

Letters for Leaders

A Global Association of Theological Studies Publication

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Lesson 1

Philemon

This is the beginning of a series called “Letters for Leaders.” Not just “Letters *to* Leaders,” that is, to the people who actually received these documents 2000 years ago; but “Letters *for* Leaders,” that is, letters with timeless principles inspired by the Holy Ghost that still speak to leaders in every generation.

Your initial impulse might be to say, “Well, I’m not a leader.” However, you would be wrong in the Biblical sense of leadership, because everyone influences someone else, and *leadership is influence*. You may be a bad influence or a good influence, but you are an influence!

“For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me” (I Corinthians 4:15-16).

“Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample” (Philippians 3:17).

“Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ” (I Corinthians 11:1).

Apostle Paul wrote the four letters we will study, probably while he was in prison toward the end of his ministry. They are unique among all his writings because they are *personal*, addressed to individuals in leadership roles rather than to churches as a whole. In addition, Paul had a “mentoring role” in the lives and ministries of each of these young leaders, so he felt at liberty to speak freely. Here, more than anywhere else, we see Paul being transparent about ministry.

The Letter to Philemon is the shortest of all Paul's writings. Philemon was a slave owner who also hosted a "church" (Greek: *ekklesia*) in his home. During the time of Paul's ministry in Ephesus, Philemon had likely journeyed to the city, heard Paul's preaching, and became a Christian. He had a slave named Onesimus, who robbed his master and ran away, making his way to Rome.

We don't know exactly how Onesimus came in contact with Paul—perhaps he knew of Paul and sought him out, or perhaps he committed some other crime and ended up in prison with Paul. What we do know is that through Paul's witness, Onesimus had become a Christian. He was still the property of Philemon, however, and so Paul wrote this short letter to smooth the way for his return to his master. While both Roman law and Jewish law gave Philemon the right to punish Onesimus severely, Paul asked Philemon to accept Onesimus as a brother in Christ and not merely as a slave. He taught Philemon the leader how to treat those who work for him, despite their failures.

"Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy our brother, unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellowlabourer, And to our beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellowsoldier, and to the church in thy house: Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (Philemon 1-3).

The apostle Paul made discipling the next generation his central focus. One-third of the New Testament either was written to Timothy or was from Paul and Timothy (see the first verse of II Corinthians, Philippians, Colossians, I Thessalonians, II Thessalonians, and Philemon).

Philemon was a leader ("fellowlabourer") in the church in Colossae (the church met in his house), along with others mentioned in this letter:

- Apphia, his wife (1:2)
- Archippus, another leader in the church at Colossae, maybe a son (1:2)
- Epaphras, another leader sent by the church to minister to Paul (1:23)
- Onesimus, Philemon's slave, and now a member of the church (1:10)

"And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it" (Colossians 4:17).

“Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God “ (Colossians 4:12).

“With Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They shall make known unto you all things which are done here” (Colossians 4:9).

Notice that right from the beginning, Paul approached Philemon based on relationship (“dearly beloved, and fellowlabourer”) and not based on rulership. John Maxwell has identified five levels of leadership, and why people follow at each level. The lowest level of leadership is position. Nevertheless, Paul’s ministry encompasses every level of leadership to Philemon, because he had mentored him.

- POSITION (“rights”) – people follow you because they have to.
- PERMISSION (“relationships”) – people follow you because they want to.
- PRODUCTION (“results”) – people follow you because of what you have done for the organization.
- PEOPLE DEVELOPMENT (“reproduction”) – people follow you because of what you have done for them.
- PINNACLE (“respect”) – people follow you because of who you are and what you represent.

“I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers, Hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints; that the communication of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus. For we have great joy and consolation in thy love, because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother” (Philemon 4-7).

Notice what Paul said to Philemon *before* he made his request, *before* he initiated a difficult and somewhat awkward conversation:

- “I pray for you consistently and thank God for you” (v. 4)
- “I know you are a real Christian, and I hear this from others” v. 5)
- “I pray that your efforts are effective in reaching the lost” (v. 6)
- “I know that your ministry is a real blessing to the church” (v. 7)

I tell leaders all the time, “The conversation you most dread having is usually the conversation you most need to have!” However, when you have that difficult conversation, make sure your spirit is right first!

“Wherefore, though I might be much bold in Christ to enjoin thee that which is convenient, yet for love’s sake I rather beseech thee, being such an one as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ” (Philemon 8-9).

Paul could command Philemon to do what he wanted (“enjoin thee”), but instead he appealed to Philemon (“beseech thee”). He modeled for Philemon (and us!) the superiority of appeals over commands, when it comes to relationships in the church that love governs.

The more relationship you have, the fewer rules you need. Acting out of freedom from a heart of love is the goal in every relationship. This applies to our relationships with others, and to our relationship with God. To command would be “convenient” (v. 8 – actually, the word means “befitting”), but because of his confidence in their relationship, Paul simply asked Philemon.

However, Paul didn’t make his request in a vacuum. He gently reminded Philemon why he should listen—Paul is an elder (“aged” – v. 9) and he had given his very life for the gospel (“prisoner” – v. 9). He was not attempting to manipulate Philemon, but he wanted to motivate him.

The principle of honoring our elders is everywhere in the Bible. Who do you respect so much that you will always obey them just because of who they are in God and what they have done for God? If you can’t answer that question, you are lacking an elder in your life!

“I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds: which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me: whom I have sent again: thou therefore receive him, that is, mine own bowels” (Philemon 10-12).

Paul made his request only after he had approached Philemon based on their relationship. He asked Philemon to do something difficult—to forgive Onesimus, who had wronged and deserted him. Paul called this runaway slave his “son” (v. 10), said that he was one of his converts (“begotten in my bonds” – v. 10), and said that sending Onesimus was like sending his own heart (“mine

own bowels" - 1:12). "Remember, Philemon, you're dealing with another one of my sons! If you consider me your father, then Onesimus is one of your brothers!"

Leaders always put themselves on the line for people they believe in—even when others can't see their potential. Paul used a clever play on words here. The name "Onesimus" means "profitable." Paul admitted that he has been "unprofitable" (v. 11) to Philemon in the past, but now because of his conversion and maturity he was living up to his name. In addition, Paul wanted Philemon to benefit from his own experience.

"And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark. But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work. And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus; and Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God" (Acts 15:37-40).

"Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry" (II Timothy 4:1).

Paul learned that people could change, and that when they do, we have to be mature enough to see them in a different light. Don't ever imprison anyone in his or her past mistakes; God didn't do that to you.

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation" (II Corinthians 5:17-18).

Paul "sent" Onesimus back to Philemon (1:12) because it was right in the eyes of the law, and because he wanted Philemon's decision to be voluntary rather than compulsory. Mostly, however, Paul wanted to see reconciliation between Philemon and Onesimus as brothers in Christ.

"Whom I would have retained with me, that in thy stead he might have ministered unto me in the bonds of the gospel: but without thy mind would I do nothing; that thy benefit should not be as it were of necessity, but willingly. For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever; not now as a

servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh, and in the Lord?" (Philemon 13-16).

Paul didn't make the mistake of quickly taking Onesimus' side, but rather watched and proved him over time, seeing both his conversion and his willingness to serve. In fact, now Onesimus was so valuable to the aging apostle that he would love to keep him ("retained" - v. 13). However, because Onesimus belonged under the authority of Philemon (even though he rebelled against it), Paul sent him back. Today, that would not only honor what we call "ministerial ethics," but it would keep relationship problems from becoming all-out "wars" within God's family. Onesimus had no right to remove himself from God-given authority—and even Paul the apostle had no right to overstep that authority.

Paul reminded Philemon that he had been ethical in this matter. He had not usurped Philemon's authority over Onesimus, and refused to make any decision regarding him without Philemon's permission ("without thy mind would I do nothing" - v. 14). Furthermore, he wanted Philemon to make his decision not out of pressure from Paul ("of necessity" - v. 14), but of his own accord ("willingly" - v. 14).

Even so, Paul reminded Philemon that God had a greater purpose - even through Onesimus' failure. Before he ran away, he was just a "servant" (v. 16), but now he was a "brother" (v. 16). Before he ran away their relationship was only temporal ("for a season" - v. 15), but now it is eternal ("for ever" - v. 15). God had totally changed Onesimus - but He also wanted to change Philemon's attitude toward Onesimus! Paul reminded Philemon that, if he would see Onesimus in a different light, he would become "much more" valuable (1:16), not only as a servant ("in the flesh" - v. 16), but as a fellow servant of God ("in the Lord" - v. 16).

Now that Paul had made his case, he made his request:

"If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself. If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account; I Paul have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it: albeit I do not say to thee how thou owest unto me even thine own self besides. Yea, brother, let me have joy of thee in the Lord: refresh my bowels in the Lord" (Philemon 17-20).

Notice how direct Paul was with Philemon.

- “If you see me as your partner in ministry” (v. 17)
- “Receive him as you would receive me” (v. 17)
- “I’ll pay back whatever he owes you” (v. 18)
- “I’ve committed myself in writing” (v. 18)
- “You owe me much more than this!” (v. 19)
- “I’m asking you to help me, not just Onesimus” (v. 20)

“I know Onesimus deserves judgment, but I’m asking for mercy. I’m not asking as his lawyer, I’m asking as his father—and yours!”

“Philemon, how do you see me, treat me, relate to me, and receive me? I’m asking you to treat your former slave and your new brother that way.”

Notice that Paul never called for an overthrow of the system of slavery, yet the principles in his letter to Philemon destroy slavery. The greatest social changes come when people change, one heart at a time. Christianity didn’t fight slavery, but it eventually overcame slavery.

“Having confidence in thy obedience I wrote unto thee, knowing that thou wilt also do more than I say” (Philemon 21).

Paul told Philemon that he was confident not only in his obedience, but in his joyful obedience, which always results in us doing more than God—or our leaders—ask of us! (“more than I say” - v. 21). Doing more than the minimum is the hallmark of a mature Christian, and certainly a necessary quality in any leader.

“But withal prepare me also a lodging: for I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you. There salute thee Epaphras, my fellowprisoner in Christ Jesus; Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas, my fellowlabourers. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen” (Philemon 22-25).

Paul had confidence in the prayers of God’s people, and hoped that he would be released from prison and be able to visit Philemon in person (“prepare me also a lodging” - v. 22). However, his faith in God was not dependent on always getting his prayers answered.

“Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Philippians 4:11-13).

He closed his letter by mentioning Epaphras, Marcus, Aristarchus, and others. He also mentioned these names in the conclusion of his letter to the Colossian church (Colossians 4). It’s probable that Tychicus and Onesimus delivered both letters at the same time (Colossians 4:7-9).

Paul also mentioned Demas (v. 24), who was a “fellowlabourer” at that point. However, Demas would later backslide and fall into worldliness. That is a warning to all of us as leaders. Guard your ministry by guarding your heart.

“For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia” (II Timothy 4:10).

Lesson 2

Titus

We are studying “Letters for Leaders.” Not just “Letters *to* Leaders,” to the people who actually received these documents 2000 years ago; but “Letters *for* Leaders,” letters with timeless principles inspired by the Holy Ghost that still speak to leaders in every generation.

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“For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me” (I Corinthians 4:15-16).

To be a good leader, you must first be a good follower.

Apostle Paul wrote the four letters we are studying, probably while he was in prison toward the end of his ministry. They are unique among all his writings because they are *personal*, addressed to individuals in leadership roles rather than to churches as a whole. Also, Paul had a “mentoring role” in the lives and ministries of each of these young leaders, so he felt at liberty to speak freely. Here, more than anywhere else, we see Paul being transparent about ministry.

Two of Paul’s young protégés in ministry were Timothy and Titus. Each of them was a pastor, but they were from different backgrounds, and they ministered in vastly different circumstances. While Timothy lived in

metropolitan Ephesus, Titus lived on the island of Crete. However, the principles of good leadership taught and modeled by Paul are universal.

“Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God’s elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness; in hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began; but hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour; to Titus, mine own son after the common faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour” (Titus 1:1-4).

Paul (Romans 1:1) and Peter (II Peter 1:1) put *servant* before *apostle* in their writing, just as we must put our relationship with God before our responsibilities in the church. You can’t lead God’s people if the Spirit of God is not leading you.

Notice Paul’s phrase “the truth which is after godliness” (1:1). This is an important concept in the Book of Titus, and everywhere else in the New Testament. If we live “according to” God’s truth, we will live godly lives. Paul emphasized this constantly to both Timothy and Titus. Six times in three chapters, he used the phrase “good works” (1:16, 2:7, 2:14, 3:1, 3:8, 3:14)—because our outward life is important, especially if we are leaders! We lead by example even more than we realize.

God has “manifested his word through preaching” (1:3). Paul believed in the power and preeminence of preaching, though the world mocks it.

“For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe” (I Corinthians 1:21).

This letter is addressed “To Titus, mine own son after the common faith” (1:4). This verse shows the deep affection Paul had for this young pastor, and used the term “common” (1:4) to describe the “truth” (1:1) the church shared. Jude wrote about the same definite body of truth deposited by God in His church, calling it “the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 1:3).

To depart in any way from this “common faith” is false teaching and cannot be tolerated in the church.

“For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee” (Titus 1:5).

Paul had left Titus on the island of Crete in order to “set in order” the local assemblies and ordain elders (*presbyteros*) in every city. This had been Paul’s policy throughout his travels, but he had not been able to stay in Crete long enough to accomplish this task. The Greek word *epidiorthoo* (“set in order”) is a medical term applied to the setting of a crooked or broken limb.

Titus was to put apostolic leaders in place so the church did not depart from apostolic doctrine or lifestyle. If we begin to stray from apostolic doctrine and lifestyle, we eventually lose apostolic principle and practice—and ultimately, apostolic power.

“If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; but a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers” (Titus 1:6-9).

The qualifications for an elder (*presbyteros*) listed in Titus 1:6-8 are very similar to those given for a bishop (*episkope*) in I Timothy 3:1-7, and to those given for a deacon (*diakonos*) in I Timothy 3:8-13. These are “spiritual” positions of leadership in the first century, not merely “religious” positions as we see in many denominations today.

The fact that these standards for leadership applied to Christians on the island of Crete as well as those in the city of Ephesus shows that God’s standards for leaders do not vary according to circumstance or location.

BLAMELESS (1:6):

This Greek term means “nothing to take hold upon”; that is, there must be nothing in his life that Satan or the unsaved can take hold of to criticize or attack the church. No man living is sinless, but we must strive to be blameless, or “above reproach.”

THE HUSBAND OF ONE WIFE (1:6):

This is not referring to polygamy, because the New Testament church did not practice that. Rather, it is a higher standard for leaders. A pastor who has been divorced opens himself and the church to criticism. His ability to manage his marriage and home life is an important indicator of his ability to lead the church. This term also indicates a “one woman man,” in the sense that a leader must not have a history or tendency of “flirting” with other women.

HAVING FAITHFUL CHILDREN (1:6):

The children in a leader’s home must not only be saved, but must be good examples to the church. For children still at home to be accused of “riot” (“wild living”) or being “unruly” (“unable to be ruled”) disqualifies their father’s leadership. Too often, new Christians feel a call to ministry and want to be involved before they establish their families in the faith. We would have fewer ministry casualties and backsliders if we paid attention to this principle.

Paul told Titus, “The most important qualification for any church leader is what goes on in his home life!”

THE STEWARD OF GOD (1:7):

A steward is a manager of his master’s possessions, and the most important characteristic of a steward is faithfulness in executing his duties (I Corinthians 4:2). Everything a leader has is on loan from God—time, talent, and treasure—and he must be faithful to use them to honor God and build His church. This applies to all Christians, but especially to leaders.

NOT SELF-WILLED (1:7):

A leader must not be “self pleasing,” always pushing to have his own way. While church members should respect and follow their leaders, leadership is leadership and not dictatorship. A self-willed leader is arrogant, will not take suggestions or criticism, won’t admit mistakes, and makes sure he always gets his own way.

NOT SOON ANGRY (1:7):

A leader must not have a quick temper. There is a righteous anger against sin (Ephesians 4:26), but much of our anger is unrighteous and directed

against people. Leaders especially must be on guard for unresolved anger issues in their own lives.

NOT GIVEN TO WINE (1:7):

This Greek term *paroinos* is from *para* (“near”) and “*oinos*” (“wine”). Two kinds of wine are referred to in the Bible—the non-fermented wine recommended to Timothy for stomach problems (I Timothy 5:23), and fermented wine that is a “mocker” (Proverbs 20:1, 23:31-32). There is a vast difference between non-alcoholic wine in Bible times and today’s alcohol. Leaders need to avoid even the appearance of evil (I Thessalonians 5:22), so their lives don’t become an excuse to those they lead. Don’t even be “near wine”!

NO STRIKER (1:7):

Leaders must not be “contentious,” or “looking for a fight.” Hitting back (not just physically, but verbally) when others attack you is a mark of immaturity, and disqualifies someone for leadership.

NOT GIVEN TO FILTHY LUCRE (1:7):

It is possible to use the ministry to make money, if a man has no integrity. (Not that pastors are overpaid in most churches.) Covetous or lazy leaders always have “financial schemes” going on, and these activities erode their character and hinder their ministry inside and outside the church.

A LOVER OF HOSPITALITY (1:8):

This Greek term literally means, “loving the stranger,” and was especially important in the first century when traveling believers and preachers needed places to stay. Leaders must be “fond of fellowship” regardless of their personality.

A LOVER OF GOOD MEN (1:8):

This Greek term literally means “fond of good” or “a promoter of virtue.” Therefore, this is not just about good people, but good activities as well. Leaders must always be careful of their associations, because they affect us personally, and they especially influence those we lead. First Corinthians 15:33 says, “Be not deceived: evil communications (‘companions’) corrupt good manners (‘habits’).”

SOBER (1:8):

The Greek word *sophron* can be translated “discreet, or sober minded.” Leaders must have a serious attitude about leadership and ministry. This doesn’t mean they have no sense of humor, or that they are always solemn. Rather, they are careful not to cheapen the ministry or the gospel message by casual or foolish behavior.

JUST (1:8):

The Greek word *dikaios* can be translated “righteous, or upright.” Leaders must be people of integrity, who keep their word, conduct themselves in a godly way, and who practice what they preach. A “just” person is one whose inward life and outward life match.

HOLY (1:8):

The root meaning of *holy* in the Bible is “separate, set apart, or different.” Here, “unstained” would be a good translation. Holiness is not just inward, but outward—especially for leadership!

TEMPERATE (1:8):

This Greek word means “self-controlled, disciplined, or masterful” and it applies both to inward appetites and outward actions. Both the mind and the body must be under the control of the Holy Spirit at all times in all Christians, but especially in leaders!

HOLDING FAST THE FAITHFUL WORD (1:9):

Because God’s Word is faithful, a leader must be faithful to teach and preach the Word “as he has been taught.” Leaders who stray from the message preached by our elders are not trustworthy! Failure to teach truth usually starts with failure to live morally, because faulty desires lead to faulty teaching. Paul uses the term “sound” (“healthy”) doctrine, because apart from truth there can be no spiritual health. Sound doctrine builds up the church *and* refutes false teachings (“gainsayers” are those who are always disputing, contradicting, refusing, or speaking against sound doctrine). Paul was not just talking about an “ability to teach,” but a “passion for truth”!

Paul’s concern was the character and conduct of the leadership team in Crete, not a specific structure. He was telling Titus to identify good disciples who would make good disciples. That’s Christian leadership!

The question we must ask ourselves, and the question we must always consider when looking for leaders, is this question: “What behavior do you excuse in your own life?” We are all prone to justifying our own behavior, but the danger over time is that we will eventually seek to change the truth to suit our own desires, and pretend that what is wrong is really “right.” When leaders get it wrong, everyone gets it wrong!

“For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre’s sake” (Titus 1:10-11).

The “unruly” (“rebellious”) people Titus had to deal with were “vain talkers” (their talk didn’t match their walk) and “deceivers”—and many of them taught the same mixture of Judaism and Christianity (“of the circumcision”) that we encounter elsewhere in the New Testament. Paul told Titus to “stop their mouths” because they were “subverting” (literally, “overturning” or “overthrowing”) the faith of others.

These false teachers were taking support (“filthy lucre”) from God’s people in order to promote their own agenda. That still happens today. If these leaders have such a “revelation,” why can’t they build something on their own? Why must they take people (and their money) away from truth?

A loving leader puts your eternal destiny before your present comfort, and they will challenge and even rebuke you if they see you straying into dangerous territory. A loving leader knows that what is nicest for you to hear is not always what is best for you to hear! This is a challenge for leaders and followers in our culture, because—like Crete—we live in a culture that resists and questions all forms of authority.

Paul’s solution for the church in Crete was to appoint leaders. Notice the word *for* at the beginning of verse 10. Paul told Titus to appoint leaders for (“because”) there were many rebellious people. The Biblical solution for rebellion is more authority.

“One of themselves, even a prophet of their own, said, The Cretians are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies. This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the

faith; Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth" (Titus 1:12-14).

The quote in Titus 1:12 is from a Cretan philosopher named Epimenides. The Cretans held him in high honor, so they could not readily ignore or deny his verdict. Yet, this description of first century Crete could just as easily be a description of our twenty-first century culture. In the Greek language of Paul's day, "Cretan" became a byword for dishonesty—to "Crete" was to "lie." The phrase "evil beasts" literally means "dangerous animals." The island of Crete was famous for having no dangerous animals, but Epimenides said that the human inhabitants of the island were actually more of a threat.

The false teachers ("they of the circumcision" - 1:10) thought they were superior to others because they kept the Old Testament law, but Paul compared them to the lawless Cretans (1:12). They reduced godliness to checking off a list of rules, but their character was totally unchanged—in fact, they are exactly like the carnal Cretans all around them! True godliness doesn't ask, "How much must I do?" but rather, "How much can I give?" There is no shortcut to godliness—it must grow out of a heart that has been changed by the Holy Ghost.

Paul said, "This witness of Epimenides is true!" He had left Titus in an ungodly society, with ungodly false teachers all around, and yet he expected him to build a godly church! If Titus could build an apostolic church on Crete, we can build an apostolic church anywhere.

"Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled. They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate" (Titus 1:15-16).

"Unto the pure all things are pure" (1:15) is one of those verses that carnal people use to defend their ungodly actions. However, they're taking it out of context. Paul was talking specifically about the way these false teachers were using the Old Testament law to put people in bondage ("Jewish fables" - 1:14). They said things like, "If you eat these kinds of foods you will be defiled, but if you refuse them you will be more holy than other people." Paul dealt with the same issue in writing to Timothy (I Timothy 4:3-5). He argued in both places that it is not the foods that were defiling the teachers; it is the teachers who were defiling the foods.

These false teachers professed to know God (1:16), but their works denied that they knew Him. Good works in the outward life are an indicator of godly character in the inward life. However, these false teachers were marked by three fatal characteristics:

- **ABOMINABLE:**
These false teachers behave in ways that are “detestable or disgusting” to God. An “abomination” to God is as serious in the New Testament as it was in the Old Testament!
- **DISOBEDIENT:**
They “cannot and will not be persuaded,” because their minds have been made up and they will not even consider the truth of God’s Word any more.
- **REPROBATE:**
This is a frightening word that literally means “not able to pass the test” or “disqualified” in the sense of an athletic contest. Because they refuse to do “good works,” they are disqualified, not just from leadership, but also from God’s kingdom. The same Greek word is translated “castaway” in I Corinthians 9:27.

“But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway” (I Corinthians (9:27).

Living a life that is godly (“like God”) is serious business with God!

This is not just about leadership—it is about discipleship.

Personal Study Notes

Lesson 3

Titus (Part II)

Apostle Paul wrote the four letters we are studying, probably while he was in prison toward the end of his ministry. They are unique among all his writings because they are personal, addressed to individuals in leadership roles rather than to churches as a whole. Also, Paul had a “mentoring role” in the lives and ministries of each of these young leaders, so he felt at liberty to speak freely. Here, more than anywhere else, we see Paul being transparent about ministry.

Two of Paul’s young protégés in ministry were Timothy and Titus. Each of them was a pastor, but they were from different backgrounds, and they ministered in vastly different circumstances. While Timothy lived in metropolitan Ephesus, Titus lived on the island of Crete. However, the principles of good leadership taught and modeled by Paul are universal.

Paul had left Titus on the island of Crete to “set in order” the local assemblies and ordain elders in every city. This had been Paul’s policy throughout his travels, but he had not been able to stay in Crete long enough to accomplish this task. Therefore, in the first chapter, he gave a list of character qualifications for Titus to look for as he appointed leaders, and then he urged Titus to deal strongly with false teachers who may have an appealing message, but have no character to back it up. Leadership is about competency, but Christian leadership is first about character.

“But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine” (Titus 2:1).

Paul now began to talk about Christian behavior, because belief that doesn’t affect our behavior is worthless. He instructed Titus to teach lifestyle

practices to the saints that are “becoming” to sound doctrine. If our doctrine is healthy (“sound”), our lives will be holy.

Paul had a mentoring relationship with Titus, and he wanted to ensure that this kind of discipling relationship was replicated throughout the church—because good disciples make good disciples. He gave different instructions for different categories of people—older men, older women, younger women, younger men, and slaves (think “employees”)—because we face different challenges at different ages and stages of life.

“That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience. The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; that they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed. Young men likewise exhort to be sober minded” (Titus 2:2-6).

AGED MEN:

- Sober - “discreet; not extreme, extravagant or excessive”
- Grave - “serious; dignified, honorable, worthy of respect”
- Temperate - “self-controlled; moderate in opinion, careful”
- Sound in Faith - “healthy; whole, uncorrupted in conviction”
- In Charity - “affectionate; benevolent, kind, tender”
- In Patience - “constancy; cheerful and hopeful endurance”

AGED WOMEN:

- In Behaviour as Becometh Holiness - “a lifestyle that is becoming, suitable, pleasing, appropriate and attractive to holiness”
- Not False Accusers - “slanderers, gossipers” (Greek: *devils*)
- Not Given to Much Wine - “in bondage to wine (i.e. “banqueting”)
- Teachers of Good Things - “examples of actions and attitudes”

YOUNG WOMEN:

- Sober - “discreet; not extreme, extravagant or excessive”
- Love Their Husbands - “affectionate, fond” (Greek: *philandros*)
- Love Their Children - “maternal instinct, fond” (Greek: *philoteknos*)
- Discreet - “disciplined, self-controlled” (same root as “sober” in 2:4)
- Chaste - “innocent; modest, pure, clean from defilement”

- Keepers at Home - “guard; busy, stayer, domestically inclined”
- Good - “honorable; honest, fair, worthy, kind”
- Obedient to Their Own Husbands - “submitted; in subjection, under”

“That the word of God be not blasphemed” - Our culture may disagree with biblical doctrine, but they should be impressed with a biblical lifestyle. A Christian family should be the envy of every family on their street. Your home is to be a model of what the Bible teaches.

The world may not like it when we talk about self-control and submission—but they will find it attractive when we live it. They may be repelled by Christian teachings on morality and marriage - but they will be attracted to Christian lives and marriages when they see the Bible lived out daily. An apostolic life is a good life.

Mothers of young children, don't let culture define you by what you do or don't do for a career. Your greatest contribution to the kingdom of God may not be something you do, but someone you raise.

YOUNG MEN:

- Sober Minded - “disciplined, self-controlled”
- Notice that young men receive only one word of exhortation.
- Notice that Paul told Titus to teach aged men, aged women, and young men—but not young women. (Aged women were to teach them, so Titus could avoid temptation, or any hint of immorality.)

Remember that Titus' job was to “ordain elders” (1:5) in the church. *Elder* means a “mature” man—qualified by character and consistency, more than age. Not every older man should be permitted to be an elder, and not every younger man should be prevented from being an elder. Nevertheless, elders are normally “older” because being older brings experience.

If you are young, find someone to disciple you.

If you are old, find someone to disciple.

If you are in between, then do both.

Leaders are to be a “pattern” for others in all things.

“In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech, that

cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you" (Titus 2:7-8).

Titus was a leader and a pastor, but notice that Paul wrote more about "Titus the example" than he did about "Titus the exhorter"—because a leader leads best by what he does, not what he says.

Nevertheless, words are still important! A leader is to use "sound speech" (healthy words), so that even enemies can't twist his words to use against him.

"Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again; not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things" (Titus 2:9-10).

SLAVES (EMPLOYEES):

- Obedient – do what you are asked
- Please them well – do *more* than what you are asked
- Not answering again – don't talk back, don't argue
- Not purloining – don't steal (by taking, or by holding back effort)
- Fidelity – consistency, outward actions matching inward convictions
- Adorn the doctrine – "beautify the Bible" in the eyes of others

"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Titus 2:11-14).

Grace is the power to live above sin. Grace teaches us!

Christians are to deny ("refuse, reject, contradict") ungodliness (whatever is unlike God), and the worldly lusts that cause it—and instead we are to live "soberly" (attitude and actions toward ourselves), "righteously" (toward others), and "godly" (toward God).

Christians live *in* this present world, but they do not live *like* this present world, and they do not live *for* this present world.

One motivation in living godly lives is the hope of Heaven, and the soon appearing of Jesus Christ. However, an even greater motivation is our love for a Saviour who gave Himself to redeem us from iniquity. His desire is to have a pure, peculiar people who love (“zealous”) to do good works!

We live between two appearings. The first appearing was the grace of God (2:11) and the second appearing will be the glory of God (2:13). Verse 11 is behind us and verse 13 is ahead of us—we are “pushed” by grace and “pulled” by glory—and we are to live our lives in light of both appearings.

Legalism says, “What we do leads to who we are.”
Grace says, “Who we are leads to what we do.”
(*Grace does not say, “What we do doesn’t matter.”*)

“These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee” (Titus 2:15).

“Titus, teach with authority! Don’t let anyone intimidate you!”

“Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work, to speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men. For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another” (Titus 3:1-3).

Christians were exhorted to be good citizens during the time of the brutal Roman Empire. How much more should we be good citizens today? Our heavenly citizenship doesn’t excuse us from our earthly citizenship. Paul told us not to be critical of our unsaved neighbors—after all, before the grace of God came, we acted exactly the same way as they do.

“But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (Titus 3:4-7).

It was the kindness and love of God toward us that made the difference! Paul had been exhorting us to do “good works” throughout this epistle, but we need to put them in proper perspective—we don’t do good works to be saved, but because we are saved. Our good works are simply our thankfulness for His great mercy.

“Washing of Regeneration” = Baptism in Jesus’ name!

“Renewing of the Holy Ghost” = Baptism of the Holy Ghost!

“This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men” (Titus 3:8).

Church leaders are to stress that believers are to “maintain good works.” Moreover, since there will always be those who disagree with the discipline required for discipleship, Paul told us to avoid their arguments entirely. People who like to argue about “minor areas” of the Bible are nearly always covering up their disobedience to “major areas” of the Bible.

“But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain. A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject; knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself” (Titus 3:9-11).

A heretic is literally “one who causes division.” Di-vision means “two visions.” This is someone who tries to get a following by going from person to person, trying to force others to take sides on an issue. They are to be warned twice, and then disfellowshipped if they will not submit. Why? Because they are “subverted” (“warped in character”) and will not stop sinning. It is not the church that has condemned them—they are “self-condemned.” Some people think this is too “authoritarian,” but this is exactly the same process outlined by Jesus Himself!

“Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear

them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican" (Matthew 18:15-17).

Paul closed his epistle with personal greetings, as usual—and with yet another reminder to “maintain good works” (3:14). He wanted to send either Artemas or Tychicus to Crete to look after the church temporarily so Titus could visit him. We don’t know whom Zenas the lawyer was, but we do remember Apollos, the eloquent evangelist, from I Corinthians.

“For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?” (I Corinthians 3:4).

Apollos was a preacher who was being compared to and exalted above Paul, by people in the churches Paul had started. With this going on, it would have been easy for Paul to feel competitive or even bitter toward Apollos. However, Paul didn’t see him as a rival—in fact, he instructed Titus to “diligently” help him in his travels, and to be sure he is wanting nothing. Division and competition should not be part of the apostolic church.

“When I shall send Artemas unto thee, or Tychicus, be diligent to come unto me to Nicopolis: for I have determined there to winter. Bring Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey diligently, that nothing be wanting unto them. And let ours also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful. All that are with me salute thee. Greet them that love us in the faith. Grace be with you all. Amen” (Titus 2:12-15).

“All that are with me salute thee.” Paul’s life was constantly intertwined with others who were preaching the gospel, and especially with young leaders. Paul shared the gospel in the context of sharing life with people. And that’s what we see in the Book of Titus. Discipleship is to take place in a community of believers, and involve every generation—because good disciples make good disciples.

“So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us” (I Thessalonians 2:8).

Personal Study Notes

Lesson 4

First Timothy (Part I)

Apostle Paul wrote the four letters we are studying, probably while he was in prison toward the end of his ministry. They are unique among all his writings because they are personal, addressed to individuals in leadership roles rather than to churches as a whole. Also, Paul had a “mentoring role” in the lives and ministries of each of these young leaders, so he felt at liberty to speak freely. Here, more than anywhere else, we see Paul being transparent about ministry.

The apostle Paul made discipling the next generation his central focus. In addition to his letters to Philemon (who hosted an *ekklesia* in his home in Colossae) and Titus (who pastored the church on the island of Crete), one-third of the New Testament was either written *to* Timothy, or was *from* Paul *and* Timothy (see the first verse of II Corinthians, Philippians, Colossians, I Thessalonians, II Thessalonians, and Philemon). So Paul’s lifelong investment in the next generation of Apostolics is reflected even in the very structure of Scripture, and yet we often overlook this principle.

Paul’s mentoring relationship with Timothy began in Acts 16.

“Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek: which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium. Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek. And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem.

And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily" (Acts 16:1-5).

Timothy and his family were most likely converted through Paul's ministry when the apostle first visited Lystra. His mother and grandmother raised him to love truth, preparing him from a very young age for his eventual call to ministry (II Timothy 1:15). Note that Paul experienced a very dramatic moment when he was called (Acts 9), but Timothy "grew" into his calling. Someone said, "God called Paul, and Paul called Timothy!"—and it's certainly true that Paul had a lot to do with it.

As a young man, Timothy undoubtedly witnessed Paul's sufferings in Lystra (Acts 14:19-20; II Timothy 3:10-11) and was drawn to the apostle. Paul later ordained him to the ministry (II Timothy 1:6), and he became Paul's favorite traveling companion and coworker on his missionary journeys. Paul invested his life in Timothy, and even called him his own "son in the faith" (I Timothy 1:2; I Corinthians 4:17; Philippians 2:22).

In the years that followed, Timothy played an important role in the expansion and strengthening of the New Testament church. He sometimes served as Paul's ambassador to "trouble spots" like Corinth, where the church had problems; he eventually became pastor of the church in Ephesus (I Timothy 1:3); and he no doubt joined Paul in Rome shortly before the imprisoned apostle was martyred (I Timothy 4:21).

Nevertheless, Timothy's first lesson in leadership came at the very beginning of his ministry. Once Paul chose him to join the missionary team, he had Timothy go through the Jewish ritual of circumcision. This action seemed to contradict the earlier decision of the Jerusalem council, which concluded that Gentile believers did not have to be circumcised. Furthermore, to require Timothy to be circumcised seems a bit hypocritical since Paul would not even allow Titus to be circumcised.

"For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; that ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well" (Acts 15:28-29).

“But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised” (Galatians 2:3).

However, an important spiritual principle was behind Paul’s decision and one that Timothy certainly needed to learn. Paul very clearly taught that circumcision had nothing to do with salvation, as the Jerusalem council had also declared. That’s precisely why he would not allow Titus to be circumcised—because Titus was a Gentile, and that would have appeared to side with the Judaizers (who taught that Gentile Christians had to obey all the Jewish ceremonial laws to be saved).

However, Timothy came from a different background than Titus. We’re clearly told in Acts 16:1 that he was the son of a Jewish mother and a Gentile father. Furthermore, Paul wanted him to work with Jewish and Gentile churches as they traveled, and it was essential that he not offend either of them. It was not Timothy’s salvation that was at issue, it was his fitness for service in leadership and ministry. Why did Paul make this distinction? Because leaders must always be held to a higher standard than followers must. Paul taught that a leader’s personal freedom must be balanced by a strong sense of public responsibility.

“Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God” (I Corinthians 10:32).

“All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not” (I Corinthians 10:23).

Paul’s epistles to Timothy continue his role of mentoring a young leader:

“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope; unto Timothy, my own son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord. As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine, neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do” (I Timothy 1:1-4).

Ephesus was not an easy place to pastor a church. The city was devoted to the worship of the goddess Diana, and worship in her temples promoted sexual immorality of all kinds (Acts 19). In spite of this, Paul spent nearly three years

there, and had done a great work, so that “all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 19:10).

Paul used the military term “charge” (“to give strict orders from a superior officer”) eight times in his two letters to Timothy to let him know how serious his task was. The first time is in 1:3, where his order is “teach no other doctrine!” There are more than thirty references to doctrine and teaching in Paul’s personal epistles, because doctrine was the foundation of the early church.

The false teaching Timothy was facing was the same thing Titus faced in Crete—“fables and endless genealogies” (1:4). The false teachers were using the Old Testament law, and especially the genealogies, to manufacture all kinds of new doctrines and spiritual theories. They were leading people astray and causing them to question the doctrine they had been taught. It was the opposite of “godly edifying” (1:4)—teaching that leads to godliness. It appealed to the flesh, and that’s why the false teachers had a following—but it was not the gospel Paul had preached, and so he dismisses it as “vain jangling” (1:6).

“Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned: from which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling; desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm. But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully; knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine; according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust” (I Timothy 1:5-11).

The end (“result, goal”) of obeying God’s commandments will always be love (“charity”), purity (“pure heart”), conviction (“good conscience”), and integrity (“faith unfeigned”). You can’t obtain this just by keeping rules, but you also can’t obtain it by ignoring God’s rules. Legalism can be either relying on keeping rules to save ourselves, or rewriting God’s rules to please ourselves. Either way, legalism gives an “appearance” of a relationship with God, but there is no corresponding reality in the inner man.

Because these false teachers were abusing the Old Testament law, Paul explained the role of God's commandments in our salvation. He said, "The Law is good, if we understand it properly." God gave Moses the Law to expose sin and convict sinners. The Law cannot save anyone, but without it, we would never see our need of a Savior. Once we are saved, we don't need Law anymore, because we now have grace—and, grace is a "higher law" than the Law, because it comes from inward transformation, not just from outward compliance.

Paul listed fourteen kinds of people who were condemned by the Law, centered especially on five of the Ten Commandments—honor your parents, don't kill, don't commit adultery, don't steal, and don't lie. This is one of several such lists in the New Testament, and these are some of the sinful people the Law was made for.

The Law and the gospel go together. The Law without the gospel is like diagnosing a disease without having a cure, but the gospel without the Law is like having a cure but never admitting you have a disease. Either way, it's fatal without having the "glorious gospel" (1:11).

"And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting. Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen" (I Timothy 1:12-17).

All this talk about the gospel moved Paul to share his testimony. He thanked God for enabling him, and told us that God's main qualification for ministry is faithfulness. Paul used to be a blasphemer (denying Jesus' deity), a persecutor, and "injurious" (a "bully") to the church—but, God was merciful to him because he was doing it ignorantly.

Paul thanked God for His grace, which was "exceeding abundant" in his case because he had been an enemy of the church. He also is thankful for the

“longsuffering” of God toward him, and calls it “a pattern to them which should hereafter believe” (1:16). Literally Paul was saying, “If God could save *me*, God can save anybody.”

Also, notice how Paul’s many trials affected him throughout his ministry. They altered his perception of how powerful, intelligent, and good he was; they made him feel helpless, dependent, and conscious of his weaknesses. And this had been a good thing.

- In his first epistle (Galatians 1:1), Paul introduced himself as “Paul, an apostle.”
- After some suffering (I Corinthians 15:9), he said that he was “the least of the apostles.”
- After more suffering (Ephesians 3:8), he felt that he was “less than the least of all saints.”
- After suffering in prison (I Timothy 1:15), Paul declared, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.”

Do you see what was happening in his life? Paul kept getting smaller and Jesus kept getting bigger. He decreased, Jesus increased. And this is why Paul worshiped Jesus as “the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God” (1:17).

“This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare; holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck: of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme” (I Timothy 1:18-20).

Here is Paul’s military talk again (“this charge”)—“Timothy, hold on to the prophetic words that have been spoken over you, and fight!” He then said to hold on to faith and a good conscience (“conviction”). It is not enough just to proclaim our faith with our lips, we must practice our faith with our lives. Christians who “make shipwreck” of their lives nearly always do so by sinning against their conscience. They change their lifestyle convictions, and then eventually you will see them change their doctrine. Hymenaeus and Alexander did this, deliberately rejecting their godly convictions in an attempt to defend their ungodly lives. Bad doctrine starts with bad conduct, and usually with secret sin.

Paul delivered these men “unto Satan” because of their willful sin. With the protection of the church removed, hopefully they would feel the full force of their sin and repent. It’s not bad when backsliders have trouble!

“I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (I Timothy 2:1-4).

Because of the battles faced by the church against the world, the flesh, and the devil, Paul exhorts that prayer should be our first priority:

- **SUPPLICATION:**

(Greek – *deomai*) has to do with asking, but extends the idea further. Asking merely makes our request known, but supplicating is to ask with passion, persistence, and focus. The root word is *deo*, which means, “to bind something up or tie something up.” This is speaking of our authority in the Spirit.

“And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Mathew 16:19).

- **PRAYERS:**

Prayer doesn’t always feel dramatic or dynamic. Much of God’s work in our lives and in the world around us takes place more gradually, through faithful and consistent daily praying. Remember the “hornets” God sent to drive out Israel’s enemies, even when they were unaware that God’s “Bee Team” was at work!

“And I sent the hornet before you, which drave them out from before you, even the two kings of the Amorites; but not with thy sword, nor with thy bow” (Joshua 24:12).

- **INTERCESSIONS:**

Intercession means to literally “stand in the gap.” It occurs when we realize that God has ordained boundaries of blessing and unless someone prays Satan will try to violate the boundary line! Then once sin has entered, God’s judgment must eventually fall—unless someone prays. We are Heaven’s on-site representatives to pray, “Thy Kingdom come! Thy will be done!”

“And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none” (Ezekiel 22:30).

- **GIVING OF THANKS:**

We don’t just come to God with a “wish list”—we pray because we want to have a relationship with God! Part of our prayer should always reflect thankfulness to God for who He is and what He has done in our lives.

“Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name” (Psalm 100:4).

Paul instructed us to pray “for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority.” (Remember that godless Emperor Nero was on the throne at this time.) No person is beyond the reach of prayer. The directive here is to pray for issues that are grander and broader than our own immediate points of personal concern or involvement. Prayer is not to be a preoccupied, self-centered concern. Not when we can literally affect the climate of our culture (“that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life” - 1:2) and create an atmosphere where people can “come unto the knowledge of the truth” (1:4). The gospel is always our ultimate goal.

“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not;) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity” (I Timothy 2:5-7).

We cannot “mediate” between God and another individual. We cannot command angels to intervene. However, we pray to a God who can do both.

Since there is only one God, there is only one mediator. The whole reason God came to earth was to intervene where sin had destroyed. When we pray, it is not that we are winning the victory through more effort; rather, we are enforcing the victory that Jesus already won!

We are Heaven's ambassadors in this world, and it is for exactly this reason that our lifestyle should reflect the doctrine we believe and the faith we say we have. Praying for God to do what we want when we won't do what He wants is the ultimate hypocrisy.

"I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting. In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works" (I Timothy 2:8-10).

Paul identifies some "challenge areas" for men and women concerning holiness, which is simply letting the Holy Spirit control our lives. Notice that they are different, because we are different in our creation:

The **man's** primary problem areas with holiness are:

- Appetite (holy hands)
- Anger (wrath)
- Apathy (doubting)

The **woman's** primary problem areas with holiness are:

- Adornment (adorn themselves . . . with . . . not with)
- Apparel (modest apparel)
- Attitude (shamefacedness and sobriety)

Notice that Scripture commands men to act holy, because when men act holy, women are less likely to be tempted. Scripture commands women to appear holy, because when women appear holy, men are less likely to be tempted. This is not to say that women never have problems with inner holiness, or that men never have problems with outer holiness. These are tendencies only, because of the distinct natures the sexes have. For both men and women, holiness begins on the inside and must be demonstrated on the outside.

God's holy people always stand out. Apostolic women will generally stand out more by their appearance, and apostolic men will generally stand out more by their actions. Real Christian men should be just as distinct from the world as real Christian women.

Men's holiness standards provide much, if not most, of the offensive power of the apostolic church. This is *dunamis* ("doing") power, and the gifts of the Spirit operate from this kind of power. Women's holiness standards provide much, if not most, of the defensive power of the apostolic church. This is *exousia* ("restraining") power, and the fruit of the Spirit operates from this kind of power. Our roles are not competitive; they are complementary.

"Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence" (I Timothy 2:11-12).

Paul now spoke directly to women about their place of "subjection." This is another military term meaning "under command of a leader." The word *silence* doesn't mean not speaking; rather it means "quietness, one who does not meddle in the affairs of others." He was simply saying that women should serenely accept their place in God's order of creation, their role as a helpmeet to their husbands, and their responsibility in matters of outward adorning.

Paul did not allow women to "teach" ("discharge the office of a teacher"), but since he later commanded older women to teach younger women (Titus 2:3-4) and commended Timothy for being taught by his mother and grandmother (II Timothy 1:5, 3:15), he is obviously referring only to women "lording it over" men in matters of church leadership. This is in accordance with their role.

Greek scholar Marvin Treece teaches that Paul's command for a woman not to "usurp authority" over men means she is not to "use her self-weapon" (i.e. her femininity) to manipulate men. This powerful "weapon" is one of the major reasons she is to be godly in apparel and adornment!

"For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety" (I Timothy 2:13-15).

The greatest reason for a godly woman to assume a spiritual posture of submission is simply God's order of creation ("for Adam was first formed, then Eve" - 2:13). However, another compelling reason is the role the woman played in the fall ("and Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression" - 2:14). Eve fell was because she usurped her husband's headship.

The Bible specifically points out that, while Eve was deceived, Adam sinned willingly. When she returned to him with the forbidden fruit, she was already dying! Adam could see and sense the difference in her, but he loved her! What was he to do? In that moment, Adam made a choice to join Eve in eating the fruit, thus joining her in her sin.

Even in the fall of man, we see a beautiful picture of Jesus, who knew we were dying in sin; but He loved us, and chose to partake of sinful humanity so that we could be saved. That's love!

Paul concluded by this chapter by reaffirming the woman's role. ("notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing" - 2:15). Even though the woman was the initial agent who led the human race into sin, through childbearing she is freed from that stigma because she is raising a generation of godly children. This is a great motivation for her holiness.

Women are just as qualified for leadership as men, but the sexes in general don't lead the same way—regardless of what management books say. In Christ, there is neither "male nor female" (Galatians 3:28). Nevertheless, in leadership we need to be aware of our unique strengths and weaknesses, and our different roles and responsibilities. Thank God for every member of His Body!

Personal Study Notes

Lesson 5

First Timothy (Part II)

Apostle Paul wrote the four letters we are studying, probably while he was in prison toward the end of his ministry. They are unique among all his writings because they are personal, addressed to individuals in leadership roles rather than to churches as a whole. Also, Paul had a “mentoring role” in the lives and ministries of each of these young leaders, so he felt at liberty to speak freely. Here, more than anywhere else, we see Paul being transparent about ministry.

Paul made discipling the next generation his central focus. In addition to his letters to Philemon (who hosted an *ekklesia* in his home in Colossae) and Titus (who pastored the church on the island of Crete), one-third of the New Testament was either written *to* Timothy, *or* was *from* Paul *and* Timothy (see the first verse of II Corinthians, Philippians, Colossians, I Thessalonians, II Thessalonians, and Philemon). So Paul’s lifelong investment in the next generation of Apostolics is reflected even in the very structure of Scripture, and yet we often overlook this principle.

In the first two chapters of I Timothy, Paul charged his young protégé to fight for truth and fight against error, specifically dealing with a group of false teachers who were abusing the Old Testament law. He also shared part of his testimony and thanked God for His “exceeding abundant” grace and mercy. Literally Paul was saying, “If God could save me, God can save anybody.” Timothy needed to be assured of this, as he pastored the church in the exceedingly sinful metropolis of Ephesus.

Notice how Paul’s many trials affected him throughout his ministry:

- In his first epistle (Galatians 1:1), Paul introduced himself as “Paul, an apostle.”
- After some suffering (I Corinthians 15:9), he said that he was “the least of the apostles.”
- After more suffering (Ephesians 3:8), he felt that he was “less than the least of all saints.”
- After suffering in prison (I Timothy 1:15), Paul declared, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.”

Do you see what was happening in his life? Paul kept getting smaller and Jesus kept getting bigger. He decreased, Jesus increased.

Because of the battles faced by the church against the world, the flesh and the devil, Paul exhorted that prayer should be our first priority, and follows this immediately with his teaching on holiness. Why? Because praying for God to do what we want, when we won't do what He wants, is the ultimate hypocrisy.

Paul concluded by affirming the woman's role in the church. Women are just as qualified for leadership as men, but the sexes don't lead in the same way. In Christ, there is neither “male nor female” (Galatians 3:28). However, in leadership, we need to be aware of our unique strengths and weaknesses, and our different roles and responsibilities. With that established, Paul began to list qualifications for leaders:

“This is a true saying, if a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil” (I Timothy 3:1-7)

The terms *bishop*, *pastor*, and *elder* are essentially synonymous in the New Testament. All three words simply mean an “overseer” of the church, and refer to mature people with spiritual wisdom and experience (not necessarily “age”). The word *pastor* also has the significance of a “shepherd,” one who leads and cares for

the flock of God. When you compare the lists of qualifications given to Timothy and Titus, it's easy to see that Paul was referring to very similar leadership roles—and just as easy to see that these are not “political positions” of any kind.

Paul stated plainly that desiring to lead is not a bad thing; however, the way to achieve that role is not to scheme, but to serve. In the church, leadership is much more about one's character than one's competence. We need both, but character is much more critical. Here are Paul's qualifications for someone serving in church leadership:

BLAMELESS (3:2):

This Greek term means “nothing to take hold upon”; that is, there must be nothing in his life that Satan or the unsaved can take hold of to criticize or attack the church. No man living is sinless, but we must strive to be blameless, or “above reproach.”

THE HUSBAND OF ONE WIFE (3:2):

This is not referring to polygamy, because the New Testament church did not practice that. Rather, it is a higher standard for leaders. A pastor who has been divorced opens himself and the church to criticism. His ability to manage his marriage and home life is an important indicator of his ability to lead the church. This term also indicates a “one woman man,” in the sense that a leader must not have a history or tendency of “flirting” with other women.

VIGILANT (3:2):

This Greek term could be translated “to be temperate” or “to be watchful.” It literally means, “to keep your head in all situations.” A leader can't be reactionary when he encounters opposition, setbacks, or disappointment; he needs to exercise sensible, rational judgment.

SOBER (3:2):

The Greek word *sophron* can be translated “discreet, or sober minded.” Leaders must have a serious attitude about leadership and ministry. This doesn't mean they have no sense of humor, or that they are always solemn. Rather, they are careful not to cheapen the ministry or the gospel message by casual or foolish behavior.

OF GOOD BEHAVIOUR (3:2):

This Greek term means “orderly.” A leader should be organized in his thinking and in his living (as well as in his teaching and preaching!). It is the same word that is translated “modest” in I Timothy 2:9, so it has the sense of “modest, becoming, not drawing attention to oneself.” Leaders shouldn’t be “drama queens.”

GIVEN TO HOSPITALITY (3:2):

This Greek term literally means, “loving the stranger,” and was especially important in the first century when traveling believers and preachers needed places to stay. Leaders must be “fond of fellowship”—regardless of their personality.

APT TO TEACH (3:2):

Teaching the Word of God is one of the main responsibilities of church leaders. They must be careful students, and hone their communication skills so they can assist others to know and obey the Word. Teaching others is work, and there is no place for laziness in church leadership. Who are you teaching and discipling?

NOT GIVEN TO WINE (3:3)

This Greek term *paroinos* is from *para* (“near”) and *oinos* (“wine”). Two kinds of wine are referred to in the Bible—the non-fermented wine recommended to Timothy for stomach problems (I Timothy 5:23), and fermented wine that is a “mocker” (Proverbs 20:1, 23:31-32). A vast difference exists between non-alcoholic wine in Bible times and today’s alcohol. Leaders need to avoid even the appearance of evil (I Thessalonians 5:22), so their lives don’t become an excuse to those they lead. Don’t even be “near wine”!

NO STRIKER (3:3):

Leaders must not be “contentious,” or “looking for a fight.” Hitting back (not just physically, but verbally) when others attack you is a mark of immaturity, and disqualifies someone for leadership.

NOT GREEDY OF FILTHY LUCRE (3:3):

It is possible to use the ministry to make money, if a man has no integrity. (Not that pastors are overpaid in most churches.) Covetous or lazy leaders always have “financial schemes” going on, and these activities erode their character and hinder their ministry inside and outside the church.

PATIENT (3:3):

This Greek word means “gentle” or “mild.” It is not just talking about patient action, but a patient attitude. Leaders must be able to deal with people gently, and react to the inevitable criticism that comes their way in the same manner. They are to be mild in character, not harsh or domineering with those whom they lead.

NOT A BRAWLER (3:3):

Leaders must be peacemakers, not fighters. This doesn’t mean they compromise their convictions, but that they must learn to disagree without being disagreeable. Warren Wiersbe says, “Short tempers do not make for long ministries.”

NOT COVETOUS (3:3):

This word literally means “not fond of silver,” but it has the sense of “not fond of things” (i.e. what silver can buy). A leader can covet many things besides money—popularity, fame, influence, advancement, a following, and so forth—but this indicates a serious character issue. God doesn’t bless leaders merely to increase their standard of living or their status in leading—He blesses them so they can increase their standard of giving and their capacity to serve.

ONE THAT RULETH WELL HIS OWN HOUSE (3:4):

Not every church leader must be married, but every church leader who is married must lead well at home. If a man’s own family cannot respect and obey him, then the church is not likely to do so. For Christians, the church and the home are one—a leader cannot be one thing at church and another thing at home. The word *ruleth* means “to govern,” and suggests that a leader should be a good “director” or “manager.” And for both our children and God’s children, the way to “rule” is through loving discipline. If a leader doesn’t know how to do that at home, he will not be able to do it in the church (3:5). The most important qualification for any church leader is what goes on in his home life.

NOT A NOVICE (3:6):

This Greek term literally means, “one newly planted,” and refers specifically to young Christians. Age alone is not a guarantee of maturity, but it is good for a leader to give himself time for study and growth before he accepts a leadership role (some leaders mature faster than others do, of course). Satan enjoys seeing a youthful leader succeed and become proud,

because that gives him an open door to tear down internally what has been built up externally. Be sure to approach any leadership position with caution and humility.

A GOOD REPORT OF THEM WHICH ARE WITHOUT (3:7):

Leaders are always held to a higher standard, both inside and outside the church. Especially when it comes to the unsaved, leaders are constantly placed under the microscope. One bad testimony outside the church affects the testimony of the entire church in the world's eyes. A leader's life, his word, and his business dealings must always be without reproach.

“Likewise must the deacons be grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless. Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus” (I Timothy 3:8-13).

The English word *deacon* is from the Greek word *diakonos* and simply means “servant.” The first deacons were appointed in Acts 6 to assist the apostles with some of the menial tasks of ministry, so they could concentrate on prayer and the Word. This is an incredibly valuable role in the New Testament church. Even though deacons were initially in “secondary” positions of leadership, some were later put in positions of spiritual authority because they had proved themselves to the church. However, no matter what the role, leadership carries responsibilities.

GRAVE (3:8):

This word points to “seriousness in purpose and self-respect in conduct.” Leaders should be worthy of respect and have Christian character that is worth imitating. They should take their responsibilities seriously and not just fill a position.

NOT DOUBLETONGUED (3:8):

A leader is not a gossip. He does not break confidences, and his word is his bond. If he says he will, he will. He speaks honestly—he does not say

one thing to one person and something entirely opposite to someone else. You can depend on him.

NOT GIVEN TO MUCH WINE (3:8):

See I Timothy 3:3.

NOT GREEDY OF FILTHY LUCRE (3:8):

See I Timothy 3:3.

PURE CONSCIENCE (3:9):

Leaders must have integrity (“wholeness”), which is being the same on the inside as they appear on the outside. They must live the Word of God (“the mystery of the faith” – 3:9).

Someone considered for a secondary position of leadership is to “first be proved” (3:10) and then—if they are “found blameless” (3:10), they can then “use the office” (3:10) of a deacon. That is, the church can publicly affirm their leadership. This should never be done too quickly, because only through a time of proving is someone’s character revealed.

“Even so must their wives . . .” (3:11). A leader’s spouse is part of their ministry, because ministry begins at home. Again, Paul stressed that leaders are to “rule” their homes and children well. The most important qualification for any church leader is what goes on in his home life.

A leader who leads well will “purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness” (3:13). The word *degree* means, “rank,” signifying that leaders who do the little things well will find that God “advances” them to greater things, and gives them more spiritual authority in their ministry.

“These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: but if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory” (I Timothy 3:14-16).

Every leader needs to be reminded of exactly what it is they are leading. We have the great honor and privilege of being involved in “the church of the living God” (3:15). The word *church* is from the Greek word *ekklesia* (100X in New Testament), which means “those called out.” If God loved the members of the church so much that He would call them out of the world, how much more should we love those we are leading?

Paul wrote to Timothy so he would know how to “behave” (i.e. conduct himself as a leader) in the house of God. The church is unlike any other institution on earth, because it is “the pillar and ground of the truth” (3:15). The famous temple of Diana in Ephesus had 127 pillars, but the church is *the* pillar of the truth. A pillar is essentially a pedestal to hold something up or display it, and the church is to display truth. The church is also the ground (“bulwark”) of the truth. A bulwark is a fortification built to protect, and the church is to protect truth.

A “mystery” in Scripture is not a secret concealed, but a secret revealed. The central doctrine of the Apostolic church is the identity of Jesus Christ, or the Oneness of God. Only Jesus fulfills I Timothy 3:16, but this verse speaks of Almighty God, who was:

- Manifest in the flesh
- Seen of angels
- Believed on in the world
- Justified in the Spirit
- Preached unto the Gentiles
- Received up into glory

It’s just one of Paul’s many strong declarations of the Oneness of God!

“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer” (I Timothy 4:1-5).

While Paul was in Ephesus, he had warned the church that false teachers would invade the church (Acts 20:28-31), and now they had arrived. They had departed from the faith (changed their doctrine) and given heed to seducing spirits (changed their lifestyle). As a result, they were now speaking “lies in

hypocrisy" (4:2)—they were talking about truth but not walking in truth. And eventually, they got to the point of no conviction—"having their conscience seared with a hot iron" (4:2). Whenever people affirm with their lips something they deny with their lives, they deaden their conscience a little more.

The Greek word *apostasia* ("apostasy") means "rebellion, revolt, defection, departure; a willful turning away from truth"—and that is the word used in I Timothy 4:1. An apostate is not just wrong doctrinally; he is wrong morally. His personal life becomes wrong before his doctrine is changed. In fact, it is likely that he changes his teachings so that he can continue his sinful living and pacify his conscience. Believing and behaving always go together.

Specifically, the false teachers in Ephesus taught that being single was more spiritual than being married ("forbidding to marry"), and that abstaining from certain foods made one more spiritual ("commanding to abstain from meats"). And tragically, becoming "super spiritual" is a trap that the devil often uses. Satan destroys some people by taking them "down and out," but he destroys many others by taking them "up and out." Beware of any "revelation" excusing you from accountability and submission to the church and to your spiritual leadership.

"If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained. But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness. For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance. For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe. These things command and teach" (I Timothy 4:6-11).

Paul shifted to an athletic image at this point. Just as an athlete has to eat the right things, refuse the wrong things, and exercise regularly, a Christian has to practice spiritual disciplines. Bodily exercise is good, but it must be both consistent and progressive in order to build up the physical man. Godly exercise is even better, because it builds up the spiritual man—but the same principles apply. And it is hard work. Paul said that we "labour and suffer reproach" (4:10),

and this word *oneidizo* (taken from Greek athletics) is the root of our English word *agonize*. It takes a lot of discipline to be a disciple.

“Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee” (I Timothy 4:12-16).

Paul became very personal with Timothy in this chapter: “Let no man despise thy youth!” A young leader is especially under scrutiny, and it is important that they are aware of it—not to make them act fearfully, but to motivate them to act wisely. Your younger years either shape you or scar you. Your life will either serve as a great example or a horrible warning to others, so “be thou an example of the believers!”

- **IN WORD** - implies that our speech should always be honest and kind.
- **IN CONVERSATION** - this KJV word means “lifestyle” (walk, not talk).
- **IN CHARITY** - we lead because we love God and love people, period.
- **IN SPIRIT** - implies that we must be fervent in life, worship, and prayer.
- **IN FAITH** - implies not only trust in God, but faithfulness to God.
- **IN PURITY** - we must be sexually and morally pure in mind and body.

Paul exhorted Timothy to devote himself to the Word and to developing his gift, because when he gives himself wholly to them his “profiting may appear to all” (4:15). When leaders get better, everyone gets better. When leaders grow spiritually, everyone grows spiritually. No leader can lead others where he has not been himself!

I Timothy 4:14 - “neglect not the gift that is in thee”

II Timothy 1:6 - “stir up the gift of God, which is in thee”

The God who calls us to leadership will equip us for leadership. However, we are responsible to cultivate and develop the gifts He gives to us—and the best place to do this is in the local church.

“Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine.” If we get how we behave correct, and what we believe correct, we not only save ourselves, but others. The church is watching you, young leader! The world is watching you, young leader. And God is watching you, young leader. How you live and how you lead are critical.

Personal Study Notes

Lesson 6

First Timothy (Part III)

Apostle Paul wrote the four letters we are studying, probably while he was in prison toward the end of his ministry. They are unique among all his writings because they are personal, addressed to individuals in leadership roles rather than to churches as a whole. Also, Paul had a “mentoring role” in the lives and ministries of each of these young leaders, so he felt at liberty to speak freely. Here, more than anywhere else, we see Paul being transparent about ministry.

In chapter 1, Paul charged Timothy to fight for truth and fight against error, and specifically dealt with a group of false teachers who abused the Old Testament law. He also shared part of his testimony—“if God could save and use the ‘chief’ of sinners, He can save anyone!”

In chapter 2, Paul exhorted that prayer should be our first priority, and followed this immediately with his teaching on holiness—because praying for God to do what *we* want when we won’t do what *He* wants is the ultimate hypocrisy. He also affirms the woman’s role in the church.

In chapter 3, Paul listed qualifications for “senior leaders” (bishops - “overseers”) and “second leaders” (deacons - “servants”). He made it obvious that, for all leaders, character is much more important than mere competence. He reminded Timothy of the high privilege of leading the church, which is the “pillar (display) and ground (protection) of the truth”—and he emphasized the central truth of the Apostolic church, which is the Oneness of God (“the mystery of godliness”).

In chapter 4, Paul repeated the warning he gave to the Ephesians in Acts 20 about false teachers departing from the faith (changing doctrine) and giving heed to seducing spirits (changing lifestyle). They eventually get to the place of

no conviction (“conscience seared”) and become apostate (“willful turning away from truth; rebellion”) instead of apostolic. Paul emphasized repeatedly to Timothy that believing and behaving always go together. He also exhorted Timothy, “let no man despise thy youth” but “be thou an example of the believers.” This takes consistent and progressive discipline (“exercise”). So, “neglect not the gift that is in thee!” and “take heed unto thyself!”

In chapter 5, Paul turned to Timothy’s relationships with elders in the church. Always, the first principle of dealing with elders is honor. Godly widows are to be cared for by the church if they have no family to do so, and if they are not “idle.” The elders that teach and lead the church full-time are to receive “double honour” (literally, “generous pay”) so they can make the church their sole responsibility.

And finally, Paul turned his attention to the issue of money. Money has the greatest potential to replace God in our lives—and how leaders handle money either qualifies or disqualifies them.

“Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed. And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren; but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit. These things teach and exhort” (I Timothy 6:1-2).

At the time Paul wrote this epistle, it is estimated that one-half of Rome’s population were slaves to the other half of the population. Many slaves had a good life, but legally they were not considered “persons.” Of course, the gospel (which prevents “neither bond nor free” from being saved – Galatians 3:28, Colossians 3:11) especially appealed to slaves, and many became Christians. When their duties allowed, they would fellowship in local assemblies where being a slave was not a handicap.

However, there was a problem. Some slaves used their newfound freedom in Christ as an excuse to disobey and defy their masters. They needed to learn that their spiritual freedom in Christ did not alter their social position, even though the church accepted them as equals. Since we have neither slaves nor masters today, where do these principles apply? In the workplace, where we have *employees* and *employers*.

In chapter five, Paul told us to treat our fellow Christians with honor—and now he extended that principle to the workplace. “Under the yoke” (6:1) means “joined by obligation”—so this certainly applies to our jobs. A Christian who is a disrespectful, argumentative, dishonest or lazy employee causes their unsaved employer to “blaspheme” (“speak evil of”) the God they serve and the doctrine they believe.

It’s amazing how little human nature changes over the centuries. Next, Paul admonished employees with saved employers—because it’s all too often the case that Christian employees think, “My boss is my brother!” and use that as an excuse for poor performance on the job. Instead, this is the way we should think and act at work:

- Don’t despise (literally, “show no esteem”) your boss. Do you work just as hard for your saved boss as you did for your unsaved boss?
- Do service (literally or figuratively, “serve as a slave”) for your boss. Your job is about what your boss wants, not what you want. Do you only do the minimum required, or do you go the second mile?
- Be a benefit (literally, “worker of good”) for your boss. Are you a burden or a blessing to your workplace? You should be the best employee there. Your boss should be glad that they hired a “brother.”

“If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself” (I Timothy 6:3-5).

It’s comforting to me as a pastor that Timothy had to deal with “pseudo-spiritual” people two thousand years ago. These are people who are “so heavenly minded that they are no earthly good.” They always have a “word from God” to give to others, but their talk isn’t backed up by their walk. Paul taught both Timothy and Titus that what we teach (“doctrine”) must be “according to godliness” (6:3)—that is, it must be reflected in our lifestyle. Moreover, here, the context for “godliness” is what you do at work. If you are lazy, you are not spiritual. Period.

Paul paints an unflattering picture of “pseudo-spiritual” people here:

- **PROUD:**
This word means “lifted up with pride, inflated with conceit,” and comes from a root word meaning, “enveloped with smoke.” You can’t teach them anything because they are always “more spiritual” than anyone else—all the while hiding behind “smoke and mirrors.”
- **KNOWING NOTHING:**
This phrase means, “not even comprehending the basics.” All their “spiritual revelations” are for nothing, because they aren’t even doing the fundamentals of the Christian life.
- **DOTING ABOUT QUESTIONS AND STRIFES OF WORDS:**
The word *doting* means “having a diseased appetite (i.e. hungering for the wrong things), to hanker after, to harp upon.” They argue about minor matters and are always trying to circumvent the authority of church leadership by contending for their interpretation of Scripture (which always just happens to emphasize areas they think they are strong in, while ignoring areas where they need accountability.).

The fruit from “pseudo-spiritual” people is not spiritual. Instead, their attitude and actions promote “envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings” (6:4-5)—in other words, a lot of arguing about Scripture instead of submitting to the authority ordained by Scripture. Paul said that they had “corrupt minds” (6:5) and that they were “destitute of the truth” (6:5)—this expression means that are “robbing” themselves of truth, all the while they think they are discovering truth!

In the context of employment, these people suppose “gain is godliness”—that anything furthering their own agenda is permissible, because after all, their agenda must be God’s agenda too! Paul tells us to “withdraw” from them. “Gain” is not always “godliness.”

“But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (I Timothy 6:10).

Gain is not always godliness (in fact, rarely). However, godliness—“with contentment”—is always great gain.

Living a godly life is real gain, not only for now but for eternity as well. However, we won't realize that unless we live “with contentment”—literally, “having an inner sufficiency that keeps us at peace in spite of outward circumstances.” Moreover, although Paul was referring primarily to our financial circumstances in this context, he used the same word later to describe all circumstances we face—even unfair circumstances.

“Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Philippians 4:11-13).

The word *contentment* (6:6) also has the sense of being “self-satisfied”—that is, being satisfied with the life God has given us, and not being envious of the blessings of others, or striving for material gain to the point of neglecting our walk with God. Many people mistakenly think their financial success is the “blessing” of God, when really God is “cursing” them by giving them up to the idols they desire more than Him.

“For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out (6:7).” We quote this verse at funerals, but really we need to think about it every day—you didn't bring it with you, and you can't take it with you. A life that is not dedicated to eternal things is a wasted life.

If you have food and “raiment” (literally “covering”—so it could refer to clothing or to shelter), if you have the basics, then be content. Why? Because money has the greatest potential to replace God in your life. Those who are always trying to get more in their material life always end up with less in their spiritual life. They fall into temptation and a trap (“snare” - 6:9), and they give in to many foolish and hurtful longings (“lusts” - 6:9). Ironically, those who tried so hard to gain end up experiencing loss—both now (“destruction”) and in eternity (“perdition”). Paul's metaphor is striking (and terrifying)—he said that these people “drown” (6:9) their eternal soul in their earthly ambition.

The love of money is the root of all evil. It is not “money” that is evil, because money is a necessity for us to exist in society. It is the “love of money” that is evil—in fact, that is the root of all evil. The word *philargyria* has the sense of “covetous, always wanting more”—these people put making money before pleasing God. As a result, they “[err] from the faith” (6:10) and “[pierce] themselves through with many sorrows” (6:10). However, in their mad quest for more they become oblivious to their eternal problem and their temporal problem. All too often, by the time “many sorrows” become apparent, it’s too late to recover all the truly important things they have missed in life.

“But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses” (I Timothy 6:11-12).

Paul’s exhortation to Timothy is “Live different than that!” Leaders need to “flee” (literally, “separate yourself”) from the covetousness of materialism, because materialism destroys ministries. Instead of using their energies to run toward money, they need to run toward “righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness” (6:11). Instead of striving for finances, they need to “fight the good fight of faith” (6:12), which is the only battle that is ultimately worth winning. Paul reminded Timothy of his private call and his public profession—“Timothy, you’re a leader and ‘many witnesses’ are watching you. So get it right when it comes to money.”

“I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; that thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen” (I Timothy 6:13-16).

Again Paul used his “commanding officer” voice—“I give thee charge!” Timothy (and we) can do this because God “quickeneth” (6:13) all things—that is, God “enables” us to live and to lead in a way that pleases Him. When he said, “and before Christ Jesus” (6:13), Paul was not talking about two persons—rather,

he is stressing how God came in flesh to give us a pattern for living. *“Jesus didn’t give in even when He was on trial for His life, so Timothy, you can stand regardless of what you are facing.”*

The coming of Christ motivates us to keep His commandments and live lives “without spot” (“unblemished”) and “unrebukeable” (“blameless”).

Far from being a Scripture about “two persons,” this is one of Paul’s emphatic declarations of the Oneness of God . . . *Jesus is “the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords” (6:15).*

- God is the only being who has immortality. However, because Jesus came, now we can experience immortality.
- God is so holy (“dwelling in the light”) that no man can approach Him. However, because Jesus came, now we can approach God.
- God is a Spirit, so He cannot be seen. However, because Jesus came, now we can see God. I’m glad I know who Jesus is.

It seems odd to us that Paul would end his epistle to a young leader by talking about money. The coming of the Lord would seem to be a more appropriate ending. That is, until we realize that money has the greatest potential to replace God in our lives. Paul taught us that the way leaders handle money either qualifies or disqualifies them.

“Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life” (I Timothy 6:17-19).

These verses were written to “them that are rich in this world,” which includes all of us. We’re so busy trying to get rich in North America that we don’t realize we already are rich. An “average” income here is in the top 5 percent of incomes around the world. Moreover, the problem with being rich is that studies show the richer people get, the smaller percentage of their money they give away. They become infected with “the love of money.” They are “rich in this world,” but not rich in the next world.

Paul told these rich people not to be high minded, or “proud of their possessions.” He exhorted them not to put their trust in material things, which are uncertain, but to trust in God who gave everything for them to enjoy in the first place! Then he gives some very practical commands ...

- **DO GOOD** - Use money to accomplish something for God’s kingdom.
- **BE RICH IN GOOD WORKS** - (*repetition*) Be spiritually wealthy!
- **READY TO DISTRIBUTE** - Have a plan to give for the sake of others.
- **WILLING TO COMMUNICATE** - Be a “sharer.” Be “liberal, generous.”

The only way to break the grip of money on our lives is by giving. Giving into God’s kingdom isn’t so much a sacrifice as it is an investment—we get eternal life, and a reward (“good foundation” - 6:19) in Heaven.

“O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: Which some professing have erred concerning the faith. Grace be with thee. Amen” (I Timothy 6:20-21).

God had committed the truth of the Gospel to Paul, and Paul had committed it to Timothy. The most important task of a young leader is to *keep* (not change!) that which has been committed to them!

Paul told Timothy to avoid that which is “profane.” This word means, “to cross a threshold,” and has the sense of leaving what one has been taught. Some people, some thinking, some conversations, and some activities cross a line that is spiritually dangerous—avoid them! “Vain babblings” literally means “empty or fruitless discussion.” People just want to argue, and it is pointless to waste your time on them. Jesus said that having discussions with them is like casting “pearls before swine” (Matthew 7:6), so Paul said avoid them.

The word *science* (6:20) is from the Greek word *gnosis*, and refers to a specific group in the first century. The Gnostics claimed to have a “new revelation” that was greater than what the apostles taught. Their teaching divided the material world from the spiritual world, so it supposedly allowed their followers to live however they wanted on the outside, while possessing a special “knowledge” on the inside that elevated them above others. They looked down on Apostolic Christians as “in bondage” and inferior, and they opposed the New Testament church (“oppositions” in 6:20 means “a conflict of teachings”). They had no true revelation; it was a revelation “falsely so called”

(6:20). Those who professed it had “erred” from the faith (literally, “missed the mark, swerved, deviated from truth” - 6:21). And they couldn’t even see it! Not much has changed in two thousand years, has it?

Not just wrong motives (i.e. a desire for money) cause leaders to go astray. Wrong teaching is even more spiritually destructive. No one starts out thinking, “I’m going to backslide.” Backsliding happens when we allow little things, little thoughts, little lies, little sins to work their way into our hearts and lives. Backsliding happens when we ignore the spiritual authority God has placed over us. And backsliding always happens internally before it appears externally.

This is why Paul exhorted Timothy to “keep” (6:20) what he has received —because if we don’t make an effort to keep it, we will lose it.

Paul closed his letter by using one of his favorite words: “*Grace* be with thee” (6:21). Grace is not an excuse to participate in sin; grace is God’s enabling power to live above sin. Every Christian needs grace, but leaders especially need grace to survive and thrive in ministry!

Personal Study Notes

Lesson 7

Second Timothy (Part I)

Apostle Paul wrote the four letters we are studying, probably while he was in prison toward the end of his ministry. They are unique among all his writings because they are personal, addressed to individuals in leadership roles rather than to churches as a whole. Also, Paul had a “mentoring role” in the lives and ministries of each of these young leaders, so he felt at liberty to speak freely. Here more than anywhere else we see Paul being transparent about ministry.

When Paul wrote the letter we know as II Timothy, his situation had changed drastically. He was in prison in Rome and facing certain death (4:6 – “the time of my departure is at hand”). He may have been in prison when he wrote the other letters we have studied in this series; he definitely was in prison this time. Almost all of his associates in ministry were gone, and only Luke was at the apostle’s side to assist him (4:11 – “only Luke is with me”). It was certainly a dark hour in his ministry. However, Paul’s concern was not for himself; it was for Timothy and the church.

So he could spend some final days with his son in the gospel, Paul asked Timothy to make the journey to Rome (4:9 – “do thy diligence to come shortly unto me”) and sent Tychicus to Ephesus to look after the church during Timothy’s absence (4:12 – “Tychicus have I sent to Ephesus”). We don’t know what they shared in those personal conversations, but this epistle really serves as Paul’s “Last Will and Testament” for us. Paul didn’t know if he would survive until Timothy arrived, and either way, Timothy was about to move into a season in his ministry where he would not have the apostle Paul to guide him. As a result, the instructions he received here are both priceless and powerful for young leaders.

“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus, to Timothy, my dearly beloved son: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day; greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy; when I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also” (II Timothy 1:1-5).

As the end of Paul’s life drew near, it’s obvious he was expressing more than ever the love he had for the people God had brought into his life. He thought about Timothy constantly (especially their last tearful parting - 1:4), and gave Timothy the greatest gift that any person can give another person—praying for them. He reminded Timothy of his godly heritage from his mother and grandmother—because, like us, Timothy didn’t need a new method, but an old message.

“Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands. For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind” (II Timothy 1:6-7).

When Paul told Timothy to “stir up” his gifting, the Greek word means “to rekindle a fire.” It’s easy to get into the routine of ministry and let the fire go out, so we need to constantly add “fuel” to our spiritual passion. God has not given us a spirit of fear (*deilia* - “timidity”), but has equipped us with power (*dynamis* - “spiritual force, miraculous power, doing power”), with love (*agape* - “God’s love working through us”), and with a sound mind (*sophronismos* - “self-discipline, self-control”). We need *all* of these to do ministry effectively. Timothy didn’t need any new spiritual ingredients in his life; all he had to do was “stir up” what he already had. “Neglect not the gift that is in thee” (I Timothy 4:14). By the way, this is why we practice “laying on of hands” in the church (1:6)—because there is a spiritual impartation from one person to another.

“Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God; who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in

Christ Jesus before the world began, but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel: whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles" (II Timothy 1:8-11).

There was a time when many young leaders wanted to associate with the great apostle because his ministry was so successful. Nevertheless, now that Paul was in prison, most of them had forsaken him—it was too shameful and too dangerous to associate with him any longer. He wrote, "Timothy, don't you be ashamed of me!" However, although Paul's circumstances were extremely difficult and discouraging, here he was encouraging Timothy to embrace suffering for the Lord (1:8). Paul had confidence that everything happening to him—even prison—was for God's own "purpose and grace." After all, Jesus "abolished death" and "brought life and immortality" (1:10)—the worst the Roman government could do was to put Paul to death, and even that wouldn't stop the gospel that he preached.

"For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day. Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us" (1:12-14).

No matter how many people were ashamed of him or turned against him, Paul was not ashamed. He had absolutely no regrets. He knew that he was suffering for the cause of the gospel, not for any real wrongdoing. Moreover, the gospel is not just a doctrine—the gospel is a person in whom he had believed. Paul's confidence is in the Jesus he knows.

When Paul said, "He is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day" (1:12), he was saying, "God is able to guard the work I have been doing until the day of my death or His return, because He gave me this commission, and I have done everything through His power." This is not my church; this is God's church.

Because of the confidence he has in the gospel, Paul exhorted Timothy to "hold fast" to the teaching he had received (1:13), and to "keep" it by the

power of the Holy Ghost (1:14). The word *form* (1:13) means “a pattern, an architect’s blueprint, a plan for imitation.” The doctrine originally delivered by the apostles is the standard by which all teaching is to be judged. There is always pressure on the church (and young leaders) to compromise the message of truth for the methods of the world. Only through the Holy Ghost will we be able to discern the difference and “hold fast.” Paul was exhorting Timothy to be “loyal to God’s Word.”

“This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes. The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain: but, when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found me. The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day: and in how many things he ministered unto me at Ephesus, thou knowest very well” (II Timothy 1:15-18).

Sadly, many Christians had deserted Paul in his hour of need (1:15). The seven churches mentioned in Revelation 2 and 3 were all in the province of Asia, and Paul had stayed nearly three years in the provincial capital of Ephesus and evangelized the whole area (Acts 19; 20:31). And yet, everyone had now “turned away” from the aging apostle (1:15).

That’s why the kindness of Onesiphorus was so refreshing (1:16). He not only helped Paul in Ephesus; he sought him out in the Roman prison and was “not ashamed” of being associated with a prisoner (1:16). We know little about this man, but he will have a great reward “in that day” (1:18). Paul appreciates those who are “loyal to God’s servant.”

It was certainly a dark hour for the apostle Paul. How he would have loved to be free to preach the Word, but he was in a Roman prison and would soon be martyred. It was up to Timothy to step into leadership.

It is time for a new generation of leaders to step up.

Lesson 8

Second Timothy (Part II)

Apostle Paul wrote the four letters we are studying, probably while he was in prison toward the end of his ministry. They are unique among all his writings because they are personal, addressed to individuals in leadership roles rather than to churches as a whole. Also, Paul had a “mentoring role” in the lives and ministries of each of these young leaders, so he felt at liberty to speak freely. Here more than anywhere else we see Paul being transparent about ministry.

When Paul wrote the letter we know as II Timothy, his situation had changed drastically. He was in prison in Rome and facing certain death (4:6 – “the time of my departure is at hand”). He may have been in prison when he wrote the other letters we have studied in this series; he definitely was in prison this time. Almost all of his associates in ministry were gone, and only Luke was at the apostle’s side to assist him (4:11 – “only Luke is with me”). It was certainly a dark hour in his ministry. Nevertheless, Paul’s concern was not for himself; it was for Timothy and the church.

“Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also” (II Timothy 2:1-2).

It has often been said, “Success without a successor is a failure.” Paul exhorted Timothy to take everything he had experienced and learned, and transmit it to the next generation. Those he appointed to leadership were to be faithful, and they were to be teachers of others. (Remember, not everyone teaches in the same way.) Paul then gave us a few examples of what leadership looks like in the Apostolic church:

“Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier. And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully. The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits. Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things” (II Timothy 2:3-7).

SOLDIER:

Leaders must be able to undergo hardship (“hardness”) without breaking under the pressure. They must also avoid worldly entanglements that would distract them from their service to God.

ATHLETE:

Leaders should strive for success (“masteries”), but they must work according to God’s principles (“lawfully”). Only God’s work done in God’s way has God’s blessing. Leaders must be ethical.

FARMER:

Leaders who work hard in God’s field must be “first partaker of the fruits.” This certainly can reference financial support for full-time leaders; however, remember that they were the exception in the New Testament. There is another way that leaders must be “first partaker,” and that is in setting an example for others to follow.

“Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel: wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound” (II Timothy 2:8-9).

Paul wanted Timothy to remember that, if Jesus rose from the dead and defeated humanity’s last enemy first (I Corinthians 15:26), then nothing can hinder His church—not even Paul’s imprisonment and impending death. Paul said, “I may be bound, but the Word is not bound.”

“Therefore I endure all things for the elect’s sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: if we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him,

he also will deny us: if we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself" (II Timothy 2:10-13).

Paul knew he was not only enduring hardship for his own spiritual benefit, but for the benefit of the church. He would go through anything—willingly, cheerfully, and confidently—if it helped further the cause of the gospel.

This "faithful saying" is probably part of an early statement of faith memorized and recited by believers. There are others in his personal letters—I Timothy 1:15, I Timothy 4:9, Titus 3:8. They would encourage one another with these words:

*If we be dead with him, we shall also live with him;
If we suffer, we shall also reign with him;
If we deny him, he also will deny us;
If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful;
He cannot deny himself.*

Think about this! Death leads to life! Suffering leads to reigning with Him! So all that is important—in the first century and in the twenty-first century—is to not deny the Lord, no matter what we are going through. Because if we deny Him, He will deny us—and we will forfeit Heaven and all its rewards. However, even if we do stop believing in Jesus, He is still faithful and He will be there the moment we turn back to Him—as long as we don't come too late! No matter how unfaithful we are, God cannot stop being faithful—to do so would be to deny Himself and His nature.

If suffering and death lead to eternal life, we have nothing to fear.

"Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers. Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (II Timothy 2:14-15).

In contrast to the "faithful saying" Paul had just mentioned, he reminded Timothy that many other opinions are "words to no profit"—they are not worth arguing about, and they only "subvert" (Greek: *katastrepho*/English: *catastrophe*/ "overthrow, overturn, demolish, apostatize") those who hear them. As leaders, we must teach people which is which.

WORKMAN:

We cannot lead others properly unless we live properly. The word *study* (*spoudazo* = “make effort, be diligent, be earnest”) doesn’t refer to books, but to behavior. A workman needs to work hard so he won’t be ashamed when his work is inspected. The phrase “rightly dividing” means “cutting straight,” as in plowing a field, sewing a seam, or cutting a board. The Word is our tool to do God’s work, and we are responsible to use it and teach it correctly. This verse is not against “study,” but is emphasizing that our study must be applied to our own lives first, and then accurately transmitted to those we are leading.

“But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some. Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity” (II Timothy 2:16-19).

In contrast to “rightly dividing” the Word, some other teachings are nothing but “profane and vain babblings.” The word *profane* means, “crossing a threshold into wickedness” and “vain babblings” means “empty or fruitless teaching.” How can we recognize this kind of false teaching? First, it allows “ungodliness” to increase. Second, it eats (“gnaws”) like a “canker” (“gangrene”)—in other words, it consumes godliness and eventually infects the whole church if it is not removed. Lifestyle is a primary indicator of false doctrine—if it leads people further from a biblical lifestyle, it is false teaching!.

Paul named two of these false teachers (Hymenaeus and Philetus) who had walked away from truth. Their specific error was to deny a physical resurrection in the future, and they had overthrown the faith of some. But regardless, the Word (“the foundation of God”) stands sure, and the Lord knows who is truly serving Him. The sign that we are true Christians is that we depart from iniquity—because a godly lifestyle on the outside is the litmus test showing God is working on the inside.

“But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he

shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work" (II Timothy 2:20-21).

VESSEL:

The "great house" is the church and it is built on the "sure foundation" (2:19) of God's Word. Ultimately, no person and no false teaching can destroy the church—but they can certainly affect us. While the global church cannot be destroyed, the local church can be damaged and its progress hindered by the "vessels" (individual members) that are in it. Some are vessels of distinction ("honour") and some are vessels of disgrace ("dishonour")—in other words, God can use some vessels greatly and other vessels only slightly. Why? Because they have prepared themselves for His use. The important emphasis here is that honorable vessels must not be contaminated by dishonorable vessels—they must be "purged" ("cleansed"), "sanctified" ("set apart"), and "prepared" ("made ready"). As leaders, we need to be thermostats (adjusting the spiritual temperature in the church), not thermometers (reading the temperature of others and adjusting ourselves to match). Leaders are influencers.

"Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart" (II Timothy 2:22).

One of the important ways we must "purge" our vessel is to flee from the lusts of the flesh. God has only one instruction for sexual temptation and that is "run!" Paul was always concerned for Timothy in this area because of his youth. Instead of following the cues of the world, we are to "follow" the cues of the Holy Spirit, which will lead us to have a "pure heart." Flee sin, but follow righteousness . . . and be sure to do it "with them" (other believers) who are going the same direction. True Bible separation is balanced—it leads you to separate from the world, but not to separate from other believers in your church. That isn't separation; it's isolation.

"But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes. And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will" (II Timothy 2:23-26).

SERVANT:

Biblical leaders are servants first and leaders second. That means that they don't get to decide what assignments they receive. Timothy might have been tempted to "strive" with these false teachers, but that would not solve the problem—it would only create more confusion.

Someone once said, "You can try to give a pig a bath, but you'll get dirty, and you'll annoy the pig!" Leaders don't get into the pigpen of the false teachers to argue with them—that's a waste of time. The cure for false doctrine isn't debate—the cure for false doctrine is to teach true doctrine.

The word *servant* in the New Testament commonly comes from the Greek word *doulos*, which means "slave." A slave has no will of his own, but is totally under the command of his master. Like the servant in the Old Testament (Exodus 21:5), we say "I love my Master . . . I will not go out free!" On our own, we might be tempted to "fight back" against our opposition, but it is important to realize that we are not fighting people.

"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:12).

Servants must not strive. Instead, we are to be "gentle unto all men" and "patient" with the people we are leading. We must be "apt to teach"—which simply means that our lives must be "instructive." The reason we approach others in "meekness" (meekness is not weakness, but strength under control) is that we remember that we were once just like them.

It's frustrating, but sometimes leaders must patiently instruct "those that oppose themselves"—for these people (even Christians) their own beliefs and behaviors are their problem, but they cannot see it. However, if we let God do the work instead of trying to force the issue, perhaps ("peradventure") they will repent ("a change of attitude leading to a change in action") and finally acknowledge the truth. Satan hates repentance, because a change of mind is a powerful force.

The word *recover* (2:26) describes a man coming out of a drunken stupor. Satan makes people drunk with his lies, and the servant of God is to sober them up and rescue them. They have been taken captive, but we are to set them free.

And this is certainly no easy task—it cannot be accomplished through “fighting” in the flesh, only through God’s power.

It’s the “peradventure” (2:25) that is so frustrating in leadership, but don’t let it get to you. We never know the results when we work with people—but God has called us to work with people anyway! In His kingdom, leaders are not bosses . . . leaders are servants.

The following is sometimes called “The Paradoxical Commandments.” Originally written by Kent Keith in 1968, they were adapted by Mother Teresa and found on the wall of her home for children in Calcutta.

People are often unreasonable, irrational, and self-centered.
Forgive them anyway.

If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives.
Be kind anyway.

If you are successful, you will win some unfaithful friends and some genuine enemies.
Succeed anyway.

If you are honest and sincere people may deceive you.
Be honest and sincere anyway.

What you spend years creating, others could destroy overnight.
Create anyway.

If you find serenity and happiness, some may be jealous.
Be happy anyway.

The good you do today, will often be forgotten.
Do good anyway.

Give the best you have, and it will never be enough.
Give your best anyway.

In the final analysis, it is between you and God.
It was never between you and them anyway.

Personal Study Notes

Lesson 9

Second Timothy (Part III)

Apostle Paul wrote the four letters we are studying, probably while he was in prison toward the end of his ministry. They are unique among all his writings because they are personal, addressed to individuals in leadership roles rather than to churches as a whole. Also, Paul had a “mentoring role” in the lives and ministries of each of these young leaders, so he felt at liberty to speak freely. Here more than anywhere else we see Paul being transparent about ministry.

When Paul wrote the letter we know as II Timothy, his situation had changed drastically. He was in prison in Rome and facing certain death (4:6 – “the time of my departure is at hand”). He may have been in prison when he wrote the other letters we have studied in this series; he definitely was in prison this time. Almost all of his associates in ministry were gone, and only Luke was at the apostle’s side to assist him (4:11 – “only Luke is with me”). It was certainly a dark hour in his ministry. However, Paul’s concern was not for himself—it was for Timothy and the church, because Timothy was doing a difficult job in a difficult time.

In chapter three, Paul spoke about the challenge of the last days, and then told Timothy exactly how to respond. Some people get confused about the “last days,” which actually began with the ministry of Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-2) and will continue until He returns. It is called the “last days” because we are in the last “dispensation” in which God is completing His purpose for His people. Because Jesus appears to have delayed His coming, some people scoff (II Peter 3:3-10)—but He will come just as He promised.

There are different “seasons” within the last days (Acts 1:7), but as they draw to a close the “times” will become perilous. The Greek word means,

“dangerous, fierce, furious, savage” and is the same word used to describe the two violent demoniacs in Gadara. This suggests that demon spirits will be active in the last days, and behind much of the opposition against the church (I Timothy 4:1).

If these challenges were already appearing in Paul’s day, it is no surprise that they have increased in frequency and intensity in our day. (These “signs of the times” are like labor pains – Romans 8:22.)

“This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away” (II Timothy 3:1-5).

Paul lists the characteristics of people who embrace the evil spirit of the age in the last days. Notice that everything they think is good, God thinks is evil; everything they embrace, God rejects. These people are only right in their own eyes. They will tell you that they are operating out of love, but it is love of self (“lovers of their own selves”), love of money (“covetous”), love of status (“boasters, proud, heady, highminded”), love of immorality (“unholy, without natural affection, incontinent”), and love of pleasures (“lovers of pleasures”). The only thing they hate is anything good (“despisers of those that are good”)!

“Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!” (Isaiah 5:20).

The first problem with these people is that they are not just in the world—they also try to get into the church. They appear religious (“having a form of godliness”), but at the same time act rebellious (“denying the power thereof”—they experience no real life change. And that’s why Paul has a strong word for Timothy—“from such turn away!”

As we live in the world, we deal with ourselves, God, people, and things. We should refuse to serve ourselves, worship God, love people, and use things. However, these people have everything reversed—they worship themselves,

refuse to serve God, use people, and love things! And the *second problem* with these people is that they make *converts*!

“For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith. But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs also was” (II Timothy 3:6-9).

In Paul’s day, women were especially susceptible to false doctrine because they had little education and a low status in society. The emphasis here is probably on doctrines the false teachers invented to justify their worldliness and sexual sins. Women were the main victims in Paul’s day, but anyone in our day who wants to justify sin or is always looking for an easier way is very susceptible to false doctrine. They are “ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

Paul compared these false teachers to the magicians of Pharaoh who opposed Moses in Exodus 7-9, during the time of the ten plagues. Their names were Jannes and Jambres, and they imitated what Moses did. What God does, Satan always tries to counterfeit—and false teachers are merely the pawns in Satan’s plan to deceive many people.

Paul said that these false teachers “resist the truth,” that they had “corrupt minds,” and that they were “reprobate concerning the faith.” That is a most frightening word, because it means, “rejected, cast away.” It is a dangerous thing to tinker with truth. On the future day of judgment, “their folly shall be manifest unto all men”—but we need discernment *now* so that we are not deceived, ending up being judged ourselves.

Just like in the banking industry, the way to deal with the counterfeit is not to have more exposure to the fake, but to have more exposure to the real. We fight false doctrine by knowing true doctrine; we fight false teachers by knowing true teachers. The character and lifestyle of a leader matters—their submission to God’s Word is paramount. That’s why Paul says, “You have known my doctrine and manner of life.”

“But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived” (II Timothy 3:10-11).

Notice the huge discrepancy between what Paul taught and experienced, and what most modern “Christian” leaders are known for. He told Timothy, “All that will live godly shall suffer persecution.” We don’t like that. It will seem like evil is winning for a time—“evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse”—but ultimately the church is triumphant. The most important thing to do, when you experience opposition and persecution, or when facing false teaching, is simply to continue. In the last days, there will be more deception and more imitation, but Satan’s lies can be defeated if we hold on to God’s truth. Continue!

“But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (II Timothy 3:14-17).

Timothy was in a position to be mightily used by God because of the Scripture he had learned when he was just a child, and because of the godly people and experiences he had been exposed to. You may not have had the privilege of an Apostolic upbringing, but make sure your children have that privilege. Nothing is more important for their future.

Paul gave us an extremely important principle in II Timothy 3:16, letting us know what we should be looking for as we study the Word of God. All of Scripture is given by inspiration (literally, it is “God breathed”), and all of Scripture is profitable in one of four areas. If we are careful to submit to it we will become mature (“perfect”) and equipped (“thoroughly furnished”) to do good works for God’s kingdom.

	BELIEF	BEHAVIOR
YES	DOCTRINE <i>"what to believe"</i>	INSTRUCTION IN RIGHTEOUSNESS <i>"how to behave"</i>
NO	REPROOF <i>"what <u>NOT</u> to believe"</i>	CORRECTION <i>"how <u>NOT</u> to behave"</i>

And now we come to the last chapter of the last book that Paul would ever write. These are literally his last words to Timothy, for he didn't know if Timothy would get to the prison in Rome before they put him to death. Watch what was important to this great man of God in his final moments.

"I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (II Timothy 4:1-4).

Paul charged Timothy to do one main thing—"preach the Word!" Everything else he said was related to this critical commission. We preach the Word because Jesus is coming . . . because we are headed to judgment, and because others are headed to judgment. We are to be instant ("prepared, present, ready") when conditions are favorable ("in season") and unfavorable ("out of season"). While we must be patient with people ("exhort with all longsuffering"), we cannot adapt our message to please people ("exhort with . . . doctrine"). We preach!

Paul said "the time will come" (and it is here!) when people will not put up with ("endure") sound doctrine, but they will have "itching ears" . . . so they will accumulate ("heap to themselves") teachers who will tell them what they want to hear, instead of what they need to hear. They want to be comfortable more than they want to be convicted.

"But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry. For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good

fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (II Timothy 4:5-8).

Paul exhorted Timothy to be on guard ("watch"), be tough ("endure afflictions"), and to always be about winning souls ("do the work of an evangelist"). Timothy's ministry would not be exactly like Paul's, but he was to do what God had called him to do, and "make full proof" of his ministry. The Greek word *plerophoreo* means, "to entirely accomplish" and comes from a root word meaning "to have a burden" or "to be always accompanied by, to wear constantly like clothing." Remember, your ministry is your life, and your life is your ministry.

Paul knew that his departure from this life was imminent, and he was at peace with that. He said, "I am now ready to be offered" (literally, "to be poured out on the altar as a drink offering")—and this is the very same image he used when speaking of Jesus "emptying Himself" in His incarnation (Philippians 2:5-8). He used the word *departure* to describe his impending death—a beautiful word meaning, "to set sail, to take down a tent (II Corinthians 5:1-8), to unyoke an ox, to loose a prisoner." His death is not a dead end—his death is just a doorway.

Paul said . . . "I fought" . . . "I finished" . . . "I kept" . . . no regrets!

A crown of righteousness is God's reward for a faithful and righteous life—and our motivation for faithfulness and holiness is His soon coming. Jesus will reward those who "love His appearing." Therefore, that begs a question: "Will the return of Jesus be an interruption of your life's work, or will it be the culmination of your life's work?"

"Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me: For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry. And Tychicus have I sent to Ephesus. The cloke that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments. Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works: Of whom be thou ware also; for he hath greatly withstood our words" (II Timothy 4:9-15).

And now we see Paul's humanity: "Timothy, please hurry to visit me! And please bring my cloak (it's cold!), and my books and parchments." Paul didn't reveal his "humanity" to many, but Timothy was like his son.

I've heard people say, "I never heard them speak a negative word." That would not be true of a godly leader, because they need to speak God's truth about people and situations. So Paul spoke very plainly here:

- **DEMAS** had forsaken Paul because he loved the world.
- **CRESCENS** and **TITUS** had departed to minister elsewhere.
- **LUKE** had put everything on hold to be with the aging apostle.
- **MARK** had been forgiven by Paul for deserting him earlier (Acts 15).
- **TYCHICUS** had been sent to Ephesus to relieve Timothy temporarily.
- **CARPUS** had been taking care of the apostle's few earthly possessions.
- **ALEXANDER** was to be avoided because of his opposition to Paul.

It appears that Paul had two trials before Caesar, with some time in between. Some scholars believe that he continued his missionary journeys during this brief reprieve, but we don't know for sure. What we do know is that everyone forsook him, probably for fear of the Roman government. But God didn't forsake Paul—He delivered him "out of the mouth of the lion" (Satan - I Peter 5:8, Psalm 22:21). And Paul was confident that—either way—God's deliverance would continue!

"At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen" (II Timothy 4:16-18).

Over one hundred men and women were associated with Paul and his ministry in Acts and his epistles, and he sent greetings here to several friends. The apostle Paul was a firm believer in team ministry.

"Salute Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus. Erastus abode at Corinth: but Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick. Do thy diligence to come before winter. Eubulus greeteth thee,

and Pudens, and Linus, and Claudia, and all the brethren. The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit. Grace be with you. Amen" (II Timothy 19:22).

"Do thy diligence to come before winter." If Timothy waited too long, it would be too dangerous for sailing and all the ships would be in port for the winter months. If Timothy waited too long, the aging apostle could die in the brutal cold conditions of the Mamertine Prison. If Timothy waited too long, the emperor could unexpectedly decree Paul's execution. If Timothy waited too long, he would miss his chance to connect one last time with the Elder who had given him so very much.

Do thy diligence to come before winter.