over fifteen years after the beginning of the second journey when Paul had rejected the company of Mark. Timothy, on the other hand, was able to stand with Paul after he had been a disciple for only two years. Though Mark about fifteen years before immediately went with his cousin Barnabas to familiar territory in Cyprus on the second mission journey of Barnabas, Timothy was willing as a young disciple to head out into the unknown after only two years of following Jesus on his own.

Discipleship is developed in in-

dividuals with different time lines. However, regardless of the time, both Mark and Timothy ended up at the same place in reference to being profitable servants for the Lord.

We have in our New Testaments two Spirit-inspired letters written to Timothy and none written to Mark. However, we must give Mark credit, for the Holy Spirit took his hand and inscribed the book of Mark, whereas the Spirit never used Timothy to write an inspired document of the New Testament. What we have is a document written directly to us by Mark, but two documents written for us by Paul to Timothy.

And then consider also that both 1 & 2 Timothy were written to Timothy who seemed to be discouraged at the time of writing. In the letter of 2 Timothy Paul had to charge Timothy to preach the word of the gospel (2 Tm 4:1-4). In the same letter, Mark was evidently close enough to Timothy that Timothy could fetch him and bring him to Rome where Paul was located in prison. Paul instructed Timothy, “*Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is profitable to me for the ministry*” (2 Tm 4:11).

By the end of Paul’s life, both Timothy and Mark were profitable to join him in the ministry of preaching the gospel to the world. Mark had a temporary setback in his early discipleship, and Timothy had his own

discouragements that led to his temporary cessation of preaching the gospel. Nevertheless, both grew in their ministry as profitable disciples. In the end, both assumed their responsibility to preach the word of the gospel.

Regardless of where one finds himself or herself in his or her ministry, he or she can at the end of the day be as Mark and Timothy. It is all about spiritual growth and not staying where one is in the present. And in refer-

ence to Timothy, it is not about using one's childhood in a mixed religious family, or culturally diverse mother and father, as an excuse for not growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Pt 3:18). Discipleship is not about being content with where one is in his or her responsibility to preach the gospel to the world. It is about growing into being a more profitable servant for Jesus.

Chapter 1

INSTRUCTIONS ON DISCIPLESHIP

No greater instructions on discipleship could have come from one who was personally called and sent forth (apostle) “*by the commandment of God our Savior and Lord Christ Jesus,*” than these admonitions by the apostle Paul. Timothy was “*a true son in the faith*” in that he was the result of Paul’s preaching the gospel to a young man and his mother and grandmother in Lystra.

To such a longtime friend and fellow servant, the aged apostle directed the instructions of this letter as to a faithful disciple. “*Grace, mercy and peace from God*” are the introductory clues that we have that these instructions were coming from One who is more than the man Paul who wrote the letter. The Holy Spirit is guiding the hand of Paul to inscribe these jewels of instruction that lead all of us into being better disciples for Jesus. Grace, mercy and peace define our relationship with God who made all such things possible through the cross of His beloved Son.

A. Legal teachers of law (1:3-11):

Our first indication of a true disciple is that he or she is one on the

move in reference to fulfilling the great commission to preach the gospel to the world (See Mk 16:15). As the traveling companion of Paul, Timothy was left in Asia because there was a great need for continued teaching among the new disciples. He was left with the special responsibility to “*charge some that they teach no other doctrine.*”

We assume correctly that there were some among the early disciples who were behaving as those about whom the apostle John wrote many years later: “*Whoever goes ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God*” (2 Jn 9). In fact, John was direct in reference to those who were not willing to abide within the confines of the truth of the gospel: “*If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching [that Jesus is come in the flesh - vs 7], do not receive him into your house and do not give him greeting*” (2 Jn 10).

The reason for the admonition is obvious: “*For he who gives him greeting participates in his evil deeds*” (2 Jn 11). John, and those to whom he wrote, were facing several false teachers who denied the very foundation upon which the gospel of the crucifixion was based. They de-

nied the incarnation of the Son of God (2 Jn 7). It seems that Timothy may have been facing the opposition of those who were either denying or questioning this truth of the gospel.

Paul’s instructions to the young teacher Timothy was that he teach that which would result in one remaining in the fellowship of the body of Christ. Therefore, there is “truth” that one must believe in order to remain in fellowship with gospel-obedient disciples. In reference to John’s admonitions, this was the truth **of the gospel**. John explained:

That which we have seen and heard we declare to you so that you also may have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ (1 Jn 1:3).

This is not simply something that one believes in reference to a code of doctrine. When speaking of the truth of the gospel, the disciples’ common fellowship with one another is totally based on the gospel of Jesus’ incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, coronation and consummation of all things when He comes again. There is no fellowship in Christ unless those in fellowship agree upon these truths of the gospel.

In the historical context of the problems that Timothy faced, some

were giving “heed to fables and endless genealogies that cause disputes.” When disputes over matters of opinion exist between disciples, then the disciples are distracted from “God’s work that is in faith.” Disputes disrupt the organic function of the body of Christ. In the religious culture of Ephesus, we are sure that there were endless fables among the idolatrous Ephesians about which speculation could be generated. At least in Crete where Paul left Titus a few years later there were those Jewish converts who were “giving heed to Jewish fables” (Ti 1:14).

We live in such a world today where speculators are willing to prognosticate with end-of-time fables and “blood moons” that supposedly signal the end of times. All such fables result in endless debates, and thus are to be avoided by those who would be disciples of Jesus. Meaningless discussions about such things reveal that one is more of a disciple of those promoting such fantasies than they are of Jesus.

Though we are not cursed today so much with the “endless genealogies” that seem to have been a favorite topic for Jewish discussions, the apostle’s point is clear. Any discussions, and particularly debates that arise over matters of opinion should be shunned. What was to be corrected was not the settlement of a particular

issue through debate, but that the participants in such discussions should be admonished not to participate in the debates in the first place. Those who are disciples of Jesus must know their Bibles well enough to separate matters of healthy teaching from matters of opinion. By our healthy study of Bible truths we discover in the religious world those fables and fantasies that are not worth discussion. Christians must avoid discussions about such matters.

If there are those who persist in their endless debates over meaningless subjects, then they have not only given up their right to the fellowship of the disciples, but they have also violated the very bond by which the brotherhood of the disciples is held together. *“The purpose of the commandment is love out of a pure heart.”* And if this exhortation were not sufficient, the apostle added that we must maintain *“a good conscience and a sincere faith.”*

Jesus’ following instructions in reference to discipleship could not have been made clearer: *“By this will all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another”* (Jn 13:35). The “commandment” was reinforced by the apostle John’s exhortation: *“He who does not love does not know God, for God is love”* (1 Jn 4:8). When in the heat of debate over fables and endless gene-

alogies, it is easy to determine where there is a lack of love. In fact, if there is “heat” in the discussion, then it is revealed that someone is challenged in the area of love. Love never allows “heat” to develop in the discussions of those who are identified as disciples by their love for one another.

When there are those who *“have turned aside to meaningless discussion,”* then we know that there are those who have *“swerved.”* They have gone beyond that which is the foundation of our faith. Those who have swerved are *“obsessed with controversy and disputes about words”* (1 Tm 6:4). And as Paul will urge all disciples in the last chapter of this epistle, a loving disciple must avoid *“profane and vain babblings and opposing arguments of what is falsely called knowledge”* (1 Tm 6:20). Controversies concerning those things that are not salvational are simply *“meaningless.”* They should be avoided. This subject is so important in reference to the brotherhood of disciples that Paul will pick up the subject again in the final chapter.

Those who are obsessed with their opinions often desire *“to be teachers of the law.”* Because of their obsession with their opinions, they assert that what they believe should be bound on others. They are thus self-centered, thinking that their opinions are correct, and thus, must be

taught as “doctrine” for others to believe. The problem is that they know so little about the word of God that they understand “*neither what they say, nor what they affirm.*”

Those who promote meaningless fables and genealogies will invariably find themselves in the company of some theological contradictions. The best way to refute a false doctrine is to go immediately to the text of scriptures from which the false doctrine is supposedly proved. If the doctrine is truly false, then the “proof text” will reveal that someone has twisted the Scriptures to his own destruction. He will have done that about which Peter wrote concerning those who do not know their Bibles. They “*are untaught and unstable,*” and thus “*distort [the word of God] to their own destruction, as they do also the other Scriptures*” (2 Pt 3:16).

Paul identified the problem. It seems that the “untaught” and “unstable” who do not know the truth will seek to bind their opinions where God has not bound. “*We know that the law is good,*” he wrote, “*if a man uses it lawfully.*” This would be a very difficult statement to understand if we approached law from a legal point of view. Law is meant to restrict, to control, to guide. But in reference to living the gospel of grace, living by law is a contradiction if law in and of itself is meant to be the only means by

which one would seek to save himself through law-keeping. In another context Paul explained, “*Do we then make void law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish law*” (Rm 3:31).

In the world of social order, law is meant for “*the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for murderers.*” But when we apply law to those who restrict their lives through their obedience to the gospel, then law hinders spiritual growth if we use it to grow closer to God. One is hindered from going beyond the requirements of law if he seeks to allow God “*to do exceedingly abundantly above all that*” He desires to do in our lives (Ep 3:20).

Law establishes limitations, but grace motivates one beyond limitations. “*According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God*” one obeys law, but does not restrict his or her spiritual growth to a supposed perfection in law-keeping. Law promotes growth in the knowledge of law, but grace promotes spiritual growth in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ (See 2 Pt 3:18). When one marks his growth by law-keeping, then he is measuring his spirituality by his performance of law.

An example is in order at this point. Under the Sinai law tithing

regulated, if not restricted, the giving of the individual. The ten percent tithe was the norm by which one would judge himself righteous according to law. If one performed the tithe, then he could consider himself righteous according to law. But the law of tithing passed away when the new covenant displaced the old covenant of which tithing was commanded as law.

Christians, therefore, in their new covenant with God, are no longer under the limitations of the ten percent. They are free from law to give as much as they want. In reference to giving, the principle now is, *“Let each one give according as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion [by law], for God loves a cheerful giver”* (2 Co 9:7). This principle is followed by a statement that explains the result of gospel-giving according to grace: **“God is able to make all grace abound toward you so that you, always having all sufficiency in everything, may abound to every good work”** (2 Co 9:8).

When we are motivated by our appreciation of the grace of God, then we “abound to every good work.” We are not confined to ten percent in our giving. The more we walk in gratitude of the grace of God, the more we give. The result is cheerful giving, not giving that we are compelled to do according to law. When we are compelled by law, we often give

grudgingly. But when we are motivated by grace, we cannot give enough (See 1 Co 15:10).

B. Grace-motivated gospel living (1:12-17):

Paul used his own life as an example of grace-motivated gospel living. Though he *“was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and injurious,”* God still “put him into His service.” Paul’s total transformation reminds us of the power of the gospel to change lives (See Rm 12:1,2; Cl 3:1-17).

Paul was “enabled” to transform because of the power of the gospel that worked in his life. God redirected his commitment as a persecutor of the gospel to being a promoter of the gospel. God simply changed the focus and use of his personality assets. His passion was redirected. His life exemplified what he wrote to some disciples in Rome, *“Be transformed by the renewing of your mind”* (Rm 12:2).

The faithfulness of Paul (Saul) in his former life as a persecutor was not justified when he said, *“I did it ignorantly in unbelief.”* His behavior before his encounter with Jesus on the Damascus road only identified the type of person he was. Once he was convinced that the Jesus whom he persecuted was truly the incarnate Son

of God who was sent to be the Messiah and Savior of the world, then the obsession of his life was changed. His transformation was a paradigm shift of thinking and behavior. “*What things were gain to me,*” he wrote, “*those things I have counted loss for Christ*” (Ph 3:7). Therefore, “*the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant*” in his life because he believed and obeyed the Lord Jesus of the Damascus vision. He once wrote,

But by the grace of God I am what I am. And His grace toward me was not in vain, but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me (1 Co 15:10).

Paul’s personal transformation became a model for the rest of us. All that God did for the world through His beloved Son is the motivational power by which we can transform our own lives. This is the transforming power of the gospel (Rm 1:16). Paul wrote, “*For all things are for your sakes, so that the grace that is reaching many people may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God*” (2 Co 4:15). The grace of God that worked so profoundly in the life of Paul caused him to abound in the work of the Lord. This begs the question: **If there is no service for Jesus in our lives, then do we really understand**

the grace of God that was revealed through the only begotten Son of God?

In order to understand, we must, as Paul, confess “*that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the worst.*” This is the incarnational invasion of God into the world into the flesh of man (See Jn 1:1,2,14). Unless we have this mind of Christ in us, we cannot begin to fully understand the sacrifice that the Son of God made for us (See Ph 2:5-8). Incarnational living as a disciple of Jesus is often terrifying to those who are in the bondage of this world.

The more we begin to understand the incarnational sacrifice of Jesus, the more we understand what true discipleship is all about. However, those who do not seek to understand this living according to the gospel of the incarnation will often establish a legal religiosity by which they can measure themselves according to law. They will often brush aside spiritual growth that is motivated by grace in order to compare one another according to their own performance of law. They are as some in Corinth who were “*comparing themselves among themselves*” (2 Co 10:12). They are as Paul confessed of himself when he was in the bondage of “comparative religion.” He said of himself, “*I advanced in Judaism above many of my contemporaries*” (Gl 1:14). When we

are under grace, there is no “spiritual” competition. There is no “advancing” above one another according to our own religious performances. On the contrary, we are all one man in Christ (See Gl 3:26-29).

Here is how some play this game with God: One will legally show up at an assembly of the saints, call for the “opening prayer,” and then legally proceed through a ceremony of “acts of worship.” Once the legal performances of the assembly are over, a “closing prayer” is ritualistically performed, and the “worshiper” has convinced himself that he is right with God. He has satisfied his laws for assembly, and thus he can go on his way having convinced himself that he has performed the laws of the assembly. But worst of all, he goes away with very little appreciation for the grace of God that can transform his life.

We have discovered that many people are satisfied with religion that conforms to their desires because they are afraid of what it means to live incarnationally after the “closing prayer.”

When Paul wrote to the Christians throughout the province of Achaia, he exhorted them, “*Be imitators of me even as I also am of Christ*” (1 Co 11:1). The readers of this statement had surely been previously informed of Paul’s former life as a persecutor. Therefore, when they

saw that he “*obtained mercy*” from God, though he was a persecutor of the church, they realized that regardless of how far away from God one might feel he is, grace can extend further.

We must never believe that we have lived so far away from God that His grace cannot find us. If grace could reach and change Paul who zealously persecuted that which he later promoted, then it can reach deep into our hearts and motive transformation. **We too can “obtain mercy.”** Jesus did this in the life of Paul in order that He “*might show forth all longsuffering for an example to those who should hereafter believe on Him to eternal life.*”

After Paul had explained these things to Timothy, a doxology was in order: “*Now to the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.*”

C. Grace-inspired faithfulness (1:18-20):

The validation for Paul’s right to charge Timothy to “*fight a good fight*” of the faith was based on his own life. Paul revealed leadership in living the gospel, and thus, he enjoined on Timothy the same. In other words, Paul was saying to Timothy, “If I can do it, so can you.”

It was not that there were specific prophecies in the Old Testament that named Timothy as one who would be a courageous warrior for the gospel. Some New Testament prophet in the immediate historical context of these matters possibly affirmed that this previously young man from Lystra would be a great man of God when he left the security of his mother and grandmother. Since Timothy may have at this time in his ministry been discouraged because of the opposition that some brought against him, Paul wanted the young man to remember that there were many others who had invested a great deal of trust in him to preach the gospel to the world. Timothy needed to remember that he had been sent forth by the “*laying on of the hands of the presbytery*” (1 Tm 4:14). There may have been someone at the time who said that Timothy would do great things for God.

In order to fight the good fight, one must keep the “*faith and a good conscience.*” Paul had faithfully labored when he was an enemy to the faith, and steeped in religion (See Gl 1:13). He reminded Timothy that even as a persecutor, he conscientiously believed that he was doing the Lord’s will. But now as a disciple, he simply continued on with his faith and good conscience in preaching the gospel. He called on Timothy to do the same.

But some “*shipwrecked their faith.*” They did so by rejecting the principles of a good soldier for Christ about which Paul wrote in this text. In the text, Paul listed two individuals whom Timothy evidently knew from past experience. Hymenaeus and Alexander were by Paul “*delivered to Satan so that they might learn not to blaspheme.*”

To blaspheme means that one assigns the work of God to be the work of Satan. On his first missionary journey there were those Jews who were “*filled with envy. And contradicting and blaspheming, they opposed those things that were spoken by Paul*” (At 13:45). These Jews were so set in their religion that they could not connect the dots from prophecy to fulfillment in reference to Jesus being the Messiah. And since they could not connect the dots from prophecy to fulfillment, they were set against Paul who did.

In the case of a Christ-sent apostle, we have in this context at least two people who were “*delivered to Satan so that they might learn not to blaspheme.*” We are not told if they were struck blind as was Bar-jesus (See At 13:9-11). They certainly did not drop dead as Ananias and Sapphira before the Christ-sent apostle Peter (At 5:1-11). But we could assume that some physical affliction came upon them so that they

might be taught not to oppose the message of the gospel by assigning it to be a message from Satan.

We might conclude that this could be the same Hymenaeus that Paul mentioned in his second letter to Timothy. If so, then Hymenaeus did not learn his lesson. Paul mentioned that Hymenaeus' word "*spread*

like gangrene" (2 Tm 2:17). In the second letter Paul also instructed the young disciple Timothy to "*avoid profane and empty babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness*" (2 Tm 2:16). Hymenaeus and Alexander were two who generated conflict, and thus they were to be avoided.

Chapter 2

ORGANIC FUNCTION OF THE BODY

Romans 12:1 would be an introductory statement that explains the organic function of the members of the body of Christ as they seek individually to live according to the gospel: "*I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.*" In order to accomplish this spiritual paradigm shift in one's life, Paul explained that we must "*be transformed by the renewing*" of our minds (Rm 12:2). In another context he wrote, "*Let this mind be in you that was also in Christ Jesus*" (Ph 2:5). In reference to discipleship, the following are those areas of our lives on which we must focus in order to transform our minds into the mind of Christ:

A. Focus on prayer (2:1-4):

Our lives must be characterized by continual prayer (1 Th 5:17). The exhortation in this text is that supplications and prayers be directed to God for those who are not a part of the body of God. These are those who have influence upon the social environment in which the members of the body live. When prayers are "*made for all men,*" then the social environment in which the church exists changes for the benefit of the members. We do not know how God influences "all men" for the benefit of the church, but at least in this request for prayers for all men, God does influence those around us for our benefit. We know that He works in the world around us because the Holy Spirit in this text asks that we pray that things change for the better.

Prayers affect "*all who are in authority*" for the benefit of Chris-

tians. Again, it is not our business to understand how God works in the affairs of man. The simple fact that the Holy Spirit here directs the hand of Paul to enjoin upon Christians the responsibility of praying for government officials assumes that God will work in government for the benefit of the church. Our prayers, therefore, do enhance the function of the body of Christ. Our prayers must extend beyond those who are members of the body of Christ. The principle reason for such prayers is *“that we may lead a quiet and peaceful life.”*

Offering prayers and supplications for all men and government officials *“is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior.”* Since God desires that *“all men to be saved,”* then it is necessary that Christians live in a society where their gospel preaching is not disrupted or hindered by social upheaval. Men and women cannot *“come to the knowledge of the truth”* of the gospel if the preaching of the gospel is hindered through social chaos. We assume, therefore, that the Spirit’s directions concerning prayers for civil government officials are not so much for the salvation of the officials themselves, but for the salvation of the citizenship through our unhindered preaching of the gospel.

B. Focus on the One Mediator for prayer (2:5-7):

While living in the midst of numerous idolatrous religions, Timothy needed to be reassured that there is *“one God and one mediator between God and men.”* The emphasis in the text is on the word “one” in reference to our Mediator. It is as Peter many years before stated, *“There is salvation in no other [than Jesus], for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved”* (At 4:12). In all matters of prayer and salvation, Jesus alone stands between God and man.

Outside Christ Jesus there is no medium through which we can approach the one God. No religion will take one to his or her desired end of eternal life. The notion that one can make his own choice of religion in order to transition into eternal life is strictly denied by the proposition of this context.

In the context of prayer, we are reassured that in our prayers for those in government we are addressing the King of kings. He is the King of all those kings on earth for whom we pray (1 Tm 6:15). He is the Lord of all lords. Our supplications to God through the mediatorship of the King of kings and Lord of lords is that He reign over His realm so that we can evangelize peacefully throughout His realm of reign.

The ascended and reigning King Jesus is *“the mediator of the new cov-*

enant.” He is the mediator between those who have obeyed the gospel and God (Hb 9:15). Jesus qualified Himself to be our mediator because He ransomed Himself. Since He is the only mediator between God and man, then we cannot expect a quiet and peaceful social environment without approaching God through Him. With great sacrifice the Son of God qualified Himself for this heavenly ministry.

He made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant and being made in the likeness of men ... He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (Ph 2:7-8).

All this occurred “*in its proper time,*” for “*when the fullness of time came, God sent forth His Son*” into the world (Gl 4:4). This was the good news that needed to be announced to the world (Mk 16:15). So Paul relates to us his own commissioning as one who was chosen to preach the gospel of the incarnational Son of God into the flesh of man in order to offer Himself for man.

It was not that Paul was entitled with the name “preacher.” Preaching was the ministry of heralding the message of the gospel to the world. When a disciple proclaims the gospel of Jesus, then he or she is heralding the

gospel to the lost. It must be noted that preaching is not a job, but a ministry of announcing the gospel to unbelievers. Only those who are in the bondage of institutional religion hire and fire professional preachers. But because Christians know the gospel, they are all proclaimers of the gospel. They cannot be fired from their mission to preach the gospel to the world.

The New Testament is void of giving titles to those who assume the responsibility to carry out the mandate of Mark 16:15. The Greek word *kerusso* (preacher) is the function of announcing (heralding) news to those who have not heard (Rm 10:14). The Greek word *euangelizo* is also translated “preacher.” This word refers to one who announces good news. It is not a word that is used to entitle one as a “preacher” who stands before the believers. There were no “pulpit preachers” in the early church. The preachers were all standing before unbelievers, not believers. There is no professionalism in the word “preacher.”

Those who would assign themselves to be professionals in the ministry of “preaching” have no proof text in the Scriptures to entitle themselves as such. In a second letter, Paul simply charged Timothy to “*Preach the word*” (2 Tm 4:2). It was not a charge to be a preacher. The charge was that he assume his responsibility as a dis-

ciple of Jesus to herald the gospel. In the same context, he added that Timothy “*do the work of an evangelist*” (2 Tm 4:5). The emphasis of the charge was on what to do, not on what he was to be.

The same is true in reference to the word “apostle” that Paul used in reference to the function of one who is sent forth to herald the gospel. He himself was “*appointed a preacher and an apostle.*” He was not designated to function as such for the sake of the church, but for the sake of the unbelievers (See 2 Tm 1:11).

The Greek word “apostle” (*apostolos*) means “one who is sent.” In the early part of His ministry, Jesus “*called His disciples. And from them He chose twelve, whom also He named apostles*” (Lk 6:13). The word “named” in this context would better be translated “designated.” Jesus did not entitle the twelve with the name “apostle.” They were not “apostle” Matthew, “apostle” John, or “apostle” Peter. They were as Paul often identified himself, “*Called to be an apostle*” (Rm 1:1).

Paul, as well as all the apostles who were specifically designated by Jesus to function as His special Christ-sent messengers, did the work of one being sent forth to preach the gospel. They were Christ-sent apostles. Therefore, those who would be apostles must be gone from home.

They must be gone into all the world. Someone who stays at home cannot assume the ministry of one who must be sent into all the world. Self-entitlement does not make one either a preacher or an apostle. Epaphroditus was a church-sent apostle who had been sent out by the church in Philippi (Ph 2:25). However, he was such only when he was away from his home on a mission to Rome on behalf of Paul (Ph 4:18). But when he returned home to Philippi, he was no longer an apostle.

When one stands before the believers, he or she is “*a teacher.*” In the case of Paul, he was designated “*a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.*” When one stands before unbelievers, he is a preacher and an evangelist. Those who are designated to be shepherds of the flock of believers are teachers (1 Tm 3:2). When Timothy stood before the believers, Paul mandated, “*These things command and teach*” (1 Tm 4:11). In the second letter to Timothy Paul gave instructions concerning the responsibility of Timothy in reference to teaching the believers: “*And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, the same commit to faithful men who will be able to teach others also*” (2 Tm 2:2).

Timothy was to “*give heed to ... teaching*” the word of God to the brethren (1 Tm 4:13). And in refer-

ence to the responsibilities of the shepherds, “*Let the elders who direct well be counted worthy of double honor [salary], especially to those who labor in preaching [the gospel to the unbelievers], and teaching [the word of God to the believers]*” (1 Tm 5:17). In this first letter to Timothy, Paul enjoined on Timothy, “*These things teach and exhort*” (1 Tm 6:2; see 1 Tm 6:18). The mandate was to reinforce Timothy’s responsibility to continue to teach the word of God to the believers. And in reference to any opposition that Timothy might incur, Paul wrote, “*If anyone teaches otherwise [to the church], ... he is proud, knowing nothing*” (1 Tm 6:3,4).

C. Designated responsibilities (2:8-15):

Since Paul has already introduced the ministries of preaching, apostleship, teaching and prayer, he now focuses on those who should use their ministries in the public. We would assume, because of the nature of his statements that the instructions that follow refer to the public ministry of the gifts, and not specifically to the small house assemblies of the disciples. Too much misunderstanding of Paul’s instructions in contexts as this have come from those who interpreted Paul’s instructions from the perspective of the modern-day corpo-

rate church. Because of the large corporate churches today that function with controlled assemblies, some have the tendency of reading into the text their modern-day “church assembly behavior.”

The first challenge that the interpreter must do, if he or she is the product of a corporate religious institution is to caution himself or herself from reading present-day institutional beliefs and behavior into this context. Once one has removed his or her thinking from the function of the large single assembly of the institutional church, then he or she can better understand the early disciples who met in small groups in their homes. The large organized single-assembly churches of today did not come until centuries **after** the revelation of the statements of this context. Therefore, when we come to these statements by Paul, we must sit ourselves in a small group of disciples in someone’s house while this letter was being read.

1. Men must pray in mixed public audiences: This instruction takes the members of the church outside the house assembly. “*In every place*” does not mean, “in every house.” We would correctly assume that when the disciples went out of their houses into the public for evangelistic reasons, then they must in many ways conform to the culture of the day in reference

to the public presentation of men and women.

The context of Acts 5:42 offers some help. In the Jewish culture of Jerusalem, the early disciples were “daily in the temple [courtyard] and in every house” (At 5:42). “They did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ” (At 5:42). Teaching and preaching “Jesus as the Christ” was a ministry of preaching the gospel to both unbelieving men and women who came to the temple courtyard. These unbelieving men and women were in the public place of the temple courtyard.

Once public preaching took place in the courtyard, the opportunity for continued teaching that Jesus was the Messiah moved to the house of the unbelievers. In this scenario, therefore, the disciples were to exercise caution in conforming to the customs of the Jewish culture as to how women must present themselves to the public. It was in these situations where Paul instructed, “I want the men to pray in every place.” Such was the Jewish custom in Judea, as well as in the Jewish synagogues throughout the Roman Empire.

Paul used the specific Greek word for “males” (*andras*) in this statement. When in a public environment where there were men and women unbelievers, Paul was emphasizing the presentation of the church

be according to the customs of the day. The church, therefore, must in these public opportunities “in every place” not give an opportunity for the church to be criticized in these matters.

Another cultural trait of public prayer was that the men should be “lifting up holy hands.” The meaning here is not in reference to figuratively lifting up one’s heart. Reference was to one’s posture in acceptable prayer at the time. Public prayer was literally with hands in the air in order to express with an outward gesture the worshipful heart of the one in prayer. There is no justification for spiritualizing the lifting of hands in this context. This is not a metaphor. If lifting of hands was meant by Paul, then he would have been speaking out of the context of the early prayer posture if he meant only that in their hearts men were to “lift up their hands.”

2. Modest dress for sisters in public: We can only imagine the scandalous reputation that the church would receive if the sisters dressed in a revealing or materialistic manner in a public environment. This would especially be true if the church were in a public place preaching the gospel. We can imagine what ridicule would come from the unbelievers if the men in the temple courtyard were lifting up holy hands in prayer, preaching the gospel of Jesus, while at the same time

the sisters were standing around in what would be judged by the public to be immodest dress.

Though modesty may be somewhat relevant to the times, there is certainly such a thing as immodest dress in every culture of the world. If there is no such thing as modest dress in any culture, then the Holy Spirit's instructions in this context would be senseless. If any individual sister has difficulty understanding what is modest dress, then this is a time when the counsel of the whole church should be consulted. This is the opportunity for the older women *"to be ... teachers of good things ... to be discreet"* (Ti 2:3,5).

Immodest dress indicates that a sister is seeking the lustful stare of her male counterpart. She is thus self-centered, not having spiritually matured to profess *"godliness through good works."* She has not learned to focus on the *"hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a meek and quiet spirit"* (1 Pt 3:4). It is this spirit that *"is precious in the sight of God"* (1 Pt 3:4). Her modesty in dress reveals her inner godliness.

Since the sisters must modestly present themselves in public through dress, then they must focus on the submissive spirit of a woman who learns *"in silence with all subjection."* "Silence" is defined by the word "sub-

jection." It is not that the women cannot speak, but that when they do speak they must speak with respect in subjection. The Holy Spirit was not making mutes out of the sisters, even in a public place. He was simply qualifying their speaking to be with *"a meek and quiet spirit,"* which in the eyes of God is precious.

Paul leads us into the following statement: *"But I do not allow a woman to teach or to be dominant over a man, but to be in silence."* If we ignore the setting for these instructions, then this statement could be misinterpreted and sometimes erroneously applied. If we ignore the public setting of the statement in the setting of those times when the disciples went public before unbelievers, then we would end up with some awkward situations. The historical social setting of the relationships between brothers and sisters must always be understood in reference to their public ministry. Also, in their function with one another, we must always focus on their relationships with one another in a house-assembly environment. If we ignore the house-assembly social environment, then we will inevitably misunderstand texts as the one under consideration.

Philip *"had four virgin daughters who prophesied"* (At 21:9). Luke did not reveal the social environment in which the four sisters functioned

in their ministry. In another context Paul instructed—as previously stated—that the older Christian women be “*teachers of good things*” (Ti 2:3). The setting for this ministry was definitely a house setting of a Christian sister. We would assume that whatever the social setting in which Philip’s four daughters functioned in their ministry of teaching did not put them in a situation where they functioned with a dominant spirit over others.

Before the brothers become restrictive by misunderstanding the injunction of Paul’s instructions in this context to Timothy, therefore, they should first check their possible inferiority complex in their relationship with the sisters among them who seek to launch out in the ministry of teaching. We have found that too many brothers who are either lazy, inactive, or spiritually dead, want to silence the women in order that they do not appear to be dead in their lethargy as leaders. If a man feels intimidated by the zeal of the sisters, then he should get up and lead in front. **Restricting the zeal of the sisters is not leadership.**

In the context under consideration, there are two necessary prerequisites for understanding what the Spirit is saying through Paul. The first, as previously stated, is that the context of instructions is in reference

to a public environment wherein the audience was composed primarily of unbelievers. The key is to understand that the church is also a community of “*women professing godliness.*” To whom should these Christian sisters be professing godliness? The assumption is that they profess godliness and modesty to the unbelievers. Failure to include this understanding in our interpretation of this text will lead, as it often has, to the total closure of the mouths of the women in all social environments. It was never Paul’s desire to mute the women in order that the men be noticed as leaders. **If it takes mute women to reveal the male leaders of the church, then the brothers are no leaders at all.**

Second, we can help ourselves to understand the statements of the text in reference to the function of the women among the disciples by reminding ourselves again that **the early church assembled in the homes of the members.** We have discovered that most interpreters today come to this and similar texts of the New Testament with the preconceived notion that the early church worshiped as the church does today in large single-assembly buildings. The result of reading into the text our present-day function of assembly has unfortunately resulted in many misunderstandings concerning the func-

tion of the body of Christ in the first century. This is especially true in reference to the function of women as active parts of the body.

Now suppose that we understand the statements that Paul made in this text in the context of the early disciples who were meeting in their homes. For example, we need to consider the Sunday assembly of the disciples in the house of brother and sister Stephanas. In preparation for the assembly, sister Stephanas has worked diligently in the kitchen in preparation for the coming disciples. She has prepared the bread for the Supper. She has cooked food for the love feast. She and brother Stephanas have worked together heartily, communicating with one another on what needed to be done for the Sunday assembly of the saints in their home. They possibly had discussions on who was coming, and those who needed to be served after the meeting, for both brother and sister Stephanas had dedicated themselves to the work of ministering to the family of God (See 1 Co 16:15,16). They took their responsibility seriously, for the Spirit specifically instructed the disciples to submit to the service of brother and sister Stephanas.

So here comes the first members to their home on Sunday. A brother shows up at the door with his wife. Others also come. Now some inter-

preters would say that sister Stephanas must cut off all communication with brother Stephanas when the first brother arrived at the door of their house. She must remain silent. Some would even say that sister Stephanas must become a mute until the last attendee leaves the Stephanas' house. In between the proverbial "opening and closing prayer," all the sisters are likewise to remain mutes. They can say nothing. Sister Stephanas must be totally mute in her own house, in which house the Holy Spirit has instructed her to manage well (See 1 Tm 5:14). Some would conclude that a sister must shut down the management of her own house while there are brethren in her house other than her husband. In other words, her Spirit-mandated responsibility to manage her house terminates with the "opening prayer," but starts up again after the "closing prayer."

Now with this unfortunate picture of some interpreters in mind, we must take this understanding back into the text of what Paul wrote: "*But I do not allow a woman to teach or to be dominant over a man, but to be in silence.*" The definitive word is "dominant." Can a sister speak in an assembly of Christians in her own home without being dominant? Certainly. Since the text is not speaking about the assembly of the saints—assembly is nowhere mentioned in the

context—then we must assume that Paul is speaking of another context than the house assemblies of the saints. If we do not, then we would have an awkward social environment in the Christian homes on Sunday where the sisters were all mutes.

The reality is that the sisters can speak in the assembly of a small group in their own houses that they are to manage. But when we move outside the house and into a public area where unbelievers are present, then the social environment changes. It is before the unbelievers that the sisters have the opportunity to manifest a meek and quiet spirit as the life-style of gospel living.

a. Did Paul’s instructions refer only to cultural situations? In other words, did Paul give the instructions of this text to Christian sisters because of the culture of the society in which the members of the church lived? But a more relevant question would be: Did Paul want the sisters to maintain total silence in all circumstances? Some have concluded that the latter situation is the case. Therefore, when the culture changed to allow women to have leadership positions in government, and culture in general, then Paul’s instructions in 1 Timothy 2:12 could be scrapped.

This position is often enforced by paralleling Paul’s statement here with

the head covering of 1 Corinthians 11. Since we conclude that the covering of the sisters’ heads was simply a cultural matter of Achaia, then the covering was not applicable to those who lived outside that culture, and especially to many of the world today. But this parallel with the head covering seems to lack substance, especially since the demeanor of women is being addressed in 1 Timothy 2:12. But in the 1 Corinthians 11 context an article of clothing that symbolized submission was discussed.

b. Was Paul’s focus on the relationship of women to men? The key phrase in the 1 Timothy 2:12 is “*or to be dominant.*” Whether in public, in the home, or in the relationship of the sisters with all the brothers, Paul indicates that in the social relationship between Christian men and women in the church there must be a relationship that is indicated in the following statement: “*I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God*” (1 Co 11:3). Though we may not understand all that is assumed in this statement, at least Paul states some order of relational responsibility. If sisters behave in a dominant manner in their relationships with all the disciples, then the relationships of the church are disrupted. They are functioning contrary to the principle

of relationships that are emphasized in 1 Corinthians 11:3, as well as the context of 1 Timothy 2.

Can a woman teach without being dominant over a man? Certainly. Can a wife be the manager of the home, as she is instructed by the Holy Spirit, without being dominant over her husband? Certainly. Can a woman speak in a gathering of Christian men and women without being dominant? Certainly. In order to guard herself against being dominant, a sister does not have to be a mute. Silencing a sister to be a mute would be most unreasonable and contrary to human behavior. Therefore, before we would interpret “silence” to being a mute, then some thought should be added to the discussion.

So some would ask, Can a sister be a preacher? This question is often asked by those who try to walk into the context of the first century church with all the baggage of the modern-day institutional church. In answer to this question, the institutional theologian who asks the question will often have a difficult time understanding an answer from the perspective of the early house-assemblies of the first century. But consider this: In the modern-day institutional church the preacher/pastor is often the center of reference for the assembly. In many churches he is not only the center of reference for the assembly, but also

the one who is in control. He supposedly has assigned himself some “evangelistic authority”—wherever that is in the New Testament. With such lording authority, he thus has dominance over the church which is often referred to as “his church.” Can a Christian sister be such a preacher/pastor in such a situation! Certainly not! If she were to assume such a “position”—which “position” is not taught in the New Testament—then she would be dominant over the brothers. Not only is such contrary to the function of gospel preaching, it is also not the function of the sisters of the church.

Whenever a sister places herself in a position of dominance over the male leadership of the brothers, then she is functioning out of order. At the same time, however, male leaders among the disciples lead in the same way as the husband who is the head of the family. In every way a good husband will encourage his wife to be the best she can be. The same is true among the disciples. Wise leaders seek to encourage the sisters to exercise their gifts to their fullest in order to give glory of God. The sisters need to keep in mind that there is a vast difference between respecting the leadership of the brothers, and simply ignoring them and moving over them.

In a general public assembly where unbelievers are present, we can

understand the opportunity that Paul gave the sisters to profess the sober character of being a disciple. The sisters can “preach” their message without ever saying a word. It would be as Peter’s instructions to those wives who were married to unbelievers: *“Wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that if any do not obey the word, they, without the word, may be won by the behavior of the wives”* (1 Pt 3:1). In public, and in the presence of unbelievers, the men have the responsibility to verbally preach and pray. Nevertheless, the women have the opportunity of “preaching” by the demeanor of their modesty that is coupled with a meek and quiet spirit.

And contrary to interrupting the speaking of the men, the women can aid in the teaching by learning *“in silence with all subjection.”* Instead of causing chaos by interrupting the public preaching of the brothers, the sisters can enhance the environment by exercising their meek and quiet spirit.

During the occasional assembly of all the disciples in Achaia when they came together in the city of Corinth illustrates the environment in which these instructions should be applied. The setting for the 1 Corinthians 14:34,35 statements of Paul was possibly the periodic assembly of the saints of Achaia in Corinth during the Isthmian Games that took place every two years. The Games

were an opportunity when all the saints throughout the province of Achaia came together in Corinth to take advantage of preaching the gospel to the athletes who had come to the Games from throughout the Roman Empire. During the assembly of the saints on this occasion, wherein were visiting unbelievers, Paul instructed the following:

Let your women keep silent in the assemblies, for they are not permitted to speak. But they are to submit themselves, as the law also says. And if they desire to learn anything, let them [those who have husbands] ask their own husbands at home, for it is improper for a women to speak in the assembly.

We have already discussed the situation with sister Stephanas. It would seem somewhat improbable to think that she must wait until after the “closing prayer,” and when everyone has left her house that she was to manage, before she could ask brother Stephanas questions about the lesson. We do not believe, therefore, that the instructions of the preceding statement of Paul in 1 Corinthians 14:34,35 was a reference to the regular house assemblies of the disciples on Sunday. On the contrary, his instructions apply perfectly to a large assembly of all those in the province

of Achaia who came together in Corinth for a unique assembly during the Isthmian Games. In such an assembly there were possibly many unbelievers present.

In the context of his instructions to Timothy, Paul gives two reasons why he seeks to protect the sisters, whether in public, or in their daily living as disciples of Jesus. First, “*Adam was first formed, then Eve.*” This may reflect on the understanding of what was stated previously in 1 Corinthians 11:3. Because Adam was first formed, he had the natural right to be the head of the woman.

The second reason for Paul’s protection of the sisters is discovered in the statement, “*Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived fell into transgression.*” The text is certainly not discussing any mental or intellectual inferiority on the part of the women. But the more tender emotions of the woman often lead her to being more susceptible to falling to some tempting influences. Hardened women may be successful in the business world, but this spirit does not lend itself to drawing others to a social environment wherein the mind of Christ is revealed. “*Have this mind in you that was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God*” (Ph 2:5,6). The mind of Christ is a mind that gave up being

God in the spirit (Jn 4:24). The Son of God sacrificed equality with God for the sake of our salvation. Did He give up the intellect of God? Certainly not. Did He give up being God? Certainly not. He gave up the “form of God.” He was made in the flesh of man (Jn 1:14). This is the mind of Christ. It is a mind of subjection for service. A man or woman who is not willing to have this subjective mind of Christ, would certainly struggle in the discipleship of the God who gave up being in the form of God in order to become flesh. We must always keep in mind that when we crave to be dominant, whether brothers or sisters, we are behaving outside the mind of Christ (See Mk 10:42,43; 1 Pt 5:2,3).

“*Childbearing*” is simply a metaphor for womanhood. This is not a metaphor that can be used in reference to men. The glory of womanhood is that she can bear children. All the emotional implications that come with the awesome responsibility of motherhood are often beyond the reach of men. Herein is the strength of the sisters. We view Paul’s metaphor in reference to women as childbearers as a compliment of something that men can never do or be.

God made women with all the emotional strength that is necessary to bear children in a marriage envi-

ronment. It is for this reason that she is instructed by the Holy Spirit to be the manager of the home (1 Tm 5:14). The conditions for maintaining her responsibility is that she “*continue in faith and love and holiness with self-control.*”

The better we understand all the instructions of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament that exalt women in the societies of the first century, the better we will appreciate those Christian sisters who seek to emulate in their lives the leading of the Spirit

through the instructions of His word. We grow as the church when every member of the body is encouraged to use their respective gifts to the fullest. When we develop theologies that stifle any member’s gift, then we are working against the organic function of the body. We should learn a lesson from woman leadership. When the brothers often sit around and argue over who is going to be in control of a particular project, the women simply say, “What’s next?”

Chapter 3

LEADERSHIP

It is essential to establish a foundation upon which we should approach the instructions of this chapter. Our interpretation, or understanding of what is revealed by the Holy Spirit in this text can be greatly enhanced or hindered by how we approach the text. First, we must understand that elders (shepherds) and deacons (menservants) existed among the disciples many years before these words were written. Elders existed in the church long before there were any books of the New Testament written in reference to the qualifications of both elders and deacons. A good example of this is the Acts 14:23 historical event when after about six

months, Paul and Barnabas, on their first missionary journey, “*designated elders in every church*” among the disciples in Lystra, Iconium and Antioch. Two years later these same elders laid hands on Timothy to send him forth with Paul on his second missionary journey (1 Tm 4:14).

The same is true of the church in Jerusalem. Elders functioned in the church long before the first words were written concerning the qualifications of elders and deacons (See At 11:30; 15:2). Therefore, Timothy was familiar with the behavior of elders among the disciples, as well as their spiritual qualities and qualifications before he received this letter from

Paul. Since he was of Jewish lineage on his mother’s side of genealogy, he knew about the function of the elders according to the Sinai law.

This brings us to the second point that we must understand when we interpret the contents of 1 Timothy 3. The first disciples in Lystra, Iconium, Derbe and Antioch were primarily of Jewish heritage. Therefore, the first disciples in these cities knew all the Sinai law concerning those who were to function as elders among the Jews. For 1,500 years Israel had been taught the behavior and qualities of those who would be designated shepherds of the people of God. When Timothy was a young man, he knew who the elders of the synagogue were and how they functioned.

So we might ask why Paul wrote these instructions concerning the spiritual qualities and physical qualifications for those who desire to be shepherds of the flock of God. One answer to the question was that the Holy Spirit knew that we today needed some guidelines. But the primary reason why these instructions were given may be in reference to where Timothy was located at the time of writing.

It is evident that Timothy needed some backup within the Gentile culture in which he labored in Asia. We must not forget that he was considered a young person in the culture, and

thus, the older men of the culture may not have accepted his knowledge alone of who should be a shepherd of the flock of God. The reason for Paul’s list of qualities and qualifications is the same as when he wrote a similar list of qualities and qualifications to Titus. Titus also worked in the same situation as Timothy, that is, in a Gentile culture.

After his release from his first imprisonment, Paul made a hurried trip through the island of Crete, a Gentile culture of people. Before listing somewhat different spiritual qualities and qualifications for elders in his letter to Titus, Paul stated, “*For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking and designate elders in every city*” (Ti 1:5). The new converts in Crete, and those among whom Timothy worked in Asia Minor, possibly Ephesus, were predominately Gentiles. They were not familiar with the heritage of Jewish elders that had been handed down from the time when the Sinai law was given to Israel 1,500 years before. Those Gentiles who were not familiar with the concept of elders among religious people needed “to be set in order” by the Holy Spirit. And so, we have the qualities and qualifications in both 1 Timothy and Titus for godly men who would serve among us today as shepherds.

When we consider in this text the spiritual qualities and physical qualifications of elders, we must keep in mind that the physical qualifications had to be linked with the spiritual qualities in order to qualify these men as shepherds. Not all the disciples were married. For example, not all were with children. Therefore, the spiritual qualities must rest on the foundation of the physical qualifications in order to qualify one to be a shepherd. There is no such thing in the New Testament as an elder who had no household within which were children. There may be those who have all the spiritual qualities of an elder—and there should be among the disciples—but without the physical qualifications they cannot be designated as elders of the flock.

However, if there are no designated elders among the disciples, this does not mean that the members lack the opportunity for godly wisdom that can come from the wise and experienced members among the flock. Neither does it mean that the needs of the flock are not fulfilled. What the Spirit-inspired qualities and qualifications of the text does mean is that for one to be publicly and specifically designated a shepherd of the sheep, he must fulfill the Spirit's instructions on this matter. But even before a shepherd is designated, he is still functioning in serving the flock.

We must also note that there was a plurality of elders of the flock in any region or city where the church existed. Elders of a single assembly of disciples was not a known practice among the early disciples. The reason for this is quite obvious and logical. Since the disciples met in the homes of the members, their assemblies were relatively small. They were small because the houses in which they met were small. For this reason, the members who lived in any particular city had to meet in several different homes throughout the city.

With the historical understanding of house assemblies in mind, we must guard ourselves against the notion that the early assemblies of the disciples were as those we witness today. In the church today there are often hundreds, if not thousands of members meeting in a single assembly in one location. But this was not the case in the first century when the disciples met in their homes throughout a city. The logical conclusion to this historical fact is that the early elders were designated among the disciples in every city or region to work among the members, which members assembled in several homes. The elders were not qualified by where they sat on Sunday morning. The function of the shepherds was not based on where they sat but on whom they served.

The regional or provincial des-

ignation of elders was indicated in the letter that Peter wrote to the church in the Roman provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia (1 Pt 1:1). After he had introduced his letter to the saints in these regions, he wrote, “*I exhort the elders who are among you* [in these provinces], **as a fellow elder**” (1 Pt 5:1). Peter was a fellow elder with all the elders in the provinces to which he directed his letter. He was not a “fellow elder” because he sat with the other elders in a single assembly of the church. They were all elders of the one universal church.

In those situations wherein the early disciples designated elders, the concept of a plurality of elders in a city or region was logically expedient. If there were only one elder with an autonomous group of disciples with which the elder confined himself, then the situation would surely arise concerning that about which Paul warned the Ephesian elders: “*From your own selves will men arise ... to draw away disciples after themselves*” (At 20:30). When there is only one elder, the tendency is that an autonomous group develops which is centered around one man. The situation usually develops that occurred in reference to Diotrephes. John wrote of Diotrephes, “*Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them* [the disciples], *does not receive us*” (3 Jn 9).

When one elder (shepherd/pastor) assumes the control of a group of disciples, sectarian denominationalism occurs. The dominant shepherd forms his own autonomous flock of sheep (3 Jn 10). In order to guard against this danger, the early disciples designated a plurality of shepherds in every city or region where the church existed in order to lead the sheep.

For example, after only about six months of existence, Paul and Barnabas “**designated elders in every church**” on their first missionary journey (At 14:23). There was only one church in each of the cities in which they designated a plurality of elders. However, there were several assemblies of the church within each of these cities, and thus, they designated a plurality of elders for all those disciples in the cities who met in many homes throughout the cities.

Within a few years after the beginning of the church in Acts 2, “*the number of the men* [disciples] *was about five thousand*” in the city of Jerusalem (At 4:4). We would assume that there were hundreds of house assemblies throughout the city of Jerusalem in which these Christians were meeting. But when Luke speaks of the elders in the city of Jerusalem, he identified them as the “elders of the church” (See At 15:2,4,6,22,23; 16:4).

The singularity of the church within a particular city was also em-

phasized in the book of Revelation. When Jesus addressed the disciples of the seven “churches” of Asia, reference was made to “*the church of Ephesus*,” “*the church in Smyrna*,” etc. (See Rv 2:1,8,12,18; 3:1,7,14). There were several assemblies of the church in Jerusalem, as well as each of the seven cities of Asia. However, **there was only one church in these cities with a plurality of elders in each city.**

It is for this reason that we must interpret texts as Acts 14:23 with the understanding that elders were designated for the church in the entire city, though the members were meeting in numerous homes throughout the city. This understanding was clarified by Paul when he addressed Titus. “*For this reason I left you in Crete*” so that you should “*designate elders in every city*” (Ti 1:5). “*In every church*” of Acts 14:23 means the designation of elders in the church “*in every city.*”

There is nothing difficult about connecting the dots on this matter. The problem prevails when the practice of single-assembly “elderships” of the modern-day church clouds our understanding of the early disciples when they designated elders for the church in every city. We erroneously assume that when the Scriptures speak of “the church” in a particular city that there was only one assembly of the church in that city. This is an unfor-

tunate conclusion that has led to the misunderstanding of many passages that speak of the existence and function of the elders of the church.

Throughout the history of Israel, there were elders throughout the Israelite cities of Palestine. Their function in their relationships with one another helps us understand how the first century elders functioned in the region surrounding every particular city (See Ja 20:4; Rt 4:2,11; Ez 10:14). When people came for consultation with the elders, they met with the elders at the city gates. The elders did not roam around throughout the land of Palestine. The people came to the elders at the gates of the city.

When we consider this matter closely, the common practice today in designating elders often seems quite challenging. We establish an unreasonable scenario in which it is almost impossible to establish a plurality of elders where there are few members. There may exist in some cities or regions groups of disciples that will go on endlessly without designating elders because there is no plurality of qualified men who arise from within each small assembly of fifteen to twenty members. This is especially true when the group is composed mostly of sisters.

Add to this the sectarian doctrine of church autonomy and the problem of neglect often arises. For example,

one autonomous group may have a plurality of elders because they are a large group of members meeting at the same place on Sunday morning. But at the same time in the same city there may be a small group of disciples meeting in a home, as was the case with all the assemblies of the early church in any particular city. But what often occurs today in the large single-assembly churches is that the large group is able to designate a plurality of elders, but these elders function only with the disciples with whom they meet on Sunday morning.

Unfortunately, these elders often feel no responsibility toward the disciples in the same city who must meet in their houses across town. This is a particular problem today in the large developing world cities. The cost of transportation is simply too much for the poorer members to pay bus fares for their families in order to attend a single large assembly in the city. Consequently, the elders of the large single assembly neglect those who must meet across town in their own homes. This neglect exists in many cities of the world today where the church exists, and the members must assemble in the homes of the members.

We have experienced ungodly behavior among some who refuse to recognize those who cannot afford to pay transportation fares for their entire families in order that they attend

the accepted single assembly in the city. In one case an intimidated husband and father was paying more than a fourth of his monthly salary in order to get his family to the assembly. In another situation, the leaders of the sanctioned single assembly of the church in town withdrew fellowship from a small group of disciples across town who did not want to drive for an hour in order to show up at the single assembly of the church in town. These cases only illustrate how misguided some are in reference to the presence of the church in a city, as well as the organic function of the one church. We must not forget that the church is identified by its members, not by its assemblies.

We must always remember that when we interpret the historical contexts of the organic function of the body, **that which is not logical or reasonable cannot be true.** It was never that the shepherds of the early church moved among only those with whom they could sit in a single assembly on Sunday morning. They moved among the sheep who were living throughout any particular city or region. In the case of Peter and those fellow elders he addressed in 1 Peter, the elders were living throughout different provinces. Wherever the shepherds could help with any sheep, they offered their services. The function of the shepherds was not deter-

mined by the ability of all the sheep to assemble in one barn. The sheep needed the shepherds in the field, not in the safety of the barn. Too often some shepherds feel that their duty is finished when they count all the sheep in the barn on the attendance chart for Sunday morning before the “closing prayer” is uttered. After the prayer, their responsibility is terminated.

Peter made the following statement in reference to the organic function between the shepherds and the sheep: *“I exhort the elders **who are among you** Shepherd the flock of God that is among you”* (1 Pt 5:1,2). The responsibility to be “among” is on the shoulders of both the sheep and the shepherds. The sheep must be among the shepherds in order that the shepherds do their ministry of shepherding the sheep. Though not written with specific reference to the shepherds, the Jewish writer of Hebrews wrote to a Jewish audience, *“Obey those who lead you and be submissive, for they watch for your souls”* (Hb 13:17). Sheep must not only be among the shepherds, they must be there in order that the shepherds have the opportunity to watch out for them. To the Thessalonian disciples Paul gave a similar directive: *“Know those who labor among you”* (1 Th 5:12).

In the preceding statement of Paul, the responsibility of knowing

the shepherds is on the shoulders of the sheep, not the shepherds. Those sheep who stray away from the shepherds are not allowing themselves to be known and watched after by the shepherds. They are refusing the shepherds the opportunity to seeing over them and watching out for their souls. Therefore, before we think that the shepherds should be running after strays, we should think about the good father who allowed his prodigal son to stray, but waited for him when he made a decision to return to the fold of the family (See Lk 15:11-32). Those who stray from the flock know the telephone numbers of the shepherds. They know where the gates of the city are located. We must remember that those who fall out of love with the sheep must return to the fellowship of the sheep in order to receive the loving care of the shepherds.

The spiritual qualities of the shepherds must be the guide by which every disciple should measure himself in reference to the organic function of the body. If one walks away from the spiritual example of the shepherds, then it is not the fault of the shepherds if he stays away and decides to reside in the pig pen (See 2 Pt 2:20-22). When the Holy Spirit identified the spiritual qualities of those who would be shepherds of the flock, He was not separating these men from the flock because of their

spiritual qualities. He was reaffirming the loving environment that would draw the sheep unto the shepherds, and consequently keep them there.

The shepherds were men among the sheep who had excelled in these qualities of gospel behavior. This means that every disciple should be excelling in the same spiritual qualities of gospel living that were written to both Timothy and Titus in reference to designating shepherds. In order to do this, the sheep must remain as close as possible to the shepherds in order to allow the shepherds to be an example for growth in gospel living (See 1 Pt 5:3). **We would, therefore, view these spiritual qualities as a road map to spiritual growth in the gospel as a disciple of Jesus.**

A. The shepherd (3:1-7):

Since there can never be any lords with authority among the disciples of Jesus—we should probably read again Mark 10:42,43—then the old translation of “office” has no place in this text. There are no “officers” among the slaves of Jesus. There are no political “appointments” of those who seek to be the greatest slaves to the needs of the flock. And since Peter explicitly stated that there be no lording by the shepherds (1 Pt 5:1-3), then certainly there is no such thing as the “authority of the elders.” Their

is not leadership by authority, but by example and their responsibility to look after the sheep. One cannot be a lord without authority, and thus the cancellation of lords among the flock restores “all authority” to King Jesus who is our Chief Shepherd (Mt 28:18). And just in case some do not understand this point, the Holy Spirit said to shepherds in another context:

*Shepherd the flock of God that is among you, serving as overseers, **not under compulsion, nor as being lords** [of authority] over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock (1 Pt 5:2,3).*

The lack of lords among the flock, therefore, begs the question: What then do those who desire to see over the flock actually desire? To ask the question assumes the correct answer. These are those spiritual giants among us who seek to look out for areas in the lives of the sheep where they can be of service. Their desire is to function organically, not organizationally. The body organically functions in order to heal its own wounds.

If the body of Christ was an institutional organization, then authorities would be involved by which the institution could continue. This would be the responsibility of “organizers” who had the authority to com-

pel the members of the organization to comply with the order of instruction by which the organization is identified and controlled. But this is not a New Testament view of a body of gospel-obedient Christians. There are no lords of authority among the disciples, which lords can make and implement laws for the church to obey.

The individual servant who has revealed his spiritual character through service “*desires a good work.*” It is not that he is seeking some office of authority in an institutional organization. His desire to serve the body is thus the first qualification for being a leading servant of the body. If one were to desire an office, then he would immediately disqualify himself, for he would be looking for some position of status and authority in what he considered an institutional organization. He is not viewing the body as an organic body of those who have obeyed the gospel. He does not understand that the needs of the body must be serviced in order that the body continue its organic function.

Shepherding slaves “*oversee*” the flock. We must caution ourselves in understanding this word. We must not define the word by the industrial/business world in which we live less we corrupt our understanding of the function of the organic body. We must

remember that we have no bosses (lords of authority) among a flock of slaves. Therefore, we must reverse the manufactured English word “oversee.” The meaning is “see over.” Those who seek to be slaves to the needs of the flock “see over” the flock of God in order to discover those sheep who may have either spiritual or physical needs that must be serviced.

Those who read into the word “oversee” the definition of the corporate institutional organizations of the business world have relegated the church to being the same. There is no sign of authority in the phrase “see over.” There is only responsibility. But some who are seeking an “office” in some institution are assuming that they have some authority to direct the matters of the church as lords of authority. But again, these people need to read Mark 10:42,43.

Paul later made a statement that helps us interpret the passage at hand. “*Let the elders who direct well be counted worthy of double honor*” (1 Tm 5:17). The rendering “double honor” needs interpretation. Emphasis is not on the character of an elder as a person, but on the ministry he accomplishes as one who sees over the needs of others. This is the person who has directed well his life in servicing the needs of others.

As one studies through the spiri-

tual qualities of the shepherds, there might be an inherent problem in reference to the service of such godly men and their financial well-being. When physical needs are discovered among the sheep, the caring shepherd has no time to call for a “business meeting,” and then present an agenda of physical needs to the church. Physical needs often have to be covered immediately. Since there were no church bank accounts for “benevolence” from which the shepherd could draw funds, then he had to draw funds from his own pocket.

When there was no food for a widow or orphan, or one who had fallen among thieves, immediate action must be taken by the shepherd to buy food or pay doctor bills. In order to meet immediate needs, the godly elder often dips into his own pocket in order to service the needs at hand. Therefore, the interpretation of “double honor” is simply **double pay**. If he were not given double pay by the church, then his own family would possibly suffer in their financial well-being. Each shepherd who did the work of shepherding well among the flock of God needed to be supplied with enough funds by the church to cover the physical needs of those he encountered in his ministry of shepherding the flock.

“*Blameless*” would certainly be in reference to the potential elder’s

relationship with the family of God. If there were any situations where a brother or sister had any unresolved and valid accusations against a possible shepherd, then the situation must be settled immediately. One who was already working among the sheep may have unknowingly wounded another. Therefore, the church must give the potential shepherd an opportunity to make peace with all the flock. If the shepherd did not solve such issues, then he would not be given the opportunity to serve those whom he had previously wounded.

There may be more meaning behind the word “blameless” than is first perceived. For instance, if the one who desires the ministry of being a shepherd is truly qualified spiritually, **then he would have already solved any problems he may have had with any other person**. If one had not settled previous disputes, then he would not be of a spiritual character to be without reproach among all men. The Holy Spirit thus placed the word “blameless” in the list in order to alert the church that those who would be shepherds must already be in a blameless relationship with others.

In reference to the world having accusations against the one who desires the ministry of shepherding the flock, such accusations should be settled if indeed they are valid. However, the church must realize that be-

cause the shepherd is who he is as a spiritual giant among the flock, Satan will not be silent concerning him. Accusations by unbelievers must always be investigated. But we must remember that false accusations were brought against Jesus. The same will often be the case in reference to those who seek to shepherd the body of Jesus (See Mt 26:59).

He must be “*the husband of one wife.*” Elders, therefore, must be married to only one woman at the time of consideration. No polygamist can be a shepherd of the flock. The reason for this needs no explanation. The type of example that the flock of God needs in reference to marriage must be illustrated by a godly marriage relationship.

It seems superfluous to add another qualification here of our own choosing because of our own interpretive prejudices. The “one wife” at the time of designation seems simple enough. However, what if the gospel had gone into a society—which it did in societies as Corinth—where divorce and remarriage were rampant throughout the society? **Would this mean that the church in such a society could not designate elders because most of the male members of the first converts had been previously married to women who were not their wives at the time they were baptized into Christ?**

What is not sensible is not what is meant in the qualification of “one wife.” Before we start tagging on our own deductive qualifications, we need to be careful about corrupting that which is exactly stated in the text. We need to be cautious lest we be guilty of adding to the word of God our own interpretive deductions (See Rv 22:18).

Consider also that the physical qualification of “one wife” in the text refers to the designation of the elder, not his disqualification after his wife dies. If after many years of service a faithful husband and his wife have given themselves to the flock of God, the wife is called on to glory, this is not a reason for the aged elder to lose his ability to shepherd the flock. The “one wife” qualification refers to initial designation. It does not reflect on his spirituality after the death of his wife. If the wife dies, this does not disqualify his spiritual ability to shepherd.

In giving this particular physical qualification for designation, we assume that the Holy Spirit knew that the gospel would be preached in polygamist societies. The qualification, therefore, restricts any polygamist relationships among the disciples, and specifically among the shepherds. Since the shepherds are to lead the disciples in marriage examples, then we conclude that there be no polygamist marriages among the disciples.

The aspiring shepherd should be “*self-disciplined, sober-minded.*” It seems ironic that if the assembly of the disciples on Sunday is a scene of emotional chaos that there would be shepherds in the midst of such an assembly who are “self-disciplined and sober-minded.” If we would conclude that the elders must illustrate the social behavior of the body of Christ, then we must assume that there are no assemblies of the saints that are out of control.

Paul’s exhortation, “*Let all things be done properly and in order*” (1 Co 14:40) reveals the fact that those who are leading the disciples should behave themselves accordingly. Any assembly, therefore, that is chaotic cannot be an assembly that is typical of the saints with self-disciplined and sober-minded leaders. Those who aspire to lead the flock must behave with a self-disciplined and sober-minded demeanor of life. They must set a spiritual example for the church as a whole in these areas of personal conduct. If they do not, then the church will wonder off into a religion of experiential emotionalism.

One who is emotionally out of control cannot be “*respectable.*” If his demeanor is emotionally erratic, then he has lost his dignity. If he is not respectable, then he cannot lead the disciples into being respectable in their relationships with one another,

and especially in their assemblies with one another.

A “*hospitable*” disciple is inclusive, not exclusive. Those disciples who move for action to disfellowship those with whom they do not agree on matters of opinion, are not inclusive. The evidence of an inclusive person is in the fact that he can sit down at a table of food with another in a spirit of peaceful fellowship. If a person cannot offer opportunities to sit down with those with whom he may disagree in matters of opinion, then he not only lacks in the area of hospitality, but he also lacks objectivity in all discussions. There is more to the qualification of hospitality than just welcoming one over to one’s home for a plate of food. The social ability to function in harmony with others is the focus of this qualification. In other words, a social introvert cannot be a shepherd.

The exhortation of the elder John should be taken into consideration with this qualification:

*Whoever goes ahead and does not abide in the teaching [doctrine] of Christ, does not have God. He who abides in the teaching of Christ, he has both the Father and the Son. **If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house and do not give him greeting** (2 Jn 9,10).*

The “teaching of Christ” in the preceding statement is defined in the context of 2 John as the one “*who does not confess that Jesus Christ is coming in the flesh*” (2 Jn 7). “*This is the deceiver and the antichrist*” (2 Jn 7). The “teaching of Christ,” therefore, is not a reference to differences of opinion. It does not refer to a system of church law. It is a matter of gospel. If anyone would deny any truth of the gospel such as the incarnation, then that person cannot be in fellowship with the church.

2 John 9,10 above, therefore, should be understood in the context that there were those who were going about from house to house and denying the incarnation of the Son of God. They denied that the Son of God had come in the flesh, and was in the future coming again in the flesh (1 Jn 3:2). The incarnation is a fundamental truth upon which the church is built. Anyone who would deny any fundamental teaching of the gospel as the incarnation should never be welcomed into the fellowship of the disciples as a member of the church.

It is superfluous to consider whether a shepherd can teach. If a shepherd is not “*able to teach*,” then certainly he cannot feed the flock of God. He cannot, with the power of the word of God, guard the flock from those who deny any part of the gospel (See At 20:28). In order “*to shep-*

herd the church of God” (At 20:28), it is imperative that one be a teacher. And in order for one to be a teacher of the flock of God, he must of necessity be a Bible student.

If one were to be considered the special designation to serve the body as an elder, he must be known for being a zealous Bible student. Those who are simply seeking a position are often weak in Bible study, and thus, they are not able to teach the Bible. The qualification of being “able to teach,” therefore, assumes that one is a student of the word of God.

When Paul exhorted the Colossian disciples, “*Let no one judge you in food or in drink*” (Cl 2:16), we are certain that he had only one drink in mind. When he stated in the text of the qualifications of elders, “*not an excessive drinker*,” he could have referred to water, milk or wine. And since it is obvious that the former two would not be considered taken in excess, the latter, wine, was on his mind. The point was not that the elders could not drink wine, but that they not become drunk with wine. A drunkard has revealed that he has no self-control. He has no self-discipline.

The qualification, “not-an-excessive-drinker,” focuses on one being out of control in reference to wine. But the old translation of the *King James Version*, “*not given to wine*,”

was unfortunate. It was a rendering of the Greek word that lent itself to being misunderstood by the modern-day reader. What the translators meant was that one not be the servant of wine. In other words, he should not be one who has given himself over to the intoxicating influence of wine. Fortunately, all recent translations have corrected this awkward English translation of the Greek phrase. One translation reads, “*Not given to drunkenness.*” Such is the meaning of the Greek phrase, and thus the rendering that we should accept.

If one were given to much wine, and thus a drunkard, then he may possibly be susceptible to being violent. Paul’s caution in reference to the drinking of wine, therefore, is that the disciples guard themselves against being violent.

Not being violent assumes that the disciples should not involve themselves in any insurrections against government. When we consider the social environment in which the disciples lived at the time, especially among the Jewish insurrectionists, Christians needed to be cautioned not to take up the sword in rebellion against God-ordained government (See Rm 13:1-7). The shepherds should come forth from a community where people are taught submission to government.

(We must not forget that as we

work our way through the spiritual qualities of those who would be designated as our leaders in living the gospel, we are identifying the social relationships among the members of the church of God. These qualities are not anomalies of certain men, but explanatory behavior of the very nature of the body of Christ as a whole. It is this gospel behavior that produces the opportunity for individuals to grow into being designated leaders. We must continually remind ourselves, therefore, that there is no social dichotomy here between the sheep and the shepherds. The shepherds simply rise from the flock as the spiritual leaders who seek to live incarnationally according to the gospel of the God.)

As God was forbearing with us, so the shepherds must be “*forbearing, not contentious*” in reference to the sheep as they seek to grow in the gospel of God’s grace (2 Pt 3:18). God did not contend with us in reference to our struggle with sin. He simply demonstrated “*His love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us*” (Rm 5:8). Such is the forbearing character of those who live according to the gospel of God’s love for us through His only begotten Son (Jn 3:16).

These two personality characteristics—forbearing and not contentious—must go together. “*The wis-*

dom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits” (Js 3:17). Those who have the wisdom of God are inherently peacemakers (Mt 5:9). And to be a peacemaker, one must be forbearing, gentle, reasonable, and full of mercy. It is this spiritual behavior of love that identifies those who are living the gospel. Such behavior identifies the manner by which the shepherds relate with the family.

Those who would be legalistically opinionated often become contentious. Therefore, they should not be considered leaders because they are often impatient in reference to another’s opinions. Those who cannot forbear the opinion of others should not be set forth as examples before the sheep who are seeking to live together in harmony with one another. The sheep will flee from the person who is contentious. And since it is the responsibility of the sheep to come to the shepherd, then the sheep will not come to a contentious, or opinionated, person.

If the shepherd is to be considered for “double salary,” then it might be tempting for one to desire the work of a shepherd. Paul would later mention that *“the love of money is the root of all evils”* (1 Tm 6:10). Therefore, before one would be set forward to lead the flock, his life must manifest

the mind of the Christ who *“did not consider it robbery to be equal with God. But He made Himself of no reputation”* (Ph 2:6,7). The incarnate Son of God was introduced into the world by one who ate grasshoppers soaked in honey and walked around in camel-skin clothes (Mt 3:4). The incarnate Son of God was preached by those who testified of Him through their own incarnational living according to the gospel. In the following statement, the apostle Paul spoke of his own life when he finally realized that the Son of God had given up heavenly dwelling for him:

But what things were gain to me, those things I have counted loss for Christ. Indeed more, I count all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things. I count them refuse so that I may gain Christ” (Ph 3:7,8).

If one would lead those who seek to live incarnationally after their incarnational Lord Jesus Christ, then certainly there must be no materialism in his heart. The fact that one is truly living incarnationally according to the gospel of the incarnate Son of God, necessitates that he should be given double salary. A good shepherd is one whom the flock trusts thoroughly. Without any doubt, the

church can channel their contributions through incarnational elders in order to service the needs of the weak. The church can do this because the members can see that an incarnational elder will not consume the contributions upon his own lusts. For this reason, no “prophet for gain” should ever be allowed to lead the people of God. Preachers for profit among the sheep should be rebuked, not given the opportunity to steal the contributions of the saints. Covetousness has no part in the life of the one who lives incarnationally the gospel of the Son of God.

A leading disciple is “*one who manages well his own household, having his children in subjection with all dignity.*” The organic function of the body of Christ is healthy when the church is composed of healthy families. Therefore, those who would lead an organically functioning body should illustrate in their own families that they live according to the gospel.

One “*who manages well*” has assumed the headship of his family, and thus, he has proved that he can lead others through love and not compulsion. When children are in subjection to the head of the family, then the church can see that the head is a loving leader, not a tyrannical dictator.

So the church should ask the following question concerning anyone who desires to serve as a shepherd of

the sheep: “*If a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?*” “Managing well,” therefore, is defined by the phrase, “*how will he take care of*” the church of God. We must not simply view “management” of the family to be something in reference to control of one’s children. Paul later gave a commentary on what he meant by this qualification: “*But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his own household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever*” (1 Tm 5:8).

Having “*a good report from those outside*” the body of Christ reflects on the gospel behavior of the disciple among the unbelievers. Regardless of how one conducts himself among the saints, especially in and during the assembly of the saints, his life-style among unbelievers must also be considered.

If one were living a hypocritical life, then he is not living according to the gospel. He is not living incarnationally. The disciple cannot please everyone when he lives according to the gospel. The unbelievers will often disfellowship him in their association with him, for wickedness does not seek to associate with righteousness. But if hypocrisy is evidenced in our lives, and such is validated by those who are not Christians, then we

must reconsider our life-style as a disciple. It is almost axiomatic that if a Christian does not live a spiritually consistent life according to the message of the gospel that he proclaims, then he will eventually “*fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.*” It was for this reason that Paul exhorted the Philippians, “*Only let your behavior be worthy of the gospel of Christ*” (Ph 1:27).

All the spiritual qualities that must be exemplified in the life of those who would be considered shepherds are qualities that identify those who seek to live according to the gospel. If we were to seek some identity for what it means to live according to the gospel, then the spiritual qualities of 1 Timothy 3 would offer goals for spiritual growth. These spiritual goals must be reflected in the lives of those who desire the ministry of being a designated shepherd of the flock of God.

B. Menservants (3:8-13):

The English word “deacon” is a transliteration of the Greek word that is used in this text. However, a *diakonos* (deacon) is simply a servant. And in this text, reference is to men, not women, for Paul later states that for one to be qualified as a deacon he must be the husband of one wife.

These special servants must also

be “*dignified, not double-tongued.*” Their dignity is manifested in their sober-minded behavior. So again the point is emphasized that the community of disciples as a whole must be those who have their behavior under control. Those who do not have their emotional behavior under control fall short in character to be leaders of those who seek to be a dignified community of people. Qualified menservants must lead as dignified members of the body.

Qualified menservants must know what they believe, for one who doubts his beliefs will be “*double-tongued.*” He will not be consistent in presenting his views to others. He is double-minded, leading others to believe that he really does not know that for which he assumes to believe.

We would include in this quality that one must not speak one thing to a particular individual, and then another differing opinion to another. One must not be guilty of talking behind the back of another. Gossips have no place in the leadership of the church, neither in the relationships that Christians have with one another.

As the shepherds, these men also must not be “*given to much wine,*” that is, not addicted to wine. They must not be drunkards. They should be the example of those who can drink wine, but the wine does not have control over them. Since wine was com-

monly drunk in the first century, there had to be those who could give an example of drinking wine, but not behaving as those of the drunken parties that were commonly associated with idol festivities.

“Given-to-much-wine” seems to have been a problem with some of the disciples in Corinth in reference to the Lord’s Supper. As in almost all situations in the first century, the “fruit of the vine” had fermented into wine in less than a week after the grape harvest. Therefore, wine was the common element of the Lord’s Supper that represented the blood of Jesus (Mt 26:26-28). But some in Corinth became intoxicated with the generous amount of wine that was available for the Supper (1 Co 11:21). Those who were given too much wine certainly disqualified themselves to be designated either elders or deacons.

The menservants must conscientiously live according to the gospel. In the case of some in Corinth, they were behaving carnally (1 Co 3:1-3). In another context, Paul explained, “*Only let your behavior be worthy of the gospel of Christ*” (Ph 1:27). Paul lived with a good conscience before God in all things, whether in persecuting the church or in living the gospel (1 Tm 1:13). Therefore, Timothy was to live in a manner wherein he was “*keeping the faith and a good conscience*” (1 Tm 1:19). In his sec-

ond letter to Timothy, Paul wrote, “*I thank God whom I serve with a pure conscience as my forefathers did*” (2 Tm 1:3). And the Hebrew writer likewise affirmed, “*For we are sure we have a good conscience, in all things desiring to live honorably*” (Hb 13:18).

The menservants cannot first be designated for a particular ministry without first manifesting in their lives that they have the spirit of a servant. Ministry as manservants (deacons), therefore, is not learned servanthood after one is designated. Menservants must first prove that they are servants to the needs of others. As elders who are already serving the needs of the sheep, and then designated by the church to focus their ministry particularly on the sheep, so deacons must also first reveal that they are truly servants before they are designated. In this way, it is known by the church that neither believe that they are being appointed to some office.

Those whom the church would designate to serve in the special capacity of being a servant to the needs of the flock of God must have the support of their wives. Their wives “*must be reverent, not slanderers, but self-disciplined, faithful in all things.*” The spiritual reputation of the wife is important. It is not that the wife can make or break the deacon. She must be known for the preceding qualities

before her husband can be designated a special servant for the church. The church must know that the deacon has the support of his wife. If she is not living the gospel of Jesus, then certainly she will not stand behind her husband as he carries out the particular ministry for which the church seeks to designate him.

As the shepherds, the menservants must also be *“the husbands of one wife, managing their children and their own houses well.”* The church can know those who are approved to serve because they are already serving as good managers of their homes. They certainly could not manage a particular ministry for which they were designated if they could not manage their own families.

C. Living the gospel (3:14-16):

Paul wrote this letter to Timothy in anticipation of shortly seeing him. But until then, Paul deemed it necessary *“to write so that you [Timothy] may know how you ought to conduct yourself”* among the members of the body. Being in Christ meant that Timothy, as all Christians, are *“in the house of God.”* The emphasis of the metaphor “in” is not on location, but in a relationship with the Father, Son, Holy Spirit and the church of the living God (See Mt 28:19,20; 1 Jn 1:3). In this relationship, the members are

the house of God (1 Pt 4:17). They are *“the church of the living God,”* with emphasis on “living.”

Jesus was raised from the dead. He is living. And thus in this text it is again revealed that God the Son lives. Since He lives, He continues to be the foundation upon which He built His church (Mt 16:18,19). It is for this reason that the house of God, the church, *“is the pillar and ground of the truth”* of the gospel. The existence of the church is based on the response of those who believe that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God (See Mt 16:16). The house of God is based on the members’ belief that the ascended Jesus is presently reigning in heaven as our living mediator with God (1 Tm 2:5; Hb 8:1). Because the church of God resulted from those who have believed and obeyed the gospel (At 2:41,42), then it is through the church of gospel-obedient disciples that the gospel is proclaimed throughout the world (Mk 16:15).

The church of obedient believers is the proclamation of the gospel to the world. It is as Paul wrote when the members observe the Lord’s Supper: *“For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes”* (1 Co 11:26). In other words, as long as the church celebrates the gospel through the Supper, the mem-

bers proclaim the gospel until the final event of the gospel occurs in the coming of King Jesus. In this the church is the pillar and ground of the truth of the gospel.

Truly, the gospel was a mystery to all humanity until it was revealed through Jesus Christ (See Ep 3:3-5). The Redeemer was “*manifested in the flesh.*” The eternal Word was incarnate into the flesh of man (Jn 1:1,2,14; Ph 2:6,8). Jesus was legally proved to be the Messiah by the Holy Spirit

who came upon Him at the time of His baptism (Mt 3:16). Angels gave testimony through their special ministry to Him while on earth (Mt 28:2; Lk 22:43). Through Paul and others He was “*preached to the Gentiles*” (Rm 10:18; Ep 3:5,6), and subsequently, Jesus was “*believed on in the world*” (Cl 1:6,23). And then finally, He ascended to the right hand of God to reign as King of kings and Lord of lords (Lk 24:51; At 1:10; 1 Tm 6:15; Hb 8:1).

Chapter 4

CHALLENGES OF THE TEACHER

The problem with the Christians who were addressed in Hebrew 5:12 was the following: “*For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need that one teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God.*” There was a difference between the Hebrew readers and Timothy. They did not take ownership of their responsibility to study and teach. Timothy did.

In Paul’s instructions to Timothy in 1 Timothy 4, Timothy was encouraged to accept the responsibility of being an instructor of those things that he had heard from his mentor, Paul. Paul was encouraging Timothy to follow the mandate that he would later state: “*The things that you have heard*

from me among many witnesses, the same commit to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Tm 2:2). Though the mandate of this statement was specifically directed to Timothy in reference to “*faithful men,*” the audience in the text at hand is to everyone, specifically in reference to guarding the flock against those who were bringing in teaching among the disciples that was contrary to the truth of the gospel.

A. Identify deception (4:1-5):

This first letter to Timothy was probably written during Paul’s first imprisonment around A.D. 60,61. In this first letter he alerted Timothy and

others that the church was “*in the latter times*” of the existence of national Israel. The prophecy of Jesus concerning the destruction of national Israel and Jerusalem was at hand (See Mt 24; Lk 21).

Five years after this letter, James wrote his epistle around the middle 60s. He too alerted his Jewish readership, “*You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near*” (Js 5:8). “Near” did not mean over two thousand years later. At the same time James wrote, Jude also prophesied that Jesus was coming in time ...

... to execute judgment on all [unbelieving Jews], and to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds that they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against Him (Jd 15).

The decade that led up to the finality of national Israel in A.D. 70 was filled with social chaos. Insurrectionist Jews had stirred great resentment throughout the Roman Empire. The heart of the Jewish resistance came from Judea, particularly Jerusalem. However, the early Christians throughout the Roman Empire lived in this era of political turmoil. And in Paul’s special encouragement to this young teacher who had given

himself to teaching the truth of the gospel, special exhortation was given. Every evangelist who traveled throughout the Roman Empire needed the encouragement that Paul wrote in this letter to Timothy.

Through the written documents of Matthew and Luke, “*the Spirit clearly*” spoke of these times when the two writers recorded the prophecy of Jesus concerning the consummation of national Israel (See Mt 24; Lk 21). Wherever the early Christians went after being scattered from Jerusalem (At 8:4), they reminded the Jews that Jesus had prophesied that the end of national Israel was at hand. The Holy Spirit spoke the following specifically of those Jewish Christians to whom the Hebrew writer addressed his warning:

For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and have become partakes of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame (Hb 6:4-6).

These were some of those who were sitting in Timothy’s Bible class. Some had already “*trodden under foot the Son of God*” (Hb 10:29). Since

these were those Jewish Christians who had been in the faith for many years, they “*insulted the Spirit of grace*” when they walked away from the cross (Hb 10:29).

It was the last times, and many Jewish Christians found security in their former religious rites and rituals of the Jews’ religion (See Gl 1:13). Therefore, some had evidently already left the faith by the time Hebrews and this epistle were written. But in this text Paul exhorts Timothy to deal directly with those who were lingering, but had already adopted some Jewish religiosity by “*giving heed to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons.*”

The times in which Timothy lived were not unlike times throughout the ages unto this day. It seems that after the initial rapid turning of the world upside down for Jesus, many have now turned aside unto fables and religious babblings. At least this was the message of the Hebrew writer. Those were times, as Peter wrote, in which the “*‘dog returns to his own vomit,’ and, ‘a sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire’*” (2 Pt 2:22). They were times of “*all deception of wickedness among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth that they might be saved*” (2 Th 2:10).

If one would bemoan his own plight as a teacher of the word of God in these modern days, then it would

be good to consider the religious world in which Timothy, Titus and the early teachers lived. The religious world then was saturated with deceptive teachers, who, “*with all deceiving power and signs and wonders,*” captivated the world of the ignorant and unlearned religionists (2 Th 2:9). In these modern times of false miracle workers who promote “*doctrines of demons,*” we too live in a world that has been led astray with all deception.

We too live in a world where there are those who are “*speaking lies in hypocrisy.*” The world is burdened with preachers for profit who go about with all deception of claims of raising the dead, and religious performances of “*powers and signs and wonders.*” The carnal lives of such religious characters reveals that their hearts are earthly. They do not have the mind of the One who was in the spirit in eternity, but was incarnate into the flesh of man (Jn 1:1,2,14; Ph 2:5-9). They profess great faith, but secure themselves financially on the backs of the weak. In teaching and behaving in such a manner, they have revealed that their conscience is “*seared with a hot iron.*”

There were those who were “*forbidding to marry,*” and subsequently setting the social environment for religious leaders to commit all sorts of sexual immorality. They enacted religious codes “*to abstain from foods*

that God has created to be received with thanksgiving.”

There were certain foods from which the Jews under the Sinai law were commanded to abstain. It seems that some of the Jews who came into the fellowship of the saints were bringing with them prohibitions of certain foods that were forbidden under the Sinai law. They were binding on the Gentiles those forbidden foods of a law that had long been nailed to the cross (Cl 2:14).

Not far from Ephesus, the supposed location of Timothy at the time of the reception of this letter, was the city of Colosse. It was to the Christians in this city that Paul wrote, *“Let no one judge you in food or in drink”* (Cl 2:16). We would assume that Timothy either had the Colossian letter in hand, or eventually, would receive a copy.

In reference to eating and drinking, *“those who believe and know the truth”* of the gospel have been set free from any religious restrictions in reference to food and drink. As gospel obedient disciples, we know that *“the kingdom of God is not meat and drink”* (Rm 14:17). Any restrictions on these matters in reference to faith, therefore, would identify such restrictions as religious rites and rituals. It is thus a sign of the existence of religion when there are laws concerning the restriction of foods and drinks. We

must remember that our obedience to the truth of the gospel sets us free from religious restrictions in reference to food and drink (See Gl 5:1).

“Every creature of God is good” for eating. Therefore, *“nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving.”* In the context of meats that were eaten in respect to some idol in Corinth, Paul reminded the Corinthian disciples, *“Concerning the eating of those things sacrificed to idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world”* (1 Co 8:4). *“Meat does not commend us to God, for neither if we eat are we the better, nor if we do not eat are we the worse”* (1 Co 8:8). Therefore, for personal reasons one may restrict himself from eating certain foods, or even specific meat, but such things can never become religious restrictions in the lives of those who have obeyed the gospel. When considering the eating of certain meats, the Christian must remember that all meats are *“sanctified by the word of God and prayer.”*

B. Teach truth (4:6-11):

Paul places a condition on being *“a good servant of Christ Jesus.”* That condition is *“if you instruct the brethren in these things.”* Again we are reminded of the rebuke that the Hebrew writer gave to some Jewish Christians who had not assumed their

responsibility to be teachers, though they had been in the faith for many years (Hb 5:12).

Timothy may have been intimidated into silence in reference to his teaching. So Paul says “if” you instruct the brethren you will be a good servant. If he did, then he would be “*nourished by the words of faith.*” Unless one is teaching the words of faith there is no nourishing by the words of faith. Any teacher of the word of God knows this. It is not that he or she necessarily takes pride in the art of teaching, but rejoices in the transformation that takes place in the lives of those who are “*nourished by the words of faith.*” The good servant as a teacher finds great fulfillment in teaching the words of truth because of the impact the words have on those whom he or she teaches. Any teacher will also confess that he or she learns as much or more than the student in reference to the subject that he or she teaches.

But we must also reflect on Paul’s judgment of those who were teachers of deceptive doctrines of demons. They were hypocritical in their teaching. They did not practice what they preached. But in Timothy’s case, it was different. In Timothy’s life reference was to the “*good teaching that you have followed.*” Timothy was a teacher who sought to demonstrate in his own life that which he taught oth-

ers. He was sensitive to what Paul asked some in Rome. “*Therefore, you who teach another, do you not teach yourself?*” (Rm 2:21).

It is necessary to make another point here. Though Timothy may have been intimidated by those deceptive brethren in his midst who were teaching doctrines of demons, he continued to walk in the “*good teaching.*” He did not allow those within his environment to determine his behavior in reference to living the gospel of Jesus Christ. He continued to follow Jesus regardless of all opposition.

There was also another condition that Paul placed on those who would be instructors of the brethren in the “*words of faith.*” The servant teacher was to “*refuse profane and old wives’ fables.*” We would associate the word “profane” with the “old wives’ fables.” These were fables that were accepted as true, but were here classified by the Holy Spirit to be fables. They were profane fables. Therefore—and we must not miss this point—when in our study of the word of God we discover that something is just an “old wives’ fable” that is proclaimed as truth, then the instructor of the word of God is not even allowed to have the subject brought up in the classroom as a matter of discussion. “Refuse” means to deny their introduction into the sound teaching

of the word of God. In his second letter to Timothy, Paul expanded on the necessity of refusing profane fables: *“Avoid profane and empty babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness”* (2 Tm 2:16).

The “old wives’ fables” and “empty babblings” evidently had a lot to do with exercising one’s self unto ungodliness. In both texts of 1 and 2 Timothy, Paul’s admonition to counter the promotion of both was to *“exercise yourself rather to godliness,”* since accepting such babblings will *“increase to more ungodliness.”* Such teachings are not simply mental pictures of false concepts. They affect our behavior. And in this case, they affected godly behavior. Therefore, one could not promote those fables that determined how one behaved.

So Paul sets up a contrast to the behavior that is associated with those things that profit little in reference to living according to the gospel. *“Bodily exercise profits little”* because such indicates that one is too obsessed with the physical rather than the spiritual. If one does not first focus his life on the spiritual, then it is difficult for him to follow the exhortation of the Hebrew writer, *“Let us lay aside every weight and the sin that so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us”* (Hb 12:1).

Sometimes that weight is our obsession with “bodily exercise.” If we focus on the spiritual race, then in this race we continually have the *“promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.”* Therefore, *“exercise yourself rather to godliness.”* So in his own life, Paul said, *“I thus run, not with uncertainty. I thus box, not as one who beats the air”* (1 Co 9:26). Paul is not discounting exercising, but is encouraging more focus on exercising our spiritual souls.

There is a reward for exercising ourselves in godliness. It is *“because we trust in the living God who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers.”* God offered His Son for “all men.” He did so because He was *“not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance”* (2 Pt 3:9). Nevertheless, though the offer continues to be made, it is *“especially the believers”* who will eventually inherit the reward of their labors. Because of this truth, it was necessary that Timothy *“command and teach”* these things.

C. Live the gospel (4:12-16):

The power of one’s youth as a Christian is in the example of his life according to the gospel he obeyed. Since Paul’s exhortation here is to a younger person, then we assume that young people have a responsibility to

take ownership of their behavior for the purpose of being an example for others to follow. Therefore, the youth must “*be an example to the believers.*” This example should be (1) in study and teaching the word of God, (2) behaving in a manner that reveals one’s gratitude for the gospel, (3) loving as God has loved us through Jesus, (4) being zealous in spirit, (5) in walking by faith, and (6) in keeping one’s life pure from the ways of the world (See 1 Tm 5:22). Not only should shepherds of the flock be an example of these things, so also those who would assume the responsibility of teaching the flock (1 Pt 5:3; see Cl 3:1-17).

Our example involves our relational interaction with the believers as the house of God. Since those with whom Timothy labored did not have copies of any other documents of the New Testament than what Timothy possessed, then he had a responsibility of reading the Scriptures to the people. That from which he read may have been some copies of the scrolls of the Old Testament. Or by this time, some of the other writings of the New Testament authors could have been circulating, copies of which Timothy was in possession (See 2 Pt 3:15,16).

Regardless of that from which Timothy was to read, the underlying purpose for the public reading was that many did not know how to read.

If we were to put this in our context today in the developing world, copies of the Bible are sometimes non-existent. At least there are few copies of the Sacred Scriptures available for individual ownership. In such situations we would assume that those copies that are available should be read to the people. Public Bible reading should be a part of our ministry to the flock, especially to those aged brothers and sisters whose eyes have grown dim for the purpose of reading.

Before his arrival, Paul also encouraged Timothy to “*give heed... to exhortation.*” Through exhortation he wanted Timothy to encourage the people. We do not presume that the “exhortation” was simply a dynamic presentation on Sunday morning. In a meek and quiet spirit one can go from house to house giving encouragement to the saints (See At 20:20). In other words, we must extract from the ministry of exhortation our preconceived notion of one standing before an audience and giving a great oration of words to the people.

Mutual edification is a responsibility of every disciple. The church is to be as Paul wrote to the Christians in Rome: “*Therefore, let us follow after the things that make for peace and things by which **one may edify another***” (Rm 14:19). “*Let every one of us please his neighbor for*

his good, to his edification” (Rm 15:2). A humble and quiet prayer in the presence of a needy spirit is sometimes all that is needed for one to be edified. “*Let all things be done for edification*” (1 Co 14:26).

To “*give heed ... to teaching*” interprets itself. Shepherds are to be able to teach in order to guard the flock from “old wives’ fables,” “doctrines of demons” and “babblings.” This instruction for Timothy to do the same means that no one has a copyright on the ministry of teaching what they know of the Bible (See Hb 5:12).

We are not told what specific gift of the Holy Spirit that Timothy received by the laying on of Paul’s hands (See 2 Tm 1:6). However, from what Paul wrote in the second letter, we would assume that it was the gift of inspired knowledge of the truth. Paul wrote in the second letter, “*I remind you that you stir up the gift of God that is in you by the laying on of my hands*” (2 Tm 1:6). Through the laying on of the hands of the Christ-sent apostles the miraculous gifts were given (At 8:17,18). Among these gifts were the gifts of “*wisdom, to another the word of knowledge ... to another prophecy*” (See 1 Co 12:8-11). Regardless of which gift was passed on to Timothy through the laying on of Paul’s hands, he was to stir up its use for the benefit of the church.

Since miraculous gifts were not

given for one’s own exhortation, or gratification, then others would be left without the blessing of the gifts if the one who possessed a particular gift did not use it for the benefit of the church. The existence of these gifts can be traced back to the prophecy of Joel 2:28-32, in which prophecy God promised that the Spirit of God would be poured out on those who obeyed the gospel. When Peter stood up on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2, he said in reference to Joel’s prophecy, “*This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel*” (At 2:16). He then quoted the prophecy of Joel. All the receiving of the Holy Spirit about which the New Testament speaks is traced back to the fulfillment of Joel 2:28-32. The miraculous gift that Timothy received through the laying on of Paul’s hands was a fulfillment of this prophecy. The indwelling of the Spirit in every Christian also finds its origin in the prophecy of Joel 2.

Timothy was blessed with one of the miraculous gifts at the time he was sent forth with Paul on Paul’s second missionary journey. The gift came by the laying on of the hands of Paul (2 Tm 1:6). However, it came “*with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery*” when the elders commissioned Timothy to be a missionary with Paul. The commissioning and receiving of the gift happened at the same time.

Paul had just given Timothy something about which to think. “*Meditate on these things*” means to focus on these responsibilities. “*Give yourself wholly to them*” assumes that Timothy was to be totally committed to the task set before him. If he gave himself wholly to that about which Paul had just instructed, then others could see his growth. It was not a matter that he should conceal his spiritual growth, as well as his ownership of the discipleship about which Paul had just instructed. Others must be able to see his spiritual growth. They could see such because he had assumed the responsibility of obeying those things about which Paul wrote.

We must assume that Timothy did not keep this letter hidden from those to whom he was to be an example. As Timothy gave heed to reading this letter before all, everyone could see that he was obedient unto

those things that Paul had written. They could see that Timothy followed the instruction, “*Take heed to yourself and to the teaching.*” The church could witness in Timothy’s life that he continued “*in these things.*” The result of Timothy taking ownership of those things about which Paul wrote would result in both his own salvation, as well as “*those who hear you.*”

We must not think for a moment that these instructions were exclusively for Timothy. The letter was preserved throughout history in order that we as disciples of Jesus also assume the responsibility of the instructions herein given. When we live according to the instructions that Paul has given, then we will save ourselves, as well as those we teach in our own ministry of teaching and faithfulness. When teachers teach, the body organically functions with a healthy spirit.

Chapter 5

GOSPEL RELATIONSHIPS

The gospel touches the relationships between all people of every society of the world. In the society of the Roman Empire, the gospel even affected the relationships between slave owners and their slaves. Living the gospel was so contrary to the normal life-style of the ancient Romans and Greeks that the Holy Spirit

had to define clearly all relationships that Christians were to have in such societies.

When one obeyed the gospel, he or she came into a new paradigm of social behavior. This meant that the accepted culture of any society must be overridden by the standards of the gospel. No one could excuse his be-

havior by saying, “It’s our culture.” In the relationships that are explained in this chapter, the Holy Spirit wanted to declare that when one obeys the gospel, he or she is born into a new social order that is patterned after the mind of Christ (See Ph 2:5-11)..

When it was said of the early Christians, “*These who have turned the world upside down have come here also*” (At 17:6), the thought was not only in reference to belief, but also to their behavior. When the gospel captivated the minds of the obedient, their behavior changed within society. Christians simply lived differently within their societies. Their behavior was so different that the society was “turned upside down,” or as someone said, “turned right side up.”

In particular, the gospel relationships of people relating to older men and women needed to be defined in reference to the mind of Christ after which we must conduct our lives (Ph 2:5). In this context, Paul also corrected some social dysfunctions in reference to widows and slaves. From chapter 5:1 through to 6:2, the Holy Spirit through Paul explained how Christians must conduct their gospel relationships within the social structures of any society.

Living the gospel meant that some social relationships had to change when one obeyed the gospel, especially those relationships that

were contrary to the gospel. Before one’s obedience to the gospel, he or she may have allowed his or her behavior to be directed by what was culturally accepted. But after obedience to the gospel, the focus of the Christian changed from socially controlled relationships according to culture, to gospel controlled relationships where one’s mind was focused on King Jesus. It was as the Spirit said in another context:

If you then were raised with Christ [from the waters of baptism], seek those things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth (Cl 3:1,2).

A. Aged men and women (5:1,2):

Often unnoticed in this text is the use of the Greek words *presbuteros* (aged men) and *presbuteras* (aged women). Both words come from the word for “presbyter.” The use of the two Greek words are generic in these two verses in reference to the aged presbytery of men and women among the disciples. So the young Timothy was to “*appeal to him [presbuteros] as a father.*” Because of his age, the elderly presbyter was to be honored. In other words, when the younger addressed the elder, great respect was to be expressed. The elder must be

approached with a spirit of submission. It is as the elder Peter explained, “*You younger, submit yourselves to the elders*” (1 Pt 5:5).

Timothy, the younger, was to consider the *presbuteras* (aged sisters) “*as mothers*.” They too must be approached with a spirit of respect and submission. When Timothy was in a house assembly with older women present, he was to show respect and submission as he would to his own mother. No young preacher has a right to behave pompously around aged sisters.

In the same text, Timothy was to associate with “*younger women as sisters*.” In his association with young women he was to keep himself pure of any immorality. Strictly speaking, Paul admonished Timothy, “*Keep yourself pure*” (1 Tm 5:22). In his association with young sisters, therefore, Timothy was to give no appearance of immorality.

The instructions that follow were in reference to women only. But in general, the young Timothy was to have a respectful relationship with both older brothers and sisters.

B. Honor widows (5:3-16):

Those who are “*truly widows*” are those widows who do not have “*children or grandchildren*” who can care for them. The responsibility of

the children and grandchildren is to “*practice piety at home*” by repaying their parents through their care for them. If one is a Christian, “*this is good and acceptable before God*.” In the text, the Holy Spirit did not qualify the care of the aged widow by one’s own financial ability. The mandate is simply that they must care for their aged mother or grandmother if they are to be acceptable before God.

Now if a sister “*is truly a widow*,” then it is assumed that there are no children or grandchildren who can administer care. This widow is qualified for the support of the church because she may be “*desolate*” (destitute). If she “*trusts in God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day*,” then she has qualified herself to be supported by the church. However, if such a widow has fallen from the faith and “*lives in pleasure*,” then she is spiritually dead, and thus, she is not qualified to be supported by the church. In other words, the church has no responsibility to care for a widow who has fallen away.

Timothy was to teach these things to the children, grandchildren and widows “*so that they may be blameless*.” If these things are taught, but still there are children or grandchildren who do not care for their aged parents, then the child has “*denied the faith*.” Such children are “*worse than*

an unbeliever.” These children are worse than an unbeliever because the unbelievers in the world have enough respect for their aged parents to care for them.

The command of the apostle extends beyond the responsibilities of the immediate family. There may be no immediate family members to care for the widows. In such cases the church is responsible for the widow. Care for widows, therefore, extends beyond one’s own immediate family if one is a Christian. One certainly has the responsibility to care “*for those of his own household.*” However, when a widow has obeyed the gospel, she becomes the responsibility of the church if there is no immediate family to care for her.

“*Let no one be enrolled as a widow who is under sixty years old.*” The following are the qualifications for a widow to be supported by the church: (1) The widow must be over sixty years of age. (2) She must have “*been the wife of one man.*” The church is not obligated to care for any widow who has been married more than once. It is assumed that the resources of the former husbands are enough to support the widow in her old age. (3) She must have “*a reputation for good works.*” These good works are specifically defined: (a) She must have reared children. (b) She must have been one who was hos-

pitable to brethren whom she did not know, but she received them and sent them on their way (See 3 Jn 5-8). (c) She has “*washed the saints’ feet*” by living the gospel in her relationships with other brothers and sisters. (d) She “*has relieved the afflicted*” by helping the poor. (e) “*She has diligently followed every good work.*” All the preceding identify the one who has lived the gospel as a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. In her old age as a widow, therefore, she has qualified herself to be supported as a worthy laborer in retirement.

The preceding qualifications for a widow to be supported by the church relieves the church of supporting every widow in a particular city. We can only imagine that once the church became known for taking care of widows, numerous widows would show up for support. So the qualifications for enrollment as a supported widow in this context is to protect the church. The church did not have the responsibility to support every widow in town, nor every widow who was a member of the church.

Nevertheless, we must assume that the community of God would reach out to help any widow who was in trouble. The qualifications that identified a worthy widow to be supported were not given to justify hardened hearts against widows in the community. What the Spirit was do-

ing through the qualifications was to relieve brothers and sisters from feeling guilty because they could not care for every widow in the city. It would have been for a small group of loving disciples in a city of several hundred thousand to turn away those widows for whom they did not have the financial resources to serve.

Some widows must be refused, particularly “*the younger widows.*” Those widows who are still young enough to have sexual desires and marry, must seek to marry. Some, however, remarry “*in disregard to Christ.*” For the Christian widow who seeks to remarry, there is a stipulation for her remarriage in regard to Christ. Paul explained, “*If her husband is dead, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord*” (1 Co 7:39). Those young widows who seek to remarry must marry only a Christian brother.

The Christian widow who has no regard for Christ will sometimes be tempted to marry someone who is not a Christian. If she does, then she has revealed her lack of understanding of these matters in reference to Christians not binding themselves to unbelievers. If an older Christian woman does not understand these matters, then she is immature in the faith. To her, marriage to an unbeliever is more important than her marriage to Christ. In fact, those widows

who marry unbelievers “*bring condemnation on themselves because they have cast off their first faith.*”

Since the relationship some widows have with Christ is shallow, “*they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house.*” In their wandering, they become “*gossips and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not.*” For this reason, Paul desired “*that the younger widows marry, bear children, manage the house.*” In doing this, they will “*give no opportunity to the adversary to speak reproachfully*” because their time will be spent in managing a home.

When Paul wrote that “*some have already turned aside after Satan,*” he was speaking of those widows who possibly married unbelievers, and subsequently, were turned aside from their first faith by the influence of the unbeliever. They allowed the unbeliever whom they married to influence them to the point of turning them away from their Lord Jesus Christ.

As a final note in reference to the children or grandchildren taking care of their aged mother or grandmother, they are encouraged to “*assist them.*” If any “*believing man or woman has widows*” for whom he is presently responsible, then he must continue with his responsibility. He must not turn the widow over to the support of the

church. If the church is burdened with a great number of widows for whom to care, then the church will not have enough funds to care for all the qualified widows for whom they are responsible. It is the responsibility of the church to relieve only “*those who are truly widows*” who have no children or grandchildren to care for them.

C. Respect elders (5:17-19):

The primary ministry of the shepherds is directed toward the sheep. However, in this text those shepherds “*who labor in preaching and teaching*” are to be considered worthy of double salary.

“Preaching” is a ministry of heralding the gospel to the unbelievers. One is a preacher only when he stands before unbelievers. If he stands before the believers, then he is a teacher. Though the primary work of the elder is directed to the sheep, this does not obligated the elder to be only with the sheep. Those elders who preach the gospel to the lost, as well as shepherd the sheep, fall under what the Sinai law requires: “*You will not muzzle the ox that treads out the grain*” (Dt 25:4). The other mandate on this matter are the words of the Lord who said that “*the laborer is worthy of his wages*” (Lk 10:7).

Paul had previously mentioned

the “*gossips and busybodies*” who go about from house to house “*speaking things which they ought not.*” In reference to “*accusations against an elder,*” special caution must be taken. Timothy was not to “*receive an accusation against an elder except before two or three witnesses.*” Such was also a requirement of the Sinai law (See Dt 17:6: 19:15). This means that there must be two or three witnesses in one’s presence before he should even consider an accusation against an elder.

The reason for this is obvious. Too many people find it too easy to speak against those who lead the flock. Because of jealousy, envy, low self-esteem, or simply an inferiority complex, there are those who are immature in the faith. They feel comfortable about bringing accusations against those to whom they should submit for service.

And then there are those brethren who believe that being an elder is some political office in the church that comes with authority. When they desire to be shepherds, they will involve themselves in all sorts of political campaigns in order to be “elected” to the office. Such people need to pray over Mark 10:42,43.

In the internet world today, this point must be greatly emphasized. It is too easy for slanderous people to go online and publish accusations

against a man of God that are simply false. “Fake news” is slanderous when written about a particular person. Those who feel unthreatened by hiding behind their smartphones and computers in order to spew out garbage against those who lead the flock of God should be confronted. One will bring himself or herself into judgment for slanderously speaking against any man of God.

When a shepherd shows up at the door of one who is walking or teaching contrary to sound teaching, it is the responsibility of the shepherds to correct such people. Those who do not want to be corrected will often shun those who approach them. They will sometimes bring accusations against those who are seeking to point out the error of their way. In such situations, it is right to have witnesses when accusations are made against any leader.

We might be naive to think that slander could not be spoken against a righteous person. But we must remember that the religiously wicked of Jesus’ day used slander to have Him convicted and nailed to the cross (Mt 26:59). And then there is the case of the apostle of love. John wrote of one who loved to be first among the disciples, and thus unjustly accused him and others “*with malicious words*” (3 Jn 10). Though John was known for love because he

wrote New Testament Scripture that focused on love, Diotrephes slandered him and the other evangelists with malicious words in order to exalt himself above them. It was fitting, therefore, that the Holy Spirit warn Timothy and every righteous leader not to accept malicious words that are spoken against anyone, especially elders.

D. Rebuke sin (5:20-25):

“*Those who continue in sin*” must be identified before the church to have given themselves over to sin. The rebuke in this case is in reference to one who will not repent of his wayward way. This may be the case of the one about whom John said there needed to be no prayers uttered: “*There is a sin unto death. I do not say that he should pray for this*” (1 Jn 5:16).

The sin that is unto death is the sin of which one will not repent. Those who are caught up in trodding under foot the blood of the Son of God have turned away from the gospel (See Hb 10:26-29). Anyone who would deny any part of the gospel has given up that which will take him into eternal glory. This is the one who has given up his right to remain in fellowship with the body of Christ. Such people will not escape the judgment to come because they have walked

away from that which would deliver them from judgment (Hb 2:2,3).

We serve a God who is no respecter of persons (At 10:34,35). If Timothy would live godly, therefore, then he must emulate in his relationships with others the same quality. Paul’s mandate that he do “*nothing by partiality*” comes as a charge. “*Preferring one before another,*” therefore, is serious. It is ungodly behavior. The things about which Paul wrote in this chapter are to be implemented without preference. James gave an excellent commentary on what Paul stated here:

My brethren, do not show favoritism and hold the faith of our glorious Lord Jesus Christ. For if there should come into your assembly a man with a gold ring in fine clothing, and there come in also a poor man in filthy clothes, and you show respect to the one who wears the fine clothing, and say to him, “You sit here in a good place,” and say to the poor, “You stand there, or sit here at my footstool,” have you not made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? (Js 2:1-4).

Timothy was to show no partiality in reference in his ministry to those in need. He was not to be naive in reference to giving his approval of others. The instructions to “*lay hands*

hastily on no man” assumed that because of some unfairness toward different individuals, Timothy was not to give his consent quickly to any person. If he did, then he might find himself “*to be a partaker of another’s sins.*”

The lesson is that if a particular individual desires to be condoned quickly by the preacher, there may be some sinister reason for his request. For this reason, it is best not to give one’s approval to new converts, or to those who have not yet restored themselves with fruits of repentance (See Mt 3:8). In keeping himself free from the influences of those who have ulterior motives, Timothy would keep himself pure.

Throughout the centuries, wine was commonly mixed with water in order to cleanse the water of any impurities. The alcohol of the wine would kill the germs in the water, and thus make the water safe to drink. This was a common practice for purifying water that dates back millennia.

Because Timothy was possibly drinking impure water, Paul here stated that he “*drink no longer water exclusively.*” Paul wanted to change his habit of drinking water that had not been purified with wine. “*Your frequent infirmities,*” Paul wrote, were evidently caused by the water, and thus, the best medicine available

was wine.

“Some men’s sins are clearly manifest” in that one often reaps what he sows (See Gl 5:19-21; 6:7). The sins are clearly identified in the individual because he parades the sins before all. Some sinful attitudes, however, are hidden sins of the heart that will be revealed only in the final judgment.

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that everyone may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether

good or bad (2 Co 5:10).

“All things are naked and opened to the eyes of Him to whom we have to give account” (Hb 4:13).

In contrast to some sins that can be hidden, good works cannot. Doing good is our ministry to others, and thus, others are the witness of our good works. Good works are to be carried out as Jesus said: “Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven” (Mt 5:16).

Chapter 6

GOSPEL RELATIONSHIPS

(Continued)

E. Bondservants (6:1,2):

When speaking of bondservants (slaves) under Roman law, these workers had several rights. However, they were still slaves in the bondage of their masters. It would be difficult, therefore, to compare the slaves of the Roman economy with the typical employee of today. One right that the slave of the Roman Empire did not have was that he could quit his job. Nor could he go on strike. In his predicament, therefore, there were some Christian slaves who needed

some instructions from the Spirit in order that they not find themselves in trouble with the law of Rome, and thus justly punished.

One responsibility of Christian slaves was that they “*count their own masters worthy of all honor.*” There was a purpose for this relational behavior of respect that was to be shown toward their masters. They were to behave in a respectful manner “*so that the name of God and His teaching not be blasphemed.*”

The behavior of the Christian slave in his relationship with his mas-

ter could be evangelistic. It would be as the evangelistic method that Peter explained should exist between a believing wife who was married to an unbelieving husband: “*Wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that if any do not obey the word, they, without the word, may be won by the behavior of the wives*” (1 Pt 3:1).

But then there were those Christian slave owners who had unbelieving slaves. They were instructed not to despise their slaves, and especially those slaves who were believers (See Pl). And then Paul gives a social twist to the relationship between two Christians, one who was a slave owner and

one who was a slave. When this social relationship existed, then the slave owner was to serve the slave “*because they [the slaves] are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit*” of the gospel as the slave owner. With this mandate issued in reference to Christian slaves and slave owners, the practice of slavery would eventually fade away when Christian social principles became the norm of society. Slavery can never exist in a society that has adopted the principles by which brothers and sisters are to exist in the freedom they have in Christ. A religion that would condone slavery, therefore, is not from God.

THE WALK OF FAITH

Because we have been redeemed from sin through the precious blood of the incarnate Son of God, we respond to God’s grace by living this good news (gospel) in our lives. We walk a life of gratitude in thanksgiving for what God has done for us through His Son (See 2 Co 4:15). This is the gospel walk, and thus, our witness to the world that we are sons of God who walk by faith. There are specific characteristics of behavior that identify this walk. Paul closes his first letter to Timothy with several marks of the identity of the one who walks by faith in the Son of God.

A. Gospel attitudes (6:3-10):

The proud person who knows little about living the gospel does not have the mind of Christ, “*who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God. But He made Himself of no reputation*” (Ph 2:6,7). This should be the mind of the one who lives after the behavior of the Son of God who gave of Himself for ourselves. There is no room for pride in the life of the one who realizes that God in the spirit (Jn 4:24) became God in the flesh (Jn 1:14) in order to bring those who respond to this incarnational offering into the eternal presence of God. Instruction in these matters constitute “*wholesome words, even the words of*

our Lord Jesus Christ.” This is the “teaching that is according to godliness.”

If one is proud as a supposed Christian, then he truly does not know what he is talking about in reference to living the mind of Christ. He is often “obsessed with controversy and disputes about words” that are contrary to “wholesome words.” Because such a person is walking contrary to the gospel of the mind of Christ, he generates controversy by his efforts to justify his life-style that is contrary to Christ. His very behavior stirs up among the members “envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions, perverse disputings between men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth.” Such people suppose “that godliness is a means to gain” because they do not understand that the Son of God gave up heaven for us. The mind of Christ is about sacrifice, not gain.

Paul could not have better defined the preachers for profit that we experience in these times. These are those who have “religion for sale.” With their presumptuous “godliness” they are true religionists who take advantage of the sincerity of others. They are as Hophni and Phinehas, the two sons of Eli, who took advantage of the sincerity of the people of God for the sake of gain (See 1 Sm 2:12-25). When preachers obsess over the

contributions of the people, then they are “men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth” of the gospel. They are men who do not know the incarnational Son of God who gave of Himself for us. When Timothy encountered such people, Paul instructed, “From such withdraw yourself.”

The Holy Spirit would instruct such covetous people with the following words: “Let your behavior be without covetousness, and be content with such things as you have” (Hb 13:5). Those who live the incarnational life after the Son of God who gave Himself for us, have covetousness under control. No person who is covetous is living the gospel. Such a person is an idolater. “Therefore, put to death your members that are on the earth ... covetousness, **which is idolatry**” (Cl 3:5). When one conquers his or her lusts for the things of this world, then he or she will understand that “godliness with contentment is great gain.” In order to be victorious over one’s lusts for the things of the world, he must remember that “we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.”

It was not that Paul was speaking hypocritically concerning these matters. Timothy knew that when Paul was Saul, Saul, the Pharisee, had power and possessions as a religious

leader of the Jews' religion (Ph 3:1-6). But when Saul finally encountered Christ on a Damascus road, Paul wrote of his former life, "*But what things were gain to me [as a leader in Judaism], those things I have counted loss for Christ*" (Ph 3:7). In fact, he continued, "*I count all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord*" (Ph 3:8). Paul lived incarnationally as John the Baptist who introduced the incarnate Son of God into this world (See Mt 3:4). Those who would live the gospel, should likewise live according to the gospel of the incarnation of the Word that became flesh (Jn 1:14).

So the person who is living the gospel of the incarnate Son of God would say, "*If we have food and clothing, with these let us be content.*" If one is not willing to be content with these things, then he or she will fall into temptation by lusting after the things of this world.

It seems that Paul established an axiomatic truth in reference to Christians who seek to be rich. "*But those who want to be rich fall into temptation and a snare.*" If there could be a harsh warning for those who seek to be rich, it would be that many rich people are following after "*many foolish and harmful lusts that drown men in ruin and destruction.*" The lust to be rich is an idolatry that drowns the gospel out of one's life. And when

the gospel is washed away in the life of a Christian by the flood of riches, the Christian is often ruined. Such ruined people have only the hope of looking forward to the destruction that is coming with Jesus and His mighty angels (2 Th 1:6-9).

Those who seek to be rich fall in love with money. They forget that "*the love of money is the root of all evils.*" It is not that money is evil, but the love of it. Those who seek to be rich, therefore, are turned aside from what is to be the primary focus of the Christian: "*Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth*" (Cl 3:2). Those who desire to be rich cannot set their minds totally on heavenly things. They are not focused on seeking "*those things that are above*" (Cl 3:1). They are diverted in their daily thinking to the things of this world. And because their minds are on the things of this world, they become worldly focused. No worldly person is living the gospel of the incarnate Son of God. Therefore, in their yearning to be rich with money, they "*have strayed from the faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows.*"

B. Focus on living the faith (6:11-16):

Those preachers who seek the contributions of the people need to

listen to the words of Paul in this text. He has already identified the idolatry of those who lust after the contributions of the people. He now turns to identifying the character of the “*man of God*.” His first instructions in reference to the lust for riches is the command, “*Flee these things*.” In order to flee, there must be something after which to follow. Therefore, “*follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness*.” These are those personality characteristics that identify one who is seeking to live according to the gospel. To the Ephesians, Paul also gave directives in conducting our lives after the gospel that moves us unto godly living (See Ep 6:14-17).

Not only should one flee, but he must also fight against that which would divert his attention away from being totally committed to gospel living. Therefore, “*fight the good fight of the faith*.” The militant disciple must “*run with endurance the race that is set before us*” (Hb 12:1). Jesus is “*the author and finisher of our faith*” (Hb 12:2). Therefore, in order to be victorious in our fight for our faith, we must continually look unto Jesus. We must “*lay hold on eternal life*.” If we lose sight of our goal, we will lose the fight for our faith.

Timothy had “*confessed a good confession before many witnesses*.” Before many friends and family mem-

bers years before, he had made a commitment to preach the gospel which he may have at this time, because of opposition, been somewhat discouraged to do. Paul therefore urges him to remember his commitment that he made before many friends and family back in Lystra and Derbe many years before. We do not assume that this was his personal confession that Jesus was the Christ and Son of God that one makes before his obedience to the gospel. The confession about which Paul speaks here resulted from the fact that Timothy had already confessed that Jesus was the Christ when he obeyed the gospel.

The confession that Paul wanted Timothy to remember here was his confession to commit to preach the gospel. At the time he made this commitment, the elders laid hands on him and sent him forth with Paul. In this context, therefore, Paul is urging Timothy to live up to his confession. He must make all those friends and family members back home proud of him. When they heard the news of his continued preaching, they would hear that he had not turned back from his confession that he made before all of them many years before.

In this text, therefore, we are given a hint as to why Paul wrote this first letter. Timothy needed encouragement to continue preaching the gospel in order that friends back in Lystra

and Derbe would be proud of one of their sons whom they had sent forth into the mission field. They needed to know that their many prayers for young Timothy were not in vain.

Therefore, Paul sought to stir within Timothy feelings of remembrance of his past commitment, as well as his destiny that came with the commitment. *“I charge you in the sight of God ... that you keep this commandment without spot or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.”* We can only imagine the feelings that were aroused in the heart of Timothy when he read these words from the Holy Spirit. We envision a renewal within him of his determination to fight the good fight of the faith.

Before Pontius Pilate, Jesus made a confession of His commitment to fulfill the will of God to go to the cross. After not denying that He was the king about whom Pilate questioned Him, Jesus said to Pilate, *“You say correctly that I am a king. For this reason I was born, and for this cause I came into the world”* (Jn 18:37). Because Jesus carried through with His commitment to the cross, He *“is the only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords.”* Though the first disciples knew Jesus according to the flesh, Paul wrote, *“Yet now we know Him thus no more”* (2 Co 5:16). We now know Jesus as the ascended King to the right hand of God who

now ministers on our behalf (Hb 8:1). All this was the result of Jesus’ total commitment to the cross for us. Likewise, our total commitment to preach the gospel will lead to many being rewarded with that for which we ourselves struggle to receive.

We must not miss the emphasis of Paul’s statement in reference to Jesus when he used the phrase, *“the King of kings, and Lord of lords.”* The Holy Spirit through Paul revealed that Jesus’ kingship is far beyond those of the household of God. The ascended King Jesus now has all authority over all things (Mt 28:18). All powers, seen and unseen, are under His control (Ep 1:21-23). He upholds all things by the word of His power (Hb 1:3). All angels are subject to His kingship (1 Pt 3:22). Though we do not now see that all things are under His present kingdom reign, we must assume that they are because of who He is as King Jesus (Hb 2:8). He is truly King of all the kings of the world, and the Lord of all lords. All this resulted from His commitment to remain true to His confession.

King Jesus is all the preceding because He *“only has immortality, dwelling in the light unto which no man can approach.”* As God the Son, He possesses the power to give immortality. He is in the light of the eternal God into whose presence we aspire to go through Him alone. Apart

from Him, therefore, there is no hope of eternal life. There is no hope of entering into the eternal presence of God without going through Jesus (At 4:12).

Timothy must remember this. We have hope because Jesus remained faithful to His commitment to the cross. Therefore, many others will have hope if Timothy remains true to his commitment to preach the gospel. Likewise—and we must add this—many others also throughout our own lives will have hope through the gospel if we remain committed to preaching the gospel (Mk 16:15,16).

God is spirit (Jn 4:24), and no man can see that which is spirit. Man can see only those manifestations that reveal His presence. Therefore, God has no eyes, no nose, and no body of any kind as we possess. If God were in bodily form as we are as His creation, then the incarnation of the Son of God would not have been an incarnation at all. It would have been only a parallel transfer of the Son of God into this world. But God the Son was made in the flesh of man (Jn 1:14; Ph 2:6,7). A body was prepared for the dwelling of the eternal Spirit (See Hb 10:5). This is the power of the gospel that draws us unto the cross. We realize that God became flesh in order to have a body that was prepared for an offering on the cross. The incarnate Son of God made it possible

for us to have hope of a new spiritual body that He has prepared for us when He comes again (See 1 Co 15:35-57).

But now this incarnate God has ascended to the right hand of the eternal Father. Therefore, “*to Him be honor and eternal dominion.*” We know Jesus now as the God over all things with all authority (Mt 28:18). He is now “*far above all principality and power and might and dominion and every name that is named*” (Ep 1:21). It is the gospel of King Jesus that we now preach to the world.

E. Responsibilities of rich Christians (6:17-19):

There are two things that rich Christians must remember: (1) They must not be “*high-minded*” (See Pv 16:18; Jr 9:23). (2) They must not “*trust in the uncertainty of riches.*” Riches often become the reason why the rich separate themselves from those who are not rich. In this way, they become respecters of people. They bring into their personal fellowship only those who are also rich.

If one trusts in riches, then he is prone to fall away because his focus is not totally on Jesus. His trust in the Lord is only partial. Paul wrote of his own personal paradigm shift from riches to faith in order to encourage others to do the same: “*What things were gain to me, those things I*

have counted loss for Christ” (Ph 3:7). It is not wrong to be rich, but when riches become an opportunity to be puffed up, or the riches become the foundation of our faith, then the riches are not worth it.

In contrast to trusting in riches, the rich must trust “*in the living God who richly gives us all things to enjoy.*” If the rich understand this, then they learn to “*do good.*” Their riches give them the opportunity to “*be rich in good works.*”

When the rich are “*ready to distribute, willing to share,*” it is then that they are “*laying up in store for themselves a good foundation for the time to come.*” When the rich are taught to “*lay hold on eternal life,*” the focus of their lives changes from that which is of this world to that which is above (See Cl 3:1,2).

The poor must not expect the rich to give themselves into poverty. If they did, then the rich would not have the opportunity to lay “*up in store for themselves.*” If one would think that the rich should give themselves into financial equality with all the church, then he is revealing his jealousy. In this text Paul is laying on the shoulders of the rich the choice as to what they will contribute and how much they should contribute. But if they give themselves into poverty, then they will have no more riches to give.

In the context of this discussion,

we must not misunderstand Acts 2:44. Luke recorded in Acts the first reactions to the gospel by those who had obeyed the gospel: “*Now all who believed were together and had all things in common.*” But this was not a communism wherein everyone had to sell and share everything in order to become financially equal with one another.

These new disciples all had a common goal because they had all obeyed the one gospel. It was then that the statement was made, “*And they sold their possessions and goods and divided them to all, as everyone had need*” (At 2:45). The selling of the possessions was determined by the needs of the people. We must not assume, therefore, that they sold everything they had, for if they did this, then they would have had no houses in which to live and meet. They would have all become destitute. Obedience to the gospel does not produce social destitution, neither does it produce financial equality.

F. Guard your faith (6:20,21):

“*Profane and vain babblings and opposing arguments*” come from those who believe that which is contrary to the truth of the gospel. Those who believe that they are gifted with the knowledge of this world will often argue against that which is stated

as truth in the Bible. There are those who are “*vainly puffed up*” with knowledge in the field of science (Cl 2:18). Some have exalted their faith in evolutionary philosophies concerning the beginnings of mankind. By assuming that the origin of man is void of God, they seek to dispel the creative work of God, and thus claim that Bible teachings concerning creation are fables.

These are examples of the philosophies of men concerning which Paul warned Timothy to guard himself. If he did not, then his faith would be shipwrecked. Some had already shipwrecked their faith because they did not heed the warnings that are herein given (See 1 Tm 1:19,20). In the immediate historical context, Paul

did not want to happen to Timothy that which happened to others because of the influence of Hymenaeus and Alexander. In order to secure his faith, Timothy must be on guard. In the second letter, Paul warned Timothy about Alexander the coppersmith. “*You also must be on guard against him,*” Paul warned, “*for he has greatly opposed our words*” (2 Tm 4:15). This brings us to the conclusion that any words that contradict those inspired words that were written for our learning must be rejected. Therefore, Timothy must be spurred on by the words of this letter from the aged Paul in order to sustain his faith and continue his ministry of preaching the gospel.

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ABBREVIATIONS

OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis - **Gn**, Exodus - **Ex**, Leviticus - **Lv**, Numbers - **Nm**, Deuteronomy - **Dt**, Joshua - **Ja**, Judges - **Jg**, Ruth - **Rt**, 1 Samuel - **1 Sm**, 2 Samuel - **2 Sm**, 1 Kings - **1 Kg**, 2 Kings - **2 Kg**, 1 Chronicles - **1 Ch**, 2 Chronicles - **2 Ch**, Ezra - **Er**, Nehemiah - **Ne**, Esther - **Et**, Job - **Jb**, Psalms - **Ps**, Proverbs - **Pv**, Ecclesiastes - **Ec**, Song of Solomon - **Ss**, Isaiah - **Is**, Jeremiah - **Jr**, Lamentations - **Lm**, Ezekiel - **Ez**, Daniel - **Dn**, Hosea - **Hs**, Joel - **Jl**, Amos - **Am**, Obadiah - **Ob**, Jonah - **Jh**, Micah - **Mc**, Nahum - **Nh**, Habakkuk - **Hk**, Zephaniah - **Zp**, Haggai - **Hg**, Zechariah - **Zc**, Malachi - **Ml**

NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew - **Mt**, Mark - **Mk**, Luke - **Lk**, John - **Jn**, Acts - **At**, Romans - **Rm**, 1 Corinthians - **1 Co**, 2 Corinthians - **2 Co**, Galatians - **Gl**, Ephesians - **Ep**, Philippians - **Ph**, Colossians - **Cl**, 1 Thessalonians - **1 Th**, 2 Thessalonians - **2 Th**, 1 Timothy - **1 Tm**, 2 Timothy - **2 Tm**, Titus - **Ti**, Philemon - **Pf**, Hebrews - **Hb**, James - **Js**, 1 Peter - **1 Pt**, 2 Peter - **2 Pt**, 1 John - **1 Jn**, 2 John - **2 Jn**, 3 John - **3 Jn**, Jude - **Jd**, Revelation - **Rv**