

A CHARGE TO KEEP

A Verse By Verse Study
of
Paul's First Epistle to Timothy

The Bible Notebook Series

By

Johnny L. Sanders, D. Min.

DEDICATION

To

James and Mike

**There is a friend that is closer than a brother,
But there are brothers who are closer than any friend.
That's the kind of brothers I have.**

INTRODUCTION

The First and Second Epistles of Paul Timothy and Epistle to Titus are usually called the Pastoral Epistles because they provide instruction and guidance concerning the care and protection of the churches. The three letters focus upon sound doctrine, conduct within the church, and leadership qualifications and responsibilities within the fellowship. The importance of sound doctrine and a life of godliness are recurring themes throughout these last three letters written by Paul.

Paul was probably released from the Roman imprisonment mentioned at the end of Acts (ch. 28). This provided an opportunity for a fourth, and unchronicled missionary journey, which may be traced to some extent by the geographical and political references in these Pastoral Epistles. Since it is not possible to harmonize all the references in the Pastoral Epistles with the Book of Acts, the places mentioned must have been visited by Paul after Acts was completed. During this time between the first Roman imprisonment and the second imprisonment he wrote 1 Timothy and Titus. Later, he traveled to Rome where he was imprisoned a second time and finally martyred (around A.D. 66-68). It is also possible that he was arrested somewhere else and then sent to Rome as a prisoner. Shortly before his execution, Paul wrote the second letter to Timothy, his son in the ministry.

AUTHOR: Paul: The letter states in the first verse that Paul is the author. This is confirmed by the unanimous testimony of Christians of the first eighteen centuries A.D., as well as by various features in the letter.

DATE: This epistle was written sometime between A.D. 62-66. It was written after the account in Acts, and after Paul's release from prison in Rome, when he returned to the missionary work to which he had been called. For this reason, the letter must be dated between A.D. 62-66, possibly A.D. 64.

RECIPIENT: Paul wrote this epistle to Timothy, who had become his close associate on his second missionary journey (Acts 16:1-3), and continued as his co-worker until Paul's martyrdom. Timothy, a native of Lystra, had a Jewish mother and a Greek father. After various assignments, the last we hear of Timothy is that he has been set free from prison (Heb. 13:23). When one co-laborer after another abandoned Paul, Timothy always remained faithful. That is not to say that those like Luke, Silas, Mark, and Titus had forsaken Paul, but others did.

THEME: A major theme of First Timothy is sound doctrine, and the danger of false doctrine. Paul left Timothy in Ephesus to deal with certain problems in the church there (1:3). A primary concern was false doctrine (1:3), the characteristics of which Paul attacks in 1:4, 7, 19; 4:1-3, 7; 6:3-5. The heresy seems to have been an early and incipient form of Gnosticism (which would be dealt with in the Prologue to the Gospel According to John more than twenty years later).

OUTLINE

Most commentaries and study Bibles include an outline of First Timothy. The following outline is from the Believer's Study Bible:

Introduction (1:1, 2)

I. True and False Ministry (1:3-20).

II. Instructions for Christian Worship (2:1-15).

A. Prayer and the Mediator (2:1-8).

B. Women and Modesty (2:9-15).

III. The Qualifications of Bishops and Deacons (3:1-13).

A. The Office of a Bishop (3:1-7).

B. The Office of a Deacon (3:8-13).

IV. The Reason for Writing (3:14-16).

V. Error and Its Correction (4:1-16).

A. The Prediction of Apostasy (4:1-5).

B. The Charge of a Good Ministry (4:6-16).

VI. The Treatment of Widows, Elders, and Others (5:1-6:2).

VII. The False Teacher Contrasted with the True Teacher (6:3-21).

BRINGING THE STORY TOGETHER

We are introduced to Saul of Tarsus, the young student of the great teacher Gamaliel, as a young man who highly approved of the stoning of Stephen (Acts 8:58). Next, we find the militant young Pharisee “ravaging the church, entering house after house; and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison” (Acts 8:3). Next, “Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest, and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem” (Acts 9:1-2).

As almost all believers are well aware, Paul met the Lord Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus. He was converted in what has been for two thousand years referred to as the “Damascus Road Experience.” His experience was one of the most dramatic conversions ever recorded, and it happened to one of the most remarkable people who ever walked on the face of the earth. Paul was

converted and called to preach the Gospel to Jews, to kings and governors, and to Gentiles. In particular, he was the Apostle to the Gentiles, even though Peter and the other Apostles reached out to Gentiles, and John spend more time working among Gentiles than any of them.

Paul, blinded by his encounter with the risen Lord, was led to Damascus where, after three days, the Lord sent Ananias to lay his hand Saul so that he might receive his sight. After his conversion, Saul spent three years in the Arabia studying the OT Scriptures and relating all he had learned in the Synagogue at Tarsus and in the graduate course in Jerusalem under Gamaliel to the Messiah. After three years he tried to reach out to the Jews in Damascus with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which led to serious consequences, as the former persecutor became the persecuted. Disciples slipped Saul out of Damascus by lowering him in a basket from a window.

Saul then went back to Jerusalem where he presented himself, not to the priest and scribes, but to the church. They did not trust Saul, the militant young man who had ravaged the church only three years earlier. It was Barnabas who befriended him and encouraged the leaders in the church at Jerusalem to accept him. After a brief time Barnabas then wisely took him to Caesarea and put him on a ship bound for Saul's home at Tarsus, where he supported himself as a tent maker while carrying on some kind of ministry in and around Tarsus.

Several years later, Barnabas went to Antioch of Syria in response to exciting reports of phenomenal success in the spread of the Gospel in the area. The extraordinary growth continued and when it became apparent that Barnabas needed an assistant he went to Tarsus and sought out Saul to come back and work with him. After about a year the Lord called Barnabas and Saul to go on a missionary journey which would take them deeper into the Gentile world. First they went to Cypress, taking John Mark with them to the home of Barnabas. From there they crossed to the mainland where John Mark turned back, possible because the effort was a lot rougher than he had expected.

Barnabas and Paul went to Antioch of Pisidia (or Antioch on the way to Pisidia), where Paul preached in the Synagogue. From there, they went to Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe, where churches were established, and where the missionaries met with serious opposition. It was at Lystra where a young man named Timothy, half Jewish and half Gentile, was saved, along with his mother Eunice and his grandmother Lois.

The missionaries had started out as Barnabas and Saul, but by the time they returned to Antioch of Syria to report to the church they were known as Paul and Barnabas. Paul had become the leader and chief spokesman, and it may be assumed that it was with the approval of Barnabas. When they reported on the mission work among the Gentiles they met Judiazers, Jews who professed faith in Christ, who had come from Jerusalem during their absence. These Judaizers would have made Christianity another sect of Judaism if they had their way. They insisted that the Gentiles must first be circumcised - they had to become proselytes to Judaism and then they could become Christians.

Paul refused to compromise and when they could not settle the issue at Antioch, scheduled a conference in Jerusalem - the Jerusalem Conference of A. D. 51 (Acts 15; Gal. 2). The Judaizers

vehemently opposed Paul and Barnabas, but with the help of Simon Peter they convinced the conference that Gentiles are saved the same way as Jews, by grace through faith. James, the half-brother of our Lord, who seems to have been the moderator of the conference, wrote the opinion (decision or ruling) of the conference. Paul tells us in Galatians that he had Titus with him and brought him out as a test case to have the leaders in Jerusalem affirm the opinion of the conference (Gal. 2).

They returned to Antioch with a report and after a period of time they made plans to go back to the church that had been started on the First Missionary Journey and read James' letter to them. Barnabas wanted to take John Mark again but Paul did not trust him and would not let him go with them. Finally, Barnabas took John Mark and went back to Cypress and Paul took Silas and went back to the churches that had been started in the first mission trip.

They read the letter from James, helped organize the work, elect leaders, and encouraged them in the work. At Lystra, Paul invited young Timothy to join him and Silas on the Second Missionary Journey. Though Paul stated that he would have absolutely refused to permit Titus to be circumcised, he circumcised Timothy before he permitted him to accompany him. What was the difference? Titus was a Gentile, Timothy was half-Jewish. What difference did that make? Timothy would be well received in the synagogues only if he was circumcised.

Paul had a mission strategy. He followed the major Roman roads to the major population centers and once he arrived there he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day. He was invited to speak and he proclaimed Jesus as the Messiah. He stayed in the synagogue as long as the Jews permitted, but when forced out, took believing Jews and Gentiles and started a church. The Gospel would then spread from the major population centers out into the smaller towns and villages. Timothy would not have been accepted in the synagogues unless he was circumcised (identified with Judaism).

Paul, Silas, and Timothy went on to Troas where they were joined by a physician named Luke, whom the Holy Spirit would inspire to write both the Gospel According to Luke and the Book of Acts, which chronicled the early spread of the Gospel. They would be led of the Lord to go to Philippi, and from there to Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, and then to Corinth where they would continue for eighteen months. There would be a Third Missionary Journey, which closed with Paul and others taking a love-offering to the suffering saints in Jerusalem. When he arrived, he went immediately to report to James, the half-brother of Jesus. James counseled him regarding his acceptance by the Jews at the Temple, but when someone from Ephesus saw him he began claiming that Paul had brought a Gentile into the Temple. An angry mob - picture the Palestinians in Israel screaming and working themselves in to a frenzy - took Paul and would no doubt have killed him if he had not been rescued by Roman soldiers (not arrested as some believe, though it meant about the same thing). When the captain learned of a death threat to Paul he sent him by night to Caesarea, where he was a prisoner for two years before appealing to Rome (his right as a Roman citizen). On the voyage to Rome Paul was miraculously saved from a storm, a violent sea, and from a poisonous snake bite. Then came the first Roman imprisonment - Paul was finally in Rome, though not as he had planned. He was released from prison and probably traveled to Spain and then back to Ephesus, where he had spent

three years on the Second Missionary Journey. In Ephesus, Paul had to deal with some really serious problems and when he moved on to Macedonia (Philippi). But left Timothy in charge at Ephesus. He then wrote the First Epistle to Timothy to encourage him and to guide him in dealing with problems in the church.

FIRST TIMOTHY VERSE BY VERSE

“Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus according to the command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus, our hope: 2 To Timothy, my true child in the faith. Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord” (1 Tim 1:1-2, HCSB).

1:1 - PAUL. Following the accepted letter writing style of the day, Paul begins by identifying himself. This letter was not delivered in an envelop with a return address on it. There was no printed letterhead. It was a scroll, so it was necessary to put the name of the writer and the recipient at the beginning. Timothy would have needed no further introduction to his mentor. No one knew Paul any better than Timothy, his fellow servant of Jesus Christ.

For those who would be reading this epistle in years, generations, even centuries ahead, there is a brief introduction - not determined by Paul but by the Holy Spirit, Who miraculously inspired the writing, has miraculously preserved it, and miraculously illuminates the hearts and minds of readers of Scripture. This is Saul of Tarsus, the brilliant, militant Pharisee who met the Lord Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus, a city to which he was traveling with a letter from the Sanhedrin authorizing him to arrest, question (torture), and take believers in “the way” (of Christ) back to Jerusalem.

Young Saul of Tarsus, the student of Gamaliel, the esteemed teacher of the Pharisees, was converted and called to be a minister to Jews, kings, and Gentiles. The Apostle to the Gentiles used his Hebrew name Saul while working among the Jewish people, but when he moved into the Gentile world, he used his Roman name Paul.

There are many people even today, after almost two thousand years, who are convinced that Paul lived the Christian life more fully than any other believer ever has. Only the Lord knows that for sure, but it would be hard to imagine anyone surpassing him in every aspect of his life and ministry. I seriously doubt that Paul loved the Lord more than John, the beloved disciple, but there is an obvious difference in their training and preparation for the work. Paul may not have been the most brilliant theologian - we will never know since the Pauline Epistles are the product of the Holy Spirit - but many of the most brilliant theologians in the history of the Church have spent a lifetime studying the Epistles of Paul.

What we need to do here is to remember that this is one of Paul’s pastoral epistles, and he does not need to prove his identity to Timothy. This is not a great theological treatise like Ephesians or Romans, it is a pastoral epistle, but there is a strong emphasis on sound doctrine.

SPECIAL NOTE ON PAUL

Paul was hated and maligned by pagans and by the Judaizers of his day. But after all these centuries no one knows the names of many of his enemies, and the ones we know, we know because Paul mentioned them. However, the name Paul is known throughout Christendom. He is held in high esteem by millions of believers, but not by all who profess to believe in Jesus Christ. Let me mention three things that will illustrate some of the reasons some people are still attacking Paul.

First, there are those “scholars” who have been attacking his authorship of various Epistles which have attributed to Paul. For some reason or another, liberals love to challenge the scholarship of various books of the Bible. One wonders why some have done this with such zeal unless there is something in the content which they reject. But what would that be?

Second, there are those who did not like Paul because of their sinful lifestyle. For eight or nine years I drove from northeast Louisiana to Sledge, Mississippi to visit my parents almost every week, and a few times more than once a week. My mother suffered through a long, eight year battle after she was found to have a malignant brain tumor. My father had a series of heart attacks and strokes, and while his health problems began before Mother’s, he was able to care for her for a few years before she had to go into a nursing home.

Either going to or returning from the visit with my parents, I often stopped by a health club in Greenville, Mississippi. I made a number of friends there over the years and enjoyed the brief visits. I had only recently met one young man and learned that he was driving to Memphis two or three days a week for classes he was taking toward his Masters, I believe in one of the social sciences. A few weeks after I met this young man, a friend commented that this man was a homosexual, and apparently he was “out of the closet.”

I had an opportunity to speak with him one day, so I asked him if he had a relationship with the Lord. He assured me he was a Christian and that he was a reader and teacher in his church. The church was not in Greenville, so he had to drive some distance to the church each Sunday. I asked him what he read and he told me he liked to read from Psalms. After talking about various books, I asked him if he ever read from Romans. His quick response was, “No. I don’t like Paul.” I have found that Paul is not very popular with homosexuals. But, we must remember that Paul had a lot to say about heterosexual sins, too.

Third, there are people who do not like Paul for other reasons. I recently met a woman who was obviously well educated and just as obviously a professional woman. She surprised me when she said, “I just read your book” (UNDEFEATED: FINDING PEACE IN A WORLD FULL OF TROUBLE, a commentary on Philipians). She quickly added, “And I usually don’t like Paul.” We discussed Paul for a minute or two as I tried to make the point that Paul was inspired to write what he wrote.

The lady stepped around and with an expression that seemed to assume that no one could possibly disagree with her opinion, she said, “Paul was strictly a product of his times.” What did she mean by that statement? Her confident smile invited one to agree that Paul had very negative attitude toward women. Perhaps she had read what Paul had to say in this epistle about the role of women in the church.

I have talked with people who did not like what Paul had to say about divorce, qualifications for deacons, gifts of the Spirit, stewardship, or worship. What we must do is remember that all Scripture is the product of the mind of the Holy Spirit and not simply Paul’s ruminations. I remember the banner that was suspended over the choir loft in a New Orleans area church: GOD SAID, I BELIEVE IT, AND THAT SETTLES IT. Sounds good, doesn’t it? Well there is just one problem with that. When God says it, it is settled. The only question is whether or not I am going to “get in on what He is up to”! When God speaks eternal truth is proclaimed, and it is settled for all eternity. The only question for me is whether or not I will read it, seek to understand it, and obey it. When God speaks, I have no right to edit, amend, or filter it through the philosophy or psychology of the world.

AN APOSTLE OF CHRIST JESUS. An apostle was one who was sent out. Jesus chose twelve apostles whom he trained to send out into the world with His message of salvation. Later, he appointed His half-brother James and Paul as apostles. A New Testament apostle was one who had been appointed directly by Jesus Himself. Since Paul was not one of the twelve, and since there was so much animosity toward him among the Judaizers, his apostleship was questioned by those who sought to pervert the Gospel. Thus, Paul is inspired to write that he was an apostle of Jesus Christ “according to the commandment of God our Savior, and of Christ Jesus, who is our hope.”

HOPE. The word hope in modern America is often used as a synonym for wishful thinking. I wish I had a million dollars. I wish I could fly like a bird. Or, I wish I could afford to take a vacation this year. Hope may refer to something that may well be possible, or it may be used to denote that which is out of reach for the average person.

The New Testament word rendered hope is much stronger. It denotes something that is certain, something reserved for us. Jesus is our hope, and Jesus is not pie in the sky by and bye. He is both a present reality and our assurance of eternal life.

1:2 - TO TIMOTHY. Paul calls Timothy, “My true child in the faith.” Timothy was always faithful to his father in the ministry, who was also his mentor.

GRACE, MERCY AND PEACE . Paul begins this epistle with the typical style for a Greco-Roman letter of the day, including the author, and the recipients, and a greeting. But Paul's greeting is not the standard greeting, either for the Jewish readers or the Greek readers. It is a combination of the Greek and Jewish greeting which brings together concepts precious to the early church. The normal Greek greeting (*chairein*) carries the basic idea of joy, pleasure, beauty. Grace is from the Greek word *charis*, which in NT means God’s unmerited favor and love.

In a Greek letter it could simply mean “greetings”, as in Philippians 1, or James 1:1). As used in the New Testament, it refers to the unmerited favor of God. It has been well said that it is easier to define than to believe. To believe in grace we have to give up our arrogance, and ideas about our own worth (self esteem). Robert Schuler has the largest viewing audience of any evangelist in the world today. Millions tune in because they are turned on by his gospel of self-esteem. The whole sin problem to him is a matter of low self-esteem, which means that the answer to man’s sin problem is self-esteem. The high self-esteem, self-worth, self-love gospel stands in marked contrast to the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. We can never accept spiritual blessings as ours because of our own merit. We can never claim God’s blessings as our right or as our property by our own merit.

Mercy. It was an oversight which my good friend Dr. Gene Jeffries caught and for that reason I am going to use his note on Mercy:

Mercy (*eleoj*) means to “take the hurt out” (as in an eleemosynary institution, a hospital). What intrigues me is this: only in Paul's Pastorals does he sandwich this in between “grace” and “peace.” Could it be that he uses it to Timothy and Titus because God's “frontline servants” need hurt removed more (or more frequently) than others? [Dr. Gene Jeffries, President of Cambridge Graduate School].

I might add that Grace and mercy are like two sides of the same coin. Grace is the positive side and mercy is the negative side. If I receive mercy it means that I do not have to pay the full penalty for my offence. One who pleads the mercy of the court is saying, “I am guilty but I do not want to pay the full penalty of the law” (that would be justice, but I want mercy). If I receive grace it means that I receive something I could never deserve, the unmerited love of God.

Peace. This (*eirene*, Gk.; *shalom* in Heb.) Was the usual Hebrew greeting. The word carries the idea of joining, or weaving together. Peace in the Jewish sense is the symphony of life made meaningful through a right relationship with God. The theological order is significant as well; it is only through the grace made available by the shed blood of the Lamb of God that peace will come. Peace is positive and not negative. It connotes far more than the absence of strife and hostility - it expresses the desire for harmony with God and with other people.

Here, peace has to do with a new relationship and points to blessings we receive because of grace. There is a problem, however. Today we usually understand peace to mean an inner peace of mind, but Paul was not a post-Freudian psychologist. God seeks to save neurotics. There are sincere Christians who are deeply troubled. Believers are often put to the test. How, then, does grace bring us peace? When one accepts Christ, the warfare between himself and God is over. So, Paul prays for them to realize what they already have (it was not dependent upon his prayer). From the point of one’s new birth in Christ the Lord seeks to make the peace that passes all understanding a reality in every aspect of the life of His children.

That other Christian writers would be influenced by Paul’s new letter writing style is seen in the

writing of the early Church Fathers. Polycarp, who was probably an infant at the time of Paul's martyrdom, would show the influence of Paul's writing style a half century later in a letter to the Philippian church. He began his letter, "Polycarp, and the presbyters with him, to the Church of God sojourning at Philippi: Mercy to you, and peace from God Almighty, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior, be multiplied."

Paul prays for both grace mercy, and peace. We need mercy, but we need more. Grace is the source of peace - peace is always dependent upon grace. If God withdraws his grace, there will be no peace and we would be lost. Prayer for grace recognizes a continuous need. The grace of God always comes as His free and unmerited gift; it is never our private possession - not an inalienable right. "That Gentiles have finally been made partakers in this marvelous mystery of God is the prime cause of the keynote of joy sounded throughout the epistle".

Millions are seeking peace today, but they will never find it anywhere except in the Prince of Peace. Perhaps you have seen the bumper sticker, or read the words on a church sign: NO JESUS, NO PEACE, KNOW JESUS, KNOW PEACE. Let me try to adapt that to this Scripture - there is

No joy without peace,
No peace without grace,
No grace without Jesus.

FROM GOD THE FATHER. The doctrine of the Trinity may not be stated to the satisfaction of every reader of the New Testament, but it is very clear to many believers. The Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Trinity, is the divine Author of this Scripture, the one who inspired the writing of all Scripture. It is so much the product of the mind of the Holy Spirit that we can think of Scripture as divine truth exhaled by the Holy Spirit - yet not a mechanical transmission. Compare the Gospel According to John with the Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians and you will see that one writer is a simple fisherman called to do a mighty work, and the other is a brilliant and polished teacher and writer.

Here the emphasis is on the First Person of the Trinity. In the Old Testament we see various names for God - Elohim (God - emphasis is on power - he had the power to create all things), Adonai (Lord - emphasis is on sovereignty; He has the right to reign over all He created), and Yahweh (I AM, rendered LORD - this is the covenant name for God). In the New Testament, He is God the Father, our Heavenly Father.

AND CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD. In the OT God is Lord, or LORD, but in the NT, Jesus, the Second Person of the Trinity, is usually identified with the title, Lord. Jesus is His name; Christ is His title (the Anointed One).

The Holy Spirit was sent on the Day of Pentecost to bring people to God the Father through Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, Who came and suffered and bled and died, was buried, raised, and then

taken up to Heaven where he sits at the right hand of the Father, making intercession for us. The Holy Spirit is not here to direct our attention to Himself, but to the Father through the Son. We pray to the Father, through the Son, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

There are those who reject the whole concept of the Holy Spirit and base it in part on the fact that word Trinity is not mentioned in the Bible. As I sit here at my keyboard, I am having a lot of trouble recalling any mention of a Lap Top or a Notebook, or a hard drive, or soft ware. But, I have not let the fact that the terms are not in the Bible keep me from using them.

I once had a long conversation with the late Dr. H. Leo Eddleman, who had been president of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary when I was a student there. He mentioned one of the most outstanding Christian leaders in America and went on to tell me that this man was attending a convention of his denomination when he was invited to visit with a professor of theology in his hotel room. Dr. Eddleman told me this well known pastor went into that room with a trinitary view of God and came out with a unitary view of God.

The unitary theory holds that there is but one Person in the Godhead. That one Person plays different roles at different times. He played the role of the Father in the OT, the Son during the earthly ministry of Christ, and the role of the Holy Spirit following Pentecost. That view runs aground at the baptism of Jesus, when the Son was baptized, the Spirit descended, and the Father spoke. To deny the Trinity - three in Person, one in essence - creates some interesting problems. For example, when Jesus withdrew to be alone with the Father, or when he prayed to the Father, if there was no Father He was deceiving His disciples. When he claimed that he did not know the time of His return, only the Father knew, He would have been misleading His followers.

Francis Shaeffer said that it was the doctrine of the Trinity that led him from agnosticism to theism. If God had been forced to create man in order to have a relationship with someone, then God would have been incomplete. God had a had a perfect horizontal relationship with the Son and the Holy Spirit, and created man for His pleasure, not to fill some inadequacy within Himself.

II. INSTRUCTION CONCERNING DOCTRINE, 1:3-20

A. Paul Warns Against False Doctrines, 1:3-11

1:3 - REMAIN IN EPHESUS. Paul, after release from prison, went to Ephesus and after an indeterminate time traveled on to Philippi, leaving Timothy in Ephesus to carry on the work. Here, he writes back to Timothy: *“As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus, in order that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines.”* Two things stand out here. First, Paul trusted Timothy to teach sound doctrine. Second, He trusted him to refute false doctrine. The teaching of sound doctrine is essential to the church and the individual believer and most called preachers spend a lot of time teaching people the truth. There are people who teach

strange doctrines, but we must teach the truth to those will listen. We must also refute false doctrine. But Paul did not tell Timothy to attack those who taught false doctrine, he told him to teach those who taught strange doctrines. If those who teach strange doctrines are open to instruction you will accomplish more instructing them than attacking them.

1:4 - MYTHS AND ENDLESS GENEALOGIES. Timothy was left in Ephesus to instruct the teachers there not to “*pay attention to myths and endless genealogies, which give rise to mere speculation rather than furthering the administration of God which is by faith.*” Myths probably meant a Jewish preoccupation with O.T. genealogies. This does mean that there was anything wrong with genealogical records, but a preoccupation with them, or a wrong emphasis could be either fruitless and a waste of time, or it could become sinful if it pursued extra-biblical paths. The Believer’s Study Bible offers a good summary:

“Endless genealogies” may refer to an incipient Gnostic heresy which distinguished between the good, supreme God on the one hand and a bad creator on the other. This type of heresy often pictured the bad creator as a distant descendant of the good God, with a long list of angelic beings (an endless genealogy) forming the link between the two. "Fables" or myths were a part of this family tree. In Paul's day, the phrase could also refer to the widespread Jewish preoccupation with elaborations on O.T. genealogies [BSB].

What is wrong with the myths and legends? Paul says that what they were doing gave “rise to mere speculation rather than furthering the administration of God which is by faith.” Obviously, the Lord prefers the furthering of the administration of God to fruitless speculation. Fruitless speculation will not advance one’s knowledge of God, his understanding of sound doctrine, or his relationship with Jesus Christ. But that is not the worst part of it. Those who engage in such speculations can influence others, especially their family, establishing faulty traditions that may be passed on from generation to generation.

1:5 - THE GOAL OF OUR INSTRUCTION. “*But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.*” We live in a day of mission statements, goals, and themes and mottos. Dean Doster, Executive Director of the Louisiana Baptist Convention has often shared with the Executive Board his vision, mission statement, and goals. That was one difference I observed when I was elected to serve on the board a few years ago. In the early nineties when I was on the board I recall goals and themes, but when I came back on the board I began hearing about mission statements. When I went through my orientation as a new member of the Board of Trustees for LifeWay Christian Resources, President Jimmy Draper made sure we understood the mission statement, goals, and future plans of LifeWay. This is good. Years ago, Luther Rice Seminary professor Dr. Charles Williams explained why he pushed doctoral students to plan their work (and then work their plan): “To fail to plan is to plan to fail.”

What then is the goal of sound doctrine, of teaching the truth? The first goal is “love from a pure heart.” We cannot begin to claim a relationship with God if we do not love Him and love our

brothers and sisters in Christ. Furthermore, there is no love that does not come from a pure heart. A second stated goal is “a good conscience and a sincere faith.” Faith here is not a mindless leap of faith, which amounts to nothing more than wishful thinking, but faith based on God’s truth. Francis Shaeffer placed a lot of emphasis on the importance of our distinguishing between “blind” faith and a faith based on sound doctrine.

1:6 - FRUITLESS DISCUSSIONS. The reason Paul challenges Timothy to instruct those who were teaching strange doctrines was that “*For some men, straying from these things, have turned aside to fruitless discussion.*” We have been entrusted with the most important message the world has ever received. We have been given the responsibility for teaching the greatest teachings the world has ever known. Fruitless discussions do not advance the Kingdom of God.

1:7 - WANTING TO BE TEACHERS. Paul explains why his instructions to Timothy are so important. There were some who wanted to be teachers of the Law. For one reason or another, there were people who desired the position of teacher. The only problem with that was that some of these people was that they did not “*understand either what they are saying or the matters about which they make confident assertions.*” I have been in the ministry for over forty years and during that time I have discovered that with some people not knowing what some people were talking about has never stopped people from talking.

1:8 -THE LAW IS GOOD. “*But we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully.*” The Law is good and all good things come from God. The Law is by design limited - yet the Law as it was handed down from God is good. Perhaps you have read the arguments that the Law was adapted from earlier codes, like the Code of Hammurabi, and no doubt some people will buy into those arguments. The truth is that Noah stepped off the Ark with certain laws he had received from God. He taught them to his sons, who in turn taught them to their sons. After a few generations the law as Noah taught it to his sons may have been amended from time to time, with some things added and some things lost, but the Code of Hammurabi was, without a doubt, influenced by the earlier law of God. The Mosaic Law, in the opinion of this writer, would have been more consistent with the oral law of God than any human document. With the same infallible Author, how could have not been so?

The Law is good if used lawfully? The Law is good if used for its original purpose. If taught as a theory of justification by works it is being used wrongfully.

1:9 - LAW NOT FOR RIGHTEOUS. In verse 8 Paul said that the Law is good when used lawfully. Here he adds, “*realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous man, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers.*” The Law was not written to govern the activities of righteous people - there aren’t any! (“There is none righteous, no not one”). The Law was given to control the activities of those who are:

- 1) Lawless - those who live as though there were no law, they reject it or hold it in contempt.
- 2) Rebellious - those who are in rebellion against God and all codes of morality and decency. I live a

few miles from West Monroe, LA High School. They have won several state championships in recent years. Two coaches, Shelby Ainsworth and James Remedies are very good friends (I was Shelby's pastor and James' wife's pastor at Forest, LA). On a game day you will see the Rebel flag flying from everything in sight, including the back of pickup trucks. I also grew up an hour from the University of Mississippi (to us, Ole Miss). Rebel flags were everywhere. I never dreamed that the flag would be seen as an emblem of racism. To us, it celebrated our being from the south - rather than the north. The days when the flag was a symbol of rebellion against the union had been left behind decades earlier. They could joke about being rebels without actually being rebellious.

Actor James Dean was the star of the movie, *REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE*, but he was certainly not the last rebel without a cause. Today, many young people actively follow the rebellious lifestyle, complete with alcohol, drugs, loud music, immorality, and work ethic.

3) Ungodly - those who adopt standards and philosophies that are in opposition to God.

4) Sinners - those who fall short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23), and we are all sinners. David, in confessing his sin with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband, used three words: sin, transgression, and iniquity. Sin means to miss the mark, as an archer misses the bull's eye (we all do that). Transgression means to cross the line with your eyes wide open. Iniquity denotes crooked, or warped. You keep on sinning and committing transgressions and your life is going to end up warped by that sin. The OT distinguishes between sins committed without premeditation and planning and sins committed with your eyes wide open (presumptuous sins).

ILLUSTRATION. When my younger brother, Mike, returned from military duty in West Germany a number of years ago he told me about standing guard duty on the border between Czechoslovakia and West Germany. He was standing guard at the Iron Curtain - at times he stood on the Iron Curtain. Once, he stepped over the line (with his eyes wide open). He transgressed. If he had been captured there would have been a price to pay. However, it was common for those on either side to step over the line for a moment and then return to their own side.

Sinners often do not consider the consequences of their action. At times, however, they are keenly aware of the nature of the sin, and possibly the consequences, but they go on and do it any way. People who continue to do that will eventually end up deep in iniquity. There is no relief from it, and no escape. There is only forgiveness.

5) UNHOLY - The word holy denotes separate, or different from other people or things. Unholy people conform to the fallen world, whose prince is called Satan.

6) PROFANE - We live in a profane world and it is getting more profane all the time. I remember when the entertainment industry spent a lot of time talking about Clarke Gable's four letter word in *GONE WITH THE WIND*. What was the feminists' mantra of the eighties, "We've come a long way, Baby!" Don't you love it when some foul-mouthed Hollywood star comes on TV and lectures us about keeping the air and streams clean when they are polluting the airwaves with profanity and

vulgarity? Children are surprised when they are called down for their language at school because they talk that way at home.

7) **THOSE WHO KILL THEIR FATHERS AND MOTHERS** - those who break the hearts of their parents, whose rebellion causes ulcers, strokes and heart attacks. In some case, they may even injure them physically.

8) **MURDERS** - The Ten Commandments pose such a serious threat to America today that the ACLU (the great defender of our liberties) feel compelled to try have them removed from all public facilities. One of those commandments tells us that we should do no murder. God gave the Law to forbid murder and to define punishment for it.

1:10 - (9) **IMMORAL MEN** - men here is used in the generic sense of all people, mankind (or humankind, if you prefer). America needs desperately to return to a biblical standard of morality. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people" (1. Cor. 5:0). He counseled them to "Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body" (1 Cor6:18). This means that Christians should flee all kinds and expressions of immorality. This means adultery, as well as pornography, vulgar stories and music, entertainment that encourages lust.

10) **HOMOSEXUALS** - This includes all expressions of homosexuality as well as all those things that would promote the homosexual lifestyle. There are few things that testify to the moral decline in America than the sin of homosexuality. Let us understand this before we go on: homosexuality is a sin, and it is a serious sin. We need to tell the world that. Sadly, we even need to tell the church that it is a sin. God loves the sinner; He sent His Son to die for all sinners, but He hates sin.

The Supreme Court of the United States has ruled that an anti-sodomy law in Texas was unconstitutional. The Episcopal church has upset many of its members as well as others denominations by electing an open homosexual as a bishop. Spokesmen for the church went before the nation to explain that they had led in a number of changes and their member accepted them. They believed their members would accept this decision. Sean Hannity asked about what the Bible had to say and one of the priests replied, "We do not look to the Bible as our authority." If you reject the Bible as your authority you open yourself to anything.

11) **KIDNAPPERS** - Kidnaping is a serious crime. President George Bush addressed the nation to discuss the peace keeping efforts in Iraq and to challenge the nations of the world to do everything within their power to stop the slave traffic that is now a world wide problem. Young girls, and sometimes boys, are kidnaped and sold as sex slaves. In some Islamic countries, the children of Christians are taken and sold into slavery. Kidnapers have taken babies and children, and on occasion adults, and held them for ransom. We need to teach children from an early age that kidnaping is a sin. How often today do we hear that the kidnaper of a child is his/ her own parent?

12) **LIARS AND PERJURERS**. "Lying lips are an abomination to the LORD, But those who deal

truthfully are His delight” (Pro. 12:22).

The Law was given to control all these sins “and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching.” God gave us the Law to define what is sinful, or criminal. But, it could never produce righteousness.

1:11 - THE GLORIOUS GOSPEL. Paul finishes the sentence: “*according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, with which I have been entrusted.*” Indeed, the Gospel is glorious because it is from the “blessed God.” It is the Gospel with which Paul had been entrusted, and our trust today is just as sacred as that given Paul.

B. Paul on the Grace of God, 1:12-17

1:12 - I THANK GOD. “*I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service.*” If you have taken the time to read Paul’s account of his hunger, shipwrecks, shivering cold, floating on the sea for three days, snake bite, stonings, beatings, and the persecution, you might wonder why he was thanking God for calling him to that ministry. Most every pastor can understand that of which Paul spoke, though very few today have had to face those trials. A friend says, “I want to resign every Monday morning.” I can think of a few Saturdays when I was tempted. I could have saved myself a lot of misery if I had chosen any number of other professions. But since God called me to this ministry I could not have been happy doing anything else.

1:13 - I WAS FORMERLY. “*Even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. And yet I was shown mercy, because I acted ignorantly in unbelief.*” Many servants of the Lord can say with Paul, “I was formerly...” George was the chaplain’s assistant at the Mississippi State Penitentiary at Parchman. Formerly, he was a thief. When I knew him he was waiting for the day he would be released so that he could go to work for the people he had victimized. Tommy could say, “Formerly, I was a murderer. I didn’t set out to commit murder, but in a drunken rage I beat and strangled her to death.” Tommy told me he wanted to serve the Lord. Robert would have to say, “Formerly, I was a cold-blooded murderer. I married her, took out an insurance policy and two weeks later I killed her.” I will never forget the moment at the Mississippi State Penitentiary when he held up the New Testament I had given him at the Hinds County Jail in Jackson, Mississippi, pointing to the place in the front where I had written a note.

Paul often testified concerning his former life. He had been a

- 1) blasphemer - he had spoken evil against Jesus Christ.
- 2) persecutor - he spearheaded the persecution against Christians with religious zeal and fervor.
- 3) violent aggressor - Picture a modern day Iraqi or Palestinian attacking an enemy today.

Paul had formerly been all those things, but in spite of all that, he had been shown mercy because he

had “acted ignorantly in unbelief.” God had shown Him mercy, but if he had not repented his ignorance would not have been an excuse.

1:14 - THE GRACE OF OUR LORD. If you want to know about grace, go to the Pauline Epistles: *“and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus.”* Paul deserved justice but received mercy and grace. God’s grace was “more than abundant.” Some speak of the supremacy of grace; I usually speak of the supremacy of God and the sufficiency of grace. God Himself tells us that His grace is sufficient for all our needs. Here Paul tells us it is more than abundant. Grace is the unmerited love of God we find in Jesus Christ our Lord.

1:15 - JESUS CAME TO SAVE SINNERS. *“It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all.”* Paul’s wording is interesting here “It is a trustworthy statement, deserving of full acceptance...” Since the Bible has no filler material, every word of it is significant. The statement he is making carries the full authority of the inspired Word of God - in other words, you have God’s Word on it. To reject it places one in extreme danger of hell forever. But there are many people who do not consider themselves to have reject the Word of God, they are just in no hurry.

Just what is it that is so important? Jesus Christ came to save sinners. Sinners cannot “find” God. They cannot take credit in any way for their salvation. God takes the initiative and does all the saving. The Father loved us enough to give His only begotten Son for our salvation. Jesus suffered and bled and died for our sins. He came to seek and to save sinners. The Holy Spirit was sent to bears witness to the Son. He convicts lost people of sin, righteousness, and the judgement to come. Our salvation is the work of the Trinity. I cannot explain the Trinity to everyone’s satisfaction, but I accept that the Bible has to say on the subject. We worship a God who is one in essence, three in Person.

There is no one in the world who can offer a defense for rejecting Jesus Christ. He actively seeks sinners. We have His word on it. Paul called himself the foremost of all sinners, and Jesus came to save him.

1:16 - I FOUND MERCY. *“And yet for this reason I found mercy, in order that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience, as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life.”* Paul is a great example of a lost and condemned sinner who found the Lord’s mercy and grace. Paul considered himself “the foremost of all sinners,” but Jesus saved him. Many people believe that Paul lived the Christian life more fully and more sacrificially than any other person ever has. They may well be right - I would never argue with them.

There are many people who were once deep in sin, whom the Lord saved. Paul thought of himself as the worst of sinners. He didn’t know William Wetzel. Wetzel was serving a life sentence at the Mississippi State Penitentiary when another prisoner crossed him. Wetzel killed him, but this time he was given the death sentence. Chaplain Roscoe Hicks visited with Wetzel and he came under conviction of sin and repented. He prayed, asking Jesus Christ to come into his life. According to the chaplain William Wetzel had the highest IQ of anyone who had ever set foot on the grounds at

Parchman. They tried to get his sentenced changed to life without parole. He was digesting the Bible faster than anyone the chaplain had ever seen and a lot of people were convinced that he could help a lot of prisoners if he was permitted to work with them for the rest of his life. The petition to stop the execution and commute his sentence to life without parole died on the Lt. Governor's desk (Gov. J. P. Coleman had been the judge and referred it to Lt. Gov. Carol Gartin). I talked with Chaplain Hicks about the execution and later with one of the officers. They both said they had never seen anything like it. The executioner had tears in his eyes, and so did everyone else there. The guard told me he had witnessed a number of executions but he would never witness another one.

There are those who would say that William Witzel found God. No! Jesus found William Wetzel, one of the worst sinners in the country. In the short time he had to live before his execution he touched a lot of lives.

Kenny Wagoner killed several more people than William Wetzel, He was the most famous (or infamous) prisoner in the history of the state. The most dangerous men in the state penitentiary were in awe of Kenny Wagoner. He was six foot, five inches of muscle, with a fifty-six inch chest, and hands that totally engulfed mine. He handled the bloodhounds and ran down escapees. They said that if the dog's nose touched a door, Kenny Wagoner put his foot through it and went in and took the prisoner back. He never failed. Then he walked off. Years later, he surrendered when he developed serious health problems. I talked with him eight days before he died in the hospital at Parchman. He was one of the friendliest men I have ever known. He had an incredible personality. After a visit I will never forget, I tried to talk with him about his need for Jesus Christ. His response was, "I don't have anything against God. A preacher told me one time if I wasn't for Him I was against Him, and I don't have anything against Him." As we drove away, Chaplain Hicks asked me if I thought Kenny Wagner would ever be saved. I said, "No. He has too much pride." In what would a man like Kenny Wagner take such pride? (I never heard anyone call him either Kenny or Wagner, only Kenny Wagner - like Jesse James.) He assured me he would never tell a lie, and that he would respect my sister just like he would respect his own sister. I felt that he meant it. However, only eight days later, he died without Christ and there was but one place for him, and that is hell - forever.

1:17 - TO THE KING ETERNAL. *"Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen."* There are two parts to this verse. First, the praise is addressed to "the King eternal." He is the invisible God, the only God. The second part is the praise, and in word and deed Paul sought to bring glory and honor to Him.

C. Paul's Charge to Timothy, 1:18-20

1:18 - THIS COMMAND. *"This command I entrust to you, Timothy, my son, in accordance with the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may fight the good fight."* On his authority as an Apostle of Jesus Christ, Paul commands Timothy to do certain things. Note that this command was in accord with the "prophecies made concerning" Timothy. Today, we might say, based on the inspired, infallible, inerrant Word of the living God, there are commands with which we would charge one who being licensed or ordained to the Gospel Ministry. Of course, Timothy was already in

the ministry and previous instructions had been given to him. What is the charge? To Timothy, it was “that by them (the prophecies) you may fight the good fight.” We would charge the young minister today that by the Word of God he might fight the good fight. There is no other way to fight the good fight than by the Word of God, in the power of the One Who inspired every word of it.

1:19 - KEEPING FAITH. “*Keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith.*” A shipwrecked faith is a serious thing. If one does not keep the faith he will suffer such a shipwreck. I knew a man when I was young in the ministry. I visited in his home, worshiped with him and his family, worked with his children, and benefitted from his wisdom and experience. I thought he really loved the Lord. Thirty-five years later when I began reading and hearing about some ungodly things he had done I could hardly believe this was the man I had known. I mentioned it to two men who had had more recent experience with him and they painted a picture of a man I did not know, a picture of greed, avarice, deception, lies, and arrogance. What had happened to my friend? Is it possible that he had suffered a shipwreck in regards to their faith? It is also possible that he had no real faith in Jesus Christ.

1:20 - DELIVERED OVER TO SATAN. “*Among these are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have delivered over to Satan, so that they may be taught not to blaspheme.*” I don’t know about you, but this is rather shocking to me. How did Paul do that? Why did he do it? Nevertheless, that is what it says and that is what he had done. But what does this mean?

Being delivered to Satan could mean one of two things: (1) Discipline: It could refer to an act of the church excluding the offenders from membership and returning them to the world over which Satan is prince (John 14:30). No judgment concerning the eternal salvation of the offender is involved. He is merely excluded from the fellowship of the church. The basis for such action is found in Matt. 18:15-18 (cf. note). (2) Punishment: It could refer to an action similar to that in Acts 5:1-11, in which physical judgment came to Ananias and Sapphira (1 Cor. 5:5) [BSB].

III. INSTRUCTION ABOUT WORSHIP, 2:1-15

A. Prayer, 2:1-8

2:1 - PRAYERS. As we would expect in a letter like this, Paul writes to his son in the ministry, “*First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men.*” Prayer is one of the greatest blessings God gives to His children. He invites us to pray, motivates us to pray, commands us to pray. David and other psalmists illustrate how we are to pray under different circumstances. Jesus’ disciples asked Him to teach them to pray - they did not ask Him to teach them “how” to pray, they asked Him to teach them to pray. There is no Christian who has not needed to go to the Lord and ask for help with prayer. I know “that” I need to pray; I know “How” to pray; and I know “why” I should pray. Then why is it that I become distracted just at the time I know

I need to be spending time with my Lord in prayer?

My wife Becky has had a routine for many years. She goes into the bedroom and closes herself off from everything else for anywhere from one-half hour to an hour each evening. She reads her Bible and spends time with the Lord in prayer. At times writes out a verse of Scripture for me to read. Then, she makes notes in her journal, as she has done for twenty-five years, noting the highlights of the day, including the weather, church reports, family activities, and current events. This is a discipline many of us lack, but one from which we would all profit.

Four of the seven Greek words for prayer occur in this verse:

- 1) SUPPLICATIONS carries the idea of asking for definite needs.
- 2) PRAYERS is the most general word for communication with the Lord
- 3) INTERCESSIONS denotes the privilege God grants to His children so that they may come into His presence in behalf of others.
- 4) GIVING OF THANKS is an integral part of prayer. This denotes the expression of gratitude for Gods grace - the source of all His blessings (1 Thess. 5:17, 18). Expressions of praise may be associated with the “giving of thanks.”

2:2 - FOR ...ALL IN AUTHORITY. Paul encourages Timothy to pray “*for kings and all who are in authority, in order that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity.*” We are hearing more and more today about “the politics of personal destruction” in America. The media and some politicians can destroy the career of almost any politician they target. According to reports Sean Hannity read from one newspaper, the LA Times carefully prepared a report on Arnold Swartzennager which they released a few days before the recall election in California (19-7-03). It was learned that they guarded this article so that none of their reporters were not working on the case would see it; but Gov. Gray Davis and his team were well aware of the contents.

President George W. Bush has been the object of bitter and sustained attacks, beginning when he announced his candidacy and continuing through his service as president. This is a man who openly confesses sins of the past - he had a drank alcoholic beverages twenty-five years earlier. This is a man of prayer, a man who quotes the Bible, a man who witnesses to heads of state, a man whose faith sustains him and guides him. Whether you are a Republican, Democrat, Libertarian, or none of the above, once he was elected as president of the United States every Christian was under an obligation to pray for him and his administration. The war with terrorism demands the prayerful support of all Americans who know the Lord. Sadly, many who profess to be Christians condemn the president rather than praying for him. According to this verse, regardless of the candidate or party for whom we voted, once they are elected we must pray for them. For some we must pray that they will come to know the Lord. We must pray for courage, faith, and protection for those who do know the Lord.

God has ordained organized government and authorities who lead and direct that government. This is essential to our leading “a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity.” Compare the America of 1950 with the USSR of the period. Compare the America of 1950 with America of 2004. Are we living a more tranquil life today? Then who moved? God is still there.

2:3 - GOOD. “*This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior.*” What is good and acceptable? Prayer, in all the expressions mentioned in verse one, and prayer for those in authority, vs. 2.

2:4 - WHO DESIRES. “*Who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth*” (NKJV). “Who” identifies the Subject - God. “Desires” speaks to His sovereignty. Some evangelicals seem to be a little hesitant to use words they associate with particular denominations. How long has it been since you have heard a sermon on Sanctification? I love to preach on Sanctification, and I love to give a brief definition which the “Sanctifier” placed in the Scripture for us: “To be conformed to the image of His Son” (Rom. 8:29). In Philippians, Paul was inspired to write, “Let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus.” The more you think like the Lord Jesus the more you will be conformed to the image of His Son.

Sovereignty is used freely by our Reformed friends, Presbyterians and many Baptists. I hold deeply to the sovereignty of God, and proclaim the sufficiency of His grace, in salvation, in security, sanctification, and in providence and protection. What God desires, He will get in His Own Way, in His Own time. We had better get this right: the real question, as already mentioned, is whether or not you and I are going to get in on what He is up to! If you doubt that, read one of the psalms that reviews the history of God’s covenant with Israel.

2:5 - ONE GOD. “*For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.*” I love it! Our God declares over and over that He is a jealous God. He will share His glory with no other. There is:

1) ONE GOD - Creator, Sustainer, Redeemer. He is the uncaused Cause of all that exists. Dr. H. Leo Eddleman, who was president of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary when I was a student there, became a close friend over years. He and my pastor were close friends and his father had been pastor of my home church years earlier. On many occasions I had the privilege of “picking his brain.” On one of those occasions I took him to my study, turned on a tape recorder and asked him a series of questions I had written out. I well remember his use of the Hebrew - he told me that J. Edgar Hoover once said that “Dr. Leo Eddleman has the best working knowledge of any non-Jew in the United States.” Once when we were talking about the names for God in the OT, he expanded my understanding Yahweh (indicated by all caps, LORD in the OT; Adonai is rendered Lord). I mentioned the fact that Yahweh means I Am, and Dr. Eddleman told me that there is more to it than that. “I Am” identifies God as the self-existent One, the uncaused Cause of all things, and as such it not only means that He is the cause of His Own existent, he is the cause of my existence.

The God of the Bible is omnipresent, omnipotent, and omniscient. Whatever the Bible say He has

done, is doing, or will do, He has done it, is doing it, or will do it! If you have any doubt about that please spell your God with a small “g” - which Francis Shaeffer said is the most meaningless word in the English language. God spelled with a capital “G” would then be the most significant word in the English language.

2) ONE MEDIATOR. In his grief, suffering, and pain, Job moved from mountain peak to deep valleys of despair. On one of those swings he exclaimed, “Nor is there any mediator between us, Who may lay his hand on us both” (Job 9:33). I believe it was G. Campbell Morgan who wrote a little book about Jesus’ answers to all of Job’s questions. He was right: “But now He (Jesus) has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises” (Heb. 8:6). Jesus does not just answer Job in words alone, He is the answer, the Mediator. Furthermore, He is the only Mediator. There are not many ways to the Father, there is but one!

“The man Christ Jesus” would certainly answer those Docetic Gnostics who claimed that Jesus only seemed to be human. In the First Epistle of John, the aged disciples dealt with this heresy : “By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God” (1 John 4:2). He is both the human Jesus and the divine Christ.

2:6 - A RANSOM. “*Who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony borne at the proper time.*” A ransom denotes a substitute payment.

The basis for Christ's work of bringing men to God is His death as a ransom, as one who pays the price in order that a condemned man or a slave may go free. The price is stated in 1 Pet. 1:18, 19, namely, the precious blood of Christ. The frequently debated question concerning the party to whom the ransom was paid is not necessary. The emphasis is upon the extent and costliness of the ransom [BSB].

For Paul, “ransom” and “redemption” became metaphors of the slave block. Justification was metaphor of the courtroom, and propitiation was a metaphor of the sacrificial system. In that lengthy passage in Hebrew in which Jesus Christ is shown to be superior to the earthly high priest, the Holy Spirit inspired the writer to stress that Jesus is our superior High Priest and the offering He offered is superior to any the earthly high price ever offered. He offered Himself, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

2:7 - APPOINTED. “*And for this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying) as a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.*” Judaizers were Jews who professed a faith in Christ but insisted that Gentiles had to embrace Judaism as a requirement for salvation. They opposed Paul and Barnabas when they heard their report to the church at Antioch of Syria at the end of the First Missionary Journey. This issue was settled at the Jerusalem Conference in A.D. 51, with James, the half-brother of our Lord serving as moderator and writing the opinion of the conference (Acts 15; Gal. 2). It was agreed that Gentiles are saved the same way as Jews, which is by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8).

How was the issue decided? A majority vote? Possibly, but there is something else. Peter, John, James, and Paul had Apostolic authority to address such issues and their testimony carried a lot of weight with most believers. The Judaizers, however, hounded Paul's steps as he returned to Antioch and then began a Second Missionary Journey with Silas. They followed him and continued their attack. In order to strengthen their argument they attacked Paul personally. They focused their attack on Paul's apostleship, forcing him to offer a defense in some of his epistles.

Paul did not mention his appointment to the office of preacher and apostle lightly. In fact, the Holy Spirit is the divine Author of these words - we must not forget this. Paul was keenly aware of the significance of his appointment to the office of apostle. The modern preacher today must be just as sure of his call to preach the Gospel. There is absolutely no other justification for entering the ministry. In fact, many young men have been counseled by older pastors, "If you can be happy doing anything else, you had better do it." I can think of many times when I could have avoided a lot of heart ache and pain and spared my family a lot of stress if I could have done anything else. But the constant awareness of my call to preach the Gospel would never have allowed me to do anything else. When the going gets rough it is the sense of a call that keeps the minister of the Gospel in the Gospel ministry. When Paul said, ("I am telling the truth, I am not lying) as a teacher of the Gentiles," he is refuting the charges of the Judaizers and reminding all believers of his special appointment as the apostle to the Gentiles.

2:8 - PRAY. *"Therefore I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension."* The therefores of Paul are important. Holding what he has just said before us, he will now make a statement based on it. On the basis of his appointment to the office of apostle, he charges "the men in every place to pray." Many times in Scripture the word man is used in the generic sense of mankind or humankind. Ryrie says that the word "men" means "males (not females) who are to lead in public prayer" [RSB]. I know that is not popular with many today, including whole denominations. It is going to be interesting to see how this will be interpreted in the future if we continue to add to or subtract from Scripture.

"Lifting up holy hands" denotes "a common posture for prayer and representative of the purity of life that is necessary for proper fellowship in prayer" [RSB]. There are many people today who are caught up in the physical aspect of this without placing emphasis on the spiritual aspect of it. There have been many postures of prayer in the history of the church, even in biblical history. At times we read of those who prostrate themselves before the Lord, or, bowing before the Lord, lifting their eyes to the Lord. When these people in Paul's day lifted holy hands they probably held the palms up, symbolizing holiness and service.

"Without wrath and dissension" points to two things that stand in the way of private or public prayer. Lifting up holy hands helps to prevent wrath and dissension. Waving hands in the air will not prevent dissension, but lifting holy hands - whether one does it literally or in his or her heart - symbolizing a holy life, complete with a commitment to ministry, worship, and evangelism overcomes dissension.

B. The Role of Women in the Church, 2:9-15

2:9 - WOMEN. *“Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments.”* I spent a lot of time in writing a two volume commentary on First Corinthians, and in that work one cannot miss what Paul had to say about women, the way they dressed and the way they conducted themselves in the church. I remember commenting that the way a lot of young women dress when they are away from the church is enough to embarrass the temple prostitutes of Corinth. Paul instructed them to dress in such a way that they would never be confused with those immoral women who served as prostitutes for a pagan god. I remember when some preachers were condemning the strapless bathing suit; today it is the suitless bathing strap! Some of the biggest problems some youth ministers have had has been in trying to get their girls to dress modestly on church trips. The trouble often comes from a mother who thinks her daughter’s mini-skirt, or the six inch gap between her jeans and her shirt is cute. A major part of the responsibility falls on the father who for one reason or another is afraid to teach his daughter why she should dress modestly. Is it possible that he is afraid for his wife or daughter to know how easily a man can be tempted by a woman in immodest dress?

A friend told me of an older Black pastor who finally got tired of seeing his organist leave the organ bench and take her seat on the front pew, only to start pulling and tugging on her mini-skirt. One Sunday, he stopped and looked at her and said, “Sister, it ain’t gonna’ be long enough, but it ain’t any shorter than it was when you left home.”

Who did Paul think he was, a bachelor telling women how to dress? In the first place, the divine Author was the Holy Spirit. In the second place, Paul had the apostolic authority to lay down the rules for dress in the church. Ryrie says:

Respectable and honorable apparel reflects a godly woman's inner life. Elaborate interweaving of the hair with gold and pearls was discouraged; and orderliness, not ostentation, was the standard. good works will be their ornament [RSB].

The Believer’s Study Bible expands it:

In this verse concerning the dress of women, the emphasis is upon commendation of modesty and propriety rather than prohibition of tasteful accessories (cf. 1 Pet. 3:3, 4). It is clear that there are worldly, ostentatious ways of dressing which the Christian is to avoid. God's focus is upon the character within (v. 10). Meaningful relationships among men and women spring from inner personality, the pure and chaste wedding of hearts and minds [BSB].

Sadly, the divorce rate is still climbing in America. Tremendous amounts of money and time are invested in wedding ceremonies, receptions, and honeymoons in bringing together two people who are often very poorly equipped for marriage. Oh, they get the wedding right. It is the marriage for which they are not prepared. Wouldn’t it be interesting if a young couple was told, “This will be the only

marriage you can ever have, so you had better get to know each other well before you get married?" They would need to spend a lot of time in prayer to be sure this is the Lord's will, and then you should prayerfully determine in advance how you will deal with challenges to your marriage, how you will settle differences.

I find it amazing that so many young married women dress in such a way as to encourage young men to lust. Once the seeds of lust are planted, who know what kind of harvest one will reap? Little do some realize that as much as they want meaningful relationships, immodest dress can lead to lust that will preclude any constructive and spiritually healthy relationship. The cultivation of friendships should be a serious goal between men and women, but lust will destroy friendships - and the church is not exempt from problems caused by immodest dress.

Elsewhere, I mention a professional woman once told me she had just read my commentary on Philippians, UNDEFEATED: FINDING PEACE IN A WORLD FULL OF TROUBLE, and that she really liked it. She quickly added, "I normally don't like Paul." She paused and then added, "Paul was strictly a product of his times, wasn't he?" Let me assure you that while Paul was the human writer, the Holy Spirit is the divine Author and He is not a product of his times. Rather, this book is the product of the timeless mind of the eternal God. This point is made over and over in this study, but it is not that the writer is forgetful. We must always keep the authority, inspiration, and inerrancy of the Scripture in mind when we study God's Word. Every word of the Word is God breathed.

2:10 - BUT RATHER. *"But rather by means of good works, as befits women making a claim to godliness."* Rather than immodest and provocative dress, Christian women should pursue godliness. Women should concentrate on the things that will manifest godliness.

2:11- SUBMISSION. *"Let a woman quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness."* Here is that word so that provokes rebellion in the hearts of so many women today - submission. Louis L'Amour has the leading character in several of his novels make the statement that a certain woman is a woman to walk beside a man, not behind him. This Scripture is not telling us that the woman is inferior to the man. This is not about who is better, smarter, more sensitive, more talented, or of greater value for any reason. It is about the role God has assigned to men and women in the church. I had been dating my wife for eight or nine months when she asked me if I would be in from seminary in time to attend her graduation from one of the Northwest Junior Colleges, one of the strong junior colleges for which Mississippi is known. She never mentioned grades and never seemed concerned about a test or an assignment, so when they stopped the line and announce that she had just set the second highest record in the history of the school (and lacked something like one thousandth of a point setting the all time record), it was a doubled surprise. First, I had know idea she was that strong a student. Second, I was thinking that if I had that kind of average everyone would know about it! But she never mentioned it. When she transferred to Mississippi College she would stand and listen to others talk about their GPA or quality points and never say a word. I do not know if I could have kept my mouth shut. If the Lord had based the leadership in the home on intelligence, guess who would be the head of our home. She prefers the role the Lord has assigned her, for which I am grateful. Of course, if she ever reads this I may be in for another surprise!

I once received a phone call from a woman whom I had discouraged from trying to take over the invitation at the close of our services. She seemed compelled to come to the front to make a little speech. After a few times I discovered that this was having a negative effect on the service and asked her to just let me close as I had planned. My son John was home and he could hear her across the room when she shouted. At one point she said, "And one more thing; you are scared to death of a woman!" I never denied that! I did explain that when she came down and made her speeches those who objected were not men but women.

This is a delicate subject for the Twenty-first Century, but it is a subject we must deal with if we are to be true to Scripture and sound doctrine. God has his reason for commanding this submission. Let me add that the woman who is willing to submit to the instruction mentioned here is to be commended. I am convinced that the woman who can submit to instruction from a male minister or teacher may be showing more character and maturity than the man who is doing the teaching. Also, the woman may have been better equipped and prepared by the Lord to receive instruction from a man than many men are to receive instruction from a woman.

2:12 - AUTHORITY OVER A MAN. *"But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet."* Wow! I can imagine how that will play out in some congregations today. One of my sociology professors, Dr. R. R. Pearce, used to challenge students as few of my teachers ever did. He would ask who should be the head of the home if the wife had made As and her husband had made Cs? One might quickly apply that to business and to professional relationships. We may also apply that to the laws under which we live. To correct some very real injustices, laws have been passed that demanded the hiring or promotion of a certain number of women in a business. Women officers exercise authority over men in the military, in educational institutions, and in industry. Is that what Paul is condemning? It is interesting to see how various scholars have interpreted this verse. One writes:

Women are not to assume the office of teacher in the church (see 1 Cor. 14:34). Women may teach as long as they do not usurp the place of leadership and authority of men in the church. Older women are specifically entrusted with teaching younger women (Titus 2:3-5). The injunction is based on the relationship of man and woman in the original creation (Gen. 2:18; 3:6) [RSB].

Compare that with the following:

Since the epistle to Timothy was written sometime after the first Corinthian epistle, there is doubtless some evidence that Paul was dealing with a particular problem, as in the Corinthian congregation (1 Cor. 14:34), in which the women had usurped the leadership role and were "lording it over" the men. However, a careful study of the Scriptures as a whole indicates further significance to this very straightforward statement. The apostle Paul shows an unequaled esteem for and appreciation of the home. Throughout his epistles Paul is careful to present a thorough and consistent

pattern for relationships within the home. In forbidding women to hold teaching/ruling positions, Paul is further protecting God-assigned lines of authority within the home. The Greek word andros, translated "man," may also be translated "husband." A wife, then, is not to instruct or rule over her husband. This does not rule out a teaching ministry for women (Titus 2:4, note), but, rather, in the case of married women, that ministry comes under the protection and direction of their respective husbands (Acts 18:26). In other words, a woman should give careful consideration to her husband's leadership in the teaching responsibilities she assumes within the church, not because of essential inferiority or inadequate intellectual faculties for reasoning and decision making but as a means of avoiding confusion and maintaining orderliness (cf. 1 Cor. 14:40). The Greek term hesuchia, translated "silence," may also be rendered "quiet," giving the picture of one who patiently accepts God-assigned authority and leadership and seeks to make herself valuable to God (1 Pet. 3:4). Concerning the role of women in the church, the N.T. clearly shows that women played a prominent role in the development of the church in the first century. This obviously included prophecy and prayer (1 Cor. 11:5), teaching (Titus 2:4, 5), personal instruction (Acts 18:26), testimony (John 4:28, 29), and hospitality (Acts 12:12). However, the divinely assigned leadership in the home does not end on the doorstep of the church. When a woman chooses to marry, she accepts the responsibility of voluntarily "lining up under" (hupotasso, Gk.) her own husband (cf. Eph. 5:22, 23; Col. 3:18; Titus 2:5; 1 Pet. 3:1), not because the husband is superior ontologically, intellectually, physically, or spiritually but because he is given by God the assignment for headship (cf. Gen. 2:15-17; 3:16; 1 Cor. 11:3). This is the same way every believer is to submit himself to Jesus Christ, "lining up under" His lordship, even as Jesus subjected Himself to the Father (cf. 1 Cor. 11:3; Phil. 2:7, 8) [BSB].

2:13 - IT WAS ADAM. *"For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve."* We all know that, as did Paul's readers, especially the Jewish readers. One lesson we can glean from this is that when there is an issue facing the church we should turn to the Bible for answers. The Word of God is our authority.

2:14 - THE WOMAN BEING... DECEIVED. *"And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being quite deceived, fell into transgression."* I was preaching in a church in Nebraska when I mentioned the Fall, and why Satan approached Eve rather than Adam in the Garden. Did the devil see Eve as weaker than Adam? There is no indication of that, but there are some possibilities. First, she and Adam were not together; Satan waited until he had her alone. Second, God had given instructions and commands to Adam, not to Eve. Adam received the command not to eat of the fruit of that tree and then he told Eve what God had said (that is a possibility, even though in their walks in the Garden He may have reviewed all these things with them). Third, men and women are different and if Satan had approached Adam first he may have had to use a different temptation. He knew when to strike and how.

This verse clearly states that Eve was deceived by the serpent (cf. Gen. 3:1-13). However, Adam was

not deceived.

God straightforwardly directed Adam to resist the forbidden fruit, giving to the man the responsibility of spiritual leadership. Eve was aware of God's command through her husband, who was the God-assigned leader and protector (Gen. 2:15-17). The woman's susceptibility to deception is better explained by her secondhand knowledge of God's limitation than by any suggestion that her intellectual faculties were inferior to the man's. Quite the contrary, both man and woman are made in the image of God and in essence stand before Him on equal footing (cf. Gen. 1:27; 5:2; Matt. 19:4; Gal. 3:28; 1 Pet. 3:7) [BSB].

2:15 - WOMEN SHALL BE PRESERVED. *“But women shall be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint.”* This is not getting any easier, is it? Does he mean that women will be saved through the bearing of children? Of course not. Then what does it mean? Some have suggested that it means that the woman would be brought safely through childbirth. It has also been suggested that it means, saved through the birth of a Child (Jesus the Savior). There is another possibility and that is “that a woman’s greatest achievement is found in her devotion to her divinely ordained role: to help her husband, to bear children, and to follow a faithful, chaste way of life” [RSB].

IV. INSTRUCTION CONCERNING LEADERS, 3:1-16

A. Pastors, 3:1-7

3:1 - A TRUSTWORTHY STATEMENT. *“It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do.”* The statement is trustworthy because it was from God, it was no doubt taught by the Apostles, and it was now a part of the inspired Scripture.

In the N.T. the terms “overseer,” (bishop), “elder,” and “pastor” all refer to the same position (Acts 20:17, 28; Titus 1:5, 7; 1 Pet. 5:1-4). It seems that it was the custom to have more than one person in each local church who was responsible for spiritual leadership (Acts 14:23), but with one ruling elder (bishop or pastor) having primary leadership as the pastor (today we might use the term “Senior Pastor”). In this passage it is clear that God’s primary concern is with the character of those men whom He called to lead the churches. “Functionally, it is the responsibility of the pastor to shepherd, direct, teach, and protect the flock of God entrusted to him” [RSB].

It is interesting that Paul acknowledges that there are some men who “aspire” to the office of pastor or overseer, and adds that “it is a fine work he desires to do.” Lest we assume that the office of overseer was so lucrative or prestigious that men were standing in line with their resumes, we would do well to remind ourselves that Jesus called on all believers to take up the cross and follow Him. He declared all believers to be His witnesses, and the word He used for witness (*martus*) is the word for martyr. Being a faithful follower of Christ in the First Century was no picnic. Then why would some men

aspire to the office of overseer? Though he does not state it here, I assume that there were men who had been called to the Gospel who were anxious to find a place of service in the church. What preacher today cannot remember how he anticipated his first pastorate. Paul say that it is a fine work to which he aspires.

3:2 - ABOVE REPROACH. *“An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach.”* A pastor (overseer) must be a person of high moral standards, he must subscribe to the highest ethical standards, and he must abstain from the very appearance of evil. He can expect charges to be made by the enemies of the Cross, and his best defense is a righteous life. I was standing in a line in my high school cafeteria when a girl who had been at our school for only a few months whirled around and demanded to know “Who did that?” I did not see what happened or who did it, but someone in the line said, “Johnny did it!” The only thing Johnny did was - well, he was shocked speechless! Before I could protest this new girl said, “No he didn’t. He wouldn’t do that!” If I had been given to a different kind of speech or behavior I doubt that the response would have been the same. Righteousness is a defense against false charges.

I was probably not much older when I walked into a local bank to get a check cashed. When I walked in, several men stopped whatever they were doing and turned to greet me with hand shakes, smiles, and questions about what I was doing. I thought nothing of it until I learned later that Jiggs Arnold, a gin owner, had mentioned it to my father. He told him that one of the men in the bank, a well known planter as well as a business and social leader, had been standing there cursing every breath, including using God’s name in vain. Mr Arnold said, “I have never seen anything like it. Walker (not his real name) was standing there using all that profanity in front of men and women and that teen aged boy walked in and he immediately cut it off and talked with him like we are talking right now.” I suppose most people knew I had been called to the ministry by this time. Actually, I was called when I was 13 and licensed at age 17, but before I graduated from high school most people around Sledge, Mississippi knew the Lord had called me for His ministry - you know the line, “I hear he’s making a preacher,” or “He’s going to school to be a preacher.”

A pastor served a church for some fifteen years, knowing that there were a few people there who would use anything they could find against him if they had an opportunity. A few people warned him that if anyone from that group made any charges, he should not respond - “Let us deal with it. Anything you say will be misrepresented.” When he resigned, someone told him that he had lived an exemplary life while he was there because if that little group could have found anything to use against him they would have done it. Later, they told him about a few of their failures in trying to make a case against him.

Though the primary purpose in living a life beyond reproach is not self-defense but to glorify the Lord, it can serve both purposes. The pastor and other ministers should let their light shine in such a way that they will glorify the Lord. In fact, they must be both salt and light to the world. One temper tantrum can blow years of dedicated work. Howard Dean was the leading candidate for the Democratic nomination for the presidency until just before the Iowa Caucus. When he came in third in Iowa he made an out of control speech in which he ranted and raved in a manner that turned off a lot

of his supporters. He had to go to New Hampshire defending his behavior. He may have paid a high price for losing control for a few minutes.

The pastor must be “the husband of one wife.” There is no reason to assume that Paul means one wife at a time. The Believer’s Study Bible Notes may help:

Monogamy (one wife for one husband) is unquestionably the normal standard and pattern for marriage throughout Scripture. Violation of this divine plan inevitably leads to heartache and tragedy, as well as to chaos and unrest in the home (cf. Gen. 16:3-6; 30:1). The passage, therefore, is an emphatic prohibition of polygamy. In the light of Rom. 7:1-3, it can be understood as excluding neither a widower who has remarried nor the man who has never married (cf. 1 Cor. 7:32, 33; 9:5, 6). The best understanding of the passage is that the bishop should be above reproach in his faithfulness to his wife. He must be a "one-woman man." The passage should be understood as assuming, rather than stipulating, that the bishop would be a married man. This also adds to the evidence against biblical approval of ordination for women in teaching/ruling functions in the church [BSB].

For those who think Paul was simply a product of his time, remember that these requirements were inspired by the Holy Spirit. If God had planned to call women as pastors it seems that this would read, “the spouse of one spouse”, but that is not what it says. Only a man can be the husband of one wife.

The pastor must be “temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable” - all desirable qualities in any servant of the Lord. For anyone with any experience in the ministry, every word is significant and each address areas of his ministry in which his ministry will be strengthened by a proper application of this verse. Failure to apply them can destroy one’s ministry.

I like the next one: “able to teach.” The KJV has “apt to teach”, which prompted the late Luther Hall to say that “the preacher is apt to teach - but he is more apt to preach!” The NT places great emphasis on two aspects of the preacher’s calling: The preaching of the Gospel and the teaching of the Word. The only way one is going to be “able to teach” is to be prepared to teach. I wonder how many preachers who started out with me would have loved to have had the dynamic delivery of a young Billy Graham, the voice of Adrian Rodgers, the homiletic skills of Charles Stanley, the brilliance of James Kennedy, the power of a W. A. Chriswell, the incredible memory, courage, wit, and delivery of R. G. Lee, still the prince of preachers to me.

I will readily admit to having few of the above skills and gifts - but this one thing I can do, I can feed the sheep. The Lord did not call me to entertain the sheep, to traumatize the sheep, or to psychoanalyze the sheep. He called me to feed His sheep. You will know you are successful when your people begin to express an opinion and instead of saying, “My pastor says...”, he says, “The Bible says thus and so...”

Some of the Lord’s most faithful servants are men who for one reason or another did not have an

opportunity to attend a seminary. Spurgeon is a most notable example. However, I will never forget standing in line to see my faculty advisor as a freshman registering for my first classes. Dr. E. R. Pinson asked, "Mr. Sanders, are you planning to go to seminary?" For the last time, I answered, "I hope to." He said, "If God wants you to, you can." God is sovereign and He calls whom He will and leads them according to His purpose. There was never any doubt in my mind the Lord was calling me to preach the Gospel and that He wanted me to go to Mississippi College, and after the talk with Dr. Pinson I knew I would be going to New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. Later, He led me to enter the Doctor of Ministry program at Luther Rice Seminary, the school that pioneered that degree program.

When I graduated from New Orleans Seminary, some friends said, "I'll bet you really know the Bible." I am still not sure that I convinced them that I did not. I had learned a little along the way, but a lot of my time was spent learning how to study the Bible. When I found myself out of school and away from the academic discipline I realized that if I was going to continue to grow I must adopt a study program that would help keep me motivated, and then find a way to save the results of my research. Little did I realize I was beginning something that would develop into THE BIBLE NOTEBOOK, verse by verse commentaries on 25-30 books of the Bible that target the gap between the critical commentary and the devotional commentary.

In 1970, Dr. James Horton, pastor of the First Baptist Church, Monroe, LA, asked me to teach the Book of James at his church. Dr. Luther Hall and Dr. Ray Rust had recommended me to teach the January Bible Study for them. I taught two hours each night, Sunday through Friday. At the end of the week, the associate pastor made it a point to talk with me about the study. He said, "You are the best prepared teacher we have had here." He did not say that I was the best teacher, the most brilliant, the most eloquent, the most dynamic, or the best qualified. Just the best prepared. I made up my mind that I would never be the best teacher or the most eloquent speaker, but I could be prepared.

3:3 -NOT ADDICTED TO WINE. The overseer should "*not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, uncontentious, free from the love of money.*" The HCSB agrees with the NASB, but the KJV and the NKJV have, "not given to wine," which some understand to mean total abstinence (either translation is appropriate here). There is one thing we need to understand when we look at wine drinking in NT times. Yes, Jesus drank wine at the wedding feast in Cana of Galilee. But, in His day, even in the Greek society, the wine they drank was mixed, usually three parts water to one part wine. Danger of becoming addicted to such wine was greatly diminished. People who drank wine unmixed with water were called winebibbers (Pro. 23:20). This is expanded in notes on 5:3.

Any believer, not only elders, would do well to abstain from anything that is addictive. That includes alcohol, drugs, tobacco, pornography, or gambling. Any of these things can destroy one's ministry. It will also lead lay-persons astray.

We live in a day when people focus on addiction to hard drugs, but the warnings about alcoholic beverages is left to the warnings at holiday time when some brewery reminds people that if they are going to drink they should appoint a designated driver. That advice could save someone's life, but

there is a much better way. There are also warnings that one should not mix alcohol and boating, hunting, and other activities. We are not likely to see it, but think what a public service a “public announcement” would be that warned people against the use of alcohol at all. If that sounds a little too radical, let me remind you that they have been making those announcements about smoking for years. Why will they not make such an announcement about beer, wine, and liquor? Obviously, the advertising dollars is one factor and the popularity of drinking among politicians and those in the media is another.

As I waited in the lobby of Camp 4 at the Mississippi State Penitentiary at Parchman years ago, I looked up at the wall and saw two poems that really caught my attention. I had a few minutes to wait for the men to leave their barracks and go to the mess hall where I would preach, so I found a small piece of paper and began writing. The first poem was entitled THE BAR. I felt that when prisoners looked up at those words many of them could read their own story into them.

THE BAR

The name of each saloon is bar,
The fittest of its names by far.
A bar to Heaven, a door to hell;
Whoever named it, named it well.
A bar to manliness and wealth,
A door to want and broken health.
A bar to honor, pride, and fame,
A door to grief, sin, and shame.
A bar to hopes, a bar to prayers,
A door to darkness and despair.
A bar to honored, useful life,
A door to brawling, senseless strife.
A bar to all that's true and brave,
A door to every drunkard's grave.
A bar to joy that home imparts,
A door to tears and aching hearts.
A bar to Heaven, a door to hell,
Whoever named it named it well.

The author is unknown

Paul moves on to “pugnacious.” There is no place for a “pugnacious” person in the pastorate. The word may be rendered “a striker,” or a bully. The HCSB has, “*not a bully but gentle, not quarrelsome, not greedy.*” I played high school baseball and football, but I was obsessed with boxing and could hardly appreciate my English teacher’s questions about what she considered a conflict between my obsession and my call. Then a few years later, I was visiting back home and I offered

some suggestions to a couple of boys were sparring in the front yard. I put the gloves on and played around with one of the boys. Suddenly, a large man came in from the field and walked up in front of me and asked, "What you do if someone threw one like this" - and he threw a long left lead, which I blocked. Thinking I would put a stop to it, I said, "Wait a minute, if you are going to throw punches like that you need to put the gloves on." That was a mistake! Before I knew it he had the gloves on, challenging me. When he began throwing punches I realized that he could have hurt anyone he hit (he told me that no one who boxed him had ever put the gloves on again). He was a brawler but no boxer. By the time I convinced him that he need to stop, I was afraid I might really hurt him. His wife had laughed at him and he came off the ground and charged me like a bull. He finally agreed to stop, but only if he could try it again. Two weeks later, he had some seizures and that really concerned me.

The story spread around the area and I discovered that I could easily have attracted a kind of attention I did not want. I have heard of pastors getting into altercations with a church member who threatened him with physical violence. The pastor must deal with attitudes and avoid situations that might lead to such an altercation.

The pastor must be "free from the love of money." This does not say that money is evil, but that the love of money is incompatible with pastoral leadership, as well as inconsistent with the Christian life. My father in the ministry, M. C. Waldrup, told me that a farmer might beat someone out of five hundred dollars and people would eventually forget it, but if a preacher forgot a five cent debt there were people who would never forget it.

3:4 - HIS OWN HOUSEHOLD. *"He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity."* Fair or not, people do watch the pastor's family. There are many temptations facing young people today and the pastor's children face the same temptations their friends face. Let me stress this one point, A pastor and his wife may do their very best and still see a son or daughter go astray. A pastor's daughter gets pregnant, or a son becomes addicted to drugs, and his ministry is in jeopardy. He is suffering enough with his family problem and the danger of being terminated from his position intensifies the problem.

The pastor is to "keep his children under control with all dignity." James Dopson makes a valid point when he speaks about "tough love." Parents are often called upon to practice tough love, but the "tough" part must never override the "love" part of it. "Dignity" does not seem to be as important to many people as it once did. If you doubt it, just look at the way some people dress, speak, eat, of conduct themselves in public places. That which is crude and undignified flies in the face of every claim to observe the Golden Rule.

3:5 - MANAGE HIS OWN HOUSEHOLD. Paul adds parenthetically, *"but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?."* The logic really need no explanation, but attention should be given to the application of it.

3:6 - NOT A NEW CONVERT. *"And not a new convert, lest he become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil."* A church called a young man as pastor, and for the first year

they praised him for his character and leadership. They loved some of the things he was doing with children. Suddenly, the leaders of the church turned against him, causing a serious division in the church. I was talking with a denominational worker about the problems that church had experienced. The denominational worker offered a reasonable explanation. He said the young man had been saved and announced that God had called him to preach. His pastor persuaded a church to call him as pastor. Before long there were problems and then he moved to the church with which I was acquainted and proceeded to make the same mistakes. The explanation was that the young man was strictly a novice. He had no background in the church, knew nothing about church administration, and not much more about cultivation relationships. He was “a new convert.”

This man was sincere and I never detected conceit or arrogance. His problem was that he inexperienced. However if Paul witnessed new converts who had become conceited and fallen into the trap set by the devil, there is no reason to believe that danger was somehow eliminated during the First Century. All of the Lord’s servants are subject to the temptation to become conceited, though most of us have more grounds for humility! God hates pride, especially when He sees it in one of His servants. He hears those who are humble but resists the proud.

3:7 - A GOOD REPUTATION. *“And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he may not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.”* We have seen God’s demand that a pastor be above reproach within the church. Here, Paul stress that he “must have a good reputation with those outside the church.” Failure will leave the pastor open to the snares of the devil.

B. Deacons, 3:8-16

3:8 - DEACONS LIKEWISE. *“Deacons likewise must be men of dignity, not double-tongued, or addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain.”* Deacons must meet the basic requirements and standards to which the pastor is held. There is one distinction we should make here. That is that the pastor must be called by the Lord and the deacon must be called out by the church under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. The deacon must be a man of dignity. Nowhere here do we find that women may be ordained as deacons.

The deacon should not be “addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain.” There is obvious danger in drinking alcoholic beverages, and this should never be minimized. Solomon wrote, “Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, And whoever is intoxicated by it is not wise” (Pro. 20:10). I do not know of anyone who ever started drinking alcoholic beverages with any intention of becoming addicted to it, but many professing Christians have indeed become addicted to the most dangerous drug in America. The wisdom of Solomon should be sufficient warning:

Those who linger long over wine, Those who go to taste mixed wine. Do not look on the wine when it is red, When it sparkles in the cup, When it goes down smoothly;
At the last it bites like a serpent, And stings like a viper. Your eyes will see strange things, And your mind will utter perverse things. And you will be like one who lies down in the middle of the sea, Or like one who lies down on the top of a mast. They struck me, but I did not become ill; They beat me, but I did not know it. **When**

shall I awake? I will seek another drink (Pro. 23:30-35).

3:9 - THE MYSTERY OF THE FAITH. *“But holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience.”* In the Bible, a mystery is something once concealed but now revealed. The mystery of the faith is God’s revelation of divine truth. That means sound doctrine from the Word of God. No deacon can honor God or serve his church without being grounded in sound doctrine (“the faith”). How do we know we are “holding the mystery of the faith” faithfully? How do we know we are right and the Muslims are wrong? How do we know we are right and the Mormons and Jehovah’s Witnesses are wrong? After all, we live in a time of toleration and the greatest sin some people can imagine is saying someone else is wrong! Diversity has become the false god of our time.

We can know the truth. God’s Word - and only God’s Word - has stood the test of time. The Holy Spirit inspired every word of it, He preserved it against incredible efforts to destroy it (or keep it out of the hands of the masses), and he illuminates the hearts of believers so that they might understand it and apply it in every day life. All believers need to study God’s Word and apply it daily, but for deacons this is especially important.

Deacons must hold the “mystery of the faith with a clear conscience.” This is important. There are times when some deacons may be more interested in keeping everyone happy (keeping the squeaky wheel greased) than in doing what is right. They know the Word of God, but when applying it to a family member or to a friend they find ways to compromise to keep from making the difficult decision that might offend. We need to try to avoid offending others, but the deacon’s first commitment is to God. He must do what is right and then he will have a clear conscience, even if someone gets upset with him.

A pastor was stopped as he came out of a meeting. Two ladies introduced themselves and he recognized their names and he recognized one of the ladies as a member of a Pastor Search Committee that had visited with him years before. The other lady was the widow of a former pastor of their church. The former committed member said, “I want to apologize to you for the way our church treated you. Our church has paid for the way they treated you for eighteen years.” The pastor was surprised because he had no idea he had been treated badly by their church. He remembered the circumstances well enough. The committee stayed in touch with him for months, even when he tried to tell them the Lord was giving him no freedom to encourage them.

He also remembered the meeting at their church when he told them that their former pastor had stopped by the previous Sunday afternoon for a brief visit and to encourage him as he met with the committee. A few days after that meeting the pastor received a call from a very distraught committee chairman who explained that when he had mentioned the former pastor two deacons on the committee turned against him and refused to consider him any longer. Such was their hatred for their former pastor. He knew that there had been a split in the church a few years after his experience with them but he really did not feel that he had been treated unfairly. He had never felt led to be their pastor anyway. But this very godly lady and her friend were convinced that God had judged their church because of the bitterness of these two deacons. Actually, one was that bitter toward the former pastor

and the other man was dominated by his friend.

There are churches today that are struggling, only a shadow where there was once a light, and some may well be suffering because of decisions, attitudes, or even sins of a deacon, or deacons. I have listened to some interesting stories about a few self-serving deacons. A well known denominational worker preached a revival in a church in his state. After a few services he pointed out one of the deacons and said, "That man has an obsession with control that is a sickness." He didn't know the half of it!

Some of the most godly people I have ever known have been deacons, mature men who were faithful in all things. They put their church ahead of themselves. They held the faith "with a clear conscience."

3:10 - FIRST BE TESTED. *"And let these also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons if they are beyond reproach."* The Gospel is not only glorious, it is practical. No deacon should be elected because he is popular, because he has money, because he has a lot of relatives in the church, or because his friends want to honor him. No deacon should be elected to the office because he may get his feelings hurt if others are elected and he is left out. One man who had received but a few votes when his church voted on deacons, joked that he had better start carrying a gun if he didn't have any more friends than that. He had a lot of friends, but they knew him too well to vote for him to serve as a deacon.

3:11 - WOMEN MUST BE DIGNIFIED. *"Women must likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things."* This is interesting! Not that they should be dignified, but their identity. Does Paul have in mind the wives of deacons or assistants who served with the deacons in the church? "Most likely a reference to the wives of the deacons, rather than to a separate office of deaconess, since the qualifications for deacons are continued in verse 12" [RSB]. If he was referring to a different group of servants, it would seem more natural for him to have finished the qualifications for deacons and then dealt with the office of deaconess or deacons' assistants.

The same Greek word (gune) can be used for "woman" or "wife." Here, the NKJV translators have inserted "their," indicating that in their judgment the reference is to deacons' wives, rather than female assistants or deaconesses. If these are female assistants or deaconesses, it should be recognized that their ministry would certainly have been one of service and directed especially to women (cf. Titus 2:3-5). It is significant that no teaching/ruling assignment is present. If wives of deacons is the correct interpretation, their assignment would no doubt be to assist their husbands in service. Note that there are no similar instructions for bishops' wives (cf. 3:8, [BSB]).

3:12 - HUSBANDS OF ONE WIFE. *"Let deacons be husbands of only one wife, and good managers of their children and their own households."* There are those today who insist that this is a prohibition against polygamy, but if you take the time to read all the NT has to say about divorce and remarriage you will find it difficult to make a case for that position. Sadly, with the increase in the divorce rate we will probably see more people who claim that the "husband of one wife" means one at

a time.

For many years I worked with a deacon whose church had insisted that they needed him to serve as a deacon. He had reservations because both he and his wife had been married and divorced before they became Christians. Their pastor had told them that it didn't matter because they were lost when they were divorced and when they married each other. When they were saved, he said, they were forgiven of all sins and given a clean slate. He served faithfully for many years, but eventually he went before his church and resigned from the office of deacon.

Many divorces cause a lot of pain to all the people involved. If a man is divorced and remarries in the same church or in the same town some of the garbage from an ugly divorce can spill over into the church. We should accept the Scripture here at face value.

The deacon must be one who disciplines his own children. There are two primary reasons for that. First, he does not need to be distracted by a family that is out of control. Second, he needs to be an example for others.

3:13 - THOSE WHO HAVE SERVED WELL. *“For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a high standing and great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.”* The word “served” is appropriate, for that is exactly what a deacon does. He serves. Today, most deacons assume administrative responsibilities, and some seem to think that the only reason they were ordained was to “run the church.” I was once warned that I should not be surprised at what a certain deacon would do to maintain control of every aspect of his church's life. He had a “run it or ruin it” mind set.

Paul not only said that the deacon should serve, but that he should serve “well.” It is not enough just to serve, one must seek to be faithful in all things. Slothfulness is an undesirable quality in any person, but it is more so in a deacon. Those who serve faithful “obtain for themselves a high standing and great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.” The deacon who serves well will be respected and with the service he will grow in confidence and assurance in his relationship with Jesus Christ.

3:14 - HOPING TO COME TO YOU. *“I am writing these things to you, hoping to come to you before long.”* Paul had left Timothy in Ephesus to deal with certain issues. He then writes to him with some additional instructions and some words of encouragement. He is planning to return from Philippi to Ephesus “before long.”

3:15 - IN CASE I AM DELAYED. *“But in case I am delayed, I write so that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth.”* Delay was always a possibility, especially in that day. During Paul's extended stay in Ephesus on the Third Missionary Journey, he had to deal with some really sticky problems in the church at Corinth. At one point he sent Titus to see if he could work out some of the problems. He kept waiting for Titus to return and when he did not show up there, Paul went to Troas but he did not find him there. It was the end of the normal shipping season in the area so Paul went on to Philippi. After a time, Titus arrived there, having traveled overland. Travel in those was not always a simple matter, but travel was possibly the least of his concerns at the time. He had suffered

hardships, persecutions, and imprisonments and he knew there might be more ahead of him.

Paul touches again on the purpose of this epistle. He wants Timothy to know, and to be able to teach others how one “ought to conduct himself in the household (church) of God.” This is no light matter. There are people whose conduct not only prevents them from getting anything out of a service, but also prevents others from learning, worshiping, or listening to the Lord. However, our conduct in the household of God is not simply a matter of refraining from talking, writing notes, and bothering others. He must have a spirit of reverence and a deep commitment to the Lord and His church.

The deacon must conduct himself in the household of God with integrity, dignity, reverence, humility, sincerity, and courage. He has been chosen to serve the Lord and His church, and as such he must serve all the church, not just one faction. What is the household of God? It is the church of the living God.

3:16 - THE MYSTERY OF GODLINESS. *“And by common confession great is the mystery of godliness: He who was revealed in the flesh, Was vindicated in the Spirit, Beheld by angels, Proclaimed among the nations, Believed on in the world, Taken up in glory.”* All spirit-filled believers will agree: “great is the mystery of godliness.” God has revealed the way of godliness and given us His Spirit to empower us to live a godly life. Every deacon should seek to live a godly life.

The “mystery of godliness” is revealed in and through a relationship with Jesus Christ, Who:

- 1) Was revealed in the flesh (He was human).
- 2) Was vindicated in the Spirit (He was divine).
- 3) Beheld by angels (who ministered to Him).
- 4) Proclaimed among the nations (The Great Commission).
- 5) Believed on in the World (churches were being planted all over the Roman world).
- 6) Taken up in glory (the Ascension, mediation, promised return).

V. AVOIDING CERTAIN DANGERS, 4:1-16

A Identifying the Threat, 4:1-5

4:1 - SOME WILL FALL AWAY. *“But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons.”* Paul returns to his attack on the heresy which was finding its way into the church. The Holy Spirit has the answer to any heresy. Since no heresy has ever caught Him by surprise, and no heresy has ever caught Him without an answer, the statement that “the Spirit explicitly says” should inspire confidence in all believers.

By “later times” Paul may have intended the dispensation in which we live, from the First Coming of Christ to His Second Coming. Many, however, believe this refers to the last days before Jesus returns to rapture His church. Almost every age could produce an abundance of evidence of apostasy, and this age is no exception. The last century has given us two world wars, the Great Depression, and the bloodiest movements in the history of the world. The ancient Assyrians and their contemporaries were bloody and ruthless, but they had nothing on the Nazis, Communists, and Muslims. Since the Second World War the world has hated Nazism and all associated with it, but for some reason or another, the elite in education, the media, liberal think tanks, and many in government have had a difficult time finding anything wrong with Communism. Actor Ed Asner reportedly told talk radio host and TV personality Sean Hannity that there is nothing wrong with Communism, it has just never been tried the right way.” The so-called godless, classless, stateless society was none of the above. What it was, was vile, murderous, and evil. Hitler killed 15 million people, including 6 million Jews (why have we forgotten the other nine million?). The Jews are to be commended for not letting the world forget the Holocaust. Communists have killed from 8 to 10 times that many, yet America is full of liberal, left-wing Marxists who can only blame a few leaders, like Stalin, who never tried it the right way.

Muslim terrorists are killing innocent people, Americans, Jews, and in some cases fellow Muslim. Over five hundred of our American troops have been killed, but liberals can only blame President George Bush. Islam has become very popular with liberals in America, especially liberal media. Yet, when we hear that a terrorist has blown himself (or herself) up in order to kill Americans or Jews, who automatically think, “He must be a Christian”? No, our first thought is, “He was a Muslim.” As they gain power in countries like Germany, France, and Russia, political leaders begin compromising in order to avoid their wrath.

There is a force for evil in the world today that has survived both Nazism and Communism, and now superseded both as the enemy of God and His church. That force is Islam (many stress that this applies only to radical Islam, but it is not easy to find Muslim clerics who will condemn the terrorism they have launched against America, against Christians, and Jews. President George Bush is a man of faith, character, and integrity, possibly the most spiritually minded Christian president in a century or more. But when he calls Islam a religion of peace he is either being diplomatic, or he does not really understand Islam. All Muslims are not terrorists, but if they could take over the control of our government, on whose side would those Muslims be them?

We were often told, “You can trust a Communist - you can trust him to do what a Communist will do.” You can trust Muslims to do what they are trained to do. We are told that there are 1.2 billion

Muslims in the world, and while only the more militant will support and carry out acts of terrorism , suicide bombing, and attacks on civilians, their clerics seldom condemn Jihad.

Communism and Nazism killed from one hundred to one hundred, fifty million people and subjected hundreds of millions to their tyranny. Radical Islam has slaughtered countless numbers over the centuries. Yet, those movements can hardly be said to have fallen away from the faith.

Sadly, a lot of Christian leaders are convinced that the New Age Movement is dead. In the first place, there never was a New Age Movement, there were, and are New Age Movements. There was, and is room under their umbrella for almost any thing, religious or otherwise except Jesus Christ. The New Agers came along and injected atheistic, evolutionary Humanism with a spiritual quality. Humanists said, "There is no god;" the New Agers said, "Of course there is a god. In fact there are many gods. If you are happy with your god and I am happy with my god, we should be happy for each other."

Within a few weeks of each other, I heard two people ask the question, "Have we moved beyond New Age to Animism?" I responded to one, "No. How can you go beyond everything and everything?" I read somewhere back in the mid-eighties that the term New Age would be dropped because they were getting too much scrutiny from the church. The term today is Postmodern, or Postmodernism. They welcome the same groups: cults, the occult with all its expressions, Eastern religions, and all sorts of global and environmental movements (religious or otherwise). Many New Agers join the Humanists in demanding a totally secular society - they want to see religion practiced at home or in the church or synagogue. And they have the ACLU serving their purpose.

I listened to a young couple try to explain to me that they are not Christians, that they are not really into formal religion, they are "spiritual". They don't like group or congregational worship, they just like to try to get their spirit in touch with the creator of the universe. The wife was Jewish but her husband grew up touring with in a Gospel Music family. He knows the jargon, the basic beliefs of Christianity, but he has rejected God and created for himself a god who is no god, to quote Jeremiah (2:11ff). When he mentioned the Creator I asked him if he knows who the Creator is. He looked puzzled at first, so I asked, "Do you know Who claims credit for Creation?" Then it was like a light coming on in his eyes, "Oh, yeah." Paul wrote of those who "professing themselves to be wise, became fools" (actually they were made fools)- and who makes fools of those who value the creation above the Creator? Satan!

These religious movements are not only seducing the world, they are seducing church members in large numbers. I read once that these movements have had the greatest impact on America of anything since the Civil War, especially in the area of ecology (see SAVIORS OF THE EARTH? By Michael S. Coffman). Morality is a factor because moral relativism is sweeping the country. Could you imagine Americans living before this we entered the post-Christian era electing Bill Clinton president of the United States? And re-elect him? We are not talking about political parties, either. The point is that millions justified their support of Clinton by saying, "It was just sex!" They have obviously never read Revelation 21:8.

Where has this falling away taken us? A major denomination is in turmoil because of the election of an openly homosexual to the office of bishop. One priest justified his vote, "The Bible is not our authority." One of their priests stated that this homosexual priest was just as monogamous (loyal to his partner) as those who were married to a woman. The Bible condemns homosexuality, but holds out the love of God for the sinner.

Many Episcopalians are very disturbed by the action taken by those who elected the homosexual as a bishop. I spoke for some time with Judge Sharon Marchman, who is absolutely one of the nicest people you would ever hope to meet, about this. She is a member of an Episcopal church whose ministers have taken a strong stand against the action taken by their church. Sharon is not at all happy with the election of the homosexual as a bishop. Unlike some of those priests who were interviewed on TV, she and her ministers do look to the Bible as their authority.

Millions today defend the right to kill unborn babies. They even crusade for the right to murder the baby that has been almost completely delivered (partial birth abortion, which is infanticide). Congress has recently passed a law banning partial-birth abortions and President Bush has signed it into law. President Clinton vetoed a similar bill.

Adultery is filling America with venereal diseases for which there is no known cure. The rising divorce rate is leaving not just broken homes in the wake, but broken lives. Ten years ago, or around 1994, my wife told me that those who had worked with young people ten years earlier did not understand the youth of that day. Recently, she told me that those who were working with young people in 1994 do not understand the youth of today. She has taught in public schools for thirty years.

When I was in high school, or junior high, I never once heard a student say, "My daddy's girlfriend has a new baby." or, "You mean you have been married to one man all that time!?" Or, "My mother moved us in with her boyfriend." My wife hears it all the time today.

Here is a question: How did we get this way? Paul had the answer: they were "paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons." Demons are still behind all these false religions and false gods. Demons are also behind the mixture of truth and error that has invaded the church today.

4:2 - HYPOCRISY OF LIARS. *"By means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron."* There is no shortage of hypocrites or liars, and sadly, some are in the church, and some definitely have seared consciences. Those outside the church often have more to say about the conscience than those within the church. We talk about the leadership of the Holy Spirit as though the conscience has no bearing on the Christian. The Greek word means "to know with."

The idea is that the conscience is a moral faculty of perception which operates within the human spirit to aid man in decision making. However, never does the conscience operate in splendid isolation. Rather, it operates within a context. If that context is the world, then the conscience becomes distorted and is only partially, if at all, reliable, being "seared with a hot iron" and, therefore, insensitive to the things of God. If, on the other hand, the conscience functions within the context of the word of God and the

Holy Spirit's application of that word in various situations, then the conscience becomes an invaluable assistant to the man who seeks a spiritual walk [BSB].

4:3 - MEN WHO FORBID. *“Men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods, which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth.”* Men forbid that which God given us (marriage and food), and in so doing turn a relationship of grace into a religion of works.

4:4 - EVERYTHING GOD CREATED IS GOOD. *“For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected, if it is received with gratitude.”* I have spent more than twenty-five years studying Creation, including material from the INSTITUTE FOR CREATION RESEARCH, ANSWERS IN GENESIS, recent books from Broadman and Holman, and other publishers. I have spent a lot of time talking with creation scientists, and I am convinced that the available evidence supports special creation rather than evolution. The First and Second Laws of Thermodynamics demand creation and refute evolution. Furthermore, for those who try to bind God and evolution in unholy wedlock, let me stress that if God had used evolution to get us where we are, He would have been using a very inefficient method of creation.

Not only did God create all things, He created them for His pleasure and for our use and/or pleasure. The psalmists continually praised God and acknowledged His mighty work in creating the universe. Paul stresses in this verse that everything God created is good. And food should not be rejected “if it is received with gratitude.” Legalistic restrictions do not honor the Lord. Decisions about food should concern our health, not our relationship with the Lord. Jesus removed food restrictions for His people (Mark 7).

4:5 - SANCTIFIED. *“For it is sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer.”* The word means setting apart, different. That which is sanctified is something which is set apart or different from other things. Here it means that setting things apart by the Word of God and by prayer will keep believers from misusing things God has given us to use. Years ago, I was showing a man through our church plant, explaining the duties of our custodian when he suddenly stopped and asked, “Rev. Sanders, can I ask you a question? Is this a sanctified church or is it Baptist?” I have no idea whether or not he bought my answer. I also wonder how many Baptists and other evangelicals understand that being sanctified does not mean speaking in “unknown” tongues, being “slain in the spirit, or even the modern phenomena of laughing uncontrollably.

The Holy Spirit sets believers apart for the glory of the Father, and through prayer and the Word of God He seeks to conform us to the image of Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:29). Peter, who would know if anyone would, gave us in one verse, both the way and the goal of sanctification: “But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen” (2 Peter 3:18). The Holy Spirit grows and nurtures us in the grace and knowledge of our Lord, to the end that we will bring glory to God the Father. This is the work of the Holy Spirit.

B. Overcoming the Threats, 4:6-16.

4: 6 - SOUND DOCTRINE. *“In pointing out these things to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following.”* Paul has left Timothy, his trusted friend, companion, and son-in-the-ministry at Ephesus to instruct the church in his own absence. He had gone to Macedonia, but planned to return. In his absence, Timothy would be teaching sound doctrine, which was obviously badly needed. Lest we judge those ancient saints too severely, let me remind you that many churches today have permitted heresy to enter, and if it is identified, do not deal with it. Some do not recognize the heresy and others refuse to refute it. When the homosexual woman who plays the organ and teaches a Sunday School class is the daughter of a deacon, the granddaughter of a deacon, and the niece of a deacon, or the daughter of the man who employs a number of the members of the church, those who object may remain silent - some had rather live with it than deal with it.

That would have been bad enough in First Century Ephesus. Do not think that they had the advantage because Paul had spent three years there, or because of the ministry of Timothy. We have every advantage because we have the completed New Testament, in many versions and translations. I had the privilege of receiving one of the first Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB) New Testaments because I am a trustee with LifeWay Christian Resources and serve on the Broadman and Holman Committee, which is publishing the new translation - a word for word translation, not a “version” of an earlier translation. The oldest Bible publisher has the newest translation. The New Testament has been out for many months and the complete Bible will soon be in book stores (April, 2004). I have had the privilege of working through various challenges in bringing this new translation to completion, including a number of question and answer sessions with those involved in the process. Dr. Ed Bloom, General Editor, met with our committee and answered questions for us. I was particularly impressed with the respect given Dr. Bloom by LifeWay President Jimmy Draper and Vice President Ken Stephens, as well as other denominational leaders. I came to understand their respect when he sat at the table with me at lunch and answered many more questions.

Dr. Bloom and the other translators have made a commitment to placing in our hands the most accurate translation possible, making sure it is readable, and presented in a format that invites us to read it. The advantage we have over Ephesus is that we have the complete New Testament in language almost anyone can read and understand. There will be no sound doctrine taught apart from the Word of God and the ministry of the Holy Spirit. In fact, the Scripture is a primary ministry of the Holy Spirit. He miraculously inspired its writing, He has miraculously preserved it, and He miraculously illuminates our minds to enable us to interpret it and apply it in everyday life.

Paul promises Timothy, if you teach the people at Ephesus, “you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine.” Teaching the truth would develop Timothy into a faithful servant of Christ, and demonstrate that he is a faithful servant of the Lord. Furthermore, the one who studies the Word of God and teaches it will constantly be nourished by it. Every faithful servant of the Lord will major on teaching sound doctrine, and both

during his preparation and teaching of sound doctrine, he will be nourished by it.

4:7 - DISCIPLINE YOURSELF. *“But have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women. On the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness.”* Leave it to a bachelor to stir up “old women”! No wonder the sophisticated professional lady said that Paul was strictly a product of his own time. But this is not the product of the mind of Paul, it is the product of the mind of the Holy Spirit. Worldly fables are no more than - dare I say it? - old wife’s tales. They do not edify.

4:8 - GODLINESS IS PROFITABLE. *“For bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.”* Tremendous emphasis in our day is placed on physical exercise. Exercise programs and equipment are being advertised daily on TV. Health clubs provide equipment, training, and motivation to help members develop strong, healthy bodies. Medical science tells us that physical exercise is very important. Then was Paul just ignorant of the benefits of “bodily discipline”? Well, if Paul was, the Holy Spirit, the divine Author, was not.

He does not condemn or discourage physical exercise here. He says that it is of little benefit in the eternal scheme of things. It is beneficial in the time frame that is characterized as a vapor that appears for a little while and then it is gone. What is most important is godliness - “since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.” Bodily exercise offers temporal benefits. Spiritual exercise offers both temporal and eternal benefits.

4:9 - A TRUSTWORTHY STATEMENT. *“It is a trustworthy statement deserving full acceptance.”* Sound doctrine, and the prayerful study required to develop and teach it, will edify the individual here and now and throughout eternity. This is the “trustworthy statement” and it deserves our consideration and acceptance.

4:10 - OUR HOPE. *“For it is for this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers.”* “For this” is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. “Labor and strive” mean just what the words say. When my son Mark was in about the first grade I was surprised to hear him announce that when he grew up wanted to be a pastor just like his daddy. He explained, “I don’t want to have to work when I grow up.” I grew up on a farm where we worked from “can ‘til can’t” (that is from the time you can see until cannot see). To help pay college expenses I worked for the ASCS (Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service). I was aware of farmers who could never understand how anyone who spends several hours a day sitting in an office could have the audacity to call that work.

Those who are faithful to the ministry to which they are called will “labor and strive.” When I was working for the ASCS, I could finish plotting a cotton field on an ariel photograph and then stand back and look at my work and know it was well done. During my first few years as a pastor there were many days when I would start home after a day of studying, taking calls, making hospital calls, and visiting in homes, and attending meetings, and look back at the day and wished I could say, “That’s a good job.” Instead, I would spend some time with my family, get some rest and start over again the

next day. In time I discovered that while my evaluation of the work is important, the main thing I should do was to continue to prayerfully “labor and strive” and commit the results to the Lord.

4:11 - PRESCRIBE. “*Prescribe and teach these things.*” Paul instructs Timothy to prescribe a course of action and teach sound doctrine. Let’s face it, there are a lot of young preachers who need to read Paul’s instruction and practice it. I remember when many church members seemed to have had but one requirement for a young preacher: he had to have a strong voice. I am serious. I heard it all the time (few small churches had sound systems then). Of course, they listened to a young Billy Graham on TV every Sunday, and many of them could name some local preachers who had a strong voice. It helped if he alternately entertained and traumatize people. We still have a lot of that around today, especially on television.

Occasionally, when a church called a pastor you would hear someone say, “Our new pastor is a not much of a preacher, but he is a good teacher.” They were apologizing for him. Some twenty years ago, Stephen Olford said that there was a famine in America, and that famine was a famine of expository preaching. If I were to offer young preachers a prescription, I would say, “Preach the Word.” By that I do mean expository preaching. When Jesus said, “Feed my sheep,” he did not mean feed them Pablum! I might add that if his purpose is to be a popular preacher he may not choose to preach expository sermons. In the first place, expository sermons are not popular with immature believers. In the second place, expository preaching requires a lot of serious work. Many young men today are receiving training and they are doing an outstanding job, both in their preaching ministry and in their teaching ministry. Still others need to be challenged to preach and teach sound doctrine.

4:12 - SHOW YOURSELF AN EXAMPLE. “*Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe.*” One of the first sermons I ever preached was on this verse. The KJV reads, “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.” I was a teenager when I preached that sermon, but I remember stressing that most adults love young people and will give them the benefit of a doubt - and give them time to mature. However, a young person can make himself despicable through youthful sins and vanities.

A young man entering the ministry should be aware of the fact that many of his members are mature people. I thank the Lord and some very gracious church members who listened to me and encouraged me when I began preaching. The young preacher should be an example to believers in:

- 1) Speech. “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold In settings of silver” (Pro. 25:11).
- 2) Conduct. “Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ...” (1:27). The word rendered conduct means to “live as a citizen” of the Kingdom of God.
- 3) Love. “And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love” (1 Cor 13:13, NKJV).

4) Faith. “For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith’ (Rom. 1:17, NKJV).

5) Purity. “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Matt. 5:8).

4:13 - GIVE ATTENTION. “*Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching.*” In Paul’s absence Timothy is instructed to give attention to “the public reading of Scripture.” This was particularly important before the invention of the printing press. During the reign of Josiah in Judah, people working on the renovation of the Temple found a copy of the Scripture that had been lost for a long time. It was the reading of the Scripture that led to the revival in Josiah’s day. Ezra and Nehemiah recognized the importance of public reading of the Scripture. In Jesus’ day, Scripture was read publically in the synagogue each Sabbath, with a reading from the Law and one from the prophets.

Scripture was read and memorized by the faithful. Paul urges Timothy to read the Scripture publically before the church in Ephesus. It is still important to read the Scripturally in our worship services. I once asked a man to preach for me because he was visiting his home church after serving a church in another state for many years. I did not need it, but some members pointed out to me that fact that the man did not read any Scripture at all - he had no text.

Today, most homes have Bibles, many have various translations. We have a number of Bible Societies in America whose commitment it is to get the Bible into the hand of those who want it. As a matter of fact, I had the distinct honor of voting to establish a new Bible Society, the Holman Bible Society and I am excited about the potential. All those involved in this ministry believe the Word of God is inspired, inerrant, and authoritative. Each Christian should read and study the Bible privately, but it is still important to read the Scripture publically. For one thing, some people will not hear it any other time. For another, God will still bless the reading of His Word.

When I was in elementary and high school, we always had someone to read the Scripture publically in our classroom. Later, I heard of schools in which a student would read a few verses over the PA system, but someone told me that many students paid little attention when read in this way. I distinctly remember that students did pay attention when the Bible was read before the class - and in all those years I never heard any student object to the Bible reading.

Miss Nellie McGhee taught speech at Mississippi College, for many years. I took her class in ORAL INTERPRETATION OF THE BIBLE. I did not realize how much I needed that class until I had been in there for a few weeks. We need to read the Scripture publically - but we need to read it well in public. Sadly, there are times when the reader is not prepared. I, for one, have never felt that I was worthy of the honor of reading from the sacred Scripture, nor have I felt that I did it particularly well. Most of us have room for improvement.

The public reading of Scripture is associated with the preaching and teaching of the Word. We preach the Gospel and exhort people to respond to it.

4:14 - THE SPIRITUAL GIFT. *“Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed upon you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery.”* Was Timothy somewhat timid in his preaching and teaching ministry, or did Paul have such passion for preaching that he simply wanted to encourage his son-in-the-ministry? Since the wording of the passage is actually “stop neglecting the gift,” Timothy may well have suffered some timidity in the discharge of his duties as a church leader and preacher of the Word. If that is the case, Paul is saying that his timidity must no longer interfere with gift which he had been given.

The word “gift” (*charismatos*) is the same word used to identify the multiplicity of spiritual gifts or grace gifts about which Paul wrote in 1 Cor. 12-14. As in the passage from 1 Corinthians, the admonition here reflects the Pauline emphasis upon the fact that the gifts were not given for personal gratification or use but for the purpose of edifying the churches.

Timothy had been called and blessed with spiritual gifts for his ministry. The gift of pastor/teacher (cf. Eph. 4:11) which was given to Timothy had been prophetically announced by Paul (cf. 1:18) “and confirmed by the ‘laying on of hands’ by the elders (presbytery). This is an apparent reference to ordination, in which a local congregation publicly recognizes the gifts of the ministry in a man and sets him apart for the work of the ministry” [BSB].

4:15 - TAKE PAINS. *“Take pains with these things; be absorbed in them, so that your progress may be evident to all.”* Paul urges Timothy to give special attention to these things. This may mean that Timothy had neglected them, but not necessarily so. There is no doubt that Timothy loved the Lord or that he was committed to His work. He had proved that over and over, and Paul had commended him for his commitment.

Every pastor needs encouragement from time to time, and perhaps Paul is more aware of that at this point in his ministry than he had been when he parted with Barnabas rather than give John Mark a second chance. Later, he would acknowledge the fact that Mark was a profitable minister of the Gospel. I wonder if Paul ever preached a sermon from the Gospel According to Mark!

Another point should be made here. I don’t know how many times I have read in some commentary that if Paul had been aware of certain circumstances, his words in a certain passage would mean one thing, but if he did not know about it, then we would have to interpret his words differently. Have we forgotten that all Scripture is the product of the mind of the Holy Spirit? Paul is the human instrument, but not the source of the instruction.

Positive, constructive encouragement is very important to all of us. My son Mark told his friend Kevin that a technician he had sent out to install phones his business had been especially courteous and helpful. Kevin said, “I wish you would send the company a letter and tell them that. We usually get calls and letters when there is a complaint. No one ever criticizes this technician, but the company does not get letters or calls telling them how helpful he is.” Paul is not complimenting Timothy here - he does that in other places. But there is no reason to assume that he is criticizing his co-laborer. The

Holy Spirit knew how much encouragement and correction Timothy needed - but He also knew how much every called preacher of the Gospel down through the centuries would need it, too.

4:16 - PAY CLOSE ATTENTION. *“Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things; for as you do this you will insure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you.”* Timothy is charged once again to be faithful to his calling, paying close attention to his own spiritual well being and then to the teaching and preaching of sound doctrine. “Persevere” demands commitment. There will be times in the ministry of every pastor when he needs encouragement. He will find times when he needs the wisdom to know which response is best: fight, fright, or flight. He may feel that the only solution is to begin sending out his resume to see if he can start over somewhere else. Only the church of his dreams has no problems, never the one where he is serving. Fortunately, for some of these men there may be a mature pastor who will advise them to persevere. Believe me, I know what it is like to ask the Lord to move me - and then the thought would come to me, “Lord, who would I ask you to send here if you moved me?”

Timothy is told that doing as he was advised would “insure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you.” Does he mean that Timothy’s salvation may not have been secured, or completed? Paul would write again to Timothy, “for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day” (2 Tim. 1:12b). There is no reason to infer that Timothy’s eternal salvation was in any jeopardy, but his ministry may have needed some attention. Faithfulness in his preaching and teaching would assure Timothy of a fruitful ministry and lead others to turn to Jesus Christ for salvation.

VI. HOW TO TREAT OTHERS, 5:1-6:21.

A. How to Treat Older and Younger Church Members, 5:1-2.

5:1 - AN OLDER MAN. *“Do not sharply rebuke an older man, but rather appeal to him as a father, to the younger men as brothers.”* Timothy was a young man, called of God for this service, and he had been trained in a school like no other, at the feet of Paul. Yet, he was still a young man, even though he had been traveling with Paul for a number of years. There is no doubt that he knew more about what the church at Ephesus should be doing than many of the older men. Yet, Paul advises him to be careful in correcting an older man.

“Appeal to him as a father” is to show respect for older men, treat them with the dignity and respect the culture dictated and the respect God demands. There are times older men are wrong and need to be corrected, but young pastors and lay leaders must still follow Paul’s directions here. How fortunate a church is when there are older men and women who can help correct those who are in error.

This does not say that the older man is always right, or that the church should always do as the older members dictate. Older people are more likely to resist change, even when change is needed. Younger

people are more likely to insist on change, even when little change is needed. Neither should adopt an attitude toward the other that violates Scripture. There are times when the church must move forward against the wishes of some older people, but when this is done it must be done in a godly manner. The Scripture and the Holy Spirit will guide us, but we should guard against the attitude that whatever comes to mind was placed there by the Holy Spirit and whoever disagrees with us is getting his directions from the devil.

I have been given a lot of information about the trouble that can come when this Scripture is violated. A very strong church in one of the suburbs of a large city called a new pastor, and even though their baptisms ranked them in the top churches in the state, the young pastor wanted to accelerate this growth. They began by calling a new “worship leader,” and then they brought in a well known youth evangelist, who spent a week leading young people to mock and ridicule the older members of the church. At the end of the week the pastor and minister of music had a large following of young people and before long they were attending business meetings to vote on things the pastor proposed. They adopted an “in your face” attitude toward older members, radically changed worship, administration, leadership, staff, and financial matters. The attitude seemed to be, “This is what we are going to do - and you are going to pay for it.”

The pastor told one member he was “going after” certain key leaders, but what he did not count on was a split in which over three hundred of the most faithful members pulled out and started a new church. These people were tithers and teachers. Another split would develop before too long and missions support was slashed. Next came the arrest of the minister of music for on serious federal charges. Then, another staff member was forced to resign following an arrest for domestic violence.

Many of the things the new pastor wanted to do may have been good, but an abusive attitude toward older men and women was wrong. It was sinfully wrong. Older men and women should be treated with respect and dignity.

Younger men (and women) should also be treated with respect. That means that we treat them as brothers or sisters in the Lord. You do not manipulate brothers in the Lord. You lead them, you do not push them. Dr. Howard Spell was academic dean and Bible professor at Mississippi College - back when Christian colleges had Bible departments instead of religion departments. Dr. Spell illustrated leadership one day by taking a piece of rope and laying it across his desk. He took one end and began pushing it. It began folding up as he pushed it. He explained that you could not push a rope to get it to go where you wanted it to go. Then, he demonstrated how he could pull the rope and it would follow his hand, where ever he led it. He explained that you can gently lead people where you want them to go, but if you try to push them you may well see things fold up on you.

5:2 - OLDER WOMEN. “*The older women as mothers, and the younger women as sisters, in all purity.*” The Bible is not a sexist book, regardless of what many modern feminists may claim. The same principle Paul laid down for Timothy in dealing with older men and younger men still applies to women, both young and old.

B. How to Treat Widows, 5:3-16.

5:3 - HONOR WIDOWS. *“Honor widows who are widows indeed.”* The Lord, in the Law, provided for widows and orphans, and one of the first things the early church had to do concerned the ministry to widows and orphans (Acts 6). There is no surprise in the words, “honor widows,” but the next statement is interesting: “who are widows in deed.” What does he mean by that? Did they not know what a widow was? As he continues, he will offer guidelines in determining which widows need the help of the church.

5:4 - IF ANY WIDOW. *“But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to practice piety in regard to their own family, and to make some return to their parents; for this is acceptable in the sight of God.”* Is this “tough love” Paul is advocating? Possibly. There must be guidelines, in determining those who should be helped by the church. Let us face it, there are people who will let others take care of their own parents as long as they are willing to do so. Their first sin is the neglect their own parents, and a second sin is greed. They refuse to spend their own money as long as they can get someone else to do it.

We live in a different society today, a totally different culture. As a matter of fact, it is different from the culture and times of an earlier America. Today, when there is a problem, we look first to the government to solve it, which usually means throwing money at it. Sadly, as we move deeper into the post-Christian era in America’s history, we are seeing some serious problems. Just last night (10-16-03) I responded to a CNN poll in which people were asked whether or not marriage should be restricted to a man and a woman. I clicked on the button and then got a response - I was in the majority, but sadly, the majority only led by 52% to 48%! Can you believe 48% of those responding to the CNN poll voted for homosexual relationships? Of course, that may say a lot about who is watching CNN and the fact that many of their former audience now look elsewhere for their news.

The moral arena is not the only place in which we see disturbing change. When our parents develop serious problems, to whom do we look? They looked to their own children first, and then to the church. Most people now look first to government. After all, we may reason, they tax us enough to pay for their care. One reason our taxes are so high is that we demand cradle to grave care. There is nothing wrong with the government helping citizens, but we may all be better off if the advice given here by Paul was followed in the home and the church.

5:5 - A WIDOW IN DEED. *“Now she who is a widow indeed, and who has been left alone has fixed her hope on God, and continues in entreaties and prayers night and day.”* Paul’s definition of a widow here may not advance our knowledge very much, but the Holy Spirit, Who inspired this Scripture, knew where He was going with this. Fallen human nature will not always do what is best for society or for the church. It often seeks only its own benefit and pleasure. The church should help the widow who is left alone, without family to care for her. The widow the church helps is one of its own, one who “has fixed her hope on God, and... continues in prayer day and night.” The church was not expected to do for a widow what her family is required to do.

5:6 - BUT SHE WHO GIVES HERSELF. *“But she who gives herself to wanton pleasure is dead even while she lives.”* There may well have been young widows who would have permitted the church to support her while she committed herself to “wanton pleasures.” There are women, widowed or divorced, who receive welfare checks and earned income tax credit money who are engaged in a sinful lifestyle, and while that is not the same as taking money from the church it illustrates that there are people who will take anything anyone will give them - as long as they will give it to them - and squander it on “wanton pleasures.” Paul says the person who does such things is “dead even while she lives.” If that is true there are a lot of people on church roles who are spiritually dead.

5:7 - PRESCRIBE THESE THINGS. *“Prescribe these things as well, so that they may be above reproach.”* Timothy must teach these principles and see that the regulations are applied, both to protect the church and to hold the widows and their families to a high standard. That way the church is protected and the widow and her family are protected from criticism about their conduct.

5:8 - IF ANYONE DOES NOT PROVIDE. *“But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever.”* The family of the widow was expected to assume responsibility for their mother, grandmother, or others who needed their support. The person who refused to assume such responsibility was not assuming the character of the citizen of the Kingdom of God, he was living as though he had never been saved. In fact, he is worse than an unbeliever! When one becomes a Christian his or her social and family responsibilities are significantly increased.

5:9 - LET WIDOWS BE PUT ON A LIST. *“Let a widow be put on the list only if she is not less than sixty years old, having been the wife of one man.”* They apparently had a list of widows whom the church supported. If that is the case, the support for widows was not a random or haphazard approach to ministering. They planned the support and then took whatever action was required. The Holy Spirit inspired Paul to set down these guidelines. For one thing, the widow must be sixty years old. For another, she must have been the wife of one man - which means that if she remarried she was no longer a widow and should not continue to receive support from the church.

5:10 - HAVING A REPUTATION FOR GOOD WORKS. *“Having a reputation for good works; and if she has brought up children, if she has shown hospitality to strangers, if she has washed the saints' feet, if she has assisted those in distress, and if she has devoted herself to every good work.”* The godly widow, the one who deserves assistance from the church is one who:

- 1) Has a reputation for good works - she has faithfully served others.
- 2) She has brought up children - she has brought them up in the rear and discipline of the Lord.
- 3) She has shown hospitality to strangers - strangers were often dependant upon such hospitality.
- 4) She has ministered to the saints - washing their feet when they visited her home.

- 5) She has assisted those in distress - including other widows she has assisted in the past.
- 6) She has devoted herself to every good work - she has been faithful in all things.

5: 11 - YOUNG WIDOWS. *“But refuse to put younger widows on the list, for when they feel sensual desires in disregard of Christ, they want to get married.”* I will admit to having some problem with this at first. The young widow in some cases might be destitute and she might have children who need food and clothing. However, it seems that Paul is concerned primarily with the spiritual welfare of these younger widows.

Having lost her husband, the young widow loses her divinely assigned protection. She may be drawn into the glamorous life of the world (v. 6); or, if she decides to remarry, she may disregard Christ and her faith and enter into a pagan marriage (v. 12) with no purpose of ministry (v. 13). This is what the apostle intends in the expression "grow wanton against Christ." Paul does not object to marriage for the younger widows (v. 14), but he does remind the women of the importance of marrying in Christ and not merely satisfying unrestrained desires [BSB].

5:12 - PREVIOUS PLEDGE. *“Thus incurring condemnation, because they have set aside their previous pledge.”* Apparently these were young widows who had taken a pledge not to remarry, but were now about to break their pledge. He does not say that they could not remarry, only that they had set aside their pledge if they did.

5:13 - THEY ALSO LEARN TO BE IDLE. *“And at the same time they also learn to be idle, as they go around from house to house; and not merely idle, but also gossips and busybodies, talking about things not proper to mention.”* If the church supported them and their children they would be free to go around from house to house - “not merely idle (which was one problem), but they might also become gossips and busybodies - which some were apparently doing.

“Talking about things that not properly mentioned” lets us know that there are some things the godly woman will not mention. Is he talking about spreading gossip, or does he refer to language that is offensive?

5:14 - GET MARRIED. *“Therefore, I want younger widows to get married, bear children, keep house, and give the enemy no occasion for reproach.”* Rather than going around from house to house spreading gossip, or simply remaining idle, the young widow is advised to get married and bear children. A lax moral attitude, laziness, slothfulness, gossip, and meddling would give the enemies of the church an occasion to criticize them and the church. Paul had addressed the issue of widows and other singles in the First Epistle Corinth, a letter which was probably delivered by Timothy.

“But I say **to the unmarried and to widows** that it is good for them if they remain even as I. But if they do not have self-control, let them marry; for **it is better to marry than to burn with passion**” (1 Cor7:8-9, emphasis added).

In the OT, the Lord chose a people to glorify His name. The laws He gave them reveal both His moral nature and the moral standards He demands of His chosen people. Jesus, rather than appealing those laws, gave them new and deeper meaning and application. No longer could one think of himself as moral because he abstained from adultery, for he now understood that lust is a sin. A man may be physically loyal to his wife, but if he lusts after another woman he has sinned against God and his wife. In his letter to the church at Corinth, Paul reveals the high moral character the church demands, and must have. In the letters to the seven churches in Asia, Jesus condemned immorality and those who tolerated it within the church.

A friend at this moment is under great pressure because he could not overlook an affair between two leaders in his church. It seems that people expect the pastor to take a stand when it is someone else's church or when it involves people they do not know - or people who are related to them. America saw Bill Clinton walk down the steps of a Washington D.C. church waving his Bible one Sunday, only to learn that a little later that day he met with an aide with whom he was involved in an immoral relationship. Did it matter to them? Here is a better question, Did it matter to the church? Millions of church members would have voted for him again if given the opportunity. Their heroes in Hollywood were saying, "What's the big deal? It was only sex!" It was the kind of sin that Cod condemns, the kind that could gotten a man stoned back when Israel was a theocracy.

Another element must be added here. That is the homosexual element, and no choice of words can make it more acceptable to the Lord. Marxists taught the world how to use propaganda. He taught that a lie is moral if it advances the cause of Communism. Today, homosexuals and their friends in the media and in liberal institutions are covering this land with lies. They are telling us that the sin of the Sodomites was not homosexuality, they were condemned because of their inhospitality. When confronted on that, they agree that the Bible may have taught that, but it was only because of the culture of the times. If you don't buy that, then they agree, but then insist that "love" overrides everything else.

Sadly, the homosexual lobby has been very successful in courts, schools, government, industry, and even in the military. Now they focus on the church - if the church does not condemn them, who will? Two very important books from Broadman and Holman deal with this threat to our families, our culture, and to the church. The first is *THE HOMOSEXUAL AGENDA*, by Alan Sears and Craig Osten. The second book, *DARK OBSESSION*, was written by Timothy J. Dailey.

Morally, America is on the slippery slope today. Almost as sad is the fact that the church does not even seem to realize it is engaged in a spiritual warfare. Was it not Martin Luther who said that if you do not confess Christ at the point of attack you have denied Him, no matter how loudly you profess a faith in Him?

Young women, including widows, can be a genuine blessing to the Lord's church. They can also create serious problems. Young women can encourage lust through their speech (flirting, suggestive language, off-color jokes), an expression, their entertainment, where they go, and of course, their dress

- or lack of same. In a two volume commentary on First Corinthians (on CD but not published at this time), I stressed my conviction that the temple prostitutes of Corinth would be embarrassed by the way some of our church members dress. They probably would not want to be seen walking down the street with them. Modest in dress and speech is a blessing to the individual and to the church.

5:15 - TURNED ASIDE. *“For some have already turned aside to follow Satan.”* Of course, if you no longer believe there is a personal devil, you can disregard this! The class had sat through almost the whole intensive class in Revelation before one of the students asked the professor, “Do you believe in a real devil?” The professor in that well known theological seminary hemmed and hawed before admitting that he did not believe there could be a devil, or at least that Satan is a person. It would be interesting to see how he would defend that position in the presence of Jesus. He was not the only professor in that school at that time who did not believe in a personal devil (he is just the personification of evil!). While seminary professors were joining Christian college professors in denying the existence of Satan during the sixties, Satan was - in the pop-jargon of the media today - “getting traction” on the streets of America.

5:16 - LET NOT THE CHURCH BE BURDENED. *“If any woman who is a believer has dependent widows, let her assist them, and let not the church be burdened, so that it may assist those who are widows indeed.”* “If any woman” suggests that both men and women were to assume a certain amount of responsibility for older widows. The stated reason for the instructions here is that “the church would not be burdened.”

The Bible may be viewed as a deep Book, filled with complicated theological, philosophical, and psychological issues that goes over the head of the average reader, but this is an unfortunate approach to the Bible. No one will ever fathom the depths of divine truth, no one person will ever iron out all the difficult passages, and no one will ever either understand it or apply it perfectly. A. T. Robertson, whose six volume work, *WORD PICTURES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT*, has helped more preachers than I can imagine, once said that every time he went to his Greek New Testament he saw something he had never seen before. It is a well that will never run dry. The more time we spend in the Word today, the more we will understand it. The more we understand the Bible the more we understand how practical it really is.

Paul is writing Timothy to encourage him to instruct the church at Ephesus in how to deal with some real issues in the church. A primary concern in any church is relationships. I have had the joy of working with a lot of church members who supported their pastor, who would tell him when they thought he was wrong, who would love him even if they did not agree with him. I have also worked with some who had never gotten along with anyone they could not manipulate or control. You know in that kind of situation that it is just a matter of time before they turn on you. A Director of Missions once named a deacon in a certain church and said to the pastor, “He is just like a rattlesnake. If you don’t ever cross his path you will be all right, but if you ever cross his path he will strike.” He was right!

C. How to Treat Elders, 5:17-25.

5:17 - WORTHY OF DOUBLE HONOR. *“Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of*

double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.” The elder, or pastor, should be given the opportunity to lead the church. This Scripture tells us the elder should receive two things from the church - respect and remuneration. He should be given the opportunity to lead the church and the church should provide him with an income so that he can concentrate on the work of the ministry. When I was growing up in the Green River community seven miles west of Sledge, MS, we were active members of the Green River Baptist Mission and either M. C. Waldrup, the Superintendent of Missions or Henning Andrews, pastor of the Lula Baptist Church which sponsored our mission preached every Sunday morning and then we had Sunday School. We arrived home in time to hear R. G. Lee every Sunday on Television. Dr. Lee was the most amazing preacher I have ever heard. I might add that I was never disappointed when I heard him in person, and I did have the privilege of hearing him preach PAYDAY SOMEDAY at First Baptist Church, Senatobia, Mississippi. R. G. Lee preached the famous sermon over twelve hundred times - and who knows how many times others preached it?!!

Dr. Lee tried to visit a powerful business man one day and the “information” lady who had all her information on a stack of cards, told him he could not see her boss. About that time a door opened and her boss stepped out of his office and demanded to know, “Who are you?”

Dr. Lee introduced himself and the man declared, “You preachers are all alike. Cut off your money and you would stop preaching tomorrow.!”

“That’s a lie!”

“What?”, asked the man, as the information girl picked up her information?

“That’s a lie.”

His boldness got him the promise of a call, and months later the man called him and asked him to come to his home. There he poured out his confession of a life of sin. He said, “I have done everything but commit murder.”

Dr. Lee said, “You have done that, too.”

“What do you mean?”

“Your sins put Jesus on the cross.”

The man was saved that night.

Concerning money, Dr. Lee said, “You can pay me for what I do Monday through Saturday, but nobody can pay me for what I do on Sunday!” Most preachers would agree. If a man is called to preach he must preach. I did a lot of preaching to prisoners in a state penitentiary and a county jail and to men in a rescue missions without any thought of money. I also did a lot of preaching in mission churches, beginning when I was a teenager, when the remuneration would not cover my expenses.

When I was in seminary, I accepted an invitation to preach at a church which was seven hours from school. But there was a problem. My car broke down in about an hour from school and I had to leave it over the week-end to have it repaired. I was able to flag down a friend and catch a ride with him. There was another problem. A state trooper stopped us and told my friend that it was snowing north of Jackson and the Yazoo hills would be impassable. We stopped at his father's home and spent the night. The next day we traveled to Indianola, MS where another friend who was riding with me had arranged to have someone meet us. He drove me to Sledge and then he went on to Clarksdale. I preached both services and then got my father to drive me to Clarksdale where I caught a ride with my friend Housion Inman back to Indianola where we met caught a ride with R. B. Smith. He drove me to the garage where I had left my car and I paid \$14.96 of my \$15.00 honorarium for the repair work. Before I got back to seminary a trooper stopped me and told me to replace a headlight that was out. I lost money, even if I had not been out money for meals, but I would not have missed the opportunity to preach for anything.

When I was in high school I was asked to preach at a mission church near Clarksdale. My father told me that the tires on his truck were bad and he didn't want me to drive it that far. There was a family on our who had a car that was not running but the tires on their 1948 Ford were same size as Daddy's tires on the 1951 Chevrolet. But there was a problem. The wheels wouldn't fit. So, I spent Saturday afternoon jacking up the car, removing a wheel, letting out the air, breaking down the tire, and then doing the same thing on the truck. I then remounted each wheel and then I had to pump up each one with an old fashioned hand pump. That was like fixing eight flats! Of course, on Monday I had to reverse the procedure. I really wanted to preach at that mission! Money was never a consideration.

5:18 - THE LABORER IS WORTHY. “*For the Scripture says, ‘YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING,’ and ‘The laborer is worthy of his wages.’*” If there is any doubt, this verse confirms what Paul stated in the previous verse. Paul had written to the Corinthian church, “So also the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel” (1 Cor. 9:14). Any reading of the OT confirms this.

One thing has always amazed me, and that is the person who carries on a lifelong crusade against paying a pastor a decent salary, especially if he is one who is impressed when a pastor from a large church or a denominational worker of an evangelist receives a good salary but still fights against every raise proposed for his own pastor. A very godly, efficient, and dedicated church treasurer, assured a former pastor of what he had suspected for years. A certain man carried on a crusade against giving the pastor a raise, but promoted giving to missions with a passion that set him apart from the rest of the church. In time, people began to suspect that it was not the missions, but the recognition that motivated him. The former treasurer reported that this man would follow finance committee members to meetings saying, “Just remember, NO RAISES!” She assured her friend that he could not imagine how this man had worked against a raise for any staff member, but the pastor was his special target - every pastor.

5:19 - AN ACCUSATION AGAINST AN ELDER. “*Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses.*” When I was very young in the ministry, I moved to a new church with a great deal of anticipation and some noble plans for church growth - and we had the

growth, but only after five years of hard work, when it seemed that nothing would ever happen. I got to the point that I cringed when I met someone and identified myself as pastor of that church, and he would give me that knowing look and say, "I sure hope you are not like one they had there."

One day, one of our deacons, Ollie Canterbury, asked me, "Can I ask you a question?" I assured him he might. I had great respect for this man, but knew he had been through the trials when a couple of former pastors had done some things that hurt the church. Mr. Canterbury asked, "Will you tell me why it is that when a church is considering a pastor and we go to another pastor and ask about him that he won't tell us the truth about him if he knows something negative." I knew that of which he was speaking. The man had been accused of burning a church building, collecting the insurance and leading in a new building program. Afterwards, they learned that he had been accused of doing the same thing in another church not fifteen miles away, but in a different association. Three men who investigated the fire assured me that if he had not been a pastor they would have "put him under the jail."

I answered Mr. Canterbury with a question. I said, "I will try to answer your question if you will answer one for me. When a committee asks about a man and we tell them the truth and it is not what they want to hear, why do disregard what we say and turn on us?" He did not answer that one.

There have been pastors who have failed the church and failed the Lord. When this happens, the church may have to deal with the issues. What Paul is saying is that when a charge is brought against a pastor, you need to be absolutely certain there is some basis before you take action. The OT required two witnesses, Jesus appealed to three. You must be sure before you raise your hand against the Lord's anointed. David is among our greatest examples of one who refused to raise his hand against the Lord's anointed, even though he would have been justified in the eyes of man. This is worth repeating. You had better be very careful when you move against the Lord's anointed. Of course those who attack pastors seem to think they are anointed to do so.

Someone asked me to recommend a pastor for their church and when I told him I had a man in mind he asked the chairman of the Pastor Search Committee to call me. He said, "I understand you have a name for us." I told him that I did and the name would be a familiar one (it was the same as their interim pastor).

The committee member asked, "It's not Bill Jones is it?" (That is not his real name.). I asked why he asked that and this man attacked the former pastor about as viciously as anyone I have ever heard. That pastor had served his church when he was about nineteen to twenty years old, and that had been twenty or twenty-five earlier. This pastor is one of the most outstanding leaders in the Southern Baptist Convention today. He had been a friend of mine for a number of years, so I called him and asked if he knew why this church had maintained such intense animosity toward him for so many years. My friend said, "Johnny, that was my first church and I was very young. I made some mistakes but they were mind mistakes, they were not heart mistakes." He had forgiven them but some people had fed and watered their animosity for all those years. They had no respect for the Lord's anointed.

I know an elderly pastor who was falsely accused of something many years ago. He was innocent and

there was no problem proving his innocence but when he asked the deacons what he should do a few of them said, “Well since the accusation has been made we think you should resign.” He had to resign with no place to go. This former pastor and long time friend did not offer an explanation or claim any extra-biblical “word of knowledge”, but he later told me that three of those men were dead within one year. I offer no explanation for this, but it does make one wonder about it.

5:20 - THOSE WHO CONTINUE IN SIN. *“Those who continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest also may be fearful of sinning.”* If an elder persists in sin after being rebuked privately, then he should be rebuked before the congregation. When I was in my late twenties I became the pastor of one of those deacons you want to adopt as another father. Perry Talley was such a man. We often traveled together, vacationed together, and visited in each other’s home. He and his wife sort of adopted my sons - and Becky and me.

Perry had talked with me on many occasions about the problems they had with a former pastor. One day he decided to talk with the pastor, he told him that rumors were hurting the church and embarrassing the members. His pastor responded, “What I do in my personal life is no one’s business but mine!” Perry love his church and he and the members went to the Lord in prayer and waited for the Lord to move this man - but they did not force him to resign. Coming up with three witnesses could have created more problems than they already had.

I might add that a number of years later another church voted to try to terminate that same pastor. The vote was a tie and this pastor said, “As moderator I will cast the deciding vote, and I vote to stay!”

God holds his called pastors to a very high standard, and I for one, would like to say to every young man who enters the ministry, “If God called you, He expects you to live on a high moral plain, and if you are not willing to live a life that is above reproach, get out of the ministry.” I would also like to say to a lot of church members, “You had better be sure it is the Lord who is leading you when you attack the Lord’s anointed, and not the devil.” The venom I detect in some charges makes me wonder who is behind their accusations. At times I sense more of the spirit of a serpent than a Savior.

5:21 I SOLEMNLY CHARGE YOU. *“I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of His chosen angels, to maintain these principles without bias, doing nothing in a spirit of partiality.”* This is a solemn charge befitting the gravity of the situation. Paul challenges Timothy in the presence of God the Father and Jesus, the Son, but rather than appealing to the Third Person of the Trinity, he appeals to “His chosen angels.” Why? Some, based on what they glean from various verses, see chosen angels as observing what is going on in the church (1 Cor. 11:10; Eph, 3:10; 1 Peter 1:2). Paul charges Timothy to:

- 1) Maintain these principles - They were inspired by the Holy Spirit, thus applicable for all believers.
- 2) Do it without bias - The same principles should be applied to all members, including elders.
- 3) Do nothing in a spirit of partiality - James (Ch. 2) stresses the sinfulness of showing partiality.

5:22 - KEEP YOURSELF FREE FROM SIN. *“Do not lay hands upon anyone too hastily and thus share responsibility for the sins of others; keep yourself free from sin.”* Paul is saying one of two things here:

1) Do not ordain a minister too quickly. They should know a person well before they ordain him. He should not be a novice. An individual may state that immediately after his salvation he was called to preach the Gospel - and that may well be the case. Such a person should understand that he needs to be taught and he needs experience working in a local church. Those considering laying their hands on a candidate should do so very prayerfully, but they should also inform themselves as much as possible.

2) Some suggest that Paul is telling Timothy that if an elder has been rebuked, they should not be too hasty in restoring a penitent backslider back into their fellowship. Let him prove himself. A well-known Christian singer confessed to an adulterous affair and took a break from his recording work and concerts. A few weeks later someone asked me if I did not think it was time for him to start doing the concerts again. They could hardly believe it when I said, “No, I don’t.” Someone asked, “Don’t you believe God has forgiven him?” If he had repented, God had already forgiven him. But that was not the question. Certain tel-evangelists had already brought shame on the church when their sins were exposed. Now this singer had done the same thing. God can and will forgive us when we repent, but the effects of the sin can continue for a long time, sometimes even for years. The Lord will restore the backslider who repents, but that does not automatically mean that he should return quickly (if at all) to a highly visible position in the church.

A former pastor called me one time to take me to task for not asking our deacons to respond to an inquiry by a pastor search committee. As I listened I was praying, asking the Lord if I could have done anything else. Finally, when he slowed down, I said, “Brother, Jones (not his real name), I would like to tell you what it was like following you here. I think you need to know what we had to live down after you left. Everywhere we went people brought up those old charges. I think you need to know that. And if, as you say, the Lord is leading you to return to the pastorate, I think you are going to have to go to some other part of the country.” He told me that other pastors did not believe he had done anything wrong. I said, “If you believe that you need to go back and talk to some who have talked with me.” I might add that his sin was not immorality - but it was a matter of integrity!

5:23 - A LITTLE WINE. *“No longer drink water exclusively, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.”* Did Jesus drink wine? Absolutely. Did Paul drink wine? Of course. Did he really tell Timothy to tell people to drink a little wine for their stomach’s sake? Yes, he did. That being the case, why have Baptists taught total abstinence? Glad you asked!

Wine was used in Paul’s day, and wine was abused by many. Traditionally, in the Greek society wine was mixed, two or three parts water to one part wine. That means that when Jesus changed the water to wine, if all the water in the water pots (for washing, not drinking) had been changed to wine and then mixed at a ratio of three to one, they would have had a lot of wine for a small wedding reception. There were 6 water pots, holding something like 25 gallons each - that is 150 gallons. The 3-1 ratio would

mean that they would have added 450 gallons of water to the 150 gallons of wine, bringing the total to 600 gallons. That is a lot of wine for a small wedding.

What Jesus did was have them fill the six water pots (for ceremonial cleansing) to the brim. That represented Judaism. Then he told them to draw again (the word means to draw from a depth, not dip out from a pot), and this seventh drawing was changed to wine and taken to the governor of the feast who pronounced it the best of all. He changed the water of Judaism to the new wine of Christianity. He filled all the hopes of the Old Covenant to the brim. He perfectly fulfilled all the Law and the Prophets.

This is important: one would have to drink several glasses of wine mixed with water to get as much alcohol as one mixed drink today. Wine drinking in NT times would not even compare with drinking beer today. Those who drank wine without mixing it with water were called wine-bibbers and those who drank alcoholic beverages in which the alcohol content was enhanced were called drinkers of strong drink.

NOTE: See Appendix # 1.

“Do not drink water exclusively” could mean one of two things. First, it may suggest medicinal value. Second, the wine would purify the water - and they did not have chlorinated water systems in those days. It has been suggested that Timothy was a total abstainer and Paul was telling him that it was all right to use a little for some medical problem.

5:24 - THE SINS OF SOME. *“The sins of some men are quite evident, going before them to judgment; for others, their sins follow after.”* We would better understand this if we knew more about the circumstances. But the principle is valid: “The sins of some are obvious (going before), whereas those of others are hidden (follow after)” [RSB].

5:25 - DEEDS THAT ARE GOOD. *“Likewise also, deeds that are good are quite evident, and those which are otherwise cannot be concealed.”* Both good deeds and bad deeds will be revealed in time. You cannot keep either a secret indefinitely. When Rush Limbaugh confessed to an addiction to prescription pain medication the media went into their feeding frenzy mode. Some of his friends, like Sean Hannity and G. Gordon Liddy, came to his defense - not trying to justify the use of the drugs, but sharing with their audiences what they knew about how generous Rush has been. They told many of the things he does and has done for years to help others, things not commonly known. What I recall is that David Limbaugh, a committed Christian, urgently requested prayer for his brother.

D. Treatment of Masters and Slaves, 6:1-2.

6:1 - SLAVES. *“Let all who are under the yoke as slaves regard their own masters as worthy of all honor so that the name of God and our doctrine may not be spoken against.”* A Director of Missions or a Baptist association in another state has observed that pastors are not teaching or preaching through books of the Bible today the way they were in the past. His conclusion is that if you teach or preach

through certain books you are going to have to deal with some difficult subjects - like women in the ministry, abortion, homosexuality, tongues, and a whole plethora of sins of the spirit. We live in the age of tolerance; the worst thing anyone can be accused of is being intolerant or judgmental.

There are parts of First Timothy some may want to avoid. We have already seen some specific requirements for pastors and deacons, and the role of women in God's plan. Now we come to the issue of slaves and masters. We must face the fact that the NT may not say what many people today want it to say on the subject of slavery. There were something like sixty million slaves in the Roman Empire. Jesus started out with twelve apostles, and on the Day of Pentecost there were 120 people in the upper room waiting for the fulfillment of His promise. Slave revolts were put down with the sword and spear, so a wholesale rebellion against slavery would have led to a blood bath. Instead of demanding an end to slavery in the Roman Empire the NT concentrates on relationships between slaves and masters. The Golden Rule must be applied in all relationships.

Thomas Sowell, in a series of books on race, culture, migration, and slavery make the point that every culture has provided its share of slaves and slave owners. Slavery did not end with the Civil War in America. There are reports of millions of slaves today in, especially in Islamic countries. There are reports of Muslims killing Christians and selling their children into slavery. President George Bush in his address before the UN in September, 2003, appealed to nations to seek an end to sex slavery which is apparently much more widespread than most people realize.

There is enough guilt to go around when it comes to slavery. Victorious nations have throughout history captured large numbers of people and sold them into slavery (as with the slave girl who told Naaman's wife about the prophet that was in Israel). In Africa, victorious tribes captured their enemy - warriors and citizens alike - and sold them, often times to Muslims, who then sold them to Europeans or possibly to northern shippers, who sold them to southern planters. Every participant was guilty of an unspeakable wrong against their fellow man. However, at the time they were not only looking to the profit, they were eliminating an enemy who would surely attack them if they had the advantage. God took that horrible evil and turned it around over several generation to bring about the conversion of millions of those slaves and their descendants.

One thing that concerns me is that there are so many people in America who are so passionate about slavery that existed two hundred years ago, but show almost no concern for slavery that exists today. Slavery is deplorable - it was deplorable in Europe and America in the eighteenth century, and it is deplorable today. But if a Christian or a slave master was converted to Christianity he would have some serious decisions to make. Would he free his slaves? Would he release his slaves without helping they get a start in a new life? That might have been cruel under some circumstances. Though slavery was not the first issue in the Civil War, Robert E. Lee freed his slaves before Lincoln and Grant.

Now, should we condemn every Christian who ever owned a slave? It is tempting, but let me suggest an example for thought. George Washington owned slaves, but it apparently troubled him. Why then did he not simply free them? According to David Barton of WALL BUILDERS, Washington was subject to the laws of King George and those laws prohibited the freeing of slaves at the time. There was a time

when a freed slave in some places might well have been enslaved by someone else.

Paul shows great compassion for slaves, but rather than commanding masters to free their slaves, he sought to protect the slaves by insisting that Christian slave owners treat their slaves with a respect and dignity unknown in the ancient world - or the modern world for that matter. The problems of the master-slave relationship are discussed in 1 Cor. 7:21; Eph. 6:5-9; Col. 3:22-4:1; Titus 2:9-10; and Philem. 10-17.

The NT writers do not question the institution of slavery but try to mitigate it through improved attitudes of both masters and slaves. In the church, they met on equal terms as members of the fellowship, though there may have been instances when slaves were elders and thus, in the church, were over masters whom they served all week [RSB].

The sooner slave owners began thinking of their slaves as human beings and objects of the love of God, the sooner the slave issue would be resolved. There are people, however, who are so motivated by greed that they have desensitized themselves against the horrors of slavery.

The slave who became a believer was often in a position to bear a witness for the Lord that no one else was afforded. Why did the Lord let so important a person as the Thirteenth Apostle linger in one jail after another? Well, have you read his Prison Epistles? Have you read about all those who came to him while he was in prison? What better witness could the Lord have had among the guards, officials, and the court?

There were people who wanted to help Christians who lived behind the Iron Curtain to escape back when the persecution of Christians was particularly vicious. As dangerous as it was, I believe God wanted most of those believers to stay where they were in order to bear a witness. There are millions of Chinese believers who are in danger in Communist China today, and they are leading people to Christ every day - and those are people you and I would never have an opportunity to reach for the Lord. The closest thing to New Testament Christianity in our world today may well be behind the Bamboo Curtain.

6:2 - NOT BE DISRESPECTFUL. *“And let those who have believers as their masters not be disrespectful to them because they are brethren, but let them serve them all the more, because those who partake of the benefit are believers and beloved. Teach and preach these principles.”* Jesus gave His disciples a principle that applies here. He said, “If someone (a Roman soldier) compels you to carry his burden a mile, carry it two miles.” It was not very pleasant to be forced to carry a Roman soldier’s burden through the streets of one’s home town in the presence of his family and friends. He had no choice but to obey or be severely punished or killed, but he might have carried the load in such a way as to show his hatred for the Roman soldier. Jesus, however, instructed His followers to do more than was required, and do it with a positive spirit, a spirit of humility and kindness that would benefit both the Jewish citizen and the Roman soldier. It might open the door for a Christian to witness for the Savior.

Christian slaves were told to respect their masters (v. 1), and here they were told that if their master was a believer, they should be especially careful to show respect. The slave may have taught his master’s

Sunday School class! (if there had been a Sunday School). They did have Bible studies. A slave may have been a deacon whose master had been saved and baptized into the local church. This could have presented a serious problem for some, but Paul is laying down some principles which would minimize the problems.

At church, the slave may have been a leader, but at home he must do his duty - and more. He would “go the second mile” in the discharge of his responsibilities. The slave may have been more intelligent than his master. He may have been better educated. He may have been stronger, but he must assume his duties with respect and dignity so that he might be an effective witness for the Lord. That did not mean that he would not be praying for freedom.

E. Dealing with False Teachers, 6:3-5.

6:3 - A DIFFERENT DOCTRINE. *“If anyone advocates a different doctrine, and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness...”* There have been countless “different doctrines” throughout church history, none of which caught God by surprise. The Holy Spirit inspired Scripture writers to warn us about false doctrines and equip us to deal with them. We must always be on guard against false doctrines, and the best way to deal with false doctrines is to teach people the truth - teach and preach sound doctrine. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, and the Bible has an answer for all heresies, including Islam, animism, Eastern mysticism, and liberalism within the church.

The time to deal with the issue of the ordination of a deacons who has been divorced and remarried is before that person is recommended for consideration by his church. Teach the qualifications before the issue becomes divisive. The best time to deal with homosexuality is not right after the church has chosen a homosexual to teach a children’s Sunday School class. The best time to deal with women in the ministry is not after one gets a following and seeks ordination. The best time to deal with false teachers is not after they have begun to lead others astray - their followers may defend them with “religious” zeal. One must be prepared to offer a defense of the Gospel at all times, and trust the Lord to lead them.

I was pastor of a very strong church in Texas when I was in my mid-thirties. I loved preaching to a packed house and I loved looking out and seeing prospects everywhere. I loved looking across the farm/market road four blocks from the church and thinking about the four hundred new houses they were going to build there. In other words, I was happy and excited about our work. People were coming to me to ask me how to be saved. I remember the teenager who caught me as I left the church one Sunday and introduced his younger sister who had started asking him questions about how to be saved after the service. We went back to my study where she prayed to receive Jesus Christ as her Savior. A man showed up at my office before Sunday School with his twelve year old son who had been asking question about how to be saved. A young man came to me after a service and said, “You said some things in that service that disturbed me - he was a lost church member. His girl friend was saved the next night.

Then one Sunday morning one as I sat in my study before Sunday School, the director of the youth

department came in and told me we had a problem (something every pastor wants to hear on Sunday morning!). It seems that two women were going to a charismatic church on Saturday evenings and then coming to our church and teaching classes of teen aged girls what they had learned the previous evening. He said, "I don't know what you can do about it but I thought you should know what is going on." A lot of churches were having to deal with the charismatic movement at the time.

The next Sunday I preached from 1 Corinthians 13 and urged any person who became involved in the charismatic movement to refrain from bringing that heresy to our church. I stressed, "I have preached from the great Love Chapter because if you try to bring that to our church you will be resisted, and if that happens you are going to need to practice the love we see in this chapter." Following the service, one of the ladies met me near the foyer and said, "I appreciate what you said. I don't agree with you, but I appreciate the way you said it." Both of these ladies had grown up in a Pentecostal church and they liked the emotional element in those services.

The church I served for fifteen years was a co-sponsor of a mission church in south Louisiana for some time. While we there for a mission Vacation Bible School, the pastor told me that a local charismatic church has selected certain members and assigned them to the task of taking the charismatic movement to other churches in the area. For a few weeks their visitor was a quiet, attentive, respectful worshiper. He had created no problem for the pastor or the church. As a matter of fact, after several weeks, he spoke with the pastor following a Sunday morning worship service and told him how much he appreciated the sermon. He added, "The Holy Spirit gave you that message."

The pastor asked, "Do you believe the Holy Spirit tells a Baptist preacher what to say?"

"I believe He gave you that message."

The pastor asked, "If I tell you the Holy Spirit is telling me to say something to you right now would you believe it?"

"If you say so, I will believe it."

"Well, the Holy Spirit is telling me right now to tell you that you should go back to your own church and not create problems in our church. Now, do you believe the Holy Spirit told me to tell you that?"

"If you say so, I believe it." He left and never returned.

6:4 -A MORBID INTEREST IN CONTROVERSIAL QUESTIONS. *"He is conceited and understands nothing; but he has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words, out of which arise envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions..."* And some people at Corinth accused Paul of saying what he thought they wanted to hear - of being one way when he was with them (timid) and another way (bold) when he was not with them. A person may be inadequately prepared; he may hold some false beliefs, only because he has never been taught sound doctrine. That is one thing, but a fascination with, or preoccupation with false doctrines is another thing altogether. The HCSB

renders this verse: “he is conceited, understanding nothing, but having a sick interest in disputes and arguments over words. From these come envy, quarreling, slanders, evil suspicions.”

What motivates this false teacher, and why is he not open to instruction in sound doctrine? Paul offers some possibilities:

- 1) He is conceited - He is on an ego trip.
- 2) He understands nothing - but he would never admit it.
- 3) He has a sick interest in disputes (HCSB) - either he is spiritually sick, or he is psychologically sick.

From these arguments come “envy, quarreling, slanders, evil suspicions.” None of these glorify the Lord, only the individual.

6:5 A MEANS OF GAIN. “*And constant friction between men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain.*” Is not a depraved mind one that has been deprived of the truth? By “who suppose that godliness is a means of gain” we may infer that these false teachers were teaching false doctrines as a means of financial gain.

Each Fall, my father recruited a number of cotton pickers who did not live on our place to pick cotton for us. This was before we used mechanical cotton pickers. “Fuzz” picked cotton during the day and went to church at night. He was uneducated - and possibly not educatable - but a very nice man. Fuzz had gotten married and had a small baby and they picked cotton with the baby on a pallet at the end of the rows, or lying on their cotton sack as they picked cotton. They also took the baby to church with them.

This church was empty and idle until cotton picking time, and then someone would come in and begin preaching every night. Fuzz was really excited about the services, but the things he told us left us a little disturbed. One morning Fuzz was really having trouble getting started and when someone asked, he told them that they had been at church until very late because God had revealed to the evangelist how much money he would receive that night. He passed the plate again - and again. Then, he took his Bible and placed it in the door and told them he was going to take up another offering, and that he would keep passing the hat until he received as much as God told him they would give. And if anyone left before he received that amount he would have to walk over the Word of God.

It gets worse. On another morning, Fuzz announced that God had called him to preach. Someone asked him to tell about it. It was awesome to Fuzz. The evangelist announced that God was calling a man there to preach the Gospel. After some time with no response, he announced that he was receiving a vision of a small casket - just “so long” (Measuring the approximate length of Fuzz’s baby) and if that man did not surrender to preach the Gospelwell, Fuzz got the message and surrendered to preach then and there.

Years later, a friend who was not a Christian at the time mentioned this “evangelist.” I had wondered what he did in the “off season.” I do not remember what he did for a living, but my friend said, “Old Earl would get me to go buy moonshine for him so people wouldn’t see him buying it.” All false teachers did not die off in the First Century.

F. A Christian Attitude Toward Money and Godliness, 6:6-19.

6:6 - GODLINESS MEANS A GREAT GAIN. *“But godliness actually is a means of great gain, when accompanied by contentment.”* The HCSB has, “But godliness with contentment is a great gain.” The false teacher may seek financial gain through his false teachings, but the true Christian will find a far greater gain (a non-financial gain) that is far superior to any financial gain.

Dr. H. Leo Eddleman, who had been president of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary when I was a student, was a very good friend. We spent a lot of time together in the gym, sometimes with others, but sometimes it was just the two of us shooting baskets. It was so like him to walk over to where I was standing in line for graduation and said, “Johnny, you think we ought to call a little conference in the gym after this?” His father had been pastor of my home church and my pastor was a close friend of his. Several years later, Dr. Eddleman was scheduled to preach a revival for me and I picked him up at the airport in Monroe, LA and we drove back to Bastrop. As we were driving back into Bastrop, Dr. Eddleman asked, “Johnny, what kind of car is this?”

“A Buick.”

“I think I have a Buick,” he said.

I waited for more, but there was no more. A car was something Mrs. Eddleman used to drive him to the airport. He was one of the most brilliant men I have ever known, but he was not even sure what kind of car he owned! But, what he did know was worth a lot more. I not only knew what kind of car I was driving, I knew what kind of car I wanted to drive!

6:7 - WE BROUGHT NOTHING. *“For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either.”* Little commentary is needed here. Job said it so well: “Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked I shall return there. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away. Blessed be the name of the LORD” (Job 1:21).

I had so many funerals in one fifteen year pastorate that the local funeral directors joked about helping me recruit some members because they were burying all of mine. I have had funerals under all sorts of circumstances; rain, sleet, and snow, and intense heat. I have been in large and small processions. But so far I have never seen an armored car in a funeral procession.

Perhaps you read about the man who died before three friends could repay ten thousand dollar loans. The three friends agreed that they owed the money and since their friend had no family, they thought the best thing they could do was to go by the open casket as they left the service and slip the money into the casket. They met later and the first man said, “Well, I feel better now. I slipped ten thousand dollars

cash into the casket with Joe.” The second friend said, “I didn’t know how you would handle it, but I did the same thing.” The third friend said, “The banker told me you had each cashed a ten thousand dollar check, so I knew what you were going to do. But instead of getting him to cash my check, I just made out a thirty thousand dollar check to Joe and slipped it into the casket - and picked up your twenty thousand dollars change.”

6:8 -IF WE HAVE FOOD. *“And if we have food and covering, with these we shall be content.”* Paul is not condemning wealth. It is the love of money that is the root of all evil, not money itself. God blesses some with wealth and they have an opportunity to use it for His glory. But for Paul, if he had food to eat and clothes to wear he was content. It seems that us believed that Timothy had the same attitude toward money.

6:9 - THOSE WHO WANT TO GET RICH. *“But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction.”* A well known evangelist of another day was very popular throughout the south. As a matter of fact, there were a number of us who attended seminary with him for a brief time (before he dropped out) who loved to hear him preach - just as long as it was in someone else’s church. He had a strong voice, a quick wit, and delivered a powerful message. In general, he was very colorful. I was preaching in revival services in north Mississippi and the pastor of the church asked me if I knew this man. I told him that we had a class together but he dropped out after a brief time, possibly because of his schedule. The pastor told me that this evangelist had the endorsement of the pastor’s conference in a large city, but they had withdrawn it after something he did while preaching a revival in their city. He asked the church to take up an offering to send him and the pastor to the Holy Land. They took up the money and met them at the airport with the tickets. The evangelist took both tickets and turned to the pastor and said, “You are not going. I am taking my wife.” And he did. Other problems led to this man’s downfall and he was out of the ministry for many years.

6:10 -THE LOVE OF MONEY. *“For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith, and pierced themselves with many a pang.”* First, Paul says, “The love of money is the root of all sorts of evil.” The KJV has “all evil, whereas the HCSB has “all kinds of evil.” The point is that there is evil that cannot be traced to the love of money. It is not money that is evil; and that love of money leads to all sorts of evil, not necessarily all the evil there is in the world.

William Colgate, and J. C. Penney were very wealthy men, and both of them gave ninety percent of everything they made to the Lord. Stanley Tam got in on the foundation of the plastics industry, but as a committed Christian he wanted to give his business to the Lord. He had to talk with a lot of lawyers before he found one who would set up the business the way he wanted it. Tam drew a salary like everyone else. All profits with to Christian causes. He shared his testimony in the book, GOD OWNS MY BUSINESS, published around 1970.

The second part of the verse, “some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced

themselves with many griefs,” seems to mean that their lust for wealth, their greed and covetousness, had left them conscience stricken, empty, and disillusioned.

6:11 - FLEE FROM THESE THINGS. *“But flee from these things, you man of God; and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness.”* There is a time to fight (fight the good fight, v. 12); there is a time for fright (we fear God and the consequences of our sin); and there is a time for flight (Joseph understood that). Paul counsels Timothy to flee greed, covetousness, and the love of money with all the sins associated with them. The man of God will not only flee these sins, he will pursue certain things:

1) Righteousness - No one can produce righteousness in the flesh, but when we believe in Jesus Christ, His righteousness is imputed unto us. We are clothed in the righteousness of our Savior and if we walk with him in the spirit, He will produce righteousness in us.

2) Godliness - The man of God will pursue a life that reflects the nature and character of God.

3) Faith - The just shall live by faith.

4) Love - This is *agape* love, a mental attitude kind of love which is directed by the mind, and not simply an emotional response. We are never more godly than when we love God and love others with the kind of love the Father has for us.

5) Perseverance - The Greek word (*hupomonay*) may be translated patience, perseverance, or endurance, with the idea of a willingness to remain under certain circumstances and wait for the Lord to work things out for us, and for His glory.

6) Gentleness - If gentleness or meekness is not being produced in your life the wrong person is in charge of production! The Lord places a premium of gentleness. I can think of a lot of gentle people - not just people with a quiet spirit. There are quiet, timid people who do not manifest the nature of our Lord, but the believer is never more like his Savior than when he is conformed to the image of Christ (Rom. 8:29) in nature and character.

Dr. Michael Zambie is an allergist in Monroe, LA. He is an outstanding physician, a civic leader who gives himself to children in the area, and a respected professional. He is also one of the most gentle men I have ever known. He is kind, gracious, and caring. I will never forget his concern when he came to my room in Glenwood Medical Center with Mark several years ago after Mark told him I had had a heart attack. His concern was genuine. If I appreciate gentleness in an individual, I can only imagine why God desires gentleness and meekness in His servants.

6:12 - FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT. *“Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.”* The word Paul uses means to contend for a prize. Paul is on the sidelines cheering on his son-in-the-ministry. The fight in which Timothy is engaged is a battle of faith.

To “take hold of eternal life” is the equivalent of. “get a grip on” [ATR - WORD PICTURES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, in the Bible Navigator program, Broadman and Holman]. The lost person cannot take hold of eternal life; he cannot attain salvation, or earn it. But the Christian can drift through life like the children of Israel in the Wilderness, or he can he can follow the Lord in the spirit enter the Land of Promise to possess his possessions. In other words, he may “take hold of eternal life.”

Timothy had made a “good confession” of faith “in the presence of many witnesses at the time of his baptism” [ATR]. From this we can draw a few conclusions. First, this was not infant baptism. Second, his baptism followed a public profession in Jesus Christ. Third, the mode of baptism was immersion (the Greek word demands it).

6:13 - I CHARGE YOU. *“I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate...”* There is A CHARGE TO KEEP (the title of this study), and Paul brings the charge to Timothy in the presence of God, the source of our life.

The charge is also given in presence of Jesus Christ. Again, we find the Trinity in the Scripture - the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write this, and the attention is focused on the Father through the Son. “Who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate” means in the presence of Pilate, not in the time of Pilate [ATR].

6:14 - KEEP THE COMMANDMENT. *“That you keep the commandment without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.”* Timothy is charged to keep the commandment “without spot or blame” (HCSB) until the Lord Jesus Christ returns. This is command was given to Timothy but it is applicable to every servant of the Lord, to every believer in general, and to every minister of the Gospel specifically.

6:15 - WHICH HE WILL BRING ABOUT. *“Which He will bring about at the proper time-- He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords.”* The “appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ” (v. 14) will be brought about at the proper time by “the blessed and only Sovereign, God the Father. I look forward to “the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ” (v. 14), and I do not hesitate to say with John, “Amen! Even so, come, Lord Jesus.” I have read a lot about the Lord’s return, from Scripture, sermons, commentaries, and magazines. I sat in a meeting a few years go and heard Dr. Nigel Lee, who has earned ten doctorates, conclude a speech by saying, “But I thank God I am still a post-millennialist! I was totally surprised because I had thought that view had gone the way of the dinosaur. I was also surprised to hear several say Amen. However, many of the Lord’s most outstanding servants held that position early in the last century.

When I was in college and seminary most of my professors were Amillennialists; they did not believe in a literal millennial (one thousand year) reign. I have heard others say, “I am a pan-millennialist; I think it is all going to pan out in the end.” A highly respected Bible teacher was once asked his position and he said, “I am a pro-millennialist - however the Lord works it out, I am for it.” Well, if you put it like that I

suppose we are all pro-millennialists. But, this can also be a way of saying one is not interested in seeking answers, or that he is unwilling to commit to any particular view.

Many of us hold to a premillennial position. I believe the NT supports that position, but I also believe the NT would have me treat one who disagrees with me with respect and dignity. A few years ago, I read a copy of the Mississippi BAPTIST RECORD that Dr. E. R. Pinson had celebrated his ninety-second birthday, so I called Dr. Pinson to congratulate him. I had a nice visit with my old Bible professor - and I am glad I had the privilege of sitting under a Bible teacher and not simply a “religion” teacher! Dr. Pinson had served as interim pastor and conference Bible teacher for many years after he retired and at the time he was teaching a Sunday School class. He had begun a class in the Revelation the previous Sunday and he told me about it. The 92 year old retired Bible teacher, one of the best I have ever known, said, “Johnny, last Sunday I stood before my class and announced for the first time in my life that I am a premillennialist.” I was totally amazed. Is it not encouraging to find a 92 year old man who is still studying and willing to be convinced that he needs to change his position? Dr. Pinson had not arrived at this position through the influence of teachers, preachers, or friends. He had been led to that position through his study of the Word of God.

I have a feeling that we are all going to learn some things about eschatology (the study of last things) at some point in the future. Without trying to defend my position at this point, let me say that in all the views with which I am familiar, the Lord returns. There is more: He will return at the proper time - and God is the One who determines the proper time. I wouldn't have it any other way. There are times when I pray that the Lord will return immediately, and then I am reminded of the fact that God is infinite, I am finite. I am totally incapable of determining the proper time.

Ray Prichard, in his new book, HE'S GOD AND WE'RE NOT, lists seven principles that seem to apply here. He calls them seven laws. The title is taken from the first one, and that is the one I would stress here, but look at all seven:

- 1) He's God and we are not.
- 2) God doesn't need us, but we desperately need Him.
- 3) What God demands he supplies.
- 4) What you seek you find.
- 5) Active faith releases God's power.
- 6) There is no growth without struggle.
- 7) What God starts, He finishes.

Think what my time schedule would do to others! I thank God that Jesus is returning and I am ready today. I also thank God that when Jesus returns He will not be returning as Suffering Servant, but King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

6:16 - POSSESSES IMMORTALITY. *“Who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light; whom no man has seen or can see. To Him be honor and eternal dominion!*

Amen.” God alone “possesses immortality.” God alone is eternal, deathless, in possession of eternal life. There can be but one God, the uncaused Cause of all that exists. He is the great I AM, Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer. Francis Shaffer wrote something like twenty two books - and none of which one would call light reading. His first three books were considered a trilogy by a man who had moved from agnosticism to theism when he came to understand the doctrine of the Trinity. In his original trilogy Shaeffer proposed two positions (or conclusions). First, He is there. Second, He is not silent. God is the One Who exists. He is the only One who can exist. Sadly, many in the church have climbed aboard the diversity bandwagon. There are church members who believe that Jesus is not the only way to the Father. They are committed to a view of tolerance that joins them with those who attack Christianity in America in order to prove they are not narrow-minded bigots.

The Ten Commandment have to be removed from all public buildings and properties lest some Muslim or atheist see them and feel left out. Boy Scouts who have been meeting on city owned property are being kicked out because they mention God - but in some cases, the real reason is that they refuse to have homosexual scout masters working with boys. ACLU lawyers and their clients defend their position with all the fervor of an old-time evangelist. They denying the freedom of millions to protect the feelings of a few. One even declared how unfair the Boy Scouts are to those boys who are “gay.” That assumes a lot! Of course, they are saying they were born that way. I am sorry, but I don’t buy that. Call me a homophobe if you like, but I cannot help it - I was born that way!

Christian attorney and columnist, David Limbaugh, has written a new book, *PERSECUTION: HOW LIBERALS WAGE WAR AGAINST CHRISTIANITY*, in which he details the attack against Christianity. There is a holy war going on in America today and it is not only the one waged by Islamic terrorists. Professing atheists are trying to drive Christianity back inside the four walls of the church or the home. Little do they understand that Christianity cannot be contained by walls! Jesus sends us out into the streets and market places, a mission which has caused the martyrdom of countless numbers of faithful Christian through the centuries. Sadly, every time the ACLU wages a fresh attack on the church, the Rev. Barry Lynn, of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, eagerly joins their fight. The God Who alone possesses immortality, is also the One Who:

- 1) “Dwells in unapproachable light” - He Who is Light dwells in light (in Him is no darkness at all).
- 2) “Whom no man has seen or can see” Him - No one can see Him because He is Spirit.
- 3) “To Him be honor and eternal dominion!” - He has dominion, but we must recognize it.

6:17 - INSTRUCT THOSE. *“Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy.”*

Paul is writing to charge Timothy with the responsibility of teaching the church at Ephesus sound doctrine. He is to teach all people, rich and poor. The poor are given many reasons to look to the Lord. “Those who are rich in this present world” are also to be taught sound doctrine. They are also to be taught a Christian world-view. Paul challenged Timothy to teach them:

- 1) Not to be conceited - pride is a temptation for anyone, but more so for the wealthy.
- 2) Not to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches” - The Great Depression and Black Monday proved the point, and the stock market has demonstrated that in the last few years.
- 3) Fix their hope on God - “Who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy.” He wants to bless us.

6:18 - DO GOOD. *“Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share.”* Once again, Paul charges Timothy, teach them:

1) “To do good.” The Bible is very clear about this one thing - there is no person who is inherently good. Jesus said, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone” (Mark 10:18). However, God demands that all who know Him to good works. There is human good, and there is Christian good. When the world proclaims that man is basically good it shows that it understands neither the Word of God nor the character of man.

2) “To be generous and ready to share” - Many of those who are wealthy are very generous. For some, it is a matter of marketing themselves. Entertainers, politicians, and even some athletes benefit from a reputation for generosity. They adopt causes and commit themselves to them. Others are moved by compassion and often give anonymously to causes they consider worthy. Christians who possess material wealth should give generously in a way that honors God and meets the needs of those who are less fortunate.

When I was a teenager I often joked about the complimentary statement, “He would give you the shirt off his back.” I heard it often in those days. I joked that my mother would give you the shirt off my back. It was not uncommon to see one of my shirts walking down the road. My all time favorite shirt was one in “inherited” from my father. It was a sport shirt, but nicer than students were wearing to school, especially those of us who played touch football in them.

There was a man in the area whose hygiene, or lack of same, was proverbial. He and his wife had three children and once when he desperately needed job my parents invited him to come to our house where they got him to take a bath and dress in the clothes they provided for him. Then they told him he could stand on the back of the pickup truck and they would take him to look for a job. He came out with “my” shirt on and climbed onto the truck. I stood there watching the shirt disappear down the road. When my parents returned my mother was frustrated - Daddy was amused. They did not realize the man had any snuff with him! When he stopped in town they discovered that he had been spitting snuff into the wind and it had blown back all over him - all over “my” shirt. I just thank the Lord that an experience like that did not discourage Mother’s generosity.

6:19 - STORING UP...THE TREASURE. *“Storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed.”* Jesus provides the reason: “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matt. 6:21). We are on this earth but a brief time - like a vapor that appears in the morning and is soon gone. All people can store up

treasures that last forever.

During the sixties, it was said of the “Jesus Freaks”, “They are so heavenly minded they are of no earthly good.” Someone responded that they were in rebellion against their parents who were so earthly minded they were of no earthly good. By doing good and helping to meet the needs of others we are storing up treasures for eternity and taking “hold of that which is life indeed.”

G. A Charge to Keep, 6:20-21.

6:20 - GUARD THAT WHICH HAS BEEN ENTRUSTED TO YOU. “*O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you, avoiding worldly and empty chatter and the opposing arguments of what is falsely called ‘knowledge’...*” The Holman Christian Standard Bible renders it, “Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you, avoiding irreverent, empty speech and contradictions from the ‘knowledge’ that falsely bears that name.” Paul charges Timothy to:

1) Guard what has been entrusted to you - A. T. Robertson points out that the Greek word for “guard” is the aorist of urgency. Literally, it is to place beside as a deposit, thus, to put up that which has been entrusted to you as a deposit. But what exactly was it that had been entrusted to Timothy? First, the Gospel of salvation had been entrusted to Timothy, as it is to all who are called to serve Him. In the second place, there is sound doctrine.

2) Avoid worldly and empty chatter - “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold In settings of silver” (Pro. 25:11), but idle chatter does not honor the Lord. Timothy, as a young servant of Jesus Christ, is charged to guard against worldly language. What does he mean by worldly chatter? That which the world calls “cool”, or “awesome” may well be worldly. The term may also include anything from profane or vulgar language to that which is somewhat off-color, or suggestive. It may be popular to use the language of the world, but if it dishonors the Lord it is sinful.

We are not only to avoid using the tongue for an ungodly purpose, we are to avoid “empty chatter”. Our Lord hears every word we say, he even knows the thoughts of our mind, the imaginations of our heart. We are accountable to Him. Timothy and all servants of the Lord must avoid idle chatter. When you add this to what James writes about the sins of speech, you know that we all have fallen short of God’s perfect will and purpose for us.

3) Avoid “contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge” - through sound doctrine. We must avoid meaningless debates. Dr. R. R. Pearce, one of my all time favorite professors, often made statements or asked questions that provoked a debate in his classes. One day when the debate was getting a little more heated than usual, Dr. Pearce turned and wrote two words on the chalk board: LIGHT and HEAT. Then he asked, “What are you trying to throw in the subject, light or heat? Light illuminates but heat tarnished. Here is a good rule of thumb: when you see that you are throwing more heat on the subject than light it is time to bring the debate to a close.

6:21- GONE ASTRAY. Paul warns Timothy to avoid “false knowledge” (v. 20), “*Which some have professed and thus gone astray from the faith. Grace be with you.*” Paul charges Timothy to remained focused on the Gospel, the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ. Sadly, some had fallen away from sound doctrine and embraced heresy.

Many in our day have gone astray, following false knowledge, or false doctrine. Some have turned from sound doctrine to cults like Mormonism or Jehovah’s Witnesses. Others have turned to pagan religions - animism, eastern mysticism, or New Age religions. Still others have turned to the occult, glamorizing and glorifying all the occult practices condemned in the Word of God. Some within the church have gone astray by adopting an unscriptural attitude toward Scripture. Still others adapted the Scripture to suit their interests or agenda.

The election of a homosexual priest to the office of Bishop by the Episcopal Church leaders is meeting with strong opposition from conservatives Episcopalians. Those who elected him defend their action in a number of ways. They have been on the cutting edge of societal revolution in the past. Their members have accepted changes in the past and they will accept this. And one priest seemed ecstatic over their action, announced, “The Bible is not our authority!” The homosexual priest has stated that he believes God has put him in that position - I wonder if he thinks God is putting His church through the turmoil for the fun of it! It seems obvious to me that this new Bishop has more concern with himself - and the homosexual agenda - than he is with his church. If there is one thing we can be sure of it is that the Bible is not his authority on this.

I once led a conference in a church that was well known for its liberal theology and its liberal position on moral and social issues. In the last session, I brought up the Bible and mentioned the controversy that had raged over the Word of God for a number of years. As I recalled, I pointed out that Francis Shaeffer, back around 1960, predicted that the next great battlefield in Christianity would be the Bible. Little could most people imagine how right he was.

I knew I could not compromise on the Scripture, regardless of what some of the people sitting there thought. So, I made the statement that I believe the Word of God is inspired, infallible, authoritative, and inerrant. I added, “If God could not have produced a perfect work why should we call Him God; and He could have done it and would not do it, what kind of God is He?” I added, “This is a theological conviction, not a political position. And I will add another note here: I have already had a major heart attack, I am past sixty years of age, and I know that I will be standing in the presence of my Lord before too long. And if He tells me that I took His Word too seriously, then I will adjust my thinking. But until that time comes, I am not willing to compromise on God’s Word.”

CONCLUSION

The Ephesian Church had a great start. Paul planted the church, and served as their missionary/pastor for three years. He was blessed with some able associates: Silas, Timothy, and Luke (at least a part of the time). After his release from the first Roman imprisonment, Paul took Timothy and went back to

visit key churches. When they arrived at Ephesus they discovered that some problems had developed. Paul left Timothy to deal with these issues, but after he arrived in Macedonia - almost certainly to visit the church at Philippi - he was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write to Timothy to provide special guidelines for his ministry there. Certain problems had to be addressed.

The charge to Timothy was both theological and practical - though some do not seem to think the two are compatible. This epistle is deeply theological in content, and at the same time it is very practical in its application. There is a charge for Timothy and that charge focused around teaching sound doctrine in an effort to refute and defeat false doctrine.

One message we get from this epistle is that Christianity is a relationship based on God's revelation of His redemptive purpose for us, and not simply a religion in which people try to either appease an angry god or attract the attention of a disinterested god. Another lesson is that, while our relationship to the Lord has an emotional quality, the essentials of the faith are not primarily emotional. The emphasis on sound doctrine takes us beyond a warm fuzzy feeling, ecstatic praise, or frenzied activities. This is not an attack on our charismatic friends, there is enough of that without my jumping on the bandwagon. At the same time, we must emphasize the mental aspect of Christianity. We must preach and teach sound doctrine or we will lose a generation to false doctrines, emotional experientialism, or ritual and ceremony.

An issue of THE CHRISTIAN READER (November/December, 2003) features a picture of Rick Warren on the front. I have heard Rick Warren speak, and as a matter of fact, received a big bear-hug from the man who has written two very popular books, THE PURPOSE DRIVEN CHURCH and THE PURPOSE DRIVEN LIFE. Rick Warren has challenged a lot of people to try what they have done in California - with amazing results, I might add. What I am about to say is not a criticism of Rick Warren as much as it is an indictment of the rest of us.

I have been concerned that the church today, from the pulpit, to the pew, to denominational headquarters, has developed a practice that needs to be examined. When Henry Blackaby wrote EXPERIENCING GOD, the book was an immediate best seller. But it did not stop there. The church wanted to buy everything Henry Blackaby wrote. I received a complimentary copy of the EXPERIENCING GOD NEW TESTAMENT just prior to its release by Broadman and Holman (I serve on the Broadman and Holman Committee for LifeWay Christian Resources). As a matter of fact, I have two copies of that New Testament - the first has a printer's error in it and they had to delay shipment to the stores until it was corrected.

Rick Warren and Henry Blackaby - and I am going to assume here that they were both led of the Lord into the ministry for which they are now famous - are two really amazing men. So, my problem is not primarily with Warren and Blackaby, or even Beth Moore, but with the way the church has come to look at celebrities. Let us say that God led these three people to something very special and that He has blessed these ministries. Many will agree, some may debate the point.

My concern is that we have reached the point in the church in America that we find someone whose

work the Lord is blessing, and at first we take a look, often a very close look at that person and his work. When we are convinced that they are for real, there is a tendency to take our eyes off the Lord and the special ministry to which He has called us and we focus on that highly visible, highly successful pastor, teacher, or evangelist. In other words, we find someone who has his eyes on the Lord and we keep our eyes on him - not on the Lord, but on one who has his eyes on the Lord. Let me say it again: instead of keeping our eyes on the Lord we keep our eyes on someone else who has his eyes on the Lord.

Rick Warren, Henry Blackaby, and Beth Moore are very special people who have been called to a special ministry which the Lord has blessed. So what do we do? We can go to the Lord and ask Him to reveal to us whether or not we are doing what He has called us to do, and if we are not we can ask Him what to do about it. That calls for some serious prayer. The alternative is to read what Rick Warren has written and save the time and energy. Some have done that and released glowing reports. Others have tried it and found themselves without a church. Still others have seen church split over this approach - and approach which Warrens advises, "may not work in your church."

What are we to do? Learn from others but keep your eyes on the Lord, not on someone else who has his eyes on the Lord. How do we do that? Stay with the Bible. The Holy Spirit, Who inspired the writing, illuminates our minds as we study it and guide in the application of it. He may lead you to adopt an existing program for your church, or He may lead you to another program or ministry - but He will lead you. Trust the Holy Spirit to lead you where He wants you to be. Trust Him to reveal how you should do it. This much you know for sure, He will keep you focused on prayer, evangelism, and sound doctrine.

Southern Baptists have adopted statements of beliefs that identify the people called Baptists. The first BAPTIST FAITH AND MESSAGE STATEMENT was adopted three quarters of a century ago and the second in 1963. The latest is the 2000 BAPTIST FAITH AND MESSAGE STATEMENT, a statement which recognizes the authority of the Word of God. This is a statement of beliefs held by most Baptists - not all agree (which proves they are Baptists!). Baptists are a people of the Book, and that should say it all, and at one time it was probably enough, but many people felt that it would be wise to adopt a statement that highlighted the basic doctrines we consider essential.

After a meeting when we discussed who is a Louisiana Baptist, I recalled a list of BAPTIST ESSENTIALS Dr. Jimmy Draper had shared with LifeWay trustees at Glorieta and I e-mailed him and asked him to send me the list. He told me that Morris Chapman has presented a similar, if not an identical list at some meeting. Here is what Dr. Draper sent me:

BAPTIST ESSENTIALS

There are many Baptist distinctives (Baptism by immersion), but there are seven Baptist distinctives every Baptist should know:

1. Salvation by grace, through faith, plus nothing (which demands security of believers).
2. Sufficiency of Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16-17)
3. The Lordship of Jesus Christ
4. Autonomy of the local church
5. Religious Liberty
6. Trinitarian view of God
7. The Great Commission

We have a charge to keep. Teach our people to do what is good, to be generous, to love one another, to win the lost, and to teach sound doctrine. "Grace be with you."

APPENDIX # 1

THE USE OF WINE IN NEW TESTAMENT TIMES

BY
JOHNNY L. SANDERS, D.Min.

How popular is home wine-making? The question appeared recently in a weekly magazine. The answer was that every month, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms of the U.S. Dept. of the Treasury licenses a new 5,000 heads-of- households. The American Wine Society, a Hobby group, reports (1975) membership as 12,000 with a 30% annual increase.

"Pop" wines, advertised so freely on TV, radio, magazines, and billboards, have contributed to a serious and growing problem among young people. People like to joke about the amount of beer consumed by servicemen but it is no joke to three million American veterans who are now alcoholics.

Alcohol is a major problem, but when one takes a stand against beverage alcohol, some “sleeper” comes up with the same old worn-out protest, “But Jesus drank wine! They drank wine at the Last Supper, didn't they?” The answer is, “yes.” Jesus drank wine and wine was used at the Last Supper. But the answer to the implied question (Is not modern drinking the same as that practiced by the Jews at their feasts and social function?) is “no.” There is a difference.

An article by R. H. Stein, "*Wine Drinking in N. T. Times*", which appeared in the June 20, 1975 issue of "Christianity Today" (p. 9) is helpful in understanding the difference in wine drinking in N. T. times and modern social drinking. Stein pointed out that in ancient Greece wine was stored in large jugs called *AMPHORAE*. When used it was first poured into large bowls called *KRATERS* and mixed with water. From these *kraters* cups (*KYLIX*) were filled. It is important to note that before the wine was consumed it was mixed with water. The cups were filled from the *kraters* and not the *amphorae*.

The ratio of water to wine mentioned by ancient writers varied from 1 to 20 parts water to 1 part wine. Common ratios mentioned are: 2-1, 3-1, 4-1, 5-2 (the larger number represents the water). "Sometimes the ratio goes down to 1 to 1 (and even lower), but it should be noted that such a mixture is referred to as 'strong wine.' Drinking wine unmixed, on the other hand, was looked on as a Scythian or barbarian custom" (Stein).

Wine was not only a common beverage in ancient times. It was used for medical purposes as well as a solvent for medicines. Wine is mentioned often in ancient writings. Plutarch wrote, “We call a mixture 'wine' although the larger of the component parts is water.” Writers simply called the mixture wine without explaining the ratio. But if straight wine or unmixed wine was intended it was called “strong wine” or strong drink.

It seems reasonable to assume that the practice among the Jews was similar to that mentioned above. In several places in the O. T. a distinction is made between wine and 'strong drink.' In Lev. 10:8-9 we find the Lord addressing Aaron, "Drink no wine nor strong drink, you nor your sons with you, when you go into the tent of meeting..."

OTHER REFERENCES: (1) Num. 6:3; (2) Deut. 14:14-26; 29:6; (3) Judges 13:4, 7, 14; (4) I Sam. 1:15; (5) Pro. 20:1; 31:4, 6; (6) Isaiah 5:11, 22.

Both the Talmud and the 1901 Jewish Encyclopedia suggests that a mixture of three parts water to one part wine was customary. Therefore, it may be safe to assume that the wine used at the Last Supper was a mixture of 3 parts water to 1 part wine.

Yes, Jesus drank wine. Yes, the apostles drank wine. But no, the modern use of alcoholic beverages does not parallel the use of wine in N. T. times. “To consume the amount of alcohol that is in two martinis by drinking wine containing three parts water to one part wine, one would have to drink over twenty-two

glasses” (Stein). There is a striking differences in modern social drinking and the use of wine in those days.

In ancient times safe drinking water was often very difficult to find. Unfermented fruit juice would soon spoil and milk would sour. The only answer to a very acute problem was real, fermented wine. The wine helped purify the water and the water stretched the wine supply. When one took an extended trip the only safe, reliable drink was this mixture of water and wine. It was not only practical, it was essential.

Today safe water, coffee, tea, refrigerated milk and juices and cold soft drinks are available to most people whether at home or on the road. These drinks are not only safer than wine, beer and liquor, they are usually less expensive. Seldom does a family become destitute because of a father’s addiction to coffee or tea. The same cannot be said of alcoholic beverages.

Lost men generally associate the drinking of alcoholic beverages with worldliness and sin. Many unsaved people can only be reached by one who lives a separated life. Any Christian who drinks beverage alcohol places his testimony in serious jeopardy and to deliberately jeopardize one's witness is a serious offense against God and the unsaved. Knowing this, the man who drinks is seeking the minimum in service and loyalty, and avoiding the maximum commitment to the Lord. Those who try to justify their drinking may often be trying to determine just how little they can do for God and still be called a Christian by others. It is easy to tell when someone is rationalizing to try justify compromise.

“If the drinking of unmixed wine or even wine mixed with a ratio of one to one with water was frowned upon in ancient times, certainly the drinking of distilled spirits in which the alcohol content is frequently three to ten times greater would be frowned upon a great deal more” (Stein).

Habakkuk warns in 2:15, “Woe unto him that giveth his neighbor drink, that putteth thy bottle to him, and maketh him drunken also...” On cigarette packages there is a warning: “The Surgeon General has determined that cigarette smoking is dangerous to your health.” Should there not be an even stronger warning attached to alcoholic beverages?

"At the last it biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder." Read Proverbs 23:29-32.

