

## **Introducing the Pastoral Epistles**

The “pastoral epistles,” I Timothy, II Timothy, and Titus, are so called because they were written by Paul to his two young pastors, Timothy and Titus. They were written at about the same time, and probably from the same place. At the time of writing Timothy was probably the pastor at Ephesus and Titus the pastor on the Island of Crete. It is almost certain that both Timothy and Titus were converts of Paul, personally led to the Lord by him; he was their spiritual father<sup>1</sup>. The pastoral epistles have particular meaning for young pastors; but their lessons apply to all pastors and, of course, to all of us.

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### **The New Testament, Book 15**

#### **I Timothy**

The first of Paul’s two letters to Timothy, his spiritual son and trusted associate, is the first of the three “pastoral epistles.” It is by far the longest of the three, and it is rich in doctrinal content.

Timothy, of Lystra, was the product of a mixed marriage; his mother was a Jewess and his father was a Greek--apparently a pagan. We know nothing more about his father than this. Such a marriage was unlawful, but was common in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century, far from Jerusalem.

Timothy was reared in the faith and in the hope of the expected Jewish Messiah by his mother and grandmother; but he had not grown up in the synagogue, for he had reached young manhood without being circumcised<sup>2</sup>. Paul and Barnabas had passed through Lystra on the first Missionary Journey, where Paul was stoned and left for dead; however, it appears that Paul had not met Timothy until he reached Lystra on his second Missionary Journey<sup>3</sup>. From that time on, young Timothy was Paul’s companion and protégé in ministry. If Paul had a favorite among his assistants and fellow laborers, it was young Timothy.

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<sup>1</sup> I Timothy 1:2; II Timothy 1:2,6; Titus 1:4.

<sup>2</sup> Acts 16:3.

<sup>3</sup> Acts 16:1.

This letter is very personal, yet its lessons apply also the Church as a whole. In this way it is a counterpoint to his letter to the Ephesians, which was written in such a way as to apply to the Church at large, yet is rich in lessons for individual Christians.

**A. Author.** The author is Paul, as he makes clear in the first two verses. His authorship was recognized from earliest times, and has been questioned only in very recent times by scholars who also question the validity of much of the Bible, and who dislike Paul's doctrinal statements.

**B. Place and Date.** This can be a problem. I Timothy was probably written after Paul's release from his comfortable imprisonment (apparently house arrest) in Rome, and before his re-arrest and final, cruel, imprisonment there, in the Mamertine Prison with Peter, awaiting martyrdom. This would place the date at about 63-65 AD. The place of writing is unknown, but is generally thought to have been someplace in Macedonia, perhaps Philippi or Thessalonica. But we must remember that this lack of clarity about where and when Paul wrote this letter is not of primary importance; the most important thing is what he wrote.

***NOTE:** The matter of Paul's release from his two-year comfortable imprisonment, and his final, cruel imprisonment and martyrdom three years later, is a theory and not a fact. However, all things considered, it has a very high degree of probability. According to Tacitus, Paul was re-arrested a little over a year after his release; Eusebius and Jerome have his second arrest taking place after three or four years of freedom, which is much more likely, for that much time would allow for the travels of Paul and for the development of the apostasy which is the setting for the second, and final, letter to Timothy.*

**C. Occasion.** Timothy had been sent to Ephesus, where Paul had spent three years, to correct errors and to ordain leaders for the churches there. The letter provided Timothy with guidance that he needed to do these things.

***NOTE:** Since Paul had spent approximately three years in Ephesus, and had apparently ordained elders and deacons there himself, why would Timothy need to do the same thing? The probable answer is that, in the intervening period of approximately 10 years, new churches had been established there with need for leaders.*

**D. Theme.** The primary theme of I Timothy is the structure and functioning of the local church; a secondary theme is the passing on of knowledge, from one generation of leaders to the next, with Paul and Timothy as examples.

**E. Highlights.** Highlights in I Timothy include the following:

1. Keep the Gospel Message Simple and Pure. (1:1-7)

Paul had predicted, in his farewell to the Ephesian elders near the end of his third missionary journey, that, after his departure, false teachers (Judaizers) would come to the church at Ephesus to argue their belief that, to be a Christian, one must first be circumcised and obey the Jewish law. He had also warned that some within the church there would rise up with false teachings, drawing the vulnerable into following them<sup>4</sup>. This had come to pass, and Paul tells Timothy to oppose these false teachers. Some, like the Judaizers, emphasized genealogies; others presented complex fables not based in Scripture. Paul dismisses these false doctrines as vain jangling--a lot of words, empty of meaning or validity. The heart of the true gospel message, he says, is love (the *agape* love of God), which springs from a pure heart, a clear conscience, and sincere, unfeigned, faith. These false leaders who want to be teachers, he says, do not know what they are talking about.

2. The Law Is for the Unredeemed--Not the Righteous. (1:8-11)

Paul reminds Timothy that the Law is good; it was our schoolmaster, to reveal the sinfulness of unredeemed mankind.<sup>5</sup> But the Judaizers, who insist that Christians must obey the Jewish law, are missing an important point: the law was written for the unredeemed sinner, and does not apply to the righteous redeemed, those who are rightly related to God by faith in Christ Jesus.

3. Paul as an Example of the Gracious Gift of Righteousness. (1:12-17)

Paul uses himself as a living example of the simplicity of the gospel message. Before he had met the Lord, was forgiven and received the gift of righteousness, he was a blasphemer of Jesus and a vehement enemy of the gospel, arresting Christians, imprisoning them and having them put to death. Paul, the great apostle, perhaps the most productive servant of God of all time, calls himself the chief of sinners. The simple and marvelous truth of the gospel message is that even one like he can be forgiven, can be empowered by the Holy Spirit, and thus become a mighty servant of the Lord. For this Paul declares the glory of God ("the King eternal"), who is immortal, invisible, utterly wise, and worthy of glory and honor forever and ever, and affirms that this should be.

**NOTE:** *Here there is revealed an extremely important principle of the Kingdom: the closer to the Lord we become, the more aware we are of our own imperfections, and the deeper should be our sense of humility.*

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<sup>4</sup> Acts 20:28-31.

<sup>5</sup> Galatians 3:19-26.

4. Dealing with Backsliders. (1:18-20)

Paul reminds Timothy of the prophecies that have been spoken concerning him so that, remembering and being inspired by them, he might be successful in his warfare against Satan and his kingdom, holding fast to the faith with a clear conscience. Some, he says, have rejected these things, and in so doing they have caused their Christian lives to become a shipwreck. And then, singling out two such backsliders by name, Paul says a remarkable thing! He says that he has delivered these men unto Satan, in order that they may learn not to blaspheme. What can this mean?

It seems to mean that he will not pray for them, but will allow them to suffer the bitter fruit of their deliberate apostasy, and learn from the pain of it. Spiritually, these heretics and false teachers are on their own. Satan will be given free reign to deceive and punish them. But with this obvious meaning there is, unspoken, the implication that, if they do not learn, repent, and return to the faith, their spiritual shipwreck will be permanent<sup>6</sup>. This is a terrible prospect indeed.

**NOTES:**

*a. Even the great Matthew Henry scratches his head in puzzlement over verse 20, saying that it would seem that, having been delivered to Satan to learn **not** to blaspheme, these two men would only “learn of Satan to blaspheme the more.” He concludes, “Therefore let us hold faith in a good conscience, if we would keep clear of blasphemy; for, if we once let go our hold of these, we do not know where we shall stop.”*

*b. In her Amplified Bible, Mrs. Frances Siewert’s handling of verse 20 is interesting. This last verse in Chapter 1 is, by far, the verse **most** pregnant with spiritual and theological possibilities in meaning; and yet, it is the verse **least amplified** by her in the passage. In fact, one might say that it appears that she hurried past the verse, wishing to leave it behind. This could reflect her personal belief concerning the doctrine of salvation; or, it could simply mean that she didn’t understand it any better than we do.*

*c. My marginal note by verse 20 is a question mark<sup>7</sup>.*

5. The Distilled Essence of the Christian Faith. (2:1-6)

In the first six verses of Chapter 2 there is an amazing, concise, summary of the essence of the Christian faith. Paul says that it all begins with a life of intercessory prayer for one another--for all classes of men--but especially

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<sup>6</sup> Paul makes this same point in his second letter to Timothy, again naming Hymenaeus; but in that statement Hymenaeus has a different partner in his error. This Hymenaeus must have been a slow learner, or he had a hard heart.

<sup>7</sup> See also in this regard ! Corinthians 5:1-5.

for political leaders. We are to do this to the end that we may have godly political leaders and lead a quiet, peaceful life outwardly, and that we may live inwardly in godliness and honesty. This, he says, is good in the sight of God our savior, whose will it is that all of mankind be redeemed, coming to a knowledge of the truth<sup>8</sup>.

He then declares the central facts that combine to be the lynchpin of the faith: these facts are that there is one God, and that there is one Mediator between God and men; and that Mediator is the Man, Christ Jesus. No one else can reconcile the unredeemed to God. This Redeemer gave Himself, as a ransom for all people; and He will return to Earth and be revealed to all in due time<sup>9</sup>.

**NOTE:** *In the 13 words of verse 6 there are volumes of cosmic truth:*

*a. First, we see again the vital fact that Christ Jesus **gave** himself voluntarily, to suffer the unimaginable agonies, physical and spiritual, of becoming sin on the cross<sup>10</sup>.*

*b. Second, He became a ransom. The Greek word rendered “ransom” is significant and unique (it is used only here--found in no other place in the New Testament). The word is “antilutron.” A similar Greek word meaning ransom is “lutron,” which means the price in money, or other valuables, paid for the liberation of a prisoner. “Antilutron,” used here, means the exchange of one person for another; i.e. in order to liberate the prisoner, another person, a substitute, takes his place. Thus, it is made clear that God didn’t just reach into the treasury of Heaven, take out some of his limitless riches, and purchase our redemption. Rather, He gave his only begotten Son, to take our place in condemnation, so that we can be free.*

*c. Third, the sacrifice of Christ Jesus to liberate lost mankind was sufficient for the redemption of **all** of mankind; the tragedy in this is that only a small percentage of mankind will accept this unspeakable gift<sup>11</sup>.*

#### 5. Paul’s Ministries. (2:7-8)

Following this condensed declaration of the Christian faith, Paul enumerates the ministries to which he has been called. He says that he has been ordained as a preacher, an apostle and a teacher. And, in general terms, he is called to minister in these capacities to the Gentiles<sup>12</sup>. With this understood, he states his injunction that men pray, not just in certain places,

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<sup>8</sup> II Pet 3:9; I Jn 1:7-10, 2:1.

<sup>9</sup> John 14:6. See also in this regard Matt 20:28 and Mk 10:45.

<sup>10</sup> Numbers 21:8-9; John 10:17-18; II Corinthians 5:21.

<sup>11</sup> Matthew 7:14.

<sup>12</sup> Galatians 2:7-9.

but everywhere they go, lifting holy hands to God, and that they should pray without anger or doubting.

**NOTES:**

*a. This man would preach and teach before anyone who would listen, Jew or Gentile; but his primary calling was to the Gentiles.*

*b. Because verse 8 begins with the word “therefore,” it belongs with verse 7 above it (and, perhaps with verses 1-7); however, it clearly belongs also with the following verses, 9-15. It seems to belong to the verses above it (1-6) as a declaration of his authority to make such pronouncements; and it belongs with the verses following (9-15) as the foundational necessity of righteous prayer for accepting, understanding, and carrying out his now-controversial directions in verses 9-15.*

6. The Position of Women in the Church. (2:9-15)

The rest of Chapter 2 consists of pronouncements and guidance concerning the role of women in the church; it is an expansion of Paul’s similar guidance in I Corinthians 14:34-35. This passage requires careful reading, comparing it with all related passages, and without emotional predisposition.

Paul’s teachings concerning women in the churches are hotly debated today, and are especially offensive to feminists. However, we should not rush to condemn such beliefs; my grandmother would not vote or sit on a jury, even though both were legal by the end of her long life, because she considered both to be out of the question--not suitable for a lady. Such customs, part of our culture for many centuries, change slowly.

It is also helpful to remember that, for thousands of years, in synagogues only Jewish men, of age 30 and above, could read the Scriptures aloud to the congregation, expound on them, and interrupt other men with questions<sup>13</sup>. This privilege did not apply to women, as Paul expressed so forcefully in I Corinthians 14:34-37. We must remember that the 1<sup>st</sup> Century Church was a Jewish Church; and this cultural concept was carried over, from the synagogues into the early Christian congregations. It was just as unthinkable to Paul that a woman should read Scriptures aloud in church, expound on them and interrupt another speaker with questions, as was the idea that a woman should vote or sit on a jury to my grandmother, 1,900 years later<sup>14</sup>. And none of Paul’s strongly held opinions about all this in

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<sup>13</sup> Luke 4:16-21.

<sup>14</sup> It is also helpful to remember that the Corinthian church brought no such ancient Jewish customs into their congregations; they were converted pagans, and their meetings were sometimes chaotic, competing for attention and interrupting one another. This is why we have such clear instructions for orderly services in I Corinthians.

any way nullified a woman's right (in fact, her duty) to pray aloud or prophesy in the church<sup>15</sup>. God spoke through them then, and does now<sup>16</sup>.

In verse 12 Paul writes that he does not "suffer a woman to teach" (he doesn't say that women must not teach in church--he merely says that he personally does not allow it)<sup>17</sup>. And, we must take notice of the fact that he ties teaching with authority; an example of this dual meaning is the word "rabbi": one who taught, but was also in a position of authority. In the 1<sup>st</sup> Century Church women were never placed in positions of leadership and authority over men. We will see in II Timothy, and in Titus that the qualifications for the positions of elder (bishop) and deacon clearly exclude women; and yet that did not prevent Priscilla, along with her husband Aquila, from teaching the great Appollos the gospel "more perfectly"<sup>18</sup>.

Verse 15 is particularly offensive to the modern woman, and deserves special consideration. Does it mean that a woman cannot be saved unless she marries and bears children? Of course not! Otherwise, Paul would not have suggested that unmarried women consider remaining unmarried in order to be more fully devoted to the Lord; that interpretation would mean that he was urging them to commit spiritual suicide<sup>19</sup>. What, then can it mean? There are almost as many interpretations of this verse as there are interpreters. It may be a promise that if a Christian woman remains faithful and godly, and if she should die during childbirth, she has the assurance that she will die saved (redeemed). Or, it may mean that when a godly woman dies, she is saved by the birthing of the Divine Child (the Redeemer), whose spirit has been birthed within her. The meaning may be a combination of these two interpretations; but the fact is that we simply don't know. But what it definitely does **not** mean is that women must be godly and bear children in order to be saved.

**NOTES:**

*a. It can be dangerous to dismiss portions of Scripture as reflecting only the culture in which they were written, and that, therefore, they do not apply to us today. This is an intellectual device commonly used by humanists and*

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<sup>15</sup> See in this regard I Corinthians 11:1-16, and noting the word "custom" in verse 16. Customs change; the Word of God doesn't.

<sup>16</sup> Philip the evangelist, one of the original seven deacons, and the one God used mightily in taking the gospel to Samaria, later had four daughters "which did prophesy" (Acts 21:9).

<sup>17</sup> I definitely **do** suffer a woman to teach. When I was a pastor there was a saintly woman in the church who was a gifted teacher. I had her do a teaching series on a subject in which she was much more knowledgeable than I was; it went on for several months, we recorded every session and distributed the tapes widely.

<sup>18</sup> I Corinthians 19:24-26.

<sup>19</sup> I Corinthians 7:6-9.

*other liberal theologians to dispense with passages of Scripture that they don't like. And yet, I am going to do this here because I am certain that, in doing so, there is no violation of timeless truth; it is merely helpful in our understanding of some troublesome passages.*

*b. We have devoted almost as much space to this one highlight as we will have given to some entire, very small, books of the Bible. This is surely because the subject is important, and that it is not quickly or easily explained. Today, what Paul wrote to Timothy and Titus about the role of women in the Church is controversial and offensive, especially to feminists. In fact, these passages of Scripture have been simply ignored and abandoned in many traditional denominations, where women are now ordained as deacons, elders, pastors and bishops. But this is not because of new, more enlightened understanding of the Scriptures; it is simply because the force of opinion in the changing secular culture has been allowed to overrule the guidance and authority of Scripture.*

*In our increasingly androgynous culture, in which the traditional roles of men and women are being progressively abandoned, contemporary ideas and values have, in many ways, overruled the Scriptures. Whether or not we approve of this treatment of Scripture, this is the fact; and it is a reflection of the general tendency in liberal circles to reject the concept of the inspiration of Scripture and, in fact, the rejection of the very concept of any unchanging truth. What is truth for one, they will insist, is not necessarily true for another. They are as intellectually and religiously confused as was Pontius Pilate when he looked into the eyes of Jesus and asked, "What is truth?" And, professing themselves to be wise, they have become fools.*

#### 7. Qualifications for Elders. (3:1-7)

In the early Church there were two categories of leadership: there were elders (also called "bishops") and there were deacons. In the first seven verses of Chapter 4, Paul lists the necessary qualifications for the office of elder (or bishop).

a. He must be blameless, i.e. above reproach, guilty of nothing which would damage his reputation and undermine his authority.

b. He must be the husband of only one wife. There are varying interpretations of this, according to the interpreter's personal beliefs; this is particularly contentious in legalistic circles, concerning divorce and remarriage. The meaning seems to be, however, what it literally states: he must not practice polygamy.

c. He must be vigilant (watchful, alert, circumspect).

- d. He must be sober (temperate, discreet and self-controlled).
- e. He must be well behaved.
- f. He must be hospitable.
- g. He must be a good teacher. The Greek adjective used here is *didaktikos*, and means literally “skilled at teaching.”
- h. He must not be given to wine (lingering at it, tipping)<sup>20</sup>.
- i. He must not be a brawler, readily given to physical violence.
- J He must not have a greedy desire for money or material possessions.
- k. He must lead his family well, keeping his children under control, maintaining order in the home, and guiding them in ways of godliness.
- l. He must be experienced and mature--not a new convert<sup>21</sup>. If a new convert is ordained as an elder (bishop), he may be lifted up with pride and fall into the same sin as that which doomed Lucifer (Satan)<sup>22</sup>.

#### 8. Qualifications for Deacons. (3:8-13)

The qualifications for the office of deacon are exactly the same as those for the office of elder, with one significant exception; it is not required that a deacon be “apt to teach.” There is in the qualifications of a deacon a specific reference to the proper behavior of his wife. This requirement is not spelled out in the qualifications of an elder; however, this requirement for proper behavior on the part of the elder’s wife is clearly implied in verses 4 and 5.

#### 9. The Incarnation in One Verse. (3:16)

Paul’s prose is so rich that he is sometimes difficult to understand; even Peter had difficulty with some of Paul’s writings<sup>23</sup>. And yet, this tendency of Paul to pack a pound of truth into an ounce of expression sometimes produces a rare gem. Such super-saturated prose is like a ton of coal compressed into one glittering diamond. An example of this is the last verse in Chapter 3. In this single verse, he compresses the entire history of the incarnation of God: as Jesus of Nazareth; his life on Earth in human flesh; and his ascension into glory in Heaven. Not only that, but he declares that there is no question or controversy over this great miracle, for it is undiluted truth, with an abundance of evidence.

**NOTE:** *Some of the many modern translations and paraphrases of the Bible delete the portion concerning his being “manifest in the flesh,” a terribly*

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<sup>20</sup> Drunkenness is a sin, at least as old as Noah.

<sup>21</sup> The Greek word rendered “novice” here is *neophytos*, the word from which we derive the word “neophyte”; it is used only here.

<sup>22</sup> Isaiah 14:12-15.

<sup>23</sup> II Peter 3:15-16.

*important part of his being our substitute in the atonement. And they do this in spite of the multiple examples of his being a fully human man, one who ate, drank, got tired, was angry at times, wept and was obviously, in every way, manifest in the flesh, as well as in the Spirit.*

10. Warning: There Will Be a Falling Away. (4:1-6)

In the first part of Chapter 4 Paul warns Timothy (and, in so doing, warns us) that as the end of this age approaches there will be a significant turning away<sup>24</sup>. Some, he says, will depart from the faith, accepting the lies of deceiving and seducing spirits and following doctrines inspired, and promoted by, evil spirits. Prominent among the false doctrines advanced by seducing spirits will be that it is wrong to marry, and that certain foods must not be eaten. Speaking of the meat of animals, he says that all such meat is suitable for eating, if it is eaten with thanks to the Lord, for it is sanctified by the Word of God and prayer<sup>25</sup>. This, it seems to me, is quite clear.

**NOTE:** *We will recall that, in I Corinthians 7, Paul recommends that those unmarried, and those widowed, consider remaining unmarried; but in that he was making a suggestion--not pronouncing a requirement.*

11. Wise Advice to Timothy. (4:12-16)

Timothy is a young man; he is not a novice in terms of his spiritual maturity, but he is younger in years than some of those he leads. Paul admonishes him not to allow his relative youth to intimidate him. All he need concern himself with is that he set a godly example for the church and concentrate on his preaching and teaching. He reminds Timothy that he must stir up the gift of the Holy Spirit, which he received when the elders ordained him, with the laying on of hands and with prophetic utterances. He must walk in the spirit, exercising the spiritual endowment that was given to him. He must always keep this in mind, for even he can wander out of the will of God<sup>26</sup>. By remaining diligent and careful, Paul says, Timothy will not only keep himself from error and sin, but will lead those in the church so that they, too, are in right standing, living in the will of God.

**NOTE:** *There is a fundamental fact of spiritual life clearly stated in verse 10, almost in passing, and easily overlooked. It is an excellent example of the richness of Paul's writing. Like the book of Revelation, we must read Paul's epistles slowly. In verse 10 he wrote that the living God "is the*

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<sup>24</sup>See, in this regard, II Thessalonians 2:1-4.

<sup>25</sup> Genesis 9:3.

<sup>26</sup> No one is immune to indifference, deception and falling away from the faith; Paul had written to the Church at Corinth that even he, if he became complacent and undisciplined, could become a castaway (I Corinthians 9:27).

*Savior of **all** men.” Here it is expressed again that the great and living God, Who is not willing that any should perish, and is not a respecter of persons, has provided salvation for everyone. Tragically, most of mankind will reject the gift of salvation and perish; but this truth is especially vital and wonderful to those of us who **do** believe and accept this unspeakable gift of redemption. Paul is speaking volumes of spiritual truth here, and in only 1/2 of a verse!*

12. More Advice: Relating to Those in the Church. (5:1-2)

Paul’s advice for Timothy continues. He is not to rebuke an older brother; instead, he should point out his error, speaking to him with respect for his age, as he would with his own father. He is to relate to the young men as brothers, to the older women as he would with his own mother, and he is to relate to the young women as sisters, maintaining purity and propriety in the relationships. This is good advice for any pastor, but especially important for single pastors, and it appears that Timothy was unmarried. Here is an example of a great deal of truth, expressed in only two short verses.

13. The Matter of Widows Supported by the Church. (5:3-16)

In the early Church all widows, orphans and the disabled were cared for by the family; those who had no family to care for them were cared for by the local church. This, at times, presented problems. We saw this as early as Acts 6 when the first seven deacons were appointed to deal with conflicts concerning food distribution. If a widow had no son, but did have a nephew, that nephew was responsible to take care of his aunt. In fact, Paul uses very strong language concerning this obligation. He says that any man who does not do this has denied the very essence of the Christian faith, and is “worse than an infidel.”

There were apparently some widows being supported by the church, but who were young, of marrying age. These, it seems, were socializing and taking advantage of the support system while they became gossips and busybodies, creating discord. These young women, Paul emphatically declares, do not qualify for support; they should, he says, marry and have children. Some of these young widows have already departed from the faith, following Satan.

14. Dealing with Elders in the Church. (5:17-21)

Continuing with the topic of support provided by the church, Paul turns to the matter of elders in the church. Those who are performing their duties well, he says, are doubly worthy of such support and respect, especially those who teach and preach. He quotes Deuteronomy and Luke’s gospel to

support his statement<sup>27</sup>. Also, he says, such elders should be protected from idle accusations. There should be at least two or three witnesses before a charge against an elder is considered; however, if an elder is found to be in sin, he is to be rebuked before the congregation to make an example of him.

*NOTE: There is nothing in the passage to suggest that an elder is to receive twice the amount of support as the others: it says only that he is worthy to be doubly respected and honored for his faithful ministry.*

15. Be Cautious In Ordaining an Elder. (5:22)

Paul expresses an important principle concerning leaders in the church. No matter how promising one may be, he should pass the test of time. Paul has already made it clear that a new Christian must not be ordained for leadership<sup>28</sup>. This, then, must apply also to experienced Christians who are newly joined in the congregation. No matter how promising he may seem to be, let the candidate first be proved by living and working in the church until it is obvious that he is ready to be ordained as a deacon or elder.

16. Paul Prescribes Wine. (5:23)

It appears that Timothy has been suffering with chronic health problems concerning his stomach--problems not serious enough to call for the elders to pray for him, but an ongoing, minor problem. Paul advises him to stop drinking water (at least for a time) and to drink wine instead. In qualifying his advice by saying "a little" wine he is reminding him not to overdo it<sup>29</sup>.

*NOTE: Virtually all water sources in that time and place were contaminated to some degree with disease producing bacteria and other microorganisms. Wine was safe because most such organisms cannot survive in the 10-12% alcohol content in naturally fermented wine.*

17. Advice for Servants and Slaves. (6:1-2)

Here is another example of the fact that sometimes it is difficult to know where to interrupt Paul in his flow of thought. Verse 3 seems logically to be the summation of verses 1 and 2; yet it also seems to be the perfect introduction to the new subject dealt with in verses 4-11.

And so, forced to make a choice, we will interrupt him at the end of verse 2.

In the first two verses Paul offers some additional guidance for the way that Christian servants and slaves should relate to their masters, a matter also dealt with in earlier epistles<sup>30</sup>. They are to treat their masters with respect

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<sup>27</sup> Deuteronomy 25:4; Luke 10:7.

<sup>28</sup> Chapter 3:6,10.

<sup>29</sup> See also in this regard Eph 5:18 and I Peter 4:3.

<sup>30</sup> Ephesians 6:5-8; Colossians 3:22-25; Titus 2:9-10.

and work faithfully, in order to avoid discrediting or casting a negative shadow on the gospel of Christ before their unredeemed masters. Likewise, Christian servants or slaves who serve Christian masters should still treat their masters with due respect, even though they are Christian brothers or sisters. The Christian servants are equals only in the sense that they are joint partakers of the benefit of the unspeakable gift of redemption.

*NOTE: The matter of hired servants, bondservants and slaves in the Hebrew world was rather complex, with a number of possible situations, including marriage. For a thorough summary of this complex matter see Unger's Bible Dictionary, "Service" on pp 998-999, Revised version of 1966.*

18. Straying from Doctrine and Seeking Wealth. (6:3-11)

Paul then launches into an interesting warning. This warning has to do with trouble-makers who depart from the simple doctrines of Jesus the Messiah, proclaiming and arguing over false doctrines, creating division, jealousy and confusion. This part is obvious and easy for us to understand; but Paul then ties such troublemakers to the love of money. Some, he says will teach that it is godly to be rich--that the gospel is a money-making business, and that the more godly we are, the more prosperous and wealthy we should be.

Such striving for wealth, he says, is inherently wrong. We should not seek to be rich, for having that goal can be a snare, causing us to fall into temptation, injury and destruction--even damnation. The love of money, he says, is the root of all evil. Timothy, he says, must flee from these things, and pursue instead the fruit of the Spirit<sup>31</sup>.

*NOTE: It is not wrong to be rich; the error is to make being rich our goal (verse 9). And money is not the root of all evil--it is **the love of it** that leads to error and evil consequences; v 10 is one of the most often misquoted verses in the Bible (i.e. "Money is the root of all evil").*

*There are teachers who proclaim that God wants every Christian to be rich; this, of course, is not scriptural. One shameless charlatan, who has enriched himself at the expense of his followers, has even blasphemously said that "the lack of money--not the love of it--is the root of all evil. Of course, God could, if He wished, make all of us rich; the danger in this, and the probable reason that He doesn't make all of us rich, is that if we possess great riches it is difficult to avoid trusting in the riches, rather than trusting in Him (see verse 17). It is infinitely better to be a righteous man of modest means, than to be a rich castaway.*

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<sup>31</sup> Proverbs 23:4-5; 28:20-22; Galatians 5:22.

19. Closing Guidance and Encouragement. (6:12-21)

Paul closes his letter with encouragement and the charge to keep things pure and simple, avoiding foolish doctrinal arguments and theories falsely called scientific. He tells Timothy to advise those in the church who are rich not to trust in their riches; rather, he says, those rich ones should concentrate on laying up for themselves riches in Heaven, and on laying hold on the gift of eternal life<sup>32</sup>.

With this, Paul pronounces a brief closing benediction and ends his letter. ***NOTE:** In verses 15 and 16 there is an interesting hint at the indescribable glory in which God resides (and which, to some extent, Paul had seen when he was caught up to “the third Heaven”). In our present state, we cannot even approach that glory and survive; but, someday, we shall enter it, and happily live in it forever.*

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<sup>32</sup> Matthew 6:19-21.