

INTRODUCTION AND 1 TIMOTHY

By Ashby L. Camp

Copyright © 2020 by Ashby L. Camp. All rights reserved.

Contents

Introduction.....	2
I. "The Pastorals"	2
II. Authorship	2
III. Timothy and his relationship with Paul	4
IV. Background on Ephesus.....	7
V. Purpose	8
VI. The False Teaching.....	8
VII. The False Teachers.....	10
The Text	10
I. Salutation (1:1-2)	10
II. The Ephesian Problem Stated (1:3-7)	11
III. Proper Use of the Law (1:8-11)	14
IV. The Glorious Gospel Exemplified in Paul (1:12-17).....	17
V. The Charge Renewed (1:18-20).....	18
VI. Instruction to Pray for All (2:1-7)	20
VII. Instruction to Pray in the Right Way (2:8-15)	22
VIII. Instruction About Elders (3:1-7)	32
IX. Instructions About Deacons (3:8-13)	38
X. Purpose of Writing and the Glorious Nature of Christianity (3:14-16).....	43
XI. The False Teachings Censured (4:1-5).....	45
XII. Timothy's Personal Responsibilities (4:6-16)	49
A. Teach these things and undergo training in godliness (4:6-10).....	49
B. Pay close attention to your life and teaching (4:11-16)	50
XIII. Manner of Correcting (5:1-2).....	52
XIV. Instructions About Widows (5:3-16).....	53
A. Obligations of Descendants (5:3-8).....	53
B. Enrollment of Widows to Be Permanently Cared for by the Church (5:9-16)	54
XV. Instructions About Elders (5:17-25)	59
XVI. Instructions for Slaves (6:1-2a).....	63
Excursus on First-Century Slavery	64
XVII. Final Indictment of False Teachers (6:2b-10)	68
XVIII. Exhortation to Right Living (6:11-16)	69
XIX. What to Teach the Wealthy Believers (6:17-19)	71
XX. Final Charge (6:20-21)	72

Introduction

I. "The Pastorals"

A. Since the first part of the 18th century, 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus have been known collectively as "the Pastoral Epistles." "Pastor" is a synonym for "shepherd," which in a Christian context refers to a spiritual guide or shepherd of souls.

B. D. A. Carson and Douglas Moo say about the title "Pastoral Epistles":

The term is almost universally used in modern discussions. It is objected that the title is not completely appropriate because the letters are not taken up with pastoral duties. However, since they are directed to people with pastoral responsibility and with the task of appointing pastors, the expression is unobjectionable. The three letters form a unit in that they are the only New Testament letters addressed to individuals with such responsibilities (Philemon is addressed to an individual, but not one in a position like that of Timothy or Titus).¹

C. Andreas Köstenberger, L. Scott Kellum, and Charles Quarles comment:

Timothy's and Titus's role was not actually that of a permanent, resident pastor of a church. Rather, the men were Paul's apostolic delegates who were temporarily assigned to their present locations in order to deal with particular problems that had arisen and needed special attention. . . . [The Pastorals] are Paul's instructions to his special delegates, set toward the closing of the apostolic era at a time when the aging apostle would have felt a keen responsibility to ensure the orderly transition from the apostolic to the postapostolic period.²

II. Authorship

A. Paul is expressly identified as the author in the opening verse of each of the Pastoral Epistles, and his authorship of these letters "went unchallenged until the nineteenth century."³ Today, however, a majority of scholars denies that Paul actually wrote these letters. They claim they were written years after Paul's death by someone who wrote them *as though* from Paul. They do so because they are convinced various

¹ D. A. Carson and Douglas Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 554.

² Andreas Köstenberger, L. Scott Kellum, and Charles L. Quarles, *The Cradle, the Cross, and the Crown* (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2009), 637.

³ Köstenberger et al., 638.

differences between the Pastorals and the undisputedly Pauline letters make that conclusion most likely.

B. But whatever differences there may be between the Pastorals and the undisputedly Pauline letters, other solutions are more likely than the claim a letter that pretended to be from the Apostle Paul, complete with personal references and reminiscences, would have been accepted into the Christian canon, accepted as authoritative by the early church.

1. Serapion, Bishop of Antioch around A.D. 200, "seems to represent the universal viewpoint of the early church on the issue of pseudepigraphy: 'We receive both Peter and the other apostles as Christ; but as experienced men we reject the writings falsely inscribed by their names, since we know that we did not receive such from our fathers' (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 6.12.1-6)."⁴

2. William Mounce states:

But, for the sake of argument, if we accept the hypothesis that a forger could write in someone else's name and it would be known and accepted by the church, why then are the historical and personal allusions woven throughout the PE? If there is no need to make the letters sound credible, then why include these features? These details are not surface trappings; as I have argued, they are part of the very fabric of the letters, especially 2 Timothy. *I can only conclude that if the writer was a pseudepigrapher, he was attempting to deceive his audience into thinking that Paul himself actually wrote the PE. But if the author felt the need to deceive, then pseudepigraphy could not have been an acceptable practice.*⁵

C. Rather than spend time exploring the arguments about authorship, let me just say I agree with Köstenberger, Kellum, and Quarles when they state, "Paul's authorship of the Pastoral Epistles is by far the best conclusion based on all the available evidence and on several major problems attached to any pseudonymity [fictitious name] or allonymity [using someone else's name] position."⁶ Donald Guthrie likewise concludes after a careful analysis of the competing claims:

In spite of the acknowledged differences between the pastorals and Paul's other epistles, the traditional view that they are authentic writings of the apostle cannot be said to be impossible, and since there are greater problems attached to the alternative theories it is most reasonable to suppose that the early church was right in accepting them as such.⁷

⁴ Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, NPTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 38.

⁵ William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, WBC (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), cxxv-cxxvi (emphasis in original).

⁶ Köstenberger et al., 639.

⁷ Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, rev. ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 646.

III. Timothy and his relationship with Paul

A. Timothy lived in Lystra (Acts 16:1), a town in south central Asia Minor, in an area known today as Turkey. His mother, Eunice (2 Tim. 1:5), was a Jew, but his father was a Greek (Acts 16:2). Timothy was not circumcised as a child as required by Jewish law (Acts 16:3), presumably because his father objected, but he had been taught the Scriptures from the time he was a child (2 Tim. 3:15).

B. Paul and Barnabas went to Lystra on Paul's first missionary journey (Acts 14:8-20), around A.D. 47-48. Timothy's mother and his grandmother Lois (Acts 16:2; 2 Tim. 1:5) probably became Christians at that time. They became Christians before Timothy (2 Tim. 1:5), which, along with the way Timothy is introduced in Acts 16:1, makes it unlikely that Timothy was converted during the same visit. And yet, just two or three years later, on Paul's second missionary journey, Timothy was a Christian and had a good reputation among the brothers in Lystra and Iconium (Acts 16:1-2).

C. Timothy most likely became a Christian through the influence of his mother and the church elders in Lystra. Paul thus had a clear, albeit indirect, hand in Timothy's conversion, which along with the close working relationship they developed, led him to refer to him as his "true child in the faith."

D. When Paul returned to Lystra on his second missionary journey, around A.D. 50, he wanted to take Timothy with him (Acts 16:3). It was probably at that time that Timothy received a spiritual gift (a gracious endowment) for ministry, the giving of which was accompanied by the laying on of hands (by the elders and Paul) and by prophetic recognition of the gift (1 Tim. 1:18, 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:5).

E. Paul had Timothy circumcised simply as a matter of evangelistic expediency. Timothy was considered a Jew by the Jews, and Paul did not want to hinder the gospel's progress among the Jews by having an uncircumcised Jewish-Christian as his associate. Paul knew that in the new covenant circumcision was insignificant in God's eyes (Gal. 5:6, 6:15), but he also knew the Jews might be put off by it, and he was willing to become all things to all people so as to win some (1 Cor. 9:19-23).

F. On the other hand, he refused to have Titus, a Gentile, circumcised (Gal. 2:3-5) because the Judaizers were insisting that this was necessary for salvation (e.g., Acts 15:5). Giving in to that demand would not be a matter of expediency but a matter of compromising the truth of the gospel.

G. Timothy accompanied Paul and Silas through Macedonia. Paul left Berea under duress and headed for Athens, but he left Silas and Timothy behind (Acts 17:14-15), presumably to instruct the new converts in their faith. Paul sent word back for Silas and Timothy to join him as soon as possible.

H. It seems that Silas and Timothy (or maybe just Timothy) joined Paul in Athens and then Timothy was dispatched to Thessalonica to strengthen and encourage the saints in the midst of their persecution (1 Thess. 3:1-3). Silas presumably was sent somewhere else in Macedonia (or remained in Berea), and then Paul left Athens for Corinth (Acts 18:1), where Silas and Timothy later joined him (Acts 18:5). The three of them are said to have preached Christ among the Corinthians (2 Cor. 1:9).

I. Paul stayed in Corinth over one and a half years (Acts 18:18:11, 18). It is from Corinth that 1 & 2 Thessalonians were written, both of which include Silas and Timothy in the salutation. The impetus for 1 Thessalonians was the good news that Timothy brought back about the church there (1 Thess. 3:6-8). Paul refers to Timothy in 1 Thess. 3:2 as "our brother and God's fellow worker in spreading the gospel of Christ."

J. Paul met Aquila and Priscilla in Corinth, a Jewish-Christian couple who had been expelled from Rome under the edict of Emperor Claudius. They accompanied him to Ephesus, where Paul made only a brief stop, promising to return if it was God's will. Paul left Priscilla and Aquila in Ephesus and returned to Antioch, ending his second missionary journey. Timothy's whereabouts at this time are not stated, but presumably he was still traveling with Paul.

K. On his third missionary journey, which began around A.D. 52, Paul returned to Ephesus and stayed there for roughly three years (Acts 19:8, 10, 20:31). This is noteworthy because 1 & 2 Timothy were written to Timothy in Ephesus. During this stay, Paul sent Timothy to Corinth (1 Cor. 4:17-18, 16:10-11), to another difficult church situation. He refers to him in 1 Cor. 4:17 as "my beloved and faithful child in the Lord," and he says in 1 Cor. 16:10-11 that Timothy is doing the work of the Lord and that no one is to despise him (probably because of his close association with Paul).

L. Paul had decided to go to Jerusalem from Ephesus, passing through Macedonia and Achaia (Acts 19:21). He sent Timothy and Erastus ahead of him to Macedonia (Acts 19:22). Not long after doing so, a riot erupted in Ephesus, having been instigated by a silversmith named Demetrius who made silver shrines of Artemis. Paul promptly left for Macedonia (Acts 19:23 - 20:1). He encouraged the people throughout Macedonia, and during this time wrote 2 Corinthians (2 Cor. 7:5-7), which includes Timothy in the salutation.

M. Paul worked his way down to Greece (Acts 20:2), where he stayed three months (Acts 20:3), almost certainly in Corinth. It was here that he wrote Romans. Romans 16:21 says, "Timothy, my fellow worker, sends his greetings to you."

N. Accompanied by Timothy and some others, Paul headed back through Macedonia because the Jews had made a plot against him as he was about to sail to Syria (Acts 20:3-4). Timothy and the others went ahead to Troas, where Paul (and Luke) joined them, sailing there from Philippi (Acts 20:5-6). They left immediately after the Lord's Day, being in a hurry to get to Jerusalem (Acts 20:11, 16). Those who sailed from Troas

picked Paul up at Assos (he had gone there on foot) and then continued on for Jerusalem (Acts 20:13-14).

O. The ship stopped at Miletus where Paul sent for the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:17). Again, 1 & 2 Timothy were written to Timothy while he was in Ephesus. Paul prophesied that savage wolves would come in among the Ephesian Christians and would not spare the flock. He said, "Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears" (Acts 20:29-30). Paul also said that the elders would not see him again (Acts 20:25, 38).

P. With a few more stops, Paul made it to Jerusalem. There was a riot in the temple because some Jews thought Paul had brought the Gentile Trophimus into the temple and defiled it. Following that was the two-year imprisonment in Caesarea and two-year incarceration in Rome. Timothy is with him in Rome. His name appears in the salutation of Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon, all of which were written during Paul's first Roman imprisonment. Paul says the following about Timothy in Phil. 2:19-24:

¹⁹ I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. ²⁰ I have no one else like him, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare. ²¹ For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. ²² But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel. ²³ I hope, therefore, to send him as soon as I see how things go with me. ²⁴ And I am confident in the Lord that I myself will come soon.

Q. From prison Paul also wrote Ephesians. It was probably a circular letter to churches in Asia Minor that, because of some contact with Ephesus (e.g., the initial point from which it circulated), came at an early date to be associated exclusively with that city.

R. Acts ends with Paul in prison, but in keeping with Paul's expectation expressed in Phil. 1:25-26 and 2:23-24, it seems he was released from prison around A.D. 62. There is a strong church tradition regarding this release. It is reflected in 1 Clement (late 1st century), the Muratorian Canon (around A.D. 180), and in Eusebius (early 4th century).

S. At some point, perhaps before his release, Paul sent Timothy to Ephesus. Upon his release, Paul may have gone west to Spain, as he intended to do when he wrote Romans (Rom. 15:23-28) and as church tradition indicates that he did. If so, he probably stayed in Spain only a short time and then made a missionary journey to Crete with Titus (Tit. 1:5). Whether before or after going to Crete, Paul went to Macedonia, and Timothy left Ephesus to meet him on his way there.

T. This may be the tearful visit mentioned in 2 Tim. 1:4. If this was the first time for Timothy to see Paul, his spiritual father, since his release from prison, it would have

been very emotional, and parting would have been even more so. Paul tells Timothy to stay in Ephesus to combat the false teaching that was threatening the church (1 Tim. 1:3). From what Timothy told him, the situation was dire. Sometime after that meeting, Paul wrote 1 Timothy, around A.D. 64.

U. Paul probably wrote Titus around the time he wrote 1 Timothy, and it is unknown which was written first. 2 Timothy was written later, during Paul's second Roman imprisonment

IV. Background on Ephesus⁸

A. Ephesus was the most important city in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). Its harbor and location at the convergence of three great trade routes made it an important commercial center. It had a major stadium and marketplace and a theater cut into the hillside that seated around 24,000 people. It also had a great marble main street that ran from the harbor to the theater, which was flanked on both sides by an elaborate colonnade. The population in N.T. times often has been estimated at around 200,000–250,000, but more recent estimates are around 100,000, claiming that the higher figures are more accurate for the second century.⁹

B. There was a well-established Jewish presence in the city that Josephus says extended back to Seleucid times. Paul preached in a Jewish synagogue for three months when he first arrived back in Ephesus on his third missionary journey before he began teaching in the hall of Tyrannus (Acts 19:8).

C. Ephesus had temples devoted to emperors and to a full range of Greek and foreign deities, but its major religious attraction was the Temple of Artemis (Latin = Diana), one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. The statue of Artemis quite possibly was in part constructed from a fallen meteorite (see Acts 19:35). Goths destroyed the temple in A.D. 262.

D. Magic arts, the attempt to master spirits, were popular in Ephesus. Indeed, charms or books believed to possess magical powers were called "Ephesian Letters." The scope of this phenomenon is evident in Acts 19:19 where, after the episode involving the seven sons of Sceva, people repented of their involvement in magic and burned their magic books. The value of these books was 50,000 silver coins, which Eckhard Schnabel says "amounts to the yearly wage (with no days off) of 137 workers."¹⁰

⁸ See, Clinton E. Arnold, "Ephesus" in Gerald F. Hawthorne et al., eds., *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993); 249-253; Richard E. Oster, Jr., "Ephesus" in David Noel Freedman, ed., *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 2:542-549.

⁹ S. M. Baugh, "A Foreign World" in Andreas J. Köstenberger and Thomas R. Schreiner, eds., *Women in the Church*, 3rd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 29.

¹⁰ Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 799.

V. Purpose

A. The primary purpose of 1 Timothy is declared in 1:3-4. Paul is renewing his urging of Timothy to remain in Ephesus to command certain men not to teach a different doctrine nor to devote themselves to myths and endless (or fruitless) genealogies. It seems Timothy was ready to leave, perhaps from ministerial weariness, but Paul's instruction is "Not yet." He needs to stay to combat the false teaching.

B. In the course of the letter, Paul gives instructions on additional matters. The relation, if any, of those additional matters to the false teaching is not always clear.

VI. The False Teaching

A. The false teaching that Timothy faced in Ephesus and Titus faced in Crete had definite similarities, though it may not have been identical. There even may have been some development in the false teaching in Ephesus during the years between 1 and 2 Timothy. The nature of the teaching can only be pieced together from Paul's words, so the precise details remain uncertain, much like the situation with the Colossian heresy.

B. The Mosaic law (1 Tim. 1:7; Tit. 1:10, 14, 3:9) was being misused as a source for wild myths or legends (1 Tim. 1:4, 4:7; Tit. 1:14; 2 Tim. 4:4) that included appeal to genealogies (1 Tim. 1:4; Tit. 3:9). The preoccupation with this speculation produced useless quarrels and controversy (1 Tim. 1:4, 6, 6:4, 20; Tit. 1:10, 3:9; 2 Tim. 2:14, 16, 23) that distracted from and even displaced the gospel of Christ (1 Tim. 1:4).

C. The law also was being misused as a basis for imposing ascetic practices such as the prohibition of eating certain foods (1 Tim. 4:1-7; Tit. 1:13-15). This is indicated by the fact Tit. 1:14 refers to their devotion to "Jewish myths," which myths 1 Tim. 1:4-7 makes clear are distortions of the Mosaic law, and then the next verse (Tit. 1:15a) rejects the demand for asceticism with the assertion "To the pure all things are pure." The distortions of the law that constituted "Jewish myths" included imposing on Christians ritual purity requirements relating to certain foods.

D. It is unclear whether the false teachers' prohibition of marriage (1 Tim. 4:3) also was supported by a misguided appeal to the Mosaic law, but the fact they falsely labeled their teaching "knowledge" (*gnosis*, 1 Tim. 6:20), forbid marriage (1 Tim. 4:3), abstained from certain foods (1 Tim. 4:3), and claimed the resurrection had already occurred (2 Tim. 2:18) all fits with a kind of incipient or proto Gnosticism.¹¹ It seems they had absorbed ideas

¹¹ James D. G. Dunn, "The First and Second Letters to Timothy and the Letter to Titus" in Leander E. Keck, ed., *The New Interpreter's Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000), 11:783. Philip Towner writes, "the better tag for the mix of elements . . . is 'pre-Gnostic' in the sense that certain developments visible in the Pauline letters correspond to those that would later come together to form the second-century Gnostic matrix." Philip H. Tower, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 43. N. T. Wright and Michael Bird state, "If we put all this together, we might surmise that we are dealing with

and perspectives that were seeds for the second-century heresy of Gnosticism and then distorted the Mosaic law to claim scriptural support for conclusions driven by those ideas and perspectives. For example:

1. Stephen Westerholm remarks, "The true motivation for these ascetic practices was the belief that the material world is evil and that the person who knows God will want to separate himself as much as possible from it. This, which the polemic of 1 Timothy 4 and Titus 1 makes quite clear, brings the opponents' beliefs within the broad spectrum of gnostic heresy."¹²

2. Köstenberger et al. state, "In Ephesus at least, one finds ascetic elements such as the prohibition of marriage and the eating of certain foods (1 Tim. 4:1-5; see Titus 1:15; Col 2:18-23) and the teaching that the resurrection had already taken place (2 Tim 2:17-18; see 1 Tim 1:19-20; 1 Cor 15:12), which may point to a Greek-style dualism that prized spirituality over the natural order. . . . [W]hat Paul apparently opposed here was an appeal to the Mosaic law in support of ascetic practices that at the root were motivated by gnostic thinking."¹³

E. Others contend that forbidding marriage (1 Tim. 4:3), abstaining from certain foods (1 Tim. 4:3), and claiming the resurrection had already occurred (2 Tim. 2:18) can be explained without resort to any pre-Gnostic seeds.

1. For example, Dillon Thornton argues, citing Philip Towner, that the false teachers had misunderstood Paul's teaching about the Christian's present participation in Christ's death and resurrection, leading them to see themselves as living only in the age to come rather than in the overlap of the ages. "Believing they had been projected into the age to come, the opponents sought to do away with marriage (1 Tim 4:3), since, according to Paul, marriage is fitting only for the old order (e.g., 1 Cor 7:29-31)."¹⁴

2. This overrealized eschatology (understanding the "now" too much in terms of the "not yet") also could account for food restrictions if it led them to "run with" Paul's teaching about the spiritual insignificance of food (Rom. 14:17; 1 Corinthians 8). One can imagine the claim that abstaining was the way to go in the new age of the Spirit.

F. The improper use of the law by these false teachers was not the wholesale binding of the Mosaic law as seen in Galatians and elsewhere. In that case, Paul certainly would have addressed the requirement of circumcision, as that was a focal point of the Judaizers' teaching because it represented submission to their claim that Gentiles must convert to Judaism.

various forms of Jewish teaching, heading in the direction of what would later become Gnosticism." N. T. Wright and Michael F. Bird, *The New Testament in Its World* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019), 542.

¹² Stephen Westerholm, "The Law and the 'Just Man' (1 Tim 1,3-11)," *Studia Theologica* 36 (1982), 81.

¹³ Köstenberger et al., 645-646.

¹⁴ Dillon T. Thornton, "Hostility in the House of God: An 'Interested' Investigation of the Opponents in 1 and 2 Timothy" (Ph.D. diss., University of Otago 2014), 224-225.

VII. The False Teachers

A. The false teachers were deceptive (1 Tim. 4:1-3; 2 Tim. 3:6-9, 13; Tit. 1:10-13), immoral (1 Tim. 1:19-20; 2 Tim. 2:16, 19, 3:1-5; Tit. 1:15-16), and desired to get material gain by means of their teaching (1 Tim. 6:5; 2 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:11). They falsely labeled their teaching "knowledge" (1 Tim. 6:20).

B. Whatever its origin, the teaching appears now to be coming from members of the church who had been attracted to it. They had lost their Christian bearings, swerving from the truth (1 Tim. 1:5-7, 1:18-20, 6:10, 6:20-21; 2 Tim. 2:16-18).

C. The reference in Tit. 1:10 to those of the "circumcision party" as empty talkers and deceivers and in 1:14 to "Jewish myths" suggests the false teachers were Hellenistic Jews. If one assumes the false teachers addressed in Titus were different from those addressed in 1 and 2 Timothy, as Thornton does, that identification becomes much less certain. Thornton writes, "their affiliation with the law does not necessarily prove the Jewish affiliation of the false teachers, because the Scriptures were the common ground of Christians of any previous religious commitment. It is just as likely that the opponents were Gentile 'converts,' who, after coming into the Pauline community, grew accustomed to using the law."¹⁵

D. Some believe the heretics were elders in the church, in keeping with Paul's prophecy in Acts 20:28-31.¹⁶ At the very least, the elders were complicit in not putting a stop to the teaching. That would explain why Paul gives instructions about elders in 1 Timothy. It also explains why 1 Timothy, which clearly was intended for the church as well as for Timothy, was directed only to Timothy. Fee remarks, "But because of defections in the leadership, Paul does not . . . write directly to the church, but to the church through Timothy."¹⁷

The Text

I. Salutation (1:1-2)

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope, ² to Timothy, [my] true child in [the] faith: grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

¹⁵ Thornton, 307; see also, Andreas J. Köstenberger, *1-2 Timothy & Titus*, BTCP (Nashville: Holman, 2017), 73.

¹⁶ E.g., Gordon D. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, NIBC (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988), 7-9; Mounce, lxxiv. Thornton concludes (p. 285), "While it is *possible* that the opponents were once elders in Ephesus, the evidence I have uncovered does not allow me to suggest this as a *probable* conclusion."

¹⁷ Fee, 10.

A. Paul opens with a statement of his authority, that he became an apostle by direct command of both God and Christ; he is God's messenger. The fact he does so, when writing to his longtime missionary companion, suggests he "is writing to Timothy with the full expectation that the church in Ephesus will overhear."¹⁸ He wants it known that the action he is calling Timothy to take is based on his apostolic authority.

B. As I mentioned in the introduction, Timothy most likely became a Christian through the influence of his mother and the church elders in Lystra. Paul thus had a clear, albeit indirect, hand in Timothy's conversion, which along with the close working relationship they developed, led him to refer to him as his "true child in the faith." That close connection reinforces his authority as Paul's delegate in Ephesus.

C. Paul wishes Timothy the blessing of laboring in the power and protection of God.

II. The Ephesian Problem Stated (1:3-7)

³ Just as I urged you when I was going to Macedonia to remain in Ephesus, [do so] that you may command certain men not to teach a different doctrine ⁴ and not to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote useless speculations rather than the stewardship of God, which is by faith. ⁵ But the goal of the command is love from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith. ⁶ Some, having deviated from these things, turned to worthless talk, ⁷ wanting to be teachers of the law yet understanding neither what they say nor the things about which they make confident assertions.

A. As in his letter to the Galatian churches, Paul immediately gets down to business. He omits the standard thanksgiving presumably because the situation in the church is so serious. This again points to the fact Paul has the church in mind as an indirect recipient of the letter.

B. In the reconstruction I presented in the introduction, Paul, either before or after his release from his first Roman incarceration, sent Timothy to Ephesus. Upon his release, he may have gone west to Spain, as he intended to do when he wrote Romans (Rom. 15:23-28) and as church tradition indicates that he did. If so, he probably stayed in Spain only a short time and then made a missionary journey to Crete with Titus (Tit. 1:5). Whether before or after going to Crete, Paul went to Macedonia, and Timothy left Ephesus to meet him on his way there.

C. During this meeting, Paul urged Timothy to remain in Ephesus. He is again urging him to do so in this letter. Part of Timothy has had enough of the situation, but the bigger part is committed to doing what needs to be done in the cause of Christ.

¹⁸ Fee, 35.

D. Paul's charge is that Timothy remain in Ephesus to command certain false teachers not to teach a different doctrine and not to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote useless speculations rather than the stewardship of God, which is by faith.

1. Some in Ephesus were teaching a "different doctrine" meaning a doctrine that differed from the apostolic norm. It did not agree with the sound/healthy words of Jesus and with the teaching that accorded with godliness (1 Tim. 6:3).

2. This deviant teaching was apparently rooted in "myths," which were false and far-fetched stories, often about the gods, that were used to deceive people into accepting practices by linking the practices to those stories.¹⁹ These myths were somehow tied to OT genealogies, the ancestor-descendant lists, probably in the early parts of Genesis. Titus 3:9 mentions genealogies along with "disputes about the law," suggesting a Jewish background. Towner writes:

As its use in Philo demonstrates, the term [genealogies] could refer to the accounts of people in the early parts of Genesis. This usage especially opens up the possibility that Paul is identifying the practice among the false teachers of speculating on stories about the early biblical characters as well as actual genealogical lists such as occur there or in other more speculative noncanonical Jewish writings (e.g., *Jubilees*). Speculation fitting roughly into this category was known to have been practiced in Jewish communities, and the reference in 1:7 to the opponents' aspirations to be "teachers of the law" helps to locate the sources of this practice within the repository of Jewish literature (cf. Titus 1:14 and the reference to "Jewish myths").²⁰

3. Whatever the precise nature of the theological yarns they were spinning (myths) and their relationship to "endless" (tiresome) genealogies, their devotion to those things promoted useless speculations rather than the stewardship of God, which is by faith.

a. The word rendered "stewardship" (*oikonomia*) is translated in this verse in a variety of ways (e.g., plan, work, administration, training). It refers literally to the management responsibility of a steward (*oikonomos*), a household manager, but it carries a range of meanings. The ESV renders the phrase "stewardship from God." Christopher Hutson states:

The PE focus on the local church as God's "house" (1 Tim. 3:15; 2 Tim. 2:20) and the overseer as household manager (3:4-5; *oikonomos*, Titus 1:7; cf. Paul's ministry as *oikonomia*, 1 Cor. 9:7; Eph. 3:2; Col. 1:25). A translation such as "stewardship from God" (ESV) or "God's household management" reflects this simpler understanding and seems preferable. The

¹⁹ Towner, 109-110.

²⁰ Towner, 110.

letter is concerned not with God's grand plan for the cosmos but with ministry in the local community.²¹

b. I. Howard Marshall concludes:

It is thus best to understand the term against the background of the *oikos-oikonomos-oikonomia* concept which the PE employ to depict the church (*oikos theou*, 3.15; 2 Tim 2.20-21) and the stewardship of ministry (*oikonomos theou*, Tit 1.7 [note]; 1 Tim 3.4-5). On this analogy *oikonomia theou* denotes 'the responsibility', and hence 'authority', laid on the leaders of his people by God; it is in effect the performance of the duties of an *oikonomos*.²²

c. The point is that what the false teachers were selling was at odds with the management responsibility God had bestowed on the leaders. "Their influence is disruptive and they constitute a liability to the welfare of the *oikos theou*."²³ That management responsibility is "by faith" in the sense it is rightly performed "only through the faithfulness which genuine faith in Christ produces in a leader (i.e. a good steward; cf. Tit 1.7) and is completely unlike the kind of spirit which leads to disputes."²⁴

E. In contrast to the results of the false teachers' fixation on myths and genealogies ("But"), the command to Timothy to put a stop to their teaching (1:3) has a very different goal.

1. The false teachers' bogus theology was, among other things, causing quarrels and divisions in the church (1 Tim. 6:4-5; 2 Tim. 2:14, 23). The goal of the instruction to Timothy to forbid that teaching is love in that stopping the source of the quarreling and division is intended to promote love in the church.

2. The love in the church that the instruction is intended to promote is Christian love, love that emanates from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith. It flows from a pure heart, one that has been cleansed of sin and is unadulterated in its devotion to the God who calls us to be other centered. It flows from a good conscience, one that has been trained by commitment to the apostolic faith to make morally good decisions leading to godly behavior. And it flows from a sincere faith, a genuine trust in God that inevitably manifests itself in conformity to his will.²⁵

F. The false teachers, having strayed from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith, turned to worthless talk. That is, having abandoned these fundamental aspects

²¹ Christopher R. Hutson, *First and Second Timothy and Titus*, Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2019), 32-33.

²² I. Howard Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 367.

²³ Marshall, 368.

²⁴ Marshall, 368.

²⁵ Marshall, 370-371.

of Christian character, having rejected basic Christian commitment, they turned to the divisive speculations rooted in myths and genealogies.

G. They desire to be and fancy themselves as being teachers of the Mosaic law, but they do not know what they are talking about. They are confidently pushing as true what is in fact error and nonsense. In their hands, the law was a dangerous weapon.

III. Proper Use of the Law (1:8-11)

⁸ Now we know that the law is good, if anyone uses it lawfully, ⁹ knowing that the law is not laid down for a righteous man but for the lawless and rebellious, for the godless and sinful, for the unholy and irreligious, for those who kill their father and those who kill their mother, for murderers, ¹⁰ fornicators, homosexuals, kidnappers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is opposed to the sound teaching ¹¹ according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, with which I was entrusted.

A. I understand Paul to be saying here that, however the false teachers err in what they claim the Mosaic law requires, their misunderstanding of the law is evident at an even more basic level. The Mosaic law is inherently good (Rom. 7:12, 16) provided it is used properly, meaning it is used knowing for whom it was meant and for whom it was not. As Westerholm says, "The argument is . . . that his opponents are wrong in applying regulations which they derive from the law . . . to people for whom the law was not meant."²⁶

B. In applying to Christians the regulations they purported to derive from the law, the false teachers were using the law illegitimately because the law is not meant (NAB, CSB, HCSB) or intended (NET, ISV) for Christians but for those under the power of sin, which power is evident in the human capacity for evil as illustrated in the list he gives of depraved individuals. Thornton writes, "The clear point of contention in vv. 9-10 is: for whom was the Mosaic law instituted? The law, Paul says, is not meant for believers, because believers have been transferred from the realm where the law, sin, and death exercise dominion to the realm of righteousness (v. 9a)."²⁷

C. To flesh out that understanding, the majority of commentators recognize that "the law" in 1:8 is the Mosaic law.²⁸ Not only does the vice list employed in vv. 9b-10 echo at least the fifth through the ninth of the Ten Commandments (Exod 20:1-17; Deut 5:6-21), but as Thornton explains:

Paul normally uses νόμος to refer to the Mosaic law. This means that, unless the context provides clear clues to the contrary, we may presume that when Paul speaks of ὁ νόμος or νόμος, he is thinking of the Mosaic law. Since this

²⁶ Westerholm, 83.

²⁷ Thornton, 128.

²⁸ George W. Knight III, *Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles, NIGTC* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 81; Towner, 123; and Thornton, 120 all acknowledge that this is the majority view of commentators.

entire section (1 Tim 1:8-11) is a response to the opponents, who likely used parts of the Pentateuch to support their deviant doctrine (1 Tim 1:3-7), there is no good reason to reject the notion that these, the only two occurrences of νόμος in the PD, are references to the law of Moses. More specifically, the Sinaitic legislation – the sum of divine requirements given to Israel through Moses – is likely the precise referent of νόμος.²⁹

D. Most commentators also recognize that the "righteous man" in 1:9 refers to a Christian, a disciple who lives out his faith in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.³⁰ Knight notes, "The 'righteous' are, then, those living in conformity to the requirements of the law by the work of Christ wrought by the Spirit in them (cf. Rom. 8:4, 'in order that the requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who . . . walk . . . according to the Spirit')."³¹ Thornton states:

But we can venture a bit further and say that, though justification by faith is not directly in view here, Paul has in mind "the *Christian* as right-living person" [quoting Westerholm]. This is made clear by the close of the vice list in 1 Tim 1:10-11. The law is not given for the δίκαιος (v. 9a), but the law is given for those who oppose the healthy doctrine, which is "in accordance with the gospel" (κατὰ τὸ εὐαγγέλιον, v. 11). *Therefore, δίκαιος, in this context, must allude to the sort of living that is in accordance with the gospel.* The term functions here in the same way the πίστις-ἀγάπη alignment functions in 1 Tim 1:5; the reference to the outer life pleasing to God necessarily includes an inner posture of belief in and commitment to Christ. *In essence, Paul's assertion in v. 9a is that the Mosaic law was not instituted for the one who has been transferred from the realm of sin and now lives in the realm of righteousness.*³²

E. Paul may have illustrated those under the power of sin with such a shocking list of sinners in part because he wanted to disparage the false teachers by associating them with such people. When he says in v. 10b "and whatever else is opposed to the sound teaching," he probably is lumping the false teachers, who oppose sound teaching, in with them, implying they are cut from the same cloth. Thornton states:

Paul concludes the list with a catchall category: the law is given for "anything else that opposes healthy teaching" (καὶ εἴ τι ἕτερον τῆ ὑγιαίνουσα διδασκαλία ἀντίκειται). He probably uses the verb ἀντίκειμαι ("to be opposed") to associate the opponents in Ephesus with the individuals just enumerated. The false teachers stand among the wicked, those for whom the law was given, those who oppose "the healthy teaching" (τῆ ὑγιαίνουσα

²⁹ Thornton, 119-120.

³⁰ Brian S. Rosner, *Paul and the Law: Keeping the Commandments of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 73 ("most take 'the just' or 'the righteous', *dikaioi*, as referring to Christians"). See, e.g., J. N. D. Kelly, *The Pastoral Epistles: Timothy I and II, and Titus* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1960), 49; Westerholm, 84; Knight, 83; Fee, 45; Mounce 35; Towner, 124; Rosner, 73; Köstenberger, 74.

³¹ Knight, 83.

³² Thornton, 123-124 (emphasis supplied).

διδασκαλία). The authoritative Christian teaching, which is again described as free from pathogenic content and viewed as positively health producing, includes Paul's interpretation of the Mosaic law.³³

F. Notice that Paul says nothing here about the purpose or function of the law. He says only that the law is not meant for the Christian but for those under the power of sin as represented by various kinds of sinners.

1. Some *assume* the reason Paul says the law does not apply to the righteous person but to sinners is because the law serves to restrain sin, which function is needed only for one who is not inwardly motivated to do right – only for the sinner and not the righteous – but Paul does not give his reasoning. Westerholm cautions:

At this point it is important to note what the text does, and what it does not, say. Verses 9 and 10 are often read as though the Pastor here counters his opponents' use of the law with the argument that the law's intended function was simply to act as a guide to morals and a restraint on sin. But such an argument must be read into the text, which states no more than that law was not enacted for the 'just man' but rather for sinners. What function the law performs among the latter is not stated.³⁴

2. Indeed, assuming that Paul is here implying that the function of the Mosaic law is to restrain sin does not fit comfortably, if at all, with what Paul says elsewhere about function of the law. Elsewhere Paul says the Mosaic law, being given to people who in general were not regenerated by the Holy Spirit, revealed the true face of sin and stimulated and provoked disobedience (Rom. 5:20, 7:5, 7-8; Gal. 3:19). It intensified and put their sin in bold relief. This was to expose their spiritual state, to make it more difficult to deceive themselves about their own righteousness (Rom. 3:20, 7:7), and thus to lead them to justification by faith in Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:23-25).

3. As Westerholm observes, ascribing to Paul the view "that wrong-doers need the restraining influence of the law whereas the 'just' do not . . . appears to be in some tension with the view that the law was given 'in order that sin might multiply' (Rom 5,20; how this operated is illustrated by Rom 5,13; 7,7-13)."³⁵ Thornton remarks:

Some interpreters understand the function of the law in vv. 9-11, which is at best implicit, to be the *restraint* of sin. This would seem to contradict the undisputed Paul's assertions that the law *alerts* one to (Rom 7:7) and even *arouses* sin (Rom 7:5, 8). How can the law both provoke and prevent sin? . . . While the restraining function of the law that the Magisterial Reformers and those who follow their interpretation find in this pericope is possible, it seems more likely that the implicit function(s) of the law in

³³ Thornton, 126-127.

³⁴ Westerholm, 83.

³⁵ Westerholm, 91.

1 Tim 9b-10 is the same as the explicit function(s) of the law that we find in Rom 7:7-8.³⁶

IV. *The Glorious Gospel Exemplified in Paul (1:12-17)*

¹² I am grateful to the one who has strengthened me, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he considered me faithful, putting [me] into service, ¹³ even though I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and a violent man. But I was shown mercy because, being ignorant, I acted in unbelief, ¹⁴ and the grace of our Lord overflowed, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. ¹⁶ But on account of this I was shown mercy, so that in me, the foremost, Christ Jesus might display the utmost patience as an example for those who come to believe on him for eternal life. ¹⁷ Now to the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory, forever and ever, amen.

A. Having mentioned in v. 11 the glorious gospel that was entrusted to him, Paul bursts into thanksgiving. In the process, he testifies about the gospel, which was being threatened by the false teachers.

B. Paul is grateful to the one who has strengthened him throughout his apostolic ministry, Christ Jesus, whom he and Timothy serve as Lord. It is taken for granted that the agent of this empowerment is the Holy Spirit (2 Tim. 1:7).³⁷ Perhaps he mentions his being strengthened and its source "to remind Timothy of resources for his flourishing, too."³⁸

C. He is grateful to Christ because he considered him faithful, putting him into service, even though he was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and a violent man. Paul marvels and rejoices in the mercy of God, which is so great that he not only received Paul, an extreme sinner, but also entrusted him with the task of sharing the gospel with the world. Paul is saying, in essence, "To think that he would consider me, of all people, worthy of his trust." The gospel in a nutshell is that even one as blind and sinful as Paul can receive God's abundant mercy in Christ.

D. Paul says he was shown mercy because he acted in unbelief born of ignorance. He is not saying that he received mercy because he had it coming, because his sins were somehow excusable. Not at all. The whole point is just how bad a sinner he was. He is

³⁶ Dillon T. Thornton, "Sin Seizing an Opportunity through the Commandments: The Law in 1 Tim 1:8-11 and Rom 6-8," *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 36 (2014), 154-156. For an argument that interpreting 1 Tim. 1:8-11 to imply a restraining function for the law does not contradict what Paul elsewhere teaches, see Thomas R. Schreiner, *40 Questions About Christians and Biblical Law* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2010), 83.

³⁷ NET note on 2 Tim. 1:7: "Or 'a spirit,' denoting the human personality under the Spirit's influence as in 1 Cor 4:21; Gal 6:1; 1 Pet 3:4. But the reference to the Holy Spirit at the end of this section (1:14) makes it likely that it begins this way also, so that the Holy Spirit is the referent."

³⁸ Robert W. Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 120.

saying that, though his sins were horrible, they were not the result of a knowing, clear-eyed rejection of God. His sin was not "willful" or "high handed" (in the sense of Num. 15:22-31) in that he was willing to repent.³⁹

E. The grace of Christ, the grace provided in his redemptive work, overflowed to cleanse even Paul's grievous sins, and the faith and love that are hallmarks of those in Christ overflowed along with it. That faith and love are also the work of God's grace in Christ.

F. Paul also says that he, the foremost sinner, was shown mercy to serve as "Exhibit A" for all other sinners who would believe on Christ for salvation. In saving Paul, Christ demonstrated utmost forbearance in dealing with sinners. Paul's point is simple: "If God did it for me, given who I was and what I did, then there is hope for all."

G. Paul concludes with a doxology. God rules in and over all ages; he is immortal (incorruptible), invisible, and the only God. Therefore, all honor and glory are due him forever and ever.

V. *The Charge Renewed (1:18-20)*

¹⁸ I entrust this command to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies made earlier about you, so that by them you might wage the good warfare, ¹⁹ holding faith and a good conscience, which thing some having rejected suffered shipwreck concerning the faith. ²⁰ Among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I handed over to Satan so that they may be taught not to blaspheme.

A. Paul tells Timothy that his entrusting to him the command to silence the false teachers is in keeping with the prophecies that had earlier been made about him. He is referring to that time, probably very early in their relationship, when Timothy received a spiritual gift for ministry, the giving of which was accompanied by the laying on of hands (by the elders and Paul) and by a prophetic recognition of the gift (1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6). By recalling these prophecies, what God had said about the gift and about Timothy's use of it in ministry, Timothy may be encouraged to wage this noble war against the false teachers.

B. Waging this good warfare requires holding onto his own faith and a good conscience. In 1:5 and 1:19b Paul says that the false teachers had abandoned those things. Timothy must take care not to be swayed from them in the course of the battle. This is in line with 1 Tim. 4:16, where Paul commands him to pay close attention to himself and to the teaching.

C. The false teachers, having rejected a good conscience, having chosen deliberately to live contrary to the will of God, suffered shipwreck regarding their faith.⁴⁰

³⁹ See Tremper Longman III, *Immanuel in Our Place* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2001), 95-96.

Faith and maintaining a good conscience are linked; rejection of the one drives rejection of the other. A guilty conscience that one refuses to resolve by repentance eventually will work itself out in a denial of faith or in a searing of the conscience, a deadness to its voice.

D. Hymenaeus and Alexander were among those at Ephesus who had suffered shipwreck concerning the faith. They obviously were known to both Timothy and the church. Paul says that he handed them over to Satan, meaning that on the basis of his apostolic authority he put them back into Satan's sphere, i.e., put them outside the church and the fellowship of God's people. It is the same thing that was done in 1 Cor. 5:5.

1. We're not told when this was done, but 1 Cor. 5:5 makes clear that it need not have been done in person. Perhaps Paul passed judgment on them when he met with Timothy in route to Macedonia.

2. The purpose of disfellowshipping is redemptive, to bring them to repentance. In Paul's words, it was to teach them "not to blaspheme," meaning not to slander or misrepresent the true faith given by God through their false teaching and opposition to God's agents.

3. Hymenaeus is probably the same person referred to later in 2 Tim. 2:17-18. He is there mentioned, along with Philetus, as one who was teaching that the resurrection had already occurred and upsetting some people's faith. From that reference, it seems that, despite the disfellowshipping he received on Paul's authority, he "continued to operate in opposition to the Pauline mission in the later setting reflected in 2 Timothy."⁴¹

4. Alexander may be the same person referred to later in 2 Tim. 4:14-15, but Alexander was a common name and was often taken by Jews.⁴² The fact the Alexander in 2 Tim. 4:14-15 is identified by his occupation ("the metalworker") does not necessarily mean he is not the same Alexander in 1 Tim. 1:20. As Towner notes, that information may have been "meant to identify the same opponent who, because of Paul's disciplinary action, moved to a new location [e.g., Troas] and posed a new level of threat to Timothy."⁴³

⁴⁰ Towner writes (p. 159), "Some take ['with regard to the faith'] impersonally as a reference to damage caused to the gospel mission or to 'the faith' by the false teaching. But a personal reference to damage caused to the opponents' own faith in some sense is more likely." Marshall writes (p. 412):

But the reference in *περὶ τὴν πίστιν* is ambiguous. (a) The articular *ἡ πίστις* often refers to the objective content of the faith, which leads Fee, 58, to suggest that it is *the* faith which has suffered shipwreck, i.e. their teaching has brought the gospel itself to ruin. But the intransitive *ναυαγέω*, the fact that it is the opponents who suffer, and the preposition *περὶ* ('with respect to'; cf. 6.21; 2 Tim 2.18; 3.8; Tit 2.7**) all make the reference to *τὴν πίστιν* rather indirect. (b) Consequently, a reference either to the faith that has just been mentioned (that of the genuine believer) or to 'their faith' which used to be healthy (Lock, 19; Arichea-Hatton, 41f.) would seem better.

⁴¹ Towner, 160.

⁴² Towner, 160.

⁴³ Towner, 160.

VI. Instruction to Pray for All (2:1-7)

Therefore, I urge, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all men,² for kings and all those in high places, so that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life in all godliness and respectability.³ This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior,⁴ who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.⁵ For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,⁶ who gave himself as a ransom for all men – the testimony given at the right time.⁷ For this I was appointed a herald and an apostle (I am telling the truth, not lying), a teacher of Gentiles in faith and truth.

A. In light of the charge to oppose the false teachers ("Therefore"),⁴⁴ Timothy's first order of business was to see that all sorts of prayers were offered in the assembly for *all* people, to see that no group or class of people, including rulers and authorities, was excluded from the prayerful concern of the church, treated as being outside the scope of the gospel.

1. Most commentators recognize that the prayer addressed by these instructions took place in the corporate worship assembly.⁴⁵ For example, Towner writes, "From 2:1 onward Paul has been preoccupied with activities and behavior within the worship assembly."⁴⁶ Linda Belleville says, "The setting is corporate worship."⁴⁷ This is confirmed by the activities occurring there, prayer (v. 8) and teaching (vv. 11-12), and by the phrase "in every place" in 2:8. Based on his published investigation of the subject, Everett Ferguson states: "The 'every place' of 1 Timothy 2:8 is to be taken as 'every meeting place,' 'every place of assembly,' bringing this passage into parallel with 1 Corinthians 14:33b-34. The prayers of 1 Timothy 2:1-2 are the public prayers of the church."⁴⁸

2. The note of universality is sounded repeatedly in these verses: prayers be made for all men (v. 1); for all those in high places (v. 2); God wants all men to be saved (v. 4), gave himself a ransom for all men (v. 6), teacher of Gentiles (v. 7). Paul had already (1:12-16) emphasized that his own sinfulness and persecution of the church did not put *him* beyond God's mercy.

⁴⁴ Mounce (p. 78) says, "οὕτως, therefore, tells us that 2:1-7 is closely related to chap. 1 and in some way issues from it." See also, Fee, 62; Yarbrough, 145; Walter L. Liefeld, *1 & 2 Timothy/Titus*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 84.

⁴⁵ Yarbrough, 144 (fn. 208).

⁴⁶ Towner, 190.

⁴⁷ Linda Belleville, "1 Timothy" in Philip W. Comfort, ed., *1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, Hebrews*, Cornerstone Biblical Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2009), 43.

⁴⁸ Everett Ferguson, *The Church of Christ: A Biblical Ecclesiology for Today* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 343. See also, Thomas R. Schreiner, "An Interpretation of 1 Tim. 2:9-15" in Andreas Köstenberger and Thomas R. Schreiner, eds., *Women in the Church*, 3rd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 175 (fn. 53).

3. Gordon Fee remarks, "The one clear concern that runs through the whole paragraph has to do with the gospel as for everyone ('all people,' vv. 1, 4-6, 7)."⁴⁹ Mounce likewise recognizes "the emphasis appears to be on the universal offer of salvation to all people."⁵⁰ Marshall observes that "[t]he stress on the universality of the gospel . . . is particularly striking."⁵¹

4. Given that this instruction relates to Timothy's commanded opposition to the false teachers and that Paul through his emphasis on universality seems to be pushing back against some kind of limitation on the scope of the gospel, it appears the false teachers had a sectarian or exclusivist theology that emphasized God's love for some people *at the expense of* his love for all mankind, perhaps most notably at the expense of his love for pagan rulers. Marshall notes, "This universalistic thrust is most probably a corrective response to an exclusive elitist understanding of salvation connected with the false teaching."⁵² Towner states, "Probably the speculative views of the false teachers or the general atmosphere surrounding the approach to the faith they promoted fostered either some sort of elitism or indifference to those outside the church."⁵³

5. Perhaps their restriction of God's loving concern was related to their misuse of genealogies or the law generally, finding in them a divine favoritism of Jews regarding salvation.⁵⁴ Towner thinks the teachers' "excessively realized view of salvation" may have generated an undue sense of the church's separation from the world.⁵⁵ Others relate the limitation of salvation to the pre-Gnostic aspects of their thinking.⁵⁶ Fee writes:

The best explanation for this emphasis [on the universality of the gospel] lies with the false teachers, who either through the esoteric, highly speculative nature of their teaching (1:4-6) or through its "Jewishness" (1:7) or ascetic character (4:3) are promoting an elitist or exclusivist mentality among their followers. The whole paragraph attacks that narrowness.⁵⁷

B. But why was correcting this exclusivist praying that was spawned by the false teaching a matter of first importance? I suggest it was such a priority because failing to pray for all people had a detrimental effect on evangelism in both a direct and indirect way.

⁴⁹ Fee, 62.

⁵⁰ Mounce, 76.

⁵¹ Marshall, 416-417.

⁵² Marshall, 420.

⁵³ Towner, 165.

⁵⁴ Köstenberger (p. 92) states, "The emphasis on the universality of salvation may respond polemically to a (Jewish?) exclusivism on the part of the false teachers in the Ephesian church."

⁵⁵ Towner, 165.

⁵⁶ Kelly (p. 60) states, "We must infer that there was an exclusivist spirit in sections of the Ephesian community, probably connected with the Jewish-Gnostic strain in the errorists' thinking." John Stott, *Guard the Truth: The Message of 1 Timothy & Titus* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 60, states, "In contrast to the elitist notion of the Gnostic heretics, that salvation was restricted to those who had been initiated into it, Paul stresses that God's plan and therefore our duty concern everybody."

⁵⁷ Fee, 62.

1. In a direct sense, failing to pray for all people deprived those who were not prayed for of whatever effect those prayers would have had on God's work in their lives. Praying for people changes things, even though we may not see or understand how.

2. In an indirect sense, this elitism or exclusivity in assembly prayers, especially with regard to governing authorities, could cast the church as an enemy of the society. This could *needlessly* disrupt their lives and thus the usual practice of their religion, which is living *within the society* lives of godliness and respectability (see 1 Thess. 4:11-12).

a. In other words, persecution disrupts the common mode of the church's witness, its being an aroma within and not outside the society, and therefore should not be invited needlessly. Of course, when persecution comes simply from the world's hatred of Christ, the church still bears witness to Christ through that fire in the power of God, but persecution should not be encouraged because of some false belief.

b. Recall that the church in Ephesus was born in political tumult. There was a riot based on the challenge Paul's preaching presented to polytheism. This Christian tenet of monotheism was viewed in the ancient world as a threat to the society by offending the multitude of other gods. Failing to offer prayers in the assembly for the larger society and its rulers is not only inconsistent with God's desire for universal salvation, but it would fuel the perception that Christians were enemies of the state and thus invite persecution.

C. Praying for *all people* is good and welcomed in God's sight, as he wants *all people* to be saved, meaning to come to a knowledge of the truth. For he is the God of all people, there being only one God; and Christ, who is the one mediator between God and mankind, gave himself a ransom for all people. So why pray inconsistently with that divine desire, especially when doing so risks hindering the spread of the gospel by disrupting the normal social context for its dissemination?

D. Paul declares in v. 7 that because of God's desire to save all men and Christ's having given himself as a ransom for all men he was appointed (by God) a herald and an apostle, a teacher of Gentiles in faith and truth. The fact he insists he is telling the truth and not lying suggests that someone was claiming the contrary, rejecting the legitimacy of his Gentile-focused ministry, in favor of a kind of (presumably Jewish) exclusivism. Marshall states, "It is plausible that the false teachers, who stressed Jewish myths and genealogies and apparently also the law, were not enthusiastic for the Gentile mission."⁵⁸

VII. Instruction to Pray in the Right Way (2:8-15)

⁸I want, therefore, the men in every place to pray, lifting holy hands, without anger or argument. ⁹Likewise, [I want] women [to pray] in appropriate attire, to adorn themselves with modesty and decency, not with elaborate

⁵⁸ Marshall, 417.

hairstyles and gold or pearls or expensive garments ¹⁰ but [with] what is fitting for women who profess reverence for God by good works. ¹¹ Let a woman learn in quietness with full submission. ¹² I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; rather, she is to be in quietness. ¹³ For Adam was formed first, then Eve. ¹⁴ And Adam was not deceived, but the woman, by being deceived, came to be in transgression. ¹⁵ But she will be saved through childbearing, if they continue in faith and love and sanctification, with decency.

A. Given the significance God places on the prayers of the church for all people ("therefore"), Paul says he wants the men to pray lifting *holy* hands, meaning hands that are not stained by anger and argument. Anger and argument, division and disharmony, are hindrances to effective prayer, to communion with God. This instruction is almost certainly related to the false teaching in that it produced controversy and disputes (1 Tim. 6:4-5; 2 Tim. 2:23-24).

1. Paul is not *prescribing* the prayer posture of lifting hands. Rather, he takes for granted, based on a common prayer posture at that time and place, that they will pray with raised hands. What he prescribes is that they avoid anger and argument so as not to hinder their prayers. So while there is no *requirement* to lift hands in prayer, no mandated posture of praying in Scripture (standing, sitting, kneeling, lifting head, bowing head, etc.), we know it is acceptable to God to lift hands when praying (and by implication when singing praises to God, as both are God-directed speech, the one being spoken and the other sung).

2. If the practice of lifting hands when praying or singing ever mutated into an action like waving hands, it may no longer be merely a posture as Paul assumed but a separate bodily action being offered to God as worship (like "holy dancing"). That would raise questions about its acceptability. But as a simple posture of praying, it is unobjectionable.

3. Also, there is a danger that those who lift their hands may perceive that posture as spiritually superior, as a marker of those who truly are moved by the Spirit in worship, rather than a mere personal preference. That attitude would be wrong and divisive. And, of course, lifting hands from an impure motivation, such as a desire to draw attention to oneself, would be wrong, but that danger is not unique to lifting hands.

B. Paul says literally in the first clause of 2:9: "Likewise [also]⁵⁹ women⁶⁰ in appropriate attire with modesty and decency to adorn themselves." There is broad agreement

⁵⁹ The *kai* ("also") is textually suspect. It is absent in such notable manuscripts as Sinaiticus and Alexandrinus, placed in brackets in Nestle-Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece* (28th ed.), and is not included in *The Greek New Testament* produced by Tyndale House (2017).

⁶⁰ Though some claim *gunaikas* in this section refers to wives rather than to women generally, most commentators recognize that such a limitation is highly improbable (Schreiner, 180). The context is rejecting the effect of the false teaching on the prayers that are offered in the assembly, and since v. 8 clearly refers to men generally rather than to husbands, there is no sound basis for limiting *gunaikas* to wives. It is noteworthy that all the standard English versions render the word in this section as "women" not

that the verb "I want" from v. 8 is implied in v. 9: As Paul *wants* the men to pray in a certain way, he likewise *wants* the women to do something. Some translations supply "I want" in v. 9 to make that implication express (e.g., NAS, NASU, NIV), and others convey the idea by saying "women *should*" (RSV, NAB, NRSV, ESV), "women *are to*" (HCSB, CSB, NJB, NET), or "women *must*" (REB, NEB), but what Paul wants the women to do is debatable.

1. Paul could be saying in 2:9, "Likewise [I want] women to adorn themselves in appropriate attire, with modesty and decency," in which case "women" serves as the subject of one infinitive ("to adorn"). That has a nice balance: I want the men *to pray* and the women *to adorn*. But that seems like an abrupt change of subject from a focus on praying to a completely unrelated focus on dress, especially with the connecting word "likewise." As Marshall puts it, "[T]he introduction of the reference to women's adornment is an unmotivated digression if it is not related to prayer in some way or other; after an injunction to the men about how they are to worship, it would be strange if something parallel was not being said to the women."⁶¹

2. Alternatively, Paul could be saying, "Likewise [I want] women [to pray] in appropriate attire, to adorn themselves with modesty and decency." In that case, "women" serves as the subject of two infinitives ("to pray" and "to adorn"). Either translation is grammatically acceptable,⁶² and the latter is favored (in meaning if not in actual translation) by many scholars.⁶³ The choice is governed by the context of the passage and by the view one has from other texts of the propriety of women praying in the assembly. Given the focus on prayer throughout this section of Scripture, my understanding of 1 Cor. 14:33b-36 and 11:2-16, and the example of Acts 1:14 and 4:23-24, I am convinced that Paul here assumes the women will be praying, just as he assumes the men will be praying.⁶⁴

"wives" (KJV, ERV, ASV, RSV, NEB, NAS, NKJV, NRSV, REB, NASU, HCSB, NAB, CEB, NIV'11, NET, LEB, ISV, CSB).

⁶¹ Marshall, 447.

⁶² Korinna Zamfir and Joseph Verheyden state in "Text-Critical and Intertextual Remarks on 1 Tim 2:8-10," *Novum Testamentum* 50 (2008), 404, "[T]he ellipsis can be supplied with the entire clause in v. 8, with Βούλομαι or with Βούλομαι προσεύχεσθαι. The latter reading does not interfere with the text, it can work grammatically, and it provides a thematic unity between w. 8 and 9-10."

⁶³ E.g., C. K. Barrett, *The Pastoral Epistles*, New Clarendon Bible (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), 55; Martin Dibelius and Hans Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles*, Hermeneia, trans. by Philip Buttolph and Adela Yarbro (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), 45; Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, TNTC, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 84; Ben Witherington III, *Women in the Earliest Churches* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 263 (fn. 203); Craig S. Keener, *Paul, Women & Wives* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1992), 102-103; Jerome D. Quinn and William C. Wacker, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, ECC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 215-216; Liefeld, 93-95; Marshall, 446-447; Köstenberger, 109; Yarbrough, 165-166; Hutson, 67. Collins does not supply "to pray" in the translation of v. 9 but clearly understands vv. 9-10 as a reference to women praying in the worship assembly. Raymond F. Collins, *I & II Timothy and Titus*, NTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 64-65.

⁶⁴ William Loader states in *The New Testament on Sexuality* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 421, that rather than implying an absolute silence, one may assume "that in liturgical responses or songs women would be vocal, and the link between instruction to women and what precedes suggests that women also prayed aloud in the gatherings."

3. Some are persuaded that Paul's desire expressed in 2:8 for "the *men* in every place to pray" means that women are not to pray (thus eliminating the second option),⁶⁵ but that does not follow. He does not say he wants the men to pray; he says he wants the men to pray *without anger and argument*. He assumes they will be praying and urges them to do so with the proper attitude so that their prayers will not be hindered (e.g., 1 Pet. 3:7).⁶⁶ If on the brink of a recess a teacher said, "I want the boys to play without fighting," no one would think the teacher was thereby excluding girls from playing. Rather, they would conclude that the boys had a problem with fighting that the teacher did not want carried over into recess.

4. Whether it is permissible for women to "lead" prayers in a church gathering is complicated by the fact such terminology is foreign to the New Testament. It boils down, in my judgment, to whether female participation in that role would violate the biblical principle of male leadership, be contrary to the submission women are required to express in the assembly (1 Cor. 14:34; 1 Tim. 2:11-12).

a. I am inclined to think it would because that role has a sense of leadership that is not present in some other prayer contexts. The person who "leads" prayer in our assemblies is not merely praying personally; rather, that person is appointed to speak to God on behalf of the assembly. (As I explain below, it is not because women are not spiritual enough or are inferior in praying: it is because God wants his sovereign choice of male leadership to be honored by female deference in Christian assemblies.)

b. I do not believe that is the kind of public praying women did. However, in an atypical context like "open praying" (i.e., where all are invited to pray without any appointment or designation to speak for the assembly), which I suspect was more common in the house churches of the early church, that concern would not seem to apply. Of course, even in a congregation today that utilized "open praying" in its assemblies, the potential impact on congregational unity would have to factor into any shift in practice from all men to both men and women.

C. Women were to pray in appropriate attire, meaning they were to be metaphorically clothed with an attitude of modesty and decency that eschewed the over-the-top adornment he is describing in favor of modest and proper dress that is fitting for women who profess reverence for God by good works, women who live a God-revering life. This extravagant ornamentation – elaborate hairstyles and gold or pearls or luxurious garments – was contrary to the faith-based attitudes of modesty and decency because it was a flaunting of wealth and status and an abnormally seductive and sexually enticing way to dress.⁶⁷

1. As the men were to pray free of the hindrance of anger and argument, the women were to pray free of the hindrance of pride and carnality, attitudes that were implicit in the excessive ornamentation that marked the loss of their modesty and decency. God

⁶⁵ E.g., J. W. Roberts, *Letters to Timothy* (Austin, TX: Sweet Publishing, 1964), 21.

⁶⁶ See Fee, 71.

⁶⁷ Schreiner states (p. 183), "In both Jewish and Greco-Roman literature, sexual seductiveness is linked with extravagant adornment."

desires a spirit of humility and contrition in those who approach him not a spirit of superiority and self-exaltation or a heart that is trolling for sexual interest.

2. In addition to the hindrance to *women's* prayers caused by the attitudes implicit in their excessive ornamentation, such dress may hinder the prayers of the men to the extent it is perceived as sexually daring in that culture. Men are highly prone to visual stimulation by women, so when a woman goes above and beyond cultural norms to invite that stimulation by her appearance, especially in the close settings of house churches, it readily could become a spiritual distraction.

3. In applying Paul's words about adornment, it is important to recognize he is not banning the wearing of all braids, gold, and pearls. After all, braiding hair was common, and "[e]ven Judaism did not absolutely forbid the wearing of jewelry."⁶⁸ Rather, "[w]hen Paul wrote 'braided hair *and* gold *or* pearls' he probably meant 'braided hair decorated with gold or pearls'.⁶⁹ It is clear from sculpture and literature of the period that some wealthy women had braids and curls piled high on their heads, which were decorated with gems and/or gold and/or pearls.⁷⁰ The rendering "elaborate hairstyles" (NEB, REB, CEB, HCSB, NIV, ISV, CSB) thus seems preferable to "braided hair."

4. The point is confirmed by the fact Paul clearly is not banning the wearing of all garments but only "luxurious" garments. The issue was the extravagant flaunting of wealth and status and the sexual seduction and enticement associated with that appearance. There is, of course, a cultural aspect to what crosses the line into extravagant flaunting of wealth and status and abnormal sexual seduction and enticement, but the principle seems reasonably clear. Christian women can be fashionable but not daring or overly ostentatious.

D. Having instructed the women about the modesty and decency necessary for their effective *praying* for all people, attitudes expressed in their rejection of wealth-flaunting and seductive attire, Paul notes an additional way in which that modesty and decency manifests with regard to *teaching* in the assembly. It includes submission to male leadership in the church, which in the assembly means women are to learn in quietness and with full submission.

1. Verse 12 clarifies what it means for women to learn in quietness and with full submission: they cannot teach or exercise authority over a man. The former ("teach") means they cannot instruct the mixed assembly in the word or will of God, as it means elsewhere in 1-2 Timothy (1 Tim. 4:11, 6:2; 2 Tim. 2:22). The latter ("exercise authority") is defined in BDAG as "to assume a stance of independent authority, give orders to, dictate to."⁷¹ BDAG says the practical meaning in 1 Tim. 2:12 is "tell a man what to do." In this

⁶⁸ Schreiner, 182.

⁶⁹ James B. Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 199.

⁷⁰ Hurley, 199, 257-259. Baugh states (p. 55), "[T]he adornment of the hair 'with braids and gold or with pearls' (cf. 1 Pet. 3:3-5) fits a new trend originating in Rome. Hence, Paul's teaching regarding elaborate hairstyles reflects and increasing influence of Roman empresses at Ephesus during the unfolding of the first century AD."

⁷¹ Bauer, Danker, Arndt, and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 150.

context, I suspect it includes correcting or challenging what was taught by a male teacher, what we might call "setting him straight" or "putting him in his place." A similar concern is expressed in 1 Cor. 14:35, where women were apparently challenging the prophets by quizzing them under the pretext of simply wanting to learn.

2. This fits well with the fact "quietness" (*hēsuchia*) refers not to complete silence but "to a quiet demeanor and spirit that is peaceable instead of argumentative."⁷² Rather than being outspoken and argumentative about the teaching, the woman is to "hold her peace," as we might say. The fact it is not a prescription of absolute silence means there is no problem with a woman asking sincere questions in a class or commenting at the request of and under the leadership of the teacher. That is part of the teacher's method of instruction. It would only become a problem if the woman took the opportunity to take over and try to set people straight.

3. In contexts outside gatherings of the church, women are free to take issue with and to attempt to enlighten Christian men, including those of us who teach.

a. This is part of how the body of Christ functions as set out in Eph. 4:11-14. As ministers of the word of God deliver that word to the gathered church, the members of the body are thereby equipped to disseminate the truth of Christ throughout the body, to widen and deepen the impact of that truth and thus to nourish the body. The (male) ministers of the word condition the saints for the work of service (or ministry) so that the body of Christ is built up.

b. I have had many insightful questions and helpful, gentle challenges from sisters through the years. In addition to engaging brothers personally in non-assembly contexts, sisters in Christ can write books, articles, and newsletters and disseminate their wisdom in podcasts. What they cannot do is teach gatherings of male and female Christians in the word or will of God or exercise authority over men in the church. That is a rejection of how God calls the church to mark its acceptance of his sovereign bestowal of the leadership responsibility on men.

E. I suspect Paul here addresses the prohibition of women teaching because he has just given instructions about the praying he assumes women are doing in the assembly. He wants to be clear that praying is a different kind of speech than teaching. It is a nondidactic expression of personal gratitude, praise, and devotion to God, like singing, whereas teaching is delivering to men the authoritative word of God.⁷³ As such, teaching is inconsistent with the submission that women are called to manifest in the assembly. The same point is made

⁷² Schreiner, 186. Even *sigāō*, which means "to be silent," can refer contextually to refraining from (being silent with regard to) a specific kind of speech. For example, in 1 Cor. 14:28 it refers to refraining *from tongues-speaking* when no interpreter is present. See Wayne A. Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy in 1 Corinthians* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1982), 242-244.

⁷³ Singing is not equated with teaching in Col. 3:16. Rather, Paul there gives two means for fostering in the community of faith the rich indwelling of the word of Christ that he commands: teaching and instructing in all wisdom and singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. As the church offers heartfelt praise and thanks to God in song, we also communicate indirectly to each other through that praise and thanksgiving and build each other up as a result (Eph. 5:19), but that is distinct from teaching as prohibited in 1 Tim. 2:12.

in 1 Cor. 14:33b-36 with regard to women prophesying in the assembly or challenging the prophecies of others: *As in all the churches of the saints, ³⁴let the women be silent in the churches, for it is not permitted for them to speak, but let them be in submission as even the Law says. ³⁵And if they want to learn something, let them question their own husbands at home, for it is shameful for a woman to speak in church. ³⁶Or did the word of God go out from you or reach only to you?*

F. It is also quite possible this submission was being threatened by the overrealized eschatology in the false teachers' doctrine, which led to belief that the distinctions of the old age in terms of sex roles were no longer significant. You see the same coupling of overrealized eschatology and ignoring of sex distinctions in 1 Corinthians.

G. Paul says the reason (For) women are not permitted to teach or to exercise authority over a man is simply that "Adam was formed first, then Eve." It has nothing to do with women's intellect, character, devotion, knowledge, education, or speaking skill; it is not because they are *incapable* of teaching or leading. It is rooted in the order of creation, which as Köstenberger notes "strongly suggests that vv. 11-12 are permanently applicable."⁷⁴ Both here and in 1 Cor. 11:7-9, the Spirit of God through Paul makes clear that Genesis 2 posits role differences between men and women.

1. We would like for Paul to have explained how Adam's being created first translates into male leadership, but the notion of the "firstborn" being the leader required no explanation in the first century. The concept of primogeniture, the leadership right of the firstborn, is all over the OT and was taken for granted.⁷⁵

2. The assertion that male leadership rests on the fact Adam was created before Eve raises the deeper question of *why* God made man first instead of making woman first or making them at the same time from the dust of the ground. Ultimately the answer is that God is sovereign (Ps. 103:19; 1 Tim. 6:15) and that he chose to do it that way.

a. One could just as well ask why God gave the tribe of Levi the exclusive responsibility to care for the Tabernacle (Num. 1:50-51; 1 Chron. 6:47, 23:26), or why he gave the family of Aaron the exclusive responsibility of serving as priests (Ex. 28:1, 29:4-9). Why limit those roles to people who happen to be born in a certain lineage rather than allowing everyone equal access to the roles based on their ability?

b. And that is precisely what led to Korah's rebellion in Numbers 16. Korah, a Levite, and 250 community leaders opposed Moses and Aaron on the basis that they should have equal access to God. All Israel was holy, so no one family line should be exalted to the priestly function. It was a challenge to God's right to choose select groups for specific roles. And, as you know, Korah, Dathan, and Abiram were swallowed by the earth, and the 250 community leaders were incinerated by God. The spirit of Korah is alive and well in any who would challenge God's right to choose men as leaders of the family and the church.

⁷⁴ Köstenberger, 117.

⁷⁵ Hurley, 207-209.

H. Understand that a submissive or nonleading role need not mean an inferior status.

1. Jesus is God; he is one in nature, being, and essence with God the Father. So the Son is not inferior to or less worthy than the Father, yet he is functionally subordinate to the Father; he willingly submits to the Father's authority. This is made explicit in 1 Cor. 11:3 and is demonstrated by the fact he was sent by the Father (Mat. 10:40, 15:24, 21:37; Mk. 9: 37, 12:6; Lk. 4: 43, 9:48, 10:16, 20:13; Jn. 3:34, 4:34, 5:23, 5:30, 5:36-38, 6:29, 6:38-39, 6:44, 6:57, 7:16, 7:28-29, 7:33, 8:16, 8:18, 8:26, 8:29, 8:42, 9:41, 10:36, 11:42, 12:44-45, 12:49, 13:20, 14:24, 15:21, 16:5, 17:3, 17:8, 17:18, 17:21, 17:23, 17:25, 20:21; Gal. 4:4; Heb. 3:2; 1 Jn. 4:9-10, 4:14); spoke the words of the Father (Jn. 7:16, 8:26-28, 8:38-40, 12:49-50, 14:24, 15:15); came to do the Father's will (Jn. 4:34, 5:19, 6:38, 14:30; Heb. 10:5-9); revealed the Father (Jn. 1:18, 12:45, 14:7-9, 17:6, 17: 26; Heb. 1:1-4); seeks to please, glorify, and honor the Father (Jn. 5:30, 8:29, 14:13, 17:1-5); and judges only as he hears from the Father (Jn. 5:30).

2. If Jesus, being in very nature God, can submit to the Father's authority, then women can submit to the leadership of men in the church without denying their equal dignity or value. They are acting like Christ! That parallel is specifically drawn in 1 Cor. 11:3. Schreiner states:

A difference in role or function in no way implies that women are inferior to men. Even the Son submits to the Father (1 Cor. 15:28), and yet he is equal to the Father in essence, dignity, and personhood. It is a modern, democratic, Western notion that diverse functions suggest distinctions in worth between men and women. Paul believed that men and women were equal in personhood, dignity, and value but also taught that women had distinct roles from men.⁷⁶

I. Despite Paul stating expressly that women are not permitted to teach or to have authority over a man because "Adam was formed first, then Eve," scholars bent on having women teach in Christian gatherings claim the prohibition here was because the women in Ephesus were teaching the heresy or were uneducated. As Schreiner points out, "Paul could easily have said that women were prohibited from teaching and exercising authority over men because they were spreading heresy or were uneducated. Yet he does not breathe a word about these matters."⁷⁷

1. Moreover, the claim that the women in the Ephesian church were all uneducated is groundless. The congregation clearly included some wealthy women (1 Tim. 2:9, 6:17-18), and as Baugh has shown, some of them would have been educated and a few may have been highly accomplished in letters or poetry.⁷⁸ Indeed, Priscilla was in Ephesus (Acts 18:18-19; 2 Tim. 4:19), and she, with her husband, Aquila, had explained the way of God to the well-educated Apollos (Acts 18:26).

⁷⁶ Schreiner, 201-202.

⁷⁷ Schreiner, 205.

⁷⁸ Baugh, 57-60.

2. As for the claim the prohibition was motivated by the fact women were spreading heresy, it is unknown whether women were teaching the heresy rather than simply being influenced by it. And as Schreiner points out: "But Paul doesn't ground his prohibition in women teaching falsely. If both men and women were involved in the heresy (and we know that men were certainly involved), why does Paul forbid only the women from teaching men?" In other words, if the prohibition was because women were teaching heresy, forbidding *only* women and *all* women from teaching would make sense only if it was *only* women and *all* women who were teaching the heresy. But we know some men were teaching it (1 Tim. 1:20; 2 Tim. 2:17-18, 3:5-9), and it would be very unlikely that all women were teaching it. So that claim just does not wash; it smacks of desperation.

J. In v. 14, Paul gives an additional reason why women are not permitted to teach or to have authority over a man. Referring to Genesis 3, he says that Adam was not deceived but the woman, by being deceived, came to be in transgression. His point is simply that Eve rather than Adam was the one deceived *by the serpent*, that qualification being understood from the Genesis account. So it is not necessary to "conclude that Adam was undeceived in every respect."⁷⁹ The fact the serpent went after Eve supports male leadership, the prohibition of women teaching or exercising authority over a man, not by suggesting women are innately more gullible than men and thus incompetent to teach, but by showing the harm that occurs when the divinely ordained pattern of leadership is subverted. Schreiner expresses the point well:

[Paul] wants to focus on the fact that the Serpent approached and deceived Eve, not Adam. The significance of the Serpent targeting Eve is magnified when we observe that Adam was apparently with Eve during the temptation (Gen. 3:6). In approaching Eve, then, the Serpent subverted the pattern of male leadership and interacted only with the woman. Adam was present throughout and did not intervene. The Genesis temptation, therefore, stands as the prototype of what happens when male leadership is abrogated. Eve took the initiative in responding to the serpent, and Adam let her do so. Thus, the appeal to Genesis 3 reminds readers of what happens when humans undermine God's ordained pattern.⁸⁰

K. The point of v. 15 seems to be that, contrary to what the false teachers were claiming, women remain faithful, and thus are saved, by accepting their God-given role, which role is symbolized by the distinctly female ability of childbearing. In other words, they are not to define their faithfulness, to define their Christian calling, in terms of the male role. Their salvation is to be "worked out" (Phil. 2:12) in a somewhat different way or on a somewhat different path than the salvation of men. Schreiner comments:

This does not mean that all women must have children in order to be saved. Though the underlying principle is timeless, Paul is hardly attempting to be comprehensive here. He has elsewhere commended the single state

⁷⁹ Schreiner, 215.

⁸⁰ Schreiner, 215-216.

(1 Cor. 7). He selects childbearing because it is the most notable example of the divinely intended difference in roles between men and women and because many women throughout history have had children. Thus, Paul generalizes from the experience of women by using a representative example of women maintaining their proper role. To select childbearing again indicates that the argument is transcultural, for childbearing is not limited to a particular culture but is a permanent and ongoing difference between men and women. The fact that God has ordained that women and only women bear children signifies that the differences in roles between men and women are rooted in the created order.

When Paul says that a woman will be saved by childbearing, he means, therefore, that they will be saved by adhering to their ordained role. Such a statement is apt to be misunderstood (and often has been), and thus a further comment is needed. Paul says that women will be saved "if they remain in faith and love and sanctification along with discretion." Thereby Paul shows that it is not sufficient for salvation for Christian women merely to bear children; they must also persevere in faith, love, holiness, and presumably other virtues. The reference to "discretion" (*sōphrosunēs*) harkens back to the same word in verse 9 and also functions to tie the entire text together. Paul does not imply that all women must bear children to be saved (cf. v. 10). His purpose is to say that women will not be saved if they do not practice good works. One indication that women are doing good works is if they do not reject bearing children as evil but bear children in accord with their proper role.⁸¹

L. The early post-apostolic church understood that women are prohibited from teaching men in Christian assemblies. That is very difficult to explain if, as alleged by modern advocates of women teachers and preachers, Paul taught the contrary. As expressed in the *Apostolic Constitutions* (Book III, Ch. VI), a collection of preexisting materials on church order compiled in the fourth century, "We do not permit 'our women to teach in the church,' but only to pray and hear those that teach." After surveying the relevant evidence, the renowned church historian Everett Ferguson concludes:

From the standpoint of history, the evidence of Christian writings of the second to fourth centuries is in continuity with the New Testament. . . . Women were not appointed as elders, nor did they take public speaking roles in the assembly as prophets, teachers, or leaders in the assembly. Where women did take these roles in heretical and schismatic groups, the practice was a basis for objection to these groups.⁸²

M. So the leadership role of men that was indicated in the order of creation means that only men are to teach in the assembly and that women are not to be put in positions of authority over men in the church. In keeping with that, it also means, as indicated in the next sections of the letter, that only men are eligible for the church offices of elder and deacon.

⁸¹ Schreiner, 222-223.

⁸² Everett Ferguson, *Women in the Church* (Chickasha, OK: Yeomen Press, 2003), 54.

1. Those matters are relatively clear, but there are difficult questions about how the principle of male leadership applies to other female activity in the church. What conduct or roles fail to respect sufficiently God's choice that men are to be leaders of the church? Should women, for example, help pass out the communion trays, collect the contribution, or make announcements? These are questions with which elderships must wrestle, and different elderships may in good faith disagree on specifics.

2. If in these gray areas an eldership permits or prohibits certain female conduct differently than you would, give the eldership the benefit of the doubt that they are drawing the line where they sincerely believe God would have them draw it and not acting from some ulterior sexist or feminist motive. Do not allow disagreements over such judgment calls to become matters of grumbling or flashpoints of division.

VIII. Instruction About Elders (3:1-7)

The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to be an overseer, he desires a noble task. ² It is necessary, therefore, that the overseer be above reproach, the husband of one wife, self-controlled, sensible, respectable, hospitable, skillful in teaching, ³ not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not contentious, and not loving money. ⁴ He must be managing his own household well, having his children in submission with all respectfulness (⁵ if anyone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?). ⁶ He must not be a recent convert, lest, having become conceited, he fall into the condemnation of the devil. ⁷ And it is also necessary that he have a good reputation with those outside, lest he fall into disgrace and the trap of the devil.

A. The instructions in chapter 3 about church leaders, elders and deacons, probably were given in response to the false teaching that had taken hold in the church. It had created an actual or anticipated leadership crisis. Towner states:

It seems clear that the emergence of opponents in the church would have caused a number of problems related to leadership. Some of the opponents themselves may have been elders, whose defection would not only create a vacuum in the leadership ranks but also promote competition to fill their spots. This kind of disturbance might also have planted seeds of doubt about the leadership positions and the people filling them.

The need to consolidate the church at this level calls forth from Paul both an endorsement for the positions, and guidelines to ensure that godly people are selected to occupy them.⁸³

⁸³ Towner, 239-240.

B. Paul lays out for Timothy and the church the standards to which elders are to conform. Those who do not meet these standards are not to be appointed to the eldership (1 Tim. 5:22), and elders who deviate from these standards are to be disciplined (1 Tim. 5:19-20) and, if necessary, replaced (1 Tim. 5:22).

C. Paul emphasizes that the position or office of overseer (the "overseership") is a noble or good task. After all, it involves the care and nurture of the people of God, looking out for the spiritual welfare of the congregation (Acts 20:28; Eph. 4:11-12; 1 Thess. 5:12; 1 Tim. 3:5, 5:17; Tit. 1:9; Heb. 13:17; 1 Pet. 5:2). He probably makes that point because some current or former elders had given the position a bad name, had tarnished the office itself.

D. The churches in the NT were each governed by a group of men who occupied the leadership position that is variously called elder (*presbuteros*), overseer/bishop (*episkopos*), and shepherd/pastor (*poimēn*). It is true, of course, that the apostles, as inspired emissaries of Christ, exercised governing authority throughout the church, but we have no apostles (or prophets) today. Elder/overseer/shepherd is the leadership position within each local church that God intended to be permanent.

1. It is clear from several texts that these terms all refer to the same office. In Acts 20:17 Paul sends for the "elders" of the church in Ephesus. In 20:28 he reminds them that they are "overseers" and commands them "to shepherd" (verb *poimainō*) the church of God. In Tit. 1:5 Paul tells Titus to appoint "elders" in every city, and in 1:7 these elders are called "overseers." And in 1 Pet. 5:1 Peter addresses the "elders," and in 5:2 he tells them "to shepherd" (verb *poimainō*) and "to oversee" (verb *episkopeō*)⁸⁴ God's flock.

2. But each term carries a different nuance of the office.⁸⁵ The position of elders within Judaism (Num. 11:16-24; Deut. 21:19-20; 1 Ki. 21:8-11), from which the early church derived the name, involved deciding disputes, interpreting the Law, administering discipline, preserving the traditions of the people (Deut. 32:7), and serving as examples. Overseer or bishop emphasizes the role of managing the group's affairs, guarding it, and directing its activities. The work of shepherds in looking after sheep involves protecting them, leading them to water and pasture, caring for their injuries, and seeking them when lost. Ezekiel 34 gives a powerful description of how shepherds should *not* act.

E. Because being an overseer is a noble or good task, those who serve in that capacity must live exemplary lives. In Paul's words, they must be "above reproach." That, of course, does not mean sinless, or else there could be no elders. It means their lives are characterized by the virtues or qualities he lists.

1. Husband of one wife

a. This is probably the most controversial of the qualifications. The phrase literally is "a husband [or man] of one wife [or woman]" (*mias gunaikos andra*),

⁸⁴ The command "watch over" or "oversee" is omitted from certain manuscripts, but it is probably original.

⁸⁵ Ferguson (1996), 319-323.

but those words are open to various interpretations. I'll address briefly the more common ones and let you know where I come down on the question.

b. A few think Paul is saying that an elder cannot be a polygamist, that he must be the husband of only one wife rather than multiple wives. Though I think polygamy is indirectly excluded by what Paul is saying, it is doubtful that he is expressly addressing polygamy here.

(1) By this time, monogamy was the generally accepted norm in Greco-Roman and Jewish cultures, and there is no evidence that polygamy was an issue in Christian communities. So it seems unlikely Paul would be focusing on that.

(2) Moreover, in 1 Tim. 5:9 Paul requires widows who are to be enrolled "on the list" (presumably a list of church support) to be "a wife [or woman] of one husband [or man]," using the identical phrase except for the gender reversal. The phrase there cannot be intended to exclude women who had multiple husbands (polyandry) because that practice was unknown in that culture.

c. Some think the phrase is a way of saying that an elder must be married, that he must have a wife. Though Paul assumes an elder will be married and that he will have a family, I do not think he is mandating that here. He does not say an elder must be married or must have "a" wife; the emphasis is on his being a husband [or man] of "one" wife [or woman], as the word "one" leads the phrase in the Greek text. In addition, if this understanding of the phrase (that it means "he must be married") is applied to its counterpart in 1 Tim. 5:9 it leaves Paul uttering the tautology that only widows who had been married could be put on the list: a widow by definition had been married.

d. Some think Paul is here excluding from serving as an elder anyone who remarried after a spouse's death, whereas others think he is excluding only those who remarried after a divorce. Neither of those seems likely.

(1) Excluding a man from serving because of remarriage after being widowed would be strange given that remarriage in such cases clearly is permitted (Rom. 7:1-3; 1 Cor. 7:8-9, 39-40) and is affirmatively encouraged in 1 Cor. 7:8-9 (dealing with widowers and widows) and in 1 Tim. 5:14 (dealing with younger widows). Why would it then be disqualifying? Moreover, in the parallel in 1 Tim. 5:9 the effect would be that Paul in 5:14 is urging the younger widows to do what would exclude them from eligibility for "the list" in the event the new husband were to die.

(2) Excluding a man from serving because of a remarriage after a divorce that left him free to remarry would be strange for the same reason. If the remarriage is permissible it is not a reflection of poor character or a lack of faith when a man avails himself of that right. A man who impermissibly remarried would be in a different light, but I do not think Paul's focus is on remarriage.

e. With the majority of scholars, I think the requirement is that the man be faithful to his wife, that he not have broken faith with her, which understanding is reflected in NEB and NIV ("faithful to his wife").

(1) Just as one can express the phrase "a diamond of one karat" as "a one-karat diamond" one can express the phrase "a man of one woman" as "a one-woman man" (or "a husband of one wife" as "a one-wife husband"). The requirement deals with the man's character, the type of person he is, rather than his status.

(2) Knight quotes the following from C. H. Dodd: "The natural meaning of *mias gunaikos aner* is surely, as Theodore [of Mopsuestia] says, 'a man who having contracted a monogamous marriage is faithful to his marriage vows,' excluding alike polygamy, concubinage and promiscuous indulgence" [cite omitted]. Knight then adds, "'Promiscuous indulgence' would encompass Jesus' words on wrongful divorce and remarriage in Mt. 5:32; 19:9."⁸⁶

f. This requirement makes clear that the office of overseer is restricted to men, as does the earlier indication that leadership authority in the church is limited to men (1 Tim. 2:11-14). The restriction of the office to men also is implied from the requirement the candidate be skillful in teaching, a task that in the assembly is done only by men (1 Tim. 2:12), and not be violent, a sin to which men are especially vulnerable.

2. Self-controlled – An elder must be a man who is self-controlled, disciplined. He is not someone who is hostage to his emotions and impulses. This is to be a quality of all Christians, but it is essential for those who are to be leaders in the Christian community.

3. Sensible – An elder must be sensible, meaning reasonable, prudent, and thoughtful. We might say he must have his head on straight. This is related to self-control. The sensible person is someone who carefully considers things for the purpose of taking responsible action.

4. Respectable – An elder must live a well-behaved or virtuous life so as to be regarded as respectable by others. His life is to be one worthy of respect.

5. Hospitable – Hospitality is required of all believers (e.g., Rom. 12:13, 16:23; Heb. 13:2; 1 Pet. 4:9), but it is an essential characteristic for elders. Mounce states, "Overseers must be the type of people who will gladly welcome people into their homes. As Knight asserts, 'He who must teach others and take care of and exercise oversight over them must be open and loving to them' (159)."⁸⁷

6. Skillful in teaching (sound doctrine)

⁸⁶ Knight, 158-159.

⁸⁷ Mounce, 174.

a. The requirement "skillful in teaching" (see BDAG, 240) in 1 Tim. 3:2 is put more fully in Tit. 1:9. Paul tells Titus there that an elder must be "holding firmly to the faithful word, according to the teaching, so that he may be able both to exhort with sound teaching and to refute those who contradict it." In these days, long after completion of the canon, we might say that an elder must be "a man of the Book." He must have a sound grasp of Christian theology.

b. 1 Timothy 5:17 can be translated "Let the elders who have led well be considered worthy of double honor, *especially* those who labor in preaching and teaching" or "Let the elders who have led well be considered worthy of double honor, *that is*, those who labor in preaching and teaching."⁸⁸ In the latter rendering leading well *means* laboring in preaching and teaching, but either way it highlights the importance of this aspect of an elder's role. The word "labor" implies vigorous effort.

c. This does not mean an elder has to be a Bible scholar, and the teaching can be done in more personal settings than a classroom, but elders necessarily are able to teach and are involved in doing so in caring for the flock. If a man cannot communicate God's word, he should not be considered as an elder.

7. Not given to drunkenness – An elder cannot be given to drunkenness. That does not mean, of course, that Christians who are not elders are free to get drunk. Drunkenness is sinful (Rom. 13:13; Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:18; 1 Pet. 4:3). It means that this cannot be an elder's area of weakness.

8. Not violent but gentle – An elder is not one who resorts to physical force or threats of physical force to get his way. He is not a bully. On the contrary, he is gentle in his dealing with others.

9. Not contentious – Similarly, an elder cannot be a contentious, quick tempered person. He is not combative, a person looking for an argument or conflict. As Stott puts it, "His patience may be sorely tried by demanding and aggravating people, but like his Master he will seek to be gentle, never crushing a bruised reed or snuffing out a wick that is burning low."⁸⁹

10. Not loving money – In contrast to the false teachers (1 Tim. 6:5; 2 Tim. 3:2), an elder cannot be a lover of money, someone who is greedy for money. If money is too important to him, he will wind up serving it rather than Christ (see Mat. 6:24). All Christians are to keep their lives free of the love of money and be content with what they have (Heb. 13:5), but this is essential for one who would serve as an elder.

11. Managing household well

a. An elder must manage his own household well, which includes seeing that his children obey him with proper respect (1 Tim. 3:4). The reason is that one

⁸⁸ See, e.g., Marshall, 612.

⁸⁹ Stott, 97.

who is unable to manage his own family properly cannot be expected to care properly for God's church (1 Tim. 3:5). If he cannot generate obedience and respect in his own children, he is unlikely to be able to generate it in God's children.

b. Paul seems to assume here that an elder will be married and have children. Some think this means an elder must have more than one child, but that strikes me as a hyper-literal reading.

(1) If someone asked a group of which I was a part "How many of you have children?" I would raise my hand even though I have only one child. I would assume that the question covered those with one or more children even though framed in the plural.

(2) In 1 Tim. 5:4 Paul says, "But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let these first learn to be religious toward their own family and to repay their parents and grandparents, for this is pleasing in the sight of God." Certainly that does not mean that the only child of a widow has no obligation to care for her, that a child must have siblings to come under the command. This is supported by v. 8 which says that if *anyone* does not provide for his own, especially his own household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

12. Not a recent convert

a. An elder cannot be a recent convert. No doubt a recent convert does not know enough about the faith to function as an elder, but that is not how Paul explains the requirement in 1 Tim. 3:6. He says an elder cannot be a recent convert "lest, having become conceited, he fall into the condemnation of the devil."

b. I think the point is that one who receives too much responsibility too soon is more likely to become conceited, like the false teachers at Ephesus (1 Tim. 6:4). An inflated ego leads readily to condemnation because a prideful person, a "know-it-all," relishes cutting his own theological trail and refuses to accept correction.

13. Has a good reputation with those outside (the church)

a. An elder must not only be "above reproach" within the community of faith, he also must have a good reputation with those outside the church. Paul adds the reason, "lest he fall into disgrace and the trap of the devil."

b. One who has a bad reputation among outsiders can easily fall into disgrace (or "incur slander") either because "unsympathetic outsiders will put the most unfavorable interpretation on his slightest word or deed"⁹⁰ or because they will be motivated to expose the particulars of the bad reputation. For the church or its leaders to be disgraced is to fall into the devil's trap.

⁹⁰ Kelly, 80.

IX. Instructions About Deacons (3:8-13)

⁸ Deacons likewise are to be worthy of respect, not double-tongued, not indulging in much wine, not greedy for money, ⁹ holding securely the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. ¹⁰ Let these also first be tested; then, if being blameless, let them serve. ¹¹ [The] wives likewise are to be worthy of respect, not slanderers, self-controlled, and faithful in all things. ¹² Let deacons be husbands of one wife, who manage their children and their own households well. ¹³ For those who have served well gain a good standing for themselves and great boldness in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

A. Paul also gives qualifications for the office or position of deacon (see, Phil. 1:1), which is the only formal office in the church other than elder/overseer/shepherd. Scripture nowhere defines the tasks deacons are to perform or the duties they are to assume, and only a broad outline of their role can be inferred from various bits of evidence.

1. Given the role of elders, the meaning of the word "deacon" (*diakonos*),⁹¹ the qualifications of deacons (especially in comparison to those of elders), and the analogy of the Seven chosen to serve in Acts 6, it is generally understood that deacons assist the elders by accepting immediate responsibility (not ultimate oversight) for works that otherwise would need to be done by the elders, thereby freeing the elders to devote themselves to matters on which their time is better spent. For example, Benjamin Merkle writes:

[I]t seems best to view the deacons as servants who do whatever is necessary to allow the elders to accomplish their God-given calling of shepherding and teaching the church. Just as the apostles delegated administrative responsibilities to the Seven, so the elders are to delegate responsibilities to the deacons so that the elders can focus their efforts elsewhere.⁹²

2. As that role developed historically in the early church, "deacons ministered to the needy, visited the sick, administered church property, and assisted at worship. They were described as the 'eyes' and 'ears' of the bishop."⁹³ Their role may have taken that shape because of the precedent of Acts 6 and a belief that some requirements of the office implied they would have substantial contact with people and some involvement with the church's purse.⁹⁴ Because deacons are assistants to the elders

⁹¹ BDAG, 230: "one who gets someth. done, at the behest of a superior, *assistant*."

⁹² Benjamin Merkle, *40 Questions About Elders and Deacons* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008), 240.

⁹³ Ferguson (1996), 336. Quinn and Wacker (p. 280) say deacons "were the social workers of the ancient congregations."

⁹⁴ See Mounce, 195.

and their tasks and duties are not spelled out, it is generally thought today that the elders have wide latitude in defining the role of deacons in a congregation.⁹⁵

B. The qualifications for the office of deacon overlap to some extent with the qualifications of elders.

1. Deacons must be (v.8) worthy of respect (*semnos*), which parallels the requirement that elders be "respectable" (*kosmios*); not double-tongued (sincere [NIV]; not hypocritical [HCSB]; not deceitful [NAB]; not two-faced [NET]); not indulging in much wine (same requirement as elders); not greedy for money (same requirement as elders); (v. 12) the husband of one wife (same requirement as elders); and must manage their households and children well (same requirement as elders).

2. Though they are not required to be skillful in teaching, as are elders, they must have orthodox convictions (v. 9). They must hold securely the "mystery of the faith," meaning the truth of the gospel, which was once hidden in God but has now been revealed by the Spirit (1 Cor. 2:6-16). And in doing so, they must maintain a clear conscience, meaning they must strive sincerely to live in accordance with the ethical demands of the gospel.

3. As with the elders (that's the thrust of the "also" in v. 10), prospective deacons are to be examined ("tested") to see if they have what is required to serve in that position. Only those who meet the qualifications are to be appointed to the office.

C. In the middle of his instruction about the qualifications of deacons, Paul says in v. 11: *Gunaikas* likewise are to be worthy of respect, not slanderers, self-controlled, and faithful in all things. *Gunaikas* is the plural accusative form of the noun *gunē*, which means either woman or wife depending on the context; it does not mean deacon.⁹⁶

1. If Paul was referring to women deacons, instead of distinguishing these women from deacons, there is no reason he would not have written *Tas diakonous*, applying the feminine form of the article to the same noun form used to refer to deacons at the beginning of v. 8 (the masculine noun *diakonos*, which generally meant "servant," could apply to both men and women).⁹⁷ That would have made his intent clear, whereas writing *gunaikas* was a sure prescription for misunderstanding. Why refer to women deacons as women/wives instead of referring to them by their office as was done with the overseers in vv. 1-2 and the male deacons in vv. 8 and 12?

⁹⁵ E.g., James Bales, *The Deacon and His Work* (Shreveport, LA: Lambert Book House, 1967), 63; Alexander Strauch writes in *Paul's Vision for the Deacons: Assisting the Elders with the Care of God's Church* (Littleton, CO: Lewis and Roth Publishers, 2017), 74; Merkle, 240.

⁹⁶ BDAG, 208-209.

⁹⁷ Thus, the oft-repeated claim that *gunaikas* was the only way Paul could refer to a female deacon because there was no feminine form of "deacon" in his day is incorrect. Paul also could have coined the feminine form of "deacon" (*diakonissa* – "deaconess") as was used for the office that developed later in church history.

2. Verse 11 is most likely a parenthetical statement about the character traits necessary for the wives of deacons. It is included because their character is a requirement for their husband's eligibility for appointment as a deacon. It is parenthetical because it relates to their character rather than his own. Attention is immediately turned back to the deacon's own character, now in the just-mentioned context of marriage, by declaring, "Let deacons be husbands of one wife."

3. That Paul is speaking of wives in v. 11 was recognized by virtually all English translations from the Tyndale New Testament (1526) until the RV/ASV (1881, 1901). This includes the Coverdale Bible, Matthew's Bible, Great Bible, Geneva Bible, Bishop's Bible, and King James Bible. The lone exception during that span was the Roman Catholic Rheims New Testament (1582), which had "The women." Modern English versions that render *gunaikas* in v. 11 as "wives" include the NEB, NKJV, NIV'84, GNT, GW, NET, HCSB, LEB, ISV, NLT, ESV, and CSB.

4. An argument commonly made against the translation "wives" is that no character traits are specified for the wives of overseers. It is alleged that this makes it very unlikely there would be character requirements for the wives of deacons, but that does not take seriously enough the differing roles of deacons and overseers. Robert Lewis summarizes the common response to this objection:

To counter such an objection, mention is made that only the wives of deacons could assist their husbands in actually carrying out their ministry while the elders' wives could not. Indeed the wife of an elder would be strictly prohibited (1 Tim 2:12) from those teaching and ruling functions which he performs in the church. Concerning the deacon's wife, however, no such prohibitions exist. On the contrary, as a deacon carried out his service and visitation duties, certain situations would arise which only a woman could perform. Such functions a deacon would quite naturally turn over to his wife whose character was complementary to his own.⁹⁸

5. Paul is not suggesting the character of an overseer's wife is irrelevant to his suitability for the position but indicating it is less directly relevant than the character of a deacon's wife. The character failings of an overseer's wife could affect whether he was above reproach, managed his household well, and had a good reputation with outsiders, but since the deacon's wife could be assisting the deacon in taking care of the personal and physical needs of congregants, which probably would involve the use of mercy funds in the church, her character requirements are stated expressly.

6. The claim that Phoebe is called a deacon in Rom. 16:1 is doubtful. She is called "a *diakonon* of the church in Cenchrea," and that is the word for the office of deacon (Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:8, 12, 13), but that word can mean simply "servant" or "minister" without any connotation of a church office or position.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ Robert M. Lewis, "The 'Women' of 1 Timothy 3:11," *Bibliotheca Sacra* (April 1979), 168.

⁹⁹ BDAG, 230-231.

a. Indeed, it is translated that way in the vast majority of its 29 occurrences in the New Testament. As Rom. 16:2 makes clear, Phoebe had served the church in Cenchrea by being a patron or benefactor (*prostatis*) of many, meaning she had helped them financially. As Frank Thielman observes, "It is easy to imagine Phoebe as a woman of wealth and high social status . . . who accommodated the assembly of Christians in Cenchreae in her house and provided practical help to Paul and his coworkers during their ministry in the area."¹⁰⁰

b. John Murray's assessment in his 1968 commentary still stands:

It is common to give to Phoebe the title of "deaconess" and regard her as having performed an office in the church corresponding to that which belonged to men who exercised the office of deacon (cf. Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:8-13). Though the word for "servant" is the same as is used for deacon in the instances cited, yet the word is also used to denote the person performing any type of ministry. If Phoebe ministered to the saints, as is evident from verse 2, then she would be a servant of the church and there is neither need nor warrant to suppose that she occupied or exercised what amounted to an ecclesiastical office comparable to that of the diaconate.¹⁰¹

7. Appeal sometimes is made to church history to rescue the claim that 1 Tim. 3:11 and Rom. 16:1 refer to women deacons, but that effort fails. The *Didache*, a manual of church life that commonly is dated from the late first or early second century,¹⁰² makes clear that the office of deacon was understood to be restricted to men.

a. Paragraph 15 of that document (Lightfoot translation) begins: "Appoint for yourselves therefore bishops and *deacons* worthy of the Lord, *men* [ἀνδρας – accusative masculine plural of ἀνὴρ] who are meek and not lovers of money, and true and approved; for unto you they also perform the service of the prophets and teachers."¹⁰³

b. The word for "men" is the same word used in Acts 6:3 where the apostles directed the disciples to choose seven *men* for appointment to the task of distributing food. The fact all of those chosen were males indicates the word in that context was sex specific. In other words, it was not used to represent both males and females. This is especially significant given that Acts 6 was understood in the early church to involve the appointment of deacons.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ Frank Thielman, *Romans*, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018), 712.

¹⁰¹ John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 226.

¹⁰² For example, Willy Rordorf says of the final redaction of the work in "Didache" in Angelo Di Berardino, ed., *Encyclopedia of Ancient Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 1:709, "we align ourselves with A. Adam and J.-P. Audet, who maintain that the whole of the work goes back to the 1st c."

¹⁰³ J. B. Lightfoot and J. R. Harmer, eds., *The Apostolic Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987 [reprint 1891]), 234.

¹⁰⁴ See, e.g., Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, Book III, ch. 12:10 ("Stephen, who was chosen the first deacon by the apostles"), Book IV, ch. 15:1 ("Luke also has recorded that Stephen, who was the first elected into the

8. Proponents of women deacons cite Pliny's letter to Emperor Trajan, written in Latin around A.D. 112, as proof there were women deacons in Bithynia in the early second century, but his statement on the matter is ambiguous. He says of certain female slaves he had tortured to obtain information about Christianity that they were called "*ministrae*" (plural of *ministra*), but *ministrae* has the same obscurity as the Greek word *diakonos*. As Jack Lewis points out, "They [Pliny's *ministrae*] could be servants of the church, or they could be appointees of the church. No one can know."¹⁰⁵ The text provides no information about the status and function of these women in the Christian community. J. G. Davies summarizes the matter well:

When we recall that there is no convincing evidence of the existence of an order [of deaconesses] in the Apostolic Age and that the first definite reference to it is not found before the middle of the third century, the only reasonable conclusion upon the available evidence is that, whoever Pliny had examined and whatever unspecified functions they had previously performed, we cannot say with conviction that they were members of an order of deaconesses.¹⁰⁶

9. It is not until the third century, in the document known as the *Didascalia of the Apostles*, probably of Syrian origin, that clear evidence arises for women being appointed to a church office of deaconess.¹⁰⁷ Aimé Georges Martimort states, "It is on the eastern *limes* of the Roman Empire that we finally see deaconesses emerging. The first document that specifically mentions deaconesses, one that, in a sense, constitutes their birth certificate as an ecclesiastical institution, is the document called the *Didascalia of the Apostles*."¹⁰⁸ (The office of deaconess was abolished by Councils at

diaconate by the apostles"); Pseudo-Tertullian, *Against All Heresies* ("He was one of the seven deacons who were appointed in the Acts of the Apostles") [The work is thought to be related to the lost treatise of the early third-century theologian Hippolytus of Rome titled the *Syntagma* – see Reinhard Plummer, *Early Christian Authors on Samaritans and Samaritanism* (Tubingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 32]; Cyprian, *Epistles of Cyprian*, Epistle LXIV:3 ("while apostles appointed for themselves deacons after the ascent of the Lord into heaven"). This understanding is reflected in Eusebius's early fourth-century work, *The History of the Church*, Bk. 2:1 ("By prayer and laying on of the apostles' hands they were appointed to the diaconate").

¹⁰⁵ Jack P. Lewis, *Exegesis of Difficult Passages* (Searcy, AR: Resource Publications, 1988), 108. Everett Ferguson likewise remarks in *Women in the Church* (Chickasha, OK: Yeoman Press, 2003), 47: "The Latin *ministrae* was a general word for women servants that in this passage could refer (1) to the feminine worshipers of a deity (Christ), (2) slaves (on this meaning, perhaps Christians chose to use this term rather than slaves for their fellow believers), (3) women especially active in service (in this context Christian service), or (4) "deaconesses" (in view of the apparent reference to a special Christian usage)."

¹⁰⁶ J. G. Davies, "Deacons, Deaconesses and the Minor Orders in the Patristic Period," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 14 (April 1963), 2-3.

¹⁰⁷ It is debated whether the document dates to the first or second half of the third century. S. Stewart-Sykes gives only a *terminus ad quem* of the mid-fourth century noting "though much of the material may be earlier." "Didascalia Apostolorum" in Angelo Di Berardino, ed., *Encyclopedia of Ancient Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 1:709.

¹⁰⁸ Aimé Georges Martimort, *Deaconesses An Historical Study* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), 35.

Epaon [517] and Orleans [533] in France, but it survived in places even in the west.)¹⁰⁹ If women had been serving as official deacons since the first century based on Paul's writings, it is deeply puzzling why no clear indication of that office exists prior to the third century and why the earlier *Didache* restricted the office to men.

10. I provide more analysis and details on this topic in my online paper "Women Are Not to Be Appointed to the Office of Deacon." You can find it on my website, <http://www.theoutlet.us>, by clicking the "Bible Studies" tab and scrolling.

D. Paul says in v. 13 that faithful service as a deacon leads to good standing or esteem, probably meaning in the eyes of both the church and God. Those who serve well as deacons also gain great confidence or boldness in their Christian faith. Living out one's faith in Christ, here in the form of serving well as a deacon, reinforces and confirms the reality of that faith.

X. Purpose of Writing and the Glorious Nature of Christianity (3:14-16)

¹⁴ Although [I am] hoping to come to you soon, I write these things to you so that, ¹⁵ if I am delayed, you may know how it is necessary to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth. ¹⁶ Without a doubt, the mystery of our religion is great: he was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.

A. Paul says he writes "these things," referring to the instructions he has given in 2:1–3:13 and perhaps also anticipating the discussion to come, so that if he is delayed in his hope to visit Timothy soon, Timothy will have in the letter instructions on how people are to conduct themselves in the household of God, which is the church. He will not have to wait for Paul to arrive to receive that information.

B. The question comes up as to why Paul was planning to go to Ephesus when he said to the Ephesian elders who met him in Miletus that he knew none of them would see his face again (Acts 20:25, 38). That need not mean he knew he would never again go to Ephesus but only that if he did he would not cross paths, for whatever reason (death, relocation, abandonment of the faith), with the men to whom he was saying farewell. If Paul never made it back to Ephesus, and we have no record that he did, it was only because more pressing things occupied him until that window of opportunity closed (probably by his final arrest).

C. The church is the household of God in the sense it is his people, those uniquely identified with him, just as a human household consists of those uniquely related to the head

¹⁰⁹ Everett Ferguson, "Deaconess" in Everett Ferguson, ed., *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, 2nd ed. (New York: Garland Publishing, 1999), 322.

of the household. And just as there is structure and organization in an ancient Greco-Roman household, so there is structure and organization in God's church, the local congregations being managed by a group of elders with others having different roles.

D. The church is the "pillar" of the truth in that, just as a pillar holds up a roof, the church, through its existence and proclamation of the truth, holds up the truth to be seen and admired. And the church is also the "foundation" of the truth in that, just as the foundation keeps a building from shifting or collapsing, the church defends the truth from forces pushing against it, forces seeking to undermine or destroy it. The false teachers, on the other hand, had abandoned the truth (1 Tim. 6:5; 2 Tim. 2:18, 3:8, 4:4), so it is very important that Timothy stop them and get people back in touch with the truth.

E. In v. 16 Paul expresses some great truths of Christianity, possibly by incorporating a hymn, a preexisting and formalized expression of the faith.¹¹⁰ The truth of God's redemptive plan, that mystery that he kept hidden for ages but revealed through Christ and the apostles, is wonderful.

1. In the incarnation, God the Son was manifested in the flesh. That person of the Godhead became the God-man Jesus. In the words of Jn. 1:14, *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

2. Jesus, who was condemned by the world in his execution as a criminal, was vindicated, proven to be innocent and the chosen one of God, by the Spirit in his resurrection from the dead. Towner states, "The early church consistently regarded the resurrection/exaltation of Jesus to be the historical event in which God demonstrated his Son's vindication."¹¹¹ Paul says in Rom. 1:4 that Jesus was appointed Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness from the resurrection of the dead. As Ben Witherington notes:

v. 4 is not about what Christ is according to this divine nature but rather about what happened to Jesus at the resurrection, when God's Spirit raised him from the dead and designated or marked him out as Son of God in power. . . . Paul means here that at the resurrection Jesus enters a phase of his career where he becomes Son of God *in power*. Previously, he was Son of God in weakness. He did not assume the role of glorified and exalted and all-powerful Lord until after the resurrection (so also Philippians 2), when he was appointed to such a role.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ Matthew E. Gordley, *New Testament Christological Hymns* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2018), 183-185.

¹¹¹ Towner, 280. He cites Acts 2:22-36; 3:11-15; 4:10-12; 10:34-43; Rom. 1:4; 1 Cor. 2:1-9; Eph. 1:20-21; Phil. 2:5-11; Col. 2:8-15; and 1 Pet. 3:21-22.

¹¹² Ben Witherington III and Darlene Hyatt, *Paul's Letter to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 32-33.

3. Marshall points out that the passive verb (*ōphthē*) in the phrase "was seen by angels" "often expresses the idea of 'becoming visible' or of 'self-exhibition'" and opines "it is preferable to take this as an appearing of Christ to 'angels', rather than as a reference to 'angels' observing Christ."¹¹³ Towner thus recommends the translation "who appeared to angels" rather than "was seen by angels."¹¹⁴ In that light, it refers to Christ's appearance to the heavenly powers in his triumphant exaltation as the Lord of lords (see, Eph. 1:21; Phil. 2:9-11; Heb. 1:3-4; 1 Pet. 3:22; Rev. 5:8-14). It also is possible it refers to the angelic witness of Jesus' resurrection (e.g., Mat 28:5-7; Lk. 24:4-7) and/or ascension (Acts 1:9-11).

4. Jesus was preached among the nations. God's plan of salvation is for all people.

5. The good news of Christ that was preached among the nations was also believed. The preaching of Christ was thus effective in bringing people to salvation.

6. Jesus was taken up in glory, referring to his ascension and exaltation. If I am correct in thinking "appeared to the angels" (line 3) refers to the ascension and exaltation, there is a symmetry between the first three lines and the last three. Jesus was *manifested* in the flesh (line 1) and in the preached message (line 4); he was *vindicated* by the Spirit (line 2) and by people's belief of the message (line 5); and he was triumphantly *exalted* as Lord of lords (lines 3 and 6). The nonchronological nature of line 6 is for the sake of the parallel.

XI. The False Teachings Censured (4:1-5)

Now the Spirit explicitly says that in [the] last times some will abandon the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons² [that come] through the hypocrisy of liars whose own consciences have been seared.³ They forbid marriage [and order people] to abstain from certain foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and have known the truth.⁴ For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if received with thanksgiving;⁵ for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.

A. Though the church has been entrusted with the truth, the Spirit of God is either now saying through Paul or has previously said through Paul (Acts 20:29-30?) or a Christian prophet that the last times will include the kind of thing now happening in Ephesus, Christians being pulled from the faith by enemy operatives. In other words, the problems Timothy is experiencing are not unexpected, and they need to be alert and prepared to resist them. In declaring it was said "clearly" or "explicitly" Paul "sharpens the sense of authority and relevance by removing any possibility of vagueness from what is being said."¹¹⁵ Towner states:

¹¹³ Marshall, 526; see also, Towner, 281.

¹¹⁴ Towner, 281.

¹¹⁵ Towner, 288.

Paul does not indicate clearly whether this was a prophetic word revealed directly to him, in the past or immediate present (Acts 16:9; 18:9-10; 2 Cor 12:1), or whether he passes on revelation that has come by way of Christian prophets and has circulated in the churches for some time (1:18; 4:14; Acts 21:9; 1 Cor 14:29; Rev 2:7; 14:13; 22:17). Both options are possible, and the more important feature of the statement is the affirmation of the authority of the Spirit's prophetic word.¹¹⁶

B. The phrase "last times" (*husteros* can mean later or last – BDAG gives "last" as its most probable meaning here) is synonymous with the phrase "last days." It means the time between the kingdom's inauguration and consummation, which encompasses the present situation in Ephesus. It is the era in which all people since Pentecost have lived (Acts 2:16-17; 2 Tim. 3:1; Heb. 1:2; 1 Pet. 1:20; 2 Pet. 3:3; 1 Jn. 2:18; Jude 18). As Knight remarks, "The NT community is conscious of being 'in the last days' (Acts 2:16, 17; [Heb. 1:2]), i.e., the days inaugurated by the Messiah and characterized by the Spirit's presence and power, the days to be consummated by the return of Christ."¹¹⁷

C. Demons are the ultimate source of the false doctrines being pushed, but those doctrines are delivered through the false teachers. The means by which some are led to abandon the faith is by *paying attention* to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons that are represented and expressed by the false teachers. Instead of ignoring them and not allowing them to get a foot in the door, they were engaging their ideas as though they were innocuous and worthy of contemplation. They did not respect the danger or appreciate how cunning and diabolical these people were.

D. Paul labels the false teachers hypocritical liars whose consciences had been seared or cauterized. These people presented themselves as faithful believers, as Christian teachers, but they were in fact enemies of the faith. Their consciences were deadened and thus no longer effective in condemning the evil in which they were engaging.

E. The false teachers forbid marriage and demand abstinence from certain foods.

1. In 1 Cor. 7:32-35 Paul commended singleness as a state in which one could give more time and energy directly to serving the Lord. He recognized, however, that not everyone was gifted for singleness (1 Cor. 7:7) and insisted that marriage was not wrong (1 Cor. 7:28), contrary to the claim of some in Corinth that it was unspiritual to marry.

2. The false teachers in Ephesus claimed that marriage was strictly forbidden, which presumably included a prohibition against sexual relations within marriage as argued by some in Corinth (1 Cor. 7:1),¹¹⁸ but it is not clear what drove them to that conclusion. There are several possibilities.

¹¹⁶ Towner, 288.

¹¹⁷ Knight, 188.

¹¹⁸ Marshall states (p. 541) that their forbidding marriage "presumably implies abstinence from sexual activity (within or outside of marriage)."

a. Some second-century Gnostics expressed their belief in the insignificance of the physical by treating the body harshly through the denial of sexual relations and certain foods. (Others took the alleged insignificance to the other extreme of licentiousness.)¹¹⁹ Some commentators think the intellectual seeds of second-century Gnosticism were already present in first-century Asia Minor and produced a similar asceticism. Kelly, for example, in reference to Tit. 1:14, states, "It is fairly certain that what he has in mind are Jewish-Gnostic ascetic requirements (e.g. the banning of marriage and proscription of certain foods) such as are implied in 1 Tim. iv. 3-6."¹²⁰

b. Certain subsets of the Jewish group known as Essenes rejected marriage,¹²¹ so it is conceivable similar thinking was present among the Hellenistic Jews of Asia Minor. The food restrictions could relate to a continuation of some aspect of the Jewish food laws.

c. Perhaps the most likely or dominant source of the Ephesian asceticism was an overrealized eschatology, viewing the "now" too much in terms of the "not yet."

(1) Thornton states:

Anticipating the discussion of 2 Tim 2:18, it is evident that there was an eschatological misconception in Ephesus: some of the opponents in Ephesus were teaching that the resurrection had already happened. . . . It seems that the opponents *spiritualized* the resurrection and claimed that it had been fully realized in the present, which meant they saw themselves living *only* in the age to come, rather than in the *overlap* of the present age and the age to come.

This perceived consummation of the present age could be the key to understanding the asceticism mentioned here in 1 Tim 4:3. Perhaps the opponents sought immediate application of Jesus' teaching, recorded in Matt 22:30: "For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage." Even more likely, since the opponents seem to have come from within the Pauline community in Ephesus, is the notion that they misinterpreted Paul's teaching similar to that contained in 1 Cor 7:29-31: "The appointed time has grown short; from now on, let even those who have wives be as though they had none" (v. 29). . . . It is not difficult to envisage such Pauline teaching becoming high-octane justification for the opponents' prohibition of marriage, since they were most likely under the impression that they were citizens of the age to come. . . . Thus, the most likely interpretation at this

¹¹⁹ Collins, 114-117.

¹²⁰ Kelly, 236. Frank Thielman comments in *Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 411, "Although none of these [gnostic] systems provides an exact match to the heresy behind the Pastorals, and all of them postdate the Pastorals, the false teaching in Ephesus and on Crete may have been a primitive form of such religions."

¹²¹ Thornton (Hostility), 89-90.

stage of the investigation seems to be that, believing they had been projected into the age to come, the opponents sought to do away with marriage, since, according to Paul, marriage is fitting only for the old order.¹²²

(2) It is not coincidental that the overrealized eschatology that was present in Corinth¹²³ also was coupled with a dim view of sex and marriage. As for the food restriction, the opponents may have expanded Paul's teaching on the *spiritual* insignificance of food (e.g., Rom. 14:17; 1 Cor. 8:1-13) into a ban on certain foods for the truly spiritual.¹²⁴ Or perhaps they applied aspects of old covenant food laws or concluded that life in the final state, which they mistakenly believed they were in, should reflect the pre-Fall restriction against eating meat.¹²⁵

3. Paul has already in 2:15 and chapter 3 (qualifications for elders and deacons) refuted implicitly the ban on marriage, and in chapter 5 he encourages the younger widows to marry. So he does not here take the time to refute that prohibition. Rather, he focuses on refuting the false teachers' prohibition against eating certain foods.¹²⁶ But since the wrong views of marriage and foods probably have a common root, correcting the latter is relevant to the former.

4. Paul says that the food the false teachers banned was created by God to be received gratefully, as a gift for human nourishment (Gen. 1:29, 2:9, 16, 3:2, 9:3; Deut. 26:10-11), by those who have believed the gospel, those the false teachers were claiming had no share in the food, no right to it, and thus no reason to be grateful for it.

a. He is not saying food was created by God to be received *only* by Christians. Rather, he is emphasizing "that their status as believers does not prevent them eating; the truth of the gospel includes the truth of God as Creator and provider and not the false assertions put out by the opponents. There may also be the implication that the asceticism of the false teachers is a form of unbelief."¹²⁷

b. He supports his claim ("For") with the assertion that everything God created for food is good, a gracious gift, and none of it is to be rejected, provided one receives it with thanksgiving. He explains that the food is sanctified, made acceptable for consumption, by God's prior pronouncement that he has given it for food and by the prayer of thanksgiving that acknowledges his graciousness in providing it.

c. This raises questions about some vegetarians today who insist it is *immoral* to eat the meat God declares he has provided for food. In denying people this gift

¹²² Thornton (Hostility), 90-91.

¹²³ See, e.g., Philip H. Towner, "Gnosis and Realized Eschatology in Ephesus (of the Pastoral Epistles) and the Corinthian Enthusiasm," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 31 (1987), 98-101.

¹²⁴ Thornton (Hostility), 92.

¹²⁵ Towner (2006), 295; Marshall, 534.

¹²⁶ The neuter plural ("foods") at the end of v. 3a is the antecedent of the neuter relative pronoun ("which") at the beginning of v. 3b.

¹²⁷ Marshall, 543.

from God, they are depriving God of the gratitude he is due for providing it, and in that sense they have something in common with the false teachers in Ephesus.

d. Paul is not addressing how the temporary Mosaic food laws fit within this argument. They had their own divine purpose, which in any event, has been fulfilled in the work of Christ. He is declaring that the food restrictions the false teachers are imposing are contrary to the will of God.

XII. Timothy's Personal Responsibilities (4:6-16)

A. Teach these things and undergo training in godliness (4:6-10)

⁶By making these things known to the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being nourished in the words of the faith and of the good teaching which you have followed. ⁷But have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales; rather, train yourself in godliness. ⁸For physical training is profitable in a small way, but godliness is profitable in every way, holding the promise of life now and life hereafter. ⁹The saying is sure and worthy of all acceptance, ¹⁰for to this end we labor and struggle, because we have set our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, that is, of the believing ones.

1. In making known to the church (or the congregational leaders)¹²⁸ the error of the false teachers, Timothy will be acting as a good servant of Christ, as one who has been (and is being) nourished in the truth of the gospel and in the good teaching he followed throughout his association with Paul. In contrast to that good teaching, Timothy is to have nothing to do with the superstitious nonsense being promoted by the false teachers. Instead of spending time with that foolishness, he is to train himself in godliness; he is to do those things that help a person develop a godly character.

2. He is to train himself in godliness because, though physical training has some value in this age, godliness is valuable for both this life and the life to come. Godliness, faithful living, is the path of spiritual blessing in this life, and it culminates in resurrection life.

3. The saying that is certain and deserves full acceptance is that godliness is profitable in every way because it promises life both for the present and the future. The surpassing value of godliness is evident in how Paul and his companions exert themselves in its pursuit -- they *labor* and *struggle* to that end, both in their own lives and in the lives of others through their missionary efforts.

¹²⁸ Köstenberger (p. 145, fn. 231) notes that "the brothers" may refer specifically to the congregational leaders.

4. They do so because they have set their hope on God for salvation, and he calls them to do it. The fact they were saved by God's grace did not make them casual about godliness. It had the opposite effect. It made them pour themselves into being the people God wanted them to be and to bring as many as possible into that vision and mission. Timothy needs to do the same, and so do we.

5. Paul notes that the God in whom they set their hope is the Savior of *all* men, again pointing out the universality of the gospel. He then clarifies that this salvation, that is *available* to all, is *received* only by those who believe. He says God is the Savior of all men, *that is*, those who believe. Knight states:

μάλιστα . . . has usually been rendered "especially" and regarded as in some way distinguishing that which follows it from that which goes before it. Skeat ("Especially the Parchments") argues persuasively that μάλιστα in some cases (2 Tim. 4:3; Tit. 1:10, 11; and here) should be understood as providing a further definition or identification of that which precedes it and thus renders it by such words as "that is." He cites several examples from papyrus letters that would seem to require this sense and that would in their particular cases rule out the otherwise legitimate alternate sense. If this proposal is correct here, which seems most likely, then the phrase μάλιστα πιστῶν should be rendered "that is, believers."¹²⁹

6. Even if one accepts as correct the standard translation ("who is the Savior of all men, *especially* of those who believe"), it need not be understood to mean that people other than believers are in fact saved. Luke Timothy Johnson states:

The translation of *malista* (above all) can easily give rise to misunderstanding. The superlative of the adverb *mala* denotes that whatever is true of one thing is "particularly" true of another . . . But when the thing involved is God's saving of people, the English "above all those who are faithful" might be taken as indicating a special position for them. The point, rather, is that God's "desire that all human beings should be saved" (2:4) is "particularly" realized among the faithful, those who in fact have "come to the recognition of the truth" (2:4; see also 4:30).¹³⁰

B. Pay close attention to your life and teaching (4:11-16)

¹¹Command and teach these things. ¹²Let no one despise your youth, but be an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity. ¹³Until I come, apply yourself to the public reading, to the exhortation, and to the teaching. ¹⁴Do not neglect the gift that is in you,

¹²⁹ Knight, 203; see also, Marshall, 556-557; Hutson, 113; Gerald L. Bray, *The Pastoral Epistles*, International Theological Commentary (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2019), 228.

¹³⁰ Luke Timothy Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 251.

which was given to you through prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership. ¹⁵Practice these things; be diligent in them, so that your progress may be clear to everyone. ¹⁶Pay close attention to yourself and to the teaching; continue in them, for by doing this, you will save both yourself and your hearers.

1. Paul tells Timothy to command and teach "these things," meaning he, as Paul's agent, is to command and teach the church to reject what the false teachers were pushing and to focus on training themselves in godliness, in righteous living and being. The pursuit of true godliness with its promise of life is not just for Timothy but for all Christians.

2. He tells Timothy not to let anyone reject or disparage his commands and teaching because he was relatively young. He has Paul's authority despite his age. Though he was probably in his thirties by this time,¹³¹ adults in the ancient world were divided into young and old at roughly the age of forty. After citing some other schemes for dividing life by ages, Marshall writes: "But there was also a rough division into young and old with the boundary set at the age of 40, and the NT writers appear to follow this. There is no doubt that people aged 30 were still 'young' (Polybius 18.125 refers to Flaminius as young at this age; cf. Bernard, 70n.). . . . Irenaeus, A.H. 2.22.5, states that one was young up to age 40."¹³²

3. Instead of being looked down on because of his youth, Timothy is to be looked up to because of his life. He is to set an example for the believers, to model for them how they are to be in speech (not arguing, not being double-tongued or deceitful), in conduct, in love, in faith (which the false teachers had abandoned), and in purity.

4. Timothy is to devote himself to the public reading of Scripture, to the exhortation of the saints to faithfulness, and to the teaching of the true Christian faith. The public nature of this activity and the fact the article is used with each noun (*the* public reading, *the* exhortation, and *the* teaching) indicates that Paul is referring to recognized activities in the congregational meeting. As Fee says, "this certainly refers to what Timothy is to do in public worship."¹³³ Paul emphasizes the teaching aspect of the assembly because the church is threatened by false teaching.

5. He urges Timothy not to neglect his gift for ministry as a preacher and teacher of the Word, something he would be tempted to do under the strain of combatting the false teachers. The giving of that gift was apparently announced by one or more prophets and was accompanied by the laying on of hands by the elders and Paul (1 Tim. 1:18, 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:5). This almost certainly took place when Timothy joined Paul's missionary team (Acts 16:3).

6. Timothy is to commit himself fully to setting an example of Christian character and to faithful preaching and teaching, so that his spiritual progress will be evident to everyone. All Christians are called to spiritual growth, but that call has even

¹³¹ Marshall, 560.

¹³² Marshall, 239.

¹³³ Fee, 107.

greater significance for those in positions of leadership because of their potential influence.

7. Paul repeats that Timothy is to pay close attention to his own life and to the teaching, the truth of God's work in Christ, for through this he will bring both himself and the congregation to final salvation. There is a war going on, and Christians cannot take their side of the battle lightly.

XIII. Manner of Correcting (5:1-2)

Do not rebuke an older man harshly but exhort him as a father; exhort younger men as brothers,² older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, in all purity.

A. Timothy's authority as God's servant does not entitle him to be needlessly harsh. He must correct and he must rebuke (see 1 Tim. 5:20; Tit. 2:15), but he is not to lash out at people. The word used here (*epiplēssō*) occurs nowhere else in the NT or LXX. Its primary sense is to strike at. When used for rebuking it carries the connotation of doing so harshly or sharply.

B. The requirement that church leaders (elders) not be violent (1 Tim. 3:3; Tit. 1:7) is applied to Timothy in a verbal sense. The prohibition against needlessly harsh rebuke applies to all the groups, not only to the older men. This is suggested by the fact "exhorting" is contrasted to harsh rebuke, and "exhorting" is how he is told to handle all the groups.

C. Though no one is to be abused, lashing out at older people is especially inappropriate.

1. Age is entitled to a certain degree of respect. This is made explicit in the Mosaic law. Leviticus 19:32 says (NIV), "Stand up in the presence of the aged, show respect for the elderly and revere your God. I am the LORD." According to Lam. 5:12, one of the tragedies of the fall of Jerusalem was that the elders were shown no respect.

2. We have thoroughly abandoned this in our culture and, unfortunately, in many of our churches. Older people in congregations too often are not respected as sources of spiritual wisdom but are viewed as obstacles to putting a young face on the congregation in the attempt to appeal to our youth-crazed culture. I actually heard a preacher say years ago that the old people "need to get out of the way." Churches like this want to minimize the exposure and profile of their older members lest someone get the idea the congregation is stodgy and not "with it." That is an inversion of the biblical picture, and it is a mistake.

3. Older men and older women are to be exhorted to right action with the kind of attitude one would take with one's father and mother. They are to be exhorted with an awareness of the respect and honor (e.g., Ex. 20:12; Eph. 6:2) they are due as older

people. They do not get a pass because of their age, but they are to be corrected in keeping with the respect that is appropriate for their age.

D. Younger men and women are to be exhorted to right action with the kind of patience and instruction one would use with one's brothers and sisters. This peer-to-peer exhortation need not be so diplomatic but still must be delivered as gently and kindly as possible without sacrificing its effectiveness.

E. Regarding the younger women, Paul adds a warning that Timothy is to maintain his sexual purity. He is reminding him that he needs to act with utmost propriety to avoid temptation and any needless suspicion. Heeding this would have spared many churches the heartache and disruption of its ministers succumbing to sexual immorality.

XIV. Instructions About Widows (5:3-16)

A. Obligations of Descendants (5:3-8)

³Honor widows who are really widows. ⁴But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let these first learn to be religious toward their own family and to repay their parents and grandparents, for this is pleasing in the sight of God. ⁵Now the one who is really a widow, having been left alone, has set her hope on God and continues in petitions and prayers night and day, ⁶but the one who lives for pleasure, though living, has died. ⁷Command these things also so that they may be above reproach. ⁸But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, that is, for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

1. In addition to the problem of false teaching in Ephesus, there was also confusion about which widows should be supported financially by the church on a regular basis. Marshall states, "The writer's concern is that the church should not expend care on those who did not need or deserve it, and he attempts to solve the problem by restricting church care to 'real widows' and defining those who came into this category."¹³⁴

2. Widows in the ancient world were in a difficult position both socially and financially. Baugh states:

Widowhood could be a severe test in the Greco-Roman world, since women were not usually the direct heirs of their husband's wills. Rather, the widow had her dowry as well as any stipulation that the testator made for her care to his heirs (usually the male children of the marriage). If the son or sons did not care for their mother (or often, their stepmother), the woman could be in

¹³⁴ Marshall, 577.

a dire condition if her dowry was not substantial (hence, Paul's stern statement in 5:8).¹³⁵

3. Concern for the welfare of widows is found throughout the OT (Ex. 22:22, 23; Deut. 10:18, 14:29, 27:17-21, 26:12-13, 27:19; Job. 24:3, 21, 31:16, Ps. 65:5, 94:6, 146:9; Prov. 15:25; Isa. 1:17, 23; Jer. 7:6, 22:3; Zech. 7:10; Mal. 3:5) and is reflected elsewhere in the NT (e.g., Acts 6:1-6; Jas. 1:27). Timothy is commanded to see that the church "honors" widows who are "really widows." The word "honor" can mean to give respect and/or to provide material support as a tangible expression of that respect. The focus here is on the latter, as is clear from its limitation to those who are "really widows" and the context of material provision.

4. Those who are "really widows," those to be permanently supported by the church, does not include those who have living children or grandchildren. Rather, the children or grandchildren are to put their religion into practice by caring for their widowed mother or grandmother. Köstenberger comments, "It's all too easy to relinquish the responsibility of caring for one's family members to the church. Yet church funds ought to be reserved for the neediest lacking other means of financial support."¹³⁶ Children or grandchildren are to care for their widowed mother or grandmother not because of some cultural norm or philosophical reasoning but because it is pleasing in God's sight for them to do it. It is the will of God.

5. The one who is "really a widow," the one who is left with no family members, has set her hope fully on God. All human props have been removed from her, so she is driven to greater reliance on God and to beseech him for provision. She stands in stark contrast to those widows who live for pleasure, who are focused on indulging their desires rather than on God. They are physically alive but spiritually dead.

6. Timothy is to command the Ephesian Christians to take care of their parents and grandparents. They are to do so not only because God desires it, as specified in v. 4, but also so that they will be above reproach in the eyes of other people. Even unbelievers generally recognized this aspect of God's will through the law written on the human heart.

7. Paul reinforces this with the statement that anyone who does not provide for his immediate family has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.¹³⁷ That person is doing something that even most non-Christians would not do and thus is exhibiting his unbelief by his action.

B. Enrollment of Widows to Be Permanently Cared for by the Church (5:9-16)

¹³⁵ S. M. Baugh, "1 Timothy" in Clinton Arnold, ed., *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 3:467.

¹³⁶ Köstenberger, 166.

¹³⁷ I again render *malista* as "that is." See, e.g., Marshall, 590.

⁹ Let a widow be put on the list [who is] not less than sixty years old, has been the wife of one husband, ¹⁰ [and] is well spoken of for her good works: if she brought up children, if she showed hospitality, if she washed the feet of the saints, if she helped the afflicted, if she devoted herself to every good work. ¹¹ But refuse [to enroll] the younger widows, for when they have sensuous desires that are opposed to Christ, they resolve to marry, ¹² thereby incurring judgment because they rejected [their] former faith. ¹³ And at the same time, they learn to be idle, going about from house to house; and not only do they learn to be idle, but also to be gossips and busybodies, saying things that ought not be said. ¹⁴ Therefore, I want the younger [widows] to marry, to have children, and to manage their households, so as to give the enemy no occasion for berating [us]. ¹⁵ For already some have turned away to follow Satan. ¹⁶ If any believing woman has widows, let her help them, and do not let the church be burdened, so that it may help the ones who are really widows.

1. Paul says, "Let a widow be enrolled [or put on the list]," but he does not spell out the significance of being put on that list. "Since the theme of the previous paragraph is care for widows by their families and widows who are truly destitute, and there is reference to church provision in v. 16,"¹³⁸ the list presumably consists of "real widows" who were eligible for a formal, lifelong commitment of support from the congregation.

a. This does not mean that the church could ignore the genuine needs of widows who did not meet these criteria. It just means that the church was not to enter into a permanent arrangement with them.

b. It is possible the supported widows served the church in some way, either by expectation or requirement, but nothing is said about it. The contextual focus is clearly on their receiving help.

2. Requirements for enrollment on this list are that she be not less than sixty years old, that she have been the wife of one husband, and that she be well spoken of for her good works.

a. In the ancient Greco-Roman world, a widow over 60 was very unlikely to remarry and was unlikely to be able to provide for her own needs. Of course, people in the first century had significantly shorter life expectancies than we do today, so 60 then was not the same as our 60.

(1) Baugh states, "Research has shown that the average life expectancy for women who survived childhood in the Hellenistic period was about thirty-six years and for men between forty-two and forty-five years. The difference is explained as the result of a high mortality rate of mothers during childbirth."¹³⁹

¹³⁸ Marshall, 592.

¹³⁹ Baugh (2002), 467.

(2) That leaves room, in my mind, for using an older cutoff age when applying this text today. I think that would be consistent with the purpose and intent of that first-century criterion.

b. The phrase "wife of one husband" is best understood as the NIV expresses it -- a wife who has been faithful to her husband. In the words of the 4th-5th century theologian Theodore of Mopsuestia, "If she has lived in chastity with her husband, no matter whether she has had only one, or whether she was married a second time."

c. Her reputation for doing good deeds includes the doing of such things as bringing up children (which may include orphans or other nonfamily members), showing hospitality (which would include hospitality to traveling Christians, especially preachers), washing the feet of weary and dusty travelers who are fellow Christians, and generally rendering aid to those in trouble. The generalizing conclusion is that she devoted herself to all kinds of good deeds.

3. Paul gives two reasons why younger widows are not to be put on the list. Keep in mind that the shortness of life expectancy and the fact men commonly married much younger women means it was not unusual to have widows who were in their 20s and 30s.

a. The first reason is given in vv. 11-12, the meaning of which is much debated. I think the verses are best translated: *But refuse [to enroll] the younger widows, for when they have sensuous desires that are opposed to Christ, they resolve to marry, ¹² thereby incurring judgment because they rejected [their] former faith.*

(1) As Thornton notes, "The basic idea [in the phrase *καταστηνιάσωσιν τοῦ Χριστοῦ*] is that the younger widows experience sexual desire that is somehow in conflict with their commitment to Christ."¹⁴⁰ I suggest to you that their sexual desire conflicts with their commitment to Christ because it is directed toward a non-Christian. That Christ-opposing, non-Christian-directed sexual desire drives them to resolve (a meaning of *thelō*) to marry the non-Christian, and in so doing, they incur God's judgment because they thereby reject their former faith, their faith in Christ.

(a) Fee, for example, states:

What seems to be envisioned in the present passage is a remarriage that includes abandoning her faith in Christ; that is, her sensual desire is more important than her faith in Christ to the point that she would marry a nonbeliever in order to fulfill that desire. . . . [T]he word *pistis*, as it does elsewhere in these letters, means "faith in Christ" or "the faith," and her judgment comes in a kind of remarriage that has inherent in it an abandoning of Christ himself.¹⁴¹

¹⁴⁰ Thornton (Hostility), 188.

¹⁴¹ Fee, 121.

(b) Mounce states, "The most likely interpretation is that the widows were giving in to their sensual desires, turning against Christ, marrying non-Christians (Towner, 121; cf. 1 Cor 7:39), and abandoning their former faith, the Christian faith they had before they remarried."¹⁴²

(c) Marshall writes:

In view of these difficulties it is more likely that πίστις [in v. 12] has its more common meaning of 'faith', i.e. they apostatize from the faith. This is strong language, but the author may have felt it to be justified if the issue was wanting to marry non-believers and presumably then adopting the religious position of their husbands (cf. Hasler, 42; Fee, 121). . . . The parallel in v. 8 strongly favors this interpretation of πίστις. The writer is concerned throughout with conduct which is in effect a denial of the faith that they previously held. Here the language is stronger because an actual falling away from devotion to Christ is envisaged rather than simply conduct which is inconsistent with faith¹⁴³.

(d) Thornton states:

The solution that best accounts for the strong language of vv. 11-12 is that Paul is thinking of intermarriage: some younger widows who professed Christ were seeking to marry unbelievers. In keeping with 1 Cor 7:39, Paul here expresses his complete disapproval of mixed marriages. When a woman in the ancient world married, she "renounced her father's religion and worshiped instead at her husband's hearth."¹⁴⁴

(2) It helps to understand that in that culture a wife would be required or expected to embrace the religion of her new husband if it differed from her own. So for a Christian widow to marry a non-Christian was normally for her to apostatize, to turn from the Christian faith to that of her husband. Thus, Paul says in v. 15, "For already some have turned away to follow Satan." There apparently were data on this phenomenon in Ephesus.

(3) That the issue involves their marrying a non-Christian is confirmed by the fact Paul in v. 14 declares, "I *want* the younger widows to marry." Since he says in v. 12 that the widows *incur judgment* by resolving to marry, he means in v. 14 that he wants them to marry *Christians*, just as he made clear in 1 Cor. 7:39: "A wife is bound for as long as her husband lives, but if the husband falls asleep, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, *only in the Lord*."

(4) Obviously the younger widows who would be and apparently had been drawn to marry a non-Christian also would be violating the false

¹⁴² Mounce, 291.

¹⁴³ Marshall, 600.

¹⁴⁴ Thornton (Hostility), 189-190.

teachers' prohibition of marriage. They either had not swallowed that aspect of the false teaching or had their commitment to it overwhelmed by their sexual desire.

(5) A woman's initial marriage would be arranged by her family, but as a widow she would be free to marry whom she wished, as Paul noted in 1 Cor. 7:39. Paul does not spell out how the potential that a younger widow will be sexually enticed into marrying a non-Christian translates into a prohibition against putting her on the list for permanent church support, but the second reason he gives for not putting her on the list (v. 13) suggests the answer.

b. Paul says in v. 13 that younger widows who are put on the list learn to be idle, and they pay social visits to homes throughout the community where they gossip and insert themselves into people's lives, saying things that ought not be said, perhaps including conversations of an unduly personal or intimate nature. Those temptations are themselves a reason not to put them on the list, as they lead to unproductive, unhealthy, and even sinful behavior, but they also increase the risk of the widow's sexual attraction to a non-Christian by increasing her time for leisure and socializing.

c. In sum, younger widows should not be put on the list of permanent church support because it is unnecessary, given they are young enough to attract a Christian husband, and it tempts them to engage in certain conduct that is unwholesome in itself and which ultimately may lead to their apostasy by igniting their sexual desire for a non-Christian.

4. Given these dangers, rather than putting the younger widows on the list, Paul says in v. 14 that he wants them to marry, meaning to marry Christians, and to have children and manage their households, all of which will provide for their material needs and future security. This not only avoids the apostasy that follows marrying a non-Christian but also avoids the ridicule heaped on the church when a widow who was deemed worthy of permanent church support spurned the Lord and the church for the sake of a non-Christian man. Verse 15 indicates that this had already occurred: "For already some have turned away to follow Satan."

5. In v. 16 Paul reiterates the point that believers are to care for the widows in their own families, so that the church will be free to help the widows who have no one (the "real widows"). He probably says "any believing woman" because the woman in a household would bear the main burden of caring for the widow.

6. In applying this today, there are questions about the cutoff age, the level of support to be provided, how government assistance or having children or grandchildren who refuse to provide support affects who qualifies as a "real widow," and other things. Elders and deacons must think through the principles reflected in these verses and seek to apply them faithfully in the context of 21st-century western culture. Whatever the wrinkles and issues, it seems clear to me that any elderly widow who is known for having served Christ faithfully and who has no other means of financial support should have her necessities met

through a public commitment of the church to provide for her regular and ongoing support. Using our funds that way is as important as anything else for which we use our funds.

XV. Instructions About Elders (5:17-25)

¹⁷ Let the elders who have led well be considered worthy of double honor, that is, those who labor in preaching and teaching. ¹⁸ For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it is threshing" and "The workman is worthy of his wage." ¹⁹ Do not entertain an accusation against an elder except on the testimony of two or three witnesses. ²⁰ Rebuke in the presence of all those who are sinning, so that the rest may also stand in fear. ²¹ I solemnly charge, before God and Christ Jesus and the elect angels, that you observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing on the basis of partiality. ²² Lay hands on no man hastily, nor share in the sins of others; keep yourself pure. (²³ No longer drink only water but use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent ailments.) ²⁴ The sins of some men are conspicuous, preceding them to judgment, but for others, they come after. ²⁵ Likewise, good works are also conspicuous, and those that are otherwise cannot remain concealed.

A. Paul says (v. 17a) that the elders who have led well are worthy of "double honor." The next clause (v. 17b) begins with *malista*, which I previously explained means either "especially" or "that is." I think it is here better rendered "that is," in which case those who have led well are defined as those who labor, who exert themselves, in preaching (word) and teaching. Teaching is such a fundamental aspect of the elder's role that laboring in it is a criterion of performing that role well, all the more when the congregation is being threatened with false teaching.

1. Knight states:

The phrase beginning with *μάλιστα* gives a further delineation of these elders. The phrase may indicate a special subgroup of elders that is especially in view (*μάλιστα* taken as "especially"). But if Skeat is correct ("Especially the Parchments"), as I think he is, that *μάλιστα* can at times have the meaning, "that is," then Paul is giving here a further description of those he has already mentioned. In this case [the elders who have led well] are [those who labor in preaching and teaching].¹⁴⁵

2. Marshall states:

μάλιστα (Tit 1.10) is capable of two meanings. It could mean 'especially'. However, this interpretation does not give an intelligible, unambiguous meaning: are those who do not labor in teaching to get the double honor or

¹⁴⁵ Knight, 232.

not? The other possibility is that it means 'namely', identifying those who lead well with those who teach. This interpretation gives better sense. A threefold division into elders/older men; those who rule well; and those who teach (Meier 1973:326f.) is complex and hard to envisage in practice. With the author's stress on the importance of teaching, he is likely to have regarded the outstanding elders as those who performed this duty (Roloff, 307).¹⁴⁶

3. If the traditional translation "*especially* those who labor in preaching and teaching" is correct, it means an elder can lead well *without* laboring in preaching and teaching and thus be deserving of double honor. But those who lead well *and also* labor in preaching and teaching are even more deserving of that double honor (even though they both get the same).

B. The "double honor" of which those who have led well are worthy includes a material provision of some kind, perhaps an occasional freewill offering (an honorarium). That is clear from the Scriptures he cites in support of the command: "*For* the Scripture says, 'You shall not muzzle an ox while it is threshing' and 'The workman is worthy of his wage.'"

1. I think Fee is probably correct that "double honor" means "twofold honor," the honor and respect due those in such a position as well as remuneration.¹⁴⁷ This is in keeping with what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 9 about the right of those who preach and teach to receive support. Paul may address this here because it is another expense to be paid from the church treasury. Of course, accepting the material provision would not be mandatory, as Paul refused to exercise his right to support (1 Cor. 9:12).

2. The Scriptures Paul cites are Deut. 25:4 and then Lk. 10:7, both of which he cited in 1 Corinthians 9 in reference to entitlement to material support. Luke 10:7 is where the Lord told the disciples, "And remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide, *for the laborer deserves his wages*. Do not go from house to house." The fact he refers to Lk. 10:7 *as Scripture* in 1 Timothy suggests he was aware of at least some form of the Gospel of Luke and regarded it as Scripture. His earlier reference to the Lord's teaching in 1 Cor. 9:14 could have been to an oral report of that teaching, as he there does not refer to Scripture.

C. Speaking of elders, Paul directs Timothy in v. 19 not to entertain (NIV), not to act on, an accusation of wrongdoing against an elder unless there are at least two people who testify to his alleged misconduct. Perhaps the turmoil and division surrounding the false teaching in Ephesus gave rise to such accusations. The witness rule is a threshold for proceeding with any kind of formal discipline against an elder; it cannot be a "he said he/she said" situation. This is an application of the OT principle of corroborating witnesses expressed in Deut. 17:6, 19:15, and elsewhere.

¹⁴⁶ Marshall, 612. See also, A. T. Hanson, *The Pastoral Epistles*, NCBC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 101; Stott, 136; Mounce, 308; Hutson, 133.

¹⁴⁷ Fee, 128-129. See also, Knight, 232; Mounce, 309-310; Collins, 144; Köstenberger, 173.

1. That does not mean the elder cannot be asked about the charge. But if he denies it, his denial ends the matter unless the accusation is corroborated by witnesses.

2. If the two-witness threshold is met, an investigation of the charge and determination of its merits would follow. Those elders who *are* sinning, probably meaning those who refuse to acknowledge and renounce their sin after having been found guilty, who "persist in" (RSV, NRSV, ESV) or "continue in" (NAS, NASU) sin, are then to be rebuked in the presence of the church.

a. In other words, they are to be called out for their sin before the community of believers. This, as I see it, is a specific application to elders of Jesus' instruction in Matthew 18 that the sins of impenitent Christians eventually get told to the church for the sake of the sinners' ultimate spiritual welfare.

b. Paul does not specify that the church is to urge the recalcitrant elder to repent, as Jesus does regarding sinners in Mat. 18:17, but the redemptive purpose of the public rebuke is evident in his statement "so that the rest may *also* stand in fear." The goal of the public censure is that the recipient will stand in fear of God's judgment, which it is hoped will move him to repentance, and any others clinging to hidden sin will likewise be moved to fear and repentance.

c. Assuming the sinning elder is brought to repentance, his sin may disqualify him from further service as an elder. It may, for example, destroy his reputation or establish that he is not a "one-woman man." But Paul does not get into that.

3. How this parallels the disfellowship process set forth in Matthew 18 depends in part on how one understands the role of the "one or two others" in Mat. 18:16 (which with the accuser totals to "two or three witnesses").

a. If they are necessary for corroboration of the sin allegedly committed against the complaining party,¹⁴⁸ then they function like the witnesses in 1 Tim. 5:19. But if they are not necessary to corroborate the charge but only to testify about the effort to win the sinner's repentance,¹⁴⁹ it being *assumed* there that the charge is uncontroverted, then they function differently.

b. It is possible that elders are given a higher level of protection against accusations of wrongdoing, that accusations cannot even be *entertained* without corroboration, because their role makes them lightning rods for criticism and discontent and their reputations are so important to the witness of the church. Satan is especially eager to disgrace church leaders, and he will use false accusations to do so.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁸ E.g., J. Carl Laney, *A Guide to Church Discipline* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1985), 52-53.

¹⁴⁹ So most commentators, e.g., Donald A. Hager, *Matthew 14-26*, WBC (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995), 532.

¹⁵⁰ Liefeld, 195.

4. There are a few other places in the NT where the "2 or 3 witness rule" is mentioned (Jn. 8:17; 2 Cor. 13:1; Heb. 10:28). The most relevant, in my opinion, is 2 Cor. 13:1. Paul says in 2 Cor. 13:1-3 (NIV):

This will be my third visit to you. "Every matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses." ² I already gave you a warning when I was with you the second time. I now repeat it while absent: On my return I will not spare those who sinned earlier or any of the others, ³ since you are demanding proof that Christ is speaking through me. He is not weak in dealing with you, but is powerful among you.

5. It seems to me that for elders and non-elders alike church discipline should not be administered solely on the word of one person – without at least some evidence to corroborate the charges. If there is no corroborating evidence sufficient for church discipline, I trust the Lord will discipline the offender in some other way. How to handle the division in the church until the situation is resolved calls for much wisdom.

6. Though Paul is referring to human witnesses, people who can testify verbally, he may not be excluding documentary or physical evidence as a "witness." Allowing such evidence to function as a "witness" would be consistent with the principle that the charge must be corroborated. And this is not as strange as it may sound, as Scripture occasionally refers to inanimate things as "witnesses" and speaks of them as "testifying." Gen. 31:48 - Laban said, "This heap [of stone] is a *witness* between you and me today." 1 Jn. 5:7-8 – "For there are three that *testify*: the Spirit, the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement." Jas. 5:3 – "Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will *testify* against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days."

7. Since Timothy possessed the authority delegated to him by the Apostle Paul and we have no such apostolic representatives in churches today, there is a question about who in our congregations is to receive and adjudicate accusations against an elder. I would say that ultimately the responsibility must fall on the uninvolved elders, as they are the leadership office of the church. How they fulfill that task is a matter of some latitude.

D. Paul in v. 21 solemnly charges Timothy before the heavenly witnesses to administer these instructions without prejudice or partiality.

1. He is not to prejudge the case or to favor one side over the other. He is to seek the truth and act accordingly, however difficult that may be.

2. The framing of the charge leaves no doubt about the gravity of the task. In declaring he gives the charge before God and Christ Jesus and the elect angels he is reinforcing for Timothy his obligation to fulfill it. He may include the elect angels as witnesses of the charge rather than the Holy Spirit because he gives the charge in and through the Spirit.

E. In the event it is necessary to replace a sinning elder, Timothy is not to be hasty in the laying on of hands, meaning he is to be careful in choosing a replacement. To hastily install an unqualified person, specifically someone unqualified because of sinfulness, would make Timothy partly to blame for sins that person committed in office; he would share in their sins in that sense. Timothy is to keep himself blameless ("pure") in that regard by exercising careful judgment.

F. The reason one cannot be hasty in appointing leaders is given in vv.24-25, but Paul inserts a comment in v. 23 about Timothy's decision to drink only water, meaning he was refusing to drink any wine.

1. Paul does so presumably because he wants to clarify that in telling Timothy to keep himself *pure* he was not endorsing his abstention from wine. He meant he was to avoid culpability for the sins committed in office by those whom he had hastily appointed.

2. We do not know what led Timothy to abstain from wine. Maybe he had adopted that practice because some in the community were abusing wine and he wanted to avoid any hint of drunkenness. (Note the injunctions against drunkenness in 1 Tim. 3:3, 8; Tit. 1:7.) Paul lets him know that in his case, given his specific health issues, it was more important for him to drink a little wine for medicinal purposes.

G. As for the need to be deliberate and careful (not hasty) in appointing leaders, Paul says in v. 24 that the sins of some people are so evident that one can make an early judgment about them and realize that they should not be designated or set apart to be elders. But the sins of others only become evident after some time. Not being hasty, getting to know the men, will provide time for such sins to surface. For that matter, the same goes for good deeds. Some are apparent, but even those that are not will in time become evident.

XVI. Instructions for Slaves (6:1-2a)

As many as are slaves under a yoke, let them consider their own masters worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and the teaching not be slandered. ²Let those who have believing masters not take them lightly because they are brothers; rather, let them serve [them] all the more, for the ones receiving the benefit of the service are believers and beloved.

A. There apparently was a problem (or potential problem) in Ephesus with the relationship between some Christian slaves and their masters. It would be easy for a Christian slave to resent being under a non-Christian master, to think that a pagan should not be ordering around a child of God. It also would be easy for a Christian slave to take lightly the authority of a Christian master, one to whom he was spiritually equal (similar to the problems that arise when one becomes "too familiar" with one's boss). This would be especially true if the slave were an elder and the master were a member of his flock.

B. Paul urges the slaves generally to consider their masters worthy of honor, to respect their position, so that God and the gospel of Christ not be slandered with the lie that they promote disrespect of masters or rebellion by slaves. Because that is false, it would create an unnecessary hindrance to the spread of the gospel.

C. He says specifically to slaves with Christian masters that they should not allow the fact they and their masters are spiritual equals, brothers, to cause them to fail to give the masters the respect their social position deserves. On the contrary, they should serve Christian masters all the more because their labor is blessing a brother or sister in Christ.

Excursus on First-Century Slavery

Slavery was a basic social institution in the ancient world. S. Scott Bartchy writes, "As many as one-third of the population of the empire were enslaved, and an additional large percentage had been slaves earlier in their lives."¹⁵¹

The Bible does not endorse or assume the goodness of any slavery; it simply tolerates in a specific social context a regulated form of a certain kind of slavery. It takes ancient slavery as a fact of life and regulates people's involvement in it.

Unlike marriage and parent-child relationships, Scripture nowhere suggests that slavery was ordained or instituted by God. On the contrary, slavery was a product of sinful humanity. This is evident from the fact that in 1 Cor. 7:21 Paul urges, "Were you a slave when you were called? Don't let it trouble you-- although if you can gain your freedom, do so" (NIV). He would never give such advice to spouses or to parents and children. In this regard, it is probably more than coincidental that, from all indications, neither Jesus nor the Apostles owned slaves.

The seeds for slavery's dissolution were sown in texts like Philem. 16 ("no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother"), Eph. 6:9 ("Masters . . . do not threaten [your slaves]"), Col. 4:1 ("Masters, provide your slaves what is right and fair"), and 1 Tim. 6:1-2 (masters are "brothers"). (Note also that Jesus' teaching about mercy and forgiving debts [e.g., Mat. 6:12, 18:23-34] implies the inappropriateness of debt-slavery.) As has been said, where those seeds of equality came to full flower, the very institution of slavery would no longer be slavery.

Early Christians understood this implication, the significance of these "seeds." They not only demonstrated a radically different attitude toward slaves, dealing with them as they did freemen, but began the practice of freeing slaves one by one as they had opportunity. There are reports of early Christians releasing huge numbers of slaves, regarding which Philip Schaff comments:

¹⁵¹ S. Scott Bartchy, "Slave, Slavery" in Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids, eds., *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 1098.

These legendary traditions may indeed be doubted as to the exact facts of the case, and probably are greatly exaggerated; but they are nevertheless conclusive as the exponents of the spirit which animated the church at that time concerning the duty of Christian masters. It was felt that in a thoroughly Christianized society there can be no room for despotism on the one hand and slavery on the other.¹⁵²

Paul Chamberlain writes:

In AD 315, only two years after the Edict of Milan the Christian emperor Constantine took the small step of criminalizing the act of stealing children for the purpose of bringing them up as slaves. Over the next few centuries, Christian bishops and councils called for the redemption and freeing of slaves, and Christian monks freed many themselves. The effects were stunning. By the twelfth century slaves in Europe were rare, and by the fourteenth century they were almost unknown on that continent, including in England.¹⁵³

I do not doubt that the Christian principles of equality and brotherhood should have flowered more quickly into the eradication of slavery, but that was the result of Christian dullness to the implications of the gospel not the intent or purpose of God. And, of course, even after slavery was essentially eliminated in Europe under Christian influence, the Evil Empire struck back.

European slavery was revived by the British in the seventeenth century, followed by the Spanish and the Portuguese. The abolitionist movement of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was led by Christians, people like William Wilberforce, Charles Spurgeon, John Wesley, William Lloyd Garrison, Charles Finney, and Harriet Beecher Stowe. This movement was driven by the understood implications of certain of the above biblical texts and the outright condemnation of kidnapping and slave trading in Ex. 21:16 and 1 Tim. 1:10, activities that characterized Colonial slavery.

The fact God did not forbid Christians in the first century from owning slaves but rather tolerated a regulated form of first-century slavery does not mean that was his ideal for mankind, that he was just fine with it. His ideal is brotherhood and equality, but it is possible that the world had gotten so twisted that he was willing to tolerate less than his ideal as a concession to the hardness of men's hearts, similar to what he did, through Moses, in permitting divorce (see Mat. 19:3-9).

Or maybe he tolerated it because mandating the release of slaves in that specific social context would have caused anarchy and consequent suffering as the gospel exploded across the Roman world. In other words, perhaps the thorn of slavery was embedded so deeply in the society that it needed to be removed slowly. Perhaps society first needed to be

¹⁵² Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church Vol. II*, 5th rev. ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1891), 353.

¹⁵³ Paul Chamberlain, *Why People Don't Believe* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 141.

altered under Christianity's influence to be able to handle such a change without overwhelming adverse side effects, without great ancillary suffering. James D. G. Dunn states:

[S]lavery was an established fact of life in the ancient world. As many as one-third of the inhabitants of most large urban centers were slaves. The economies of the ancient world could not have functioned without slavery. Consequently, a responsible challenge to the practice of slavery would have required a complete reworking of the economic system and a complete rethinking of social structures, which was scarcely thinkable at the time, except in idealistic or anarchic terms.¹⁵⁴

Or maybe he tolerated it because he knew that mandating its abolition in that social setting would have triggered such an immediate and violent cultural reaction that the young church would be criminalized prematurely and thereby be crushed or at least prevented from spreading in the way that it did. In that case, you can see why God might want to plan for slavery's *gradual* death through the principles of equality and brotherhood rather than lead with that ethical mandate.

In the context of this regulated form of first-century slavery that God tolerated, if release was desired it needed to be worked out on an individual basis consistent with the principle of brotherhood. But as long as the relationship remained, the slave could not take advantage of having a brother for a master, and the master could not mistreat the slave.

That God tolerated a regulated form of first-century slavery does not mean he would tolerate that same form of slavery in a different social context, where it was not so tied up with the functioning of the society that mandating its removal would cause economic collapse, anarchy, and consequent suffering or where the entire church's survival or its launching into the world would not be jeopardized. Neither does it mean God would tolerate other forms of slavery, a slavery different from the slavery of the first century, such as the slavery that existed in early America.

That is why those believers in early America who cited the Bible in support of Colonial slavery were wrong. They were abusing the Bible by jumping from the fact God had *tolerated* an "apple," a modified form of first-century slavery, to the claim he had thereby *endorsed* an "orange," the slavery of early America.

Slavery in the first century was a very different institution from early American slavery. Bartchy states (paragraphs are not continuous in original):

Central features that distinguish 1st century slavery from that later practiced in the New World are the following: racial factors played no role; education was greatly encouraged (some slaves were better educated than their owners) and enhanced a slave's value; many slaves carried out sensitive and highly responsible social functions; slaves could own property (including other

¹⁵⁴ James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 699.

slaves!); their religious and cultural traditions were the same as those of the freeborn; no laws prohibited public assembly of slaves; and (perhaps above all) the majority of urban and domestic slaves could legitimately anticipate being emancipated by the age of 30.

It must also be stressed that, despite the neat legal separation between owners and slaves, in none of the relevant cultures did persons in slavery constitute a social or economic class. Slaves' individual honor, social status, and economic opportunities were entirely dependent on the status of their respective owners, and they developed no recognizable consciousness of being a group or of suffering a common plight. For this reason, any such call as "slaves of the world unite!" would have fallen on completely deaf ears. (From p. 69: "The great slave rebellions, all of which were led primarily by prisoners of war between 140-70 B.C.E., never sought to abrogate slavery. Rather, these rebels sought either escape or to turn the tables by enslaving the owners.")

Furthermore, by no means were those in slavery regularly to be found at the bottom of the social-economic pyramid. Rather, in that place were those free and impoverished persons who had to look for work each day without any certainty of finding it (day laborers), some of whom eventually sold themselves into slavery to gain some job security.

Large numbers of people sold themselves into slavery for various reasons, e.g., to pay debts, to climb socially (Roman citizenship was conventionally bestowed on a slave released by a Roman owner), to obtain special jobs, and above all to enter a life that was more secure and less strenuous than existence as a poor, freeborn person.

Slaves were used for "an enormous variety of functions in enormously different circumstances," some of which when compared to New World slavery seem astonishingly responsible: "doctors, teachers, writers, accountants, agents, bailiffs, overseers, secretaries, and sea-captains."

Since slaves represented a substantial investment by their owners . . . , they could at least expect to receive enough food to keep them alive and working. Manumission could mean the end of that security. Epictetus [a first-century philosopher], himself an ex-slave, took pleasure in pointing out that the slave who thinks only of gaining his freedom may be reduced, when he is manumitted, to "slavery much more severe than before."

For many, self-sale into slavery with anticipation of manumission was regarded as the most direct means to be integrated into Greek and Roman society. For many this was the quickest way to climb socially and financially. As such, in stark contrast to New World slavery, Greco-Roman slavery functioned as a process rather than a permanent condition, as a

temporary phase of life by means of which an outsider obtained "a place within a society that has no natural obligations of kinship or guest-friendship towards him."¹⁵⁵

Andrew Lincoln writes:

Many slaves in the Greco-Roman world enjoyed more favorable living conditions than many free laborers. Contrary to the supposition that everyone was trying to avoid slavery at all costs, it is clear that some people actually sold themselves into slavery in order to climb socially, to obtain particular employment open only to slaves, and to enjoy a better standard of living than they had experienced as free persons. Being a slave had the benefit of providing a certain personal and social security.¹⁵⁶

XVII. Final Indictment of False Teachers (6:2b-10)

Teach and urge these things. ³ If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and with the teaching that is in accordance with godliness, ⁴ he has become conceited, understanding nothing, but having a sick craving for controversies and word battles. From these come envy, discord, abusive statements, evil suspicions, ⁵ and constant irritations of men who have been corrupted in mind and robbed of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. ⁶ But godliness with contentment is great gain, ⁷ for we have brought nothing into the world; [it is clear] that neither are we able to carry anything out. ⁸ But if we have means of subsistence and coverings, we will be content with these. ⁹ Those who want to be rich fall into temptation, into a trap, and into many foolish and harmful cravings that plunge men into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰ For love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. Some, by striving after money, wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

A. One final time, Paul exhorts Timothy "to teach and urge these things." At the very least, he means the things he said in 5:3 - 6:2a (dealing with the widows, the elders, and the slaves). He probably means all the prior teaching in the letter.

B. Those who teach a different doctrine, one that is contrary to the true words of the Lord Jesus, which produce godliness in a person's life, are conceited in that they consider themselves sources of wisdom and insight when in fact they know nothing. They also have a sick craving for controversies and word battles. They always are engaging in verbal battles, pushing their claims on the faithful with clever words that confuse the unprepared, but they are in error.

¹⁵⁵ S. Scott Bartchy, "Slavery (Greco-Roman)" in David Noel Freedman, ed., *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 6:66-70.

¹⁵⁶ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, WBC (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), 418.

C. The controversies and word battles in which they aggressively engage disrupt the peace and unity of the community by generating envy, discord, abusive statements, and evil suspicions. It is obvious how attempting to take over a church with heretical teaching would produce discord, abusive statements, and evil suspicions within the community, but how it would produce envy is less clear. Perhaps winning converts to the heresy makes them envious of the authority and influence of the orthodox, which attitude is fanned by the false teachers to make the converts more zealous.

D. The controversies and word battles, the campaign to spread the false teaching, produces converts, people who have been corrupted in mind and robbed of the truth, who experience and are a source of constant friction in the church. They are part of an invading theological force that constantly clashes with the orthodox. Evidence of this group's corruption, exemplified in the proponents of the heresy, is that they view godliness not as an expression of faith and gratitude toward God but with an ulterior motive of turning a buck! The same charge is leveled in Tit. 1:11. In the end, it is about them. This leads to the comments in vv. 6-10.

E. The correct attitude toward wealth is given in vv. 6-8. Godliness that is accompanied by contentment with material necessities, with food and clothing, yields great gain in that it insulates one from the spiritual dangers inherent in longing for wealth.

F. The dangers of longing for wealth are elaborated on in vv. 9-10. Those who are focused on getting rich, who have an unhealthy attraction to money, will be pulled by that attraction to serve money rather than Christ. The Enemy will exploit love of money to lure one away from the faith and ultimately to destruction. It is foolish to base one's contentment on material possessions, to grant them that power over one's life, because, in the end, no one has any material possessions. As Paul says in v. 7, we came into this world with nothing, and we are going out with nothing. You know the line – I've never seen a hearse pulling a U-Haul.

XVIII. Exhortation to Right Living (6:11-16)

¹¹ But you, man of God, flee from these things; pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness. ¹² Fight the good fight of the faith; take hold of the eternal life for which you were called and made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. ¹³ I charge you in the sight of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate, ¹⁴ to keep the commandment without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁵ which he will bring about at the right time - he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, ¹⁶ who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see; to him be honor and eternal dominion, amen.

A. As a man of God, Timothy is to flee from the things that characterize the false teachers: the conceit, the craving of controversies, the divisive attitudes and actions, the love of money, and the evils that flow from the love of money. Instead, he is to run after or pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness. He is to strive continually to become more and more the person Christ calls him to be. Köstenberger states:

To summarize, Timothy, and with him every man and woman of God, is to be fueled by a strong desire to put as great a distance as possible between himself and evil, avoiding ungodly associations of any kind, and doing everything in his power to exemplify righteousness, faith, love, and other Christian virtues. Followers of Christ are to love and do what is right (or, as Jesus put it, "hunger and thirst for righteousness"; Matt 5:6). They are to cultivate godly character, trust God in all things, love friends and foes alike, and display endurance and gentleness, particularly in dealing with opponents inside and outside the church.¹⁵⁷

B. He is to fight the good fight of the faith in his personal life and his ministry. It is a fight, a struggle, not a walk in the park. We are in a spiritual war, as Paul explains in Eph. 6:12: *For our struggle is not against blood and flesh but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world-controlling powers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.* Timothy is to take hold of the eternal life to which he was called when he became a Christian, meaning he is to live out the implications of his salvation, to live in accordance with the gift.

C. The "good confession" Timothy made in the presence of many witnesses is almost certainly the confession that "Jesus is Lord" that one makes at baptism (see, Rom. 10:9-10). As Beasley-Murray notes in reference to Rom. 10:9-10, "It is universally acknowledged that 'Jesus is Lord' is the primitive confession of faith in Christ that was made at baptism."¹⁵⁸ Verse 13 says that Jesus testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate. That refers to his affirmative answer to the question "Are you the king of the Jews?" (Mat. 27:11; Mk. 15:2; Lk. 23:3; Jn. 18:33-37), which was rightly understood as a claim to be the Messiah.

D. Paul solemnly charges Timothy in the sight of God and Christ Jesus (no elect angels this time) to "keep the commandment" without stain or reproach until Christ's return. Commentators offer a wide range of possibilities for the meaning of "the commandment." I think Paul probably is referring to what he just told him – that he is to fight the good fight of the faith with all that entails. Timothy is to faithfully live out this command, to do so in an exemplary manner that provides no basis for reproach.

E. Note what Paul says here about God:

¹⁵⁷ Köstenberger, 192-193.

¹⁵⁸ G. R. Beasley-Murray, "Baptism" in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, eds. Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 61.

1. He gives life to all things. Nothing has ever lived, now lives, or will live apart from God's giving and sustaining that life. He is the author of life, and he has given life to such a mind-numbing diversity of creatures – from moss to monkeys, ants to aardvarks, honeysuckles to humans – as an expression of his power and glory.

2. He will bring about Christ's appearing, his return, at the right time, his own time. As Jesus told the inquiring disciples in Acts 1:7, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority" (see also, Mat. 24:36; Mk. 13:32).

3. He is the blessed and only Ruler (or Sovereign), the King of kings and Lord of lords. He is the ultimate King and supreme Lord. The divine unity of the Father and the Son is reflected in the fact Jesus is called the "King of kings" and "Lord of lords" in Rev. 17:14 and 19:16.

4. He alone is immortal in an innate or inherent sense. The immortality, the everlasting life, of any human is derived from and conferred by him.

5. He lives in unapproachable light. The glory of God, which is often represented as light (see Ps. 104:2), is so intense that people cannot enter its presence. And yet, as Christians, we have a mediator, a great high priest, by whose work we will live eternally in God's glorious presence in the new heaven and new earth (Rev. 21:1-5).

6. No one has seen or can see him. The idea is that God is so holy, infinitely holy, that sinful, unglorified humanity can never see him in his full glory and live.

7. To him be honor and eternal dominion, amen. Yarbrough remarks, "Honor is what Timothy and all creation owe God. Might is what he possesses that makes any other response to him except honor inexplicable folly."¹⁵⁹

XIX. What to Teach the Wealthy Believers (6:17-19)

¹⁷ Command those who are rich in the present age not to be haughty or to have their hope set on the uncertainty of riches, but on God who richly provides us all things for enjoyment. ¹⁸ Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, to be generous and sharing, ¹⁹ thus laying up for themselves a good foundation for the future, that they may take hold of the real life.

A. Timothy is told to command those who are rich not to be haughty, not to create division by scorning those with less wealth. He is also to command them not to set their hope on riches, which are uncertain, but on God who richly provides us all things for enjoyment.

¹⁵⁹ Yarbrough, 333.

1. Earthly wealth belongs entirely to this world and therefore is no basis for security in the world to come. You cannot serve two masters. Either you trust in wealth or you trust in God. The sinfulness and foolishness of choosing wealth over God is shown graphically in the parable of the rich fool in Lk. 12:16-21.

2. This does not mean that having or enjoying material things is wrong. On the contrary, God provides us all things for our enjoyment. You can have things and enjoy them as gracious gifts of God without trusting in them. Remember Paul said in Phil. 4:12 that he had learned the secret of having plenty and having need. But you always must be on guard against greed and self-indulgence.

B. That is why Timothy is to command the wealthy people to do good, to be rich in good deeds, to be generous and sharing. Those who have been blessed by God with wealth are to use it for the benefit of others. They are to be good stewards of what they have received from God.

C. To live faithfully to God, which in this context means sharing one's wealth, is to lay a good foundation for the future, to take hold of real life, the life that will culminate in heavenly glory.

XX. Final Charge (6:20-21)

²⁰ Timothy, guard the deposit, avoiding godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge; ²¹ by professing it, some missed the mark with regard to the faith. Grace be with you.

A. In these final words, Paul calls Timothy to guard the deposit that had been entrusted to his care. This is the gospel, the apostolic teaching that must be guarded from assault by its enemies.

B. As part of guarding the gospel, Timothy is to avoid the heretical teaching that is threatening it in Ephesus, what Paul labels "godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge."

C. By embracing the heresy masquerading as knowledge, some had wandered from the faith. Paul ends with an expression of his desire that the grace of God be with him in all that lies ahead.