

F. Wayne MacLeod

The Epistles of Thessalonians, Timothy and Titus

Light To My Path Bible Notes

An open book with a wooden cover is shown from a low angle, resting on a wooden surface. The pages are thick and aged. The background is a dark, deep blue or black, speckled with small white dots, resembling a starry night sky. The lighting is warm, highlighting the texture of the wood and the edges of the pages.

THESSALONI ANS, TIMOTHY AND TITUS

*Light To My Path Bible
Notes*

F. Wayne Mac Leod

Light To My Path Book Distribution



Copyright © 2024 F. Wayne Mac Leod

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means without the author's written permission.

Scripture quotations marked (NIV) are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com The "NIV" and "New International Version" are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.™

"Scripture quotations marked (ESV) are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved."

Scripture quotations marked (NLT) are taken
from the Holy Bible,
New Living Translation, copyright ©1996, 2004,
2015 by Tyndale
House Foundation. Used by permission of
Tyndale House
Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All
rights reserved.

Scripture quotations from The Authorized (King
James) Version.
Rights in the Authorized Version in the United
Kingdom are vested
in the Crown. Reproduced by permission of the
Crown's patentee,
Cambridge University Press

CONTENTS

[Title Page](#)

[Copyright](#)

[Introduction to 1 Thessalonians](#)

[1 Thessalonians 1](#)

[1 Thessalonians 2](#)

[1 Thessalonians 3](#)

[1 Thessalonians 4](#)

[1 Thessalonians 5](#)

[Introduction to 2 Thessalonians](#)

[2 Thessalonians 1](#)

[2 Thessalonians 2](#)

[2 Thessalonians 3](#)

[Introduction to 1 Timothy](#)

[1 Timothy 1](#)

[1 Timothy 2](#)

[1 Timothy 3](#)

[1 Timothy 4](#)

[1 Timothy 5](#)

[1 Timothy 6](#)

[Introduction to 2 Timothy](#)

[2 Timothy 1](#)

[2 Timothy 2](#)

[2 Timothy 3](#)

[2 Timothy 4](#)

[Introduction to Titus](#)

[Titus 1](#)

[Titus 2](#)

[Titus 3](#)

[About The Author](#)

INTRODUCTION TO 1 THESSALONIANS

Thessalonica was a significant city and capital of the Roman province of Macedonia. It is currently located in Greece. Acts 17:1-8 tells the story of Paul's visit to the city. According to Luke, the author of Acts, a number of people came to Christ during the apostle's visit to Thessalonica. This, however, stirred up the jealousy of the Jews and Paul was compelled to leave. Despite this difficult beginning, the church in Thessalonica would become an example to believers in both

Macedonia and Achaia (1 Thessalonians 1:6-8).

Paul was concerned about the Thessalonians and sent Timothy to inquire about their wellbeing. This letter was written after Timothy returned and gave his report to Paul (1 Thessalonians 3:6). Paul writes to express his gratitude to God for the Thessalonians and their witness, and to encourage them to persevere in their faith. He warns them about sexual immorality (1 Thessalonians 4:3-7) and challenges them to grow in their demonstration of brotherly love (1 Thessalonians 4:9-12).

It appears that the Thessalonians had questions about the resurrection and those who died in the Lord. Paul takes a moment here to clarify this truth and shares with them a word about the return of the Lord Jesus. Knowing the Saviour will return like a thief in the night, Paul exhorts the believers in

Thessalonica to live each day in expectation.

1

THESSALONIANS

1

Verse 1

This letter was written to the church of the Thessalonians. Paul visited Thessalonica and spoke in the synagogue on the Sabbath about Jesus Christ. While in the city, the apostle convinced some Greeks to follow the Saviour, but the Jews stirred up a mob against him, forcing him to leave (see [Acts 17:1-8](#)). It appears that despite this humble beginning, that was

the start of an important work of God in the city. Paul reconnects with the established church as a result of this letter.

Note that the letter is from Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy. Silvanus is the Latin form of the name Silas. Most commentators agree that Silvanus and Silas are the same person. In Acts 15, Paul and Barnabas parted company. Barnabas chose John Mark as his traveling companion, while Paul chose Silas (Silvanus).

(39) And there arose a sharp disagreement so that they separated from each other. Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus, (40), but Paul chose Silas and departed, having been commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord. (41) And he went through Syria

and Cilicia, strengthening the churches. – Acts 15:39-41 ESV

Silvanus then was a longtime traveling partner of Paul.

Paul would meet Timothy on his missionary journey in Lystra. He was a young man with an excellent reputation among the people of the region. The apostle determined he would be an excellent ministry partner and invited him to accompany him and Silvanus (see [Acts 16:1-5](#)).

Paul begins his letter by sending his greetings from himself, Silvanus and Timothy. In this greeting, the apostle recognized the church of Thessalonica to be "*in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*" That is to say, it was a genuine church that walked in fellowship with the Father and the Son.

The apostle wishes these believers the grace or unmerited favour of the Lord

and peace with God. Of course, this peace with God is not just through the work of the Lord Jesus but also with one another, for there can be no true peace with God unless there is peace with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Verse 2

The apostle begins by telling the Thessalonians he did two things regularly for them.

First, he always gave thanks to God for them. The word always does not mean that every time he prayed, he thanked God for the Thessalonians, but rather, whenever he thought of them, he was always thankful to God for their life and example and gave God thanks.

Second, Paul assured the Thessalonians that he constantly mentioned them in his prayers. The word mentioned is μνεῖα (mneía) and speaks of recollecting or remembering. Not all

prayer is heart-wrenching, filled with tears and agony. Paul brings the names of these believers to God and commits them to His keeping. He does this on a regular and consistent basis.

Verse 3

Notice why Paul was thankful to the Lord for the Thessalonians. He gives three reasons here.

First, Paul remembered the work of faith demonstrated by the Thessalonian believers. The word translated work here is ἔργον (érgon) and refers to employment, the fruit of one's effort or possibly even the effort itself. Notice that the work referred to here is a work of faith. That is to say, their relationship with Jesus Christ and the Father produced visible fruit.

Second, Paul was also thankful for the Thessalonian "labour of love." The word labour is κόπος kópos and means to cut

down, to strike or to beat. It refers to an intense and costly effort. The work the Thessalonians did was not easy. It required a sacrifice of themselves. What caused them to be beaten, struck down or to pay the high price necessary? Paul recognized it was a labour of love. In other words, love for Christ and His people drove these Thessalonians on. They endured long hours, strain and hardship out of love for God and His people.

Third, Paul was grateful for the "steadfastness of hope" demonstrated by the Thessalonian church. Note that this hope was in "our Lord Jesus Christ." Life was not always easy. These men and women struggle in their labours for the Lord. There were sacrifices to make. Through all this, they found strength in the truth Paul had taught them. They trusted the words of the Lord Jesus and waited upon Him. They did not lose faith in the

promise of Christ but trusted Him no matter what arose.

The apostle Paul had every reason to thank God for these Thessalonian believers.

Verse 4

Paul has three things to say about the Thessalonians here.

First, note that he calls them brothers. The word ἀδελφός (adelphós) comes from the word *delphús* meaning womb. The idea was that brothers shared the same womb. The word expanded to refer to those who share the same experience or society. Brothers are those who have a common bond. In this case, the bond is the Lord Jesus and their relationship with Him. Paul recognizes the bond he had with the believers in Thessalonica through the person of Jesus Christ.

Second, the Thessalonians were loved by God. There is a general sense in which God loves the entire world. The love Paul speaks about here, however, is deeper than this and is demonstrated in the third characteristic Paul expresses here.

The third characteristic of the Thessalonian believers was that God chose them. The word translated chosen is ἐκλογή (eklogḗ) and is translated as election in the King James Version of the Bible. It refers to a choice made by God. In this case, the choice of God was to reach down, forgive the believers of Thessalonica, and draw them into a relationship with Himself.

Verse 5

Paul explains his bond with the Thessalonians in more detail in this verse.

Note first the phrase “our gospel.” The word “our” can be confusing. Paul is *not* saying that the gospel belonged to him or originated with him. The word “our” shows us how the Thessalonians heard the message of the gospel for the first time. It was the gospel presented to them by Paul and his co-workers. In other words, Paul says something like this: “The gospel we presented to you.”

Note what Paul tells the Thessalonians about the gospel he presented to them.

First, the gospel did not come in word only. Paul was not just a teacher of philosophy and doctrines. The gospel is not just a new way of thinking. Many like the idea of a God who would send His Son to die for sinful humanity. While this is, in essence, the gospel’s message, if we stop there, we miss the whole point. The gospel is much more than doctrines and truths.

Second, the gospel came with power and conviction in the Holy Spirit. The message of the gospel is life-changing when it is accompanied by the convicting work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is pleased to work in the proclamation of the gospel to bring conviction of sin and hope of forgiveness. The seed of the gospel truth and the light and water of the Spirit produce new life. This is what took place in Thessalonica. The seed of the word planted by the apostle was given life by the Spirit and transformed the lives of the Thessalonians.

Paul concludes the verse with the words, "*You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake.*" While the message of the gospel is life-changing, bringing that message is not an easy task. In the case of Paul and his co-workers, the message came to Thessalonica with great difficulty. Paul had been forced to leave the city

of Thessalonica because of the opposition of the Jews (see [Acts 17:1-8](#)). Despite the opposition in Thessalonica, the apostles faithfully presented the gospel to them in the power of God's Spirit. Paul and his co-workers demonstrated passion for the Thessalonian's souls and even now were following up on their spiritual growth. They proved their sincere character and genuine love for the Thessalonians.

Verse 6

The apostles not only preached the gospel among the Thessalonians but demonstrated what that gospel looked like in the life of one who has been transformed by it. The Thessalonians saw this godly example and became imitators of the apostles and their Lord. Note that the gospel is preached in both words and example. People ought

to see how the salvation of Christ impacts our lives.

Paul confirms his understanding that the Thessalonians were imitators of both the apostles and the Lord, not only in character but also in suffering. It was not easy to be a Christian in Thessalonica. Paul had been forced to leave the town because of the Jewish mob. The Thessalonians did not have the option of leaving. They had to remain and live as believers. As a result, they suffered “much affliction” for their faith in Jesus Christ.

Note that while the Thessalonians were much afflicted, they endured with the joy of the Holy Spirit. It was a privilege for them to suffer for the cause of Jesus Christ. They did not back down. Despite their trial, they experienced great joy and fellowship in the Holy Spirit. They knew His peace, joy and comfort in what they endured.

Verse 7

Paul recognized that the Thessalonian believers, despite their trials and afflictions, had become an example for all believers in the region. Thessalonica was a principal city in the region of Macedonia. Corinth was a principal city in the neighbouring region of Achaia. Both of these cities are in modern day Greece.

Verse 8

Word about the faith of the Thessalonians spread from region to region. In verse 7, Paul declared that their testimony of Christ was heard throughout the provinces of Macedonia and Achaia. The apostle moves beyond this, however, to state that the Thessalonians' reputation and faith in God had spread beyond their immediate region to distant shores, so

that Paul tells them he hardly had to say anything; their testimony was sufficient.

Understand here that there was a cost involved in having such a testimony. The Thessalonian church “received the word in much affliction (verse 6).” These afflictions were their loudspeaker. Their testimony in affliction spoke volumes to people in their region and beyond. Without this affliction, their testimony may not have been heard or observed by the nations around them. God uses what we suffer to amplify the message of the gospel in us.

Verse 9

As Paul and his co-workers travelled through Macedonia, Achaia, and the surrounding regions, they heard a constant theme. People in these regions reported how they had been

touched by how the Thessalonians welcomed the apostles and received their message.

Understand that not everyone in Thessalonica received the apostles. The Jews actually formed a mob and drove them out of the city. There was, however, a group in the city that not only received the apostles but heard their message and turned from idolatry to serve the living and true God. The gospel's impact had been so profound on these individuals, that their lives were radically transformed. The testimony of this change spread like wildfire throughout the region.

Verse 10

Not only did the Thessalonians turn from idols to serve the living God, but Paul tells us that they also waited for His Son from heaven. Consider what the apostle John describes in [Revelation](#)

[6](#) regarding the return of the Lord Jesus and the response of the kings of the earth to that return:

(15) Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, (16) calling to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, (17) for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?" – Revelation 6:15-17 ESV

The return of the Lord Jesus from heaven is not something everyone looks forward to seeing. For those who do not know the Lord, this will be a terrible day of judgment. The Thessalonians waited for the Son from

heaven, however, with delight and great anticipation. They had experienced His salvation and knew Jesus the Son as the one who was raised from the dead and delivered them from the wrath to come. They had no fear of the Lord Jesus. He was their Saviour and Lord. Their union with Him would be joyous, and so they looked forward to the day when He would return.

1

THESSALONIANS

2

Verse 1

Paul begins the chapter with a statement about his time in Thessalonica. According to Paul, it was not in vain. The apostle passed through the region after a time in Philippi. He met with the Jews of Thessalonica in the local synagogue and “reasoned with them from the Scriptures” (see [Acts 17:2](#)). We read that a “great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women” ([Acts 17:4](#)) were

persuaded by the apostle's teaching. This stirred up the jealousy of the Jews, and they "formed a mob" and "set the city in an uproar ([Acts 17:5](#)).\" As a result of this commotion, the brothers in the city \"immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night ([Acts 17:10](#)).\"

While Paul and Silas were forced to leave Thessalonica because of the Jewish response to the gospel, their time proved very beneficial. A good number of Thessalonians did come to Christ, and the church was established.

Verse 2

Paul and Silas ministered in Philippi before arriving in Thessalonica. [Acts 16:22-24](#) describe the response of the Philippians to their ministry:

(22) The crowd joined in attacking them, and the magistrates tore the garments off them and gave orders

to beat them with rods. (23) And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, ordering the jailer to keep them safely. (24) Having received this order, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. – Acts 16:19-24 ESV

Paul and Silas were healing from their wounds when they arrived in Thessalonica. Notice how Paul declares here: *"We had boldness in our God to declare to you the gospel of God amid much conflict."*

Paul's experience in Philippi was difficult. Notice, however, that he went from being beaten and imprisoned in Philippi to declaring the same message that caused his trouble again in Thessalonica. This required a boldness Paul did not have in himself. He told the Thessalonians, however, that he experienced boldness *"in our God to*

declare the gospel of God in the midst of much conflict." God gave these men the boldness required to persevere. The result, of course, was establishing the church in Thessalonica. The work was not easy, but God gave them the courage to do what they would naturally not have had the strength or boldness to do.

Verse 3

Paul has just told the Thessalonians that he had suffered greatly to bring his message to them. Notice what Paul has to say about the gospel he brought to Thessalonica.

First, note how he speaks of his message as an appeal. The word used here is παράκλησις (paráklēsis). It carries the sense of exhorting, admonishing, comforting or encouraging. The word shows us something of Paul's heart. He believed

the message he proclaimed and felt a very strong need to warn, encourage and plead with the Thessalonians to turn to the Lord Jesus. The message Paul spoke came from a heart that had the well-being of the Thessalonians in mind.

Second, the gospel appeal Paul made did not spring from error. The message Paul brought to the Thessalonian church was new to them, but the apostle assured them that it was true. He was so convinced of the truth of this message that he willingly risked his life to share it with them.

Third, Paul's message did not come from an impure heart or motive. He was not seeking any personal benefit from the Thessalonians. He was not attempting to gather a following for himself. There were no financial incentives to the apostle. Sincere motives and a deep conviction of truth

moved him. His intentions toward the Thessalonian were honourable.

Finally, Paul assured the Thessalonians that he had no intention to deceive them. False prophets were willing to say anything to gain the support of those who heard them. This was not Paul's method. He shared the truth, and sometimes that led to persecution and imprisonment, but he would not compromise the truth given to Him by Jesus Christ.

Verse 4

Paul assured the Thessalonians that he had been approve by God and entrusted by Him with the gospel message. This was, something he took seriously.

Understand here that Paul did not feel that he was qualified to be an apostle. Consider what he told the Corinthians in [1 Corinthians 15](#):

(8) Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. (9) For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle because I persecuted the church of God. (10) But by the grace of God, I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I but the grace of God that was with me. – 1 Corinthians 15:8-10 ESV

Paul saw himself as the least of all the apostles. He did not feel worthy of the call on his life. He lived, however, with deep gratitude to God for His salvation and calling. He devoted himself to the task given to him by God and worked harder than any apostle.

When Paul was called to the ministry of the gospel, God asked Ananias to go to see him. Ananias, knowing how much Paul (then known as Saul) had

persecuted the church, questioned God about this. Listen to God's response to Ananias regarding Paul:

(13) But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem... (15) But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. (16) For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name." – Acts 9:13,15-16 ESV

Paul's conversion to Christ and call to the gospel were quite spectacular. God's hand was on him to preach the gospel to many nations. The message he proclaimed would not be well received, and Paul would suffer greatly for its proclamation. He refused to compromise the message in any way,

however. He would not be a people pleaser but committed himself to pleasing and honouring the call of God on his life. He knew that in the end, he would stand before the one who tested the hearts and motivations of every servant. He wanted to be guiltless before Him.

Verse 5

Paul assures the Thessalonians of two things about his ministry here.

First, the apostle never resorted to “words of flattery” in his gospel presentation. Flattery relates to giving exaggerated praise to advance one’s interests. This was not Paul’s method. He did not resort to human tactics to advance the work of God. He proclaimed the unadulterated truth and trusted the Spirit of God to minister in the hearts and lives of those who heard.

Second, Paul was committed to rejecting a heart of greed. Paul was not in the ministry for the money. He was not interested in making a good life for himself. He was not concerned about worldly comforts and possessions. He offered the gospel freely and with no desire to profit financially or materially from his preaching.

Paul ends the verse with the words, "God is my witness." He knew he was accountable to God for how he ministered.

Verse 6

Another aspect of Paul's ministry was that he chose not to seek glory from people. He understood that as an apostle chosen by God, he had a position of great honour in the church. Just because you have a position of honour does not mean that you should demand glory and honour from

people. Consider Paul's advice to the Philippians in this regard:

(5) Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, (6) who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, (7) but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. (8) And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. – Philippians 2:5-8 ESV

How did Jesus live His life? Even though He was equal with God, He humbled himself and took on the form of a servant, and willingly laid down His life for His creation.

It was the opinion of Paul that he needed to follow the example of Jesus

Christ in this matter. He chose not to seek praise and glory from people. Paul saw his position in the church not as something that lifted his status among people but as an obligation before God to serve these people.

Verse 7

When Paul was among the Thessalonians, he was like a nursing mother caring for her children. The Thessalonians were infants in the gospel when Paul was among them. They required the apostle's care and provision. Any nursing mother can tell you that the task of nursing infant children is a difficult one involving little sleep and selfless devotion.

It is important to understand the verse in its context. Paul has been speaking of not being a people pleaser, flattering, and greedy for what he could get from those he served. He wasn't seeking people's attention or demanding

respect and glory. In contrast, Paul chose the role of nursing mother to demanding, weak and helpless children. He spent sleepless and thankless nights ministering to their needs and feeding their souls.

The nursing mother Paul refers to here is caring for her children and not someone else's. Paul saw the Thessalonians as his children and was willing to give everything to provide for their safety and security. He fed and cared for them with deep affection and devotion, as a mother would care for her children. This is the heart of a true, selfless pastor who cares not for his own needs but devotes himself to the needs of the people under his care.

Verse 8

Note Paul's deep affection and devotion to the Thessalonians here. He tells them that he was "affectionately

desirous” of them. The word used here is ἠμεῖρομαι (himeíromai) and refers to a longing or deep yearning for someone or something.

This deep affection was demonstrated in the willingness of Paul to be a “nursing mother” (see verse 7) to the Thessalonians. It also was seen in how he faced persecution to share the gospel with them. Beyond this, however, was the apostle’s confession that he was willing to give of himself for their good. He would suffer or even die for these Thessalonians. Such was the apostle’s devotion to these believers.

Verse 9

What Paul told the Thessalonians in verse 8 about his affection for them was indisputably proven by how he lived among them. Paul reminds the Thessalonians that he laboured and

toiled night and day so that he would not be a burden to them as he lived and proclaimed the gospel in their midst.

Writing to Timothy, Paul tells him that the elder who ruled was to be paid for his work:

(17) Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honour, especially those who labour in preaching and teaching. (18) For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain," and, "The labourer deserves his wages." – 1 Timothy 5:17-18 ESV

By paying an “elder who rules well,” that elder is free to give himself full-time to the work of the gospel. Paul believed in the responsibility of the church to provide for its workers. While he understood that the church should

pay the elder, Paul also knew the burden this would place on the church, especially a young church like the church in Thessalonica. So as not to be a burden to them, the apostle chose to get a job on the side to provide for his personal needs. This principle not only removed any sense of burden from the church but also any accusation that he was only doing the job for the money.

Verse 10

Paul has no regrets about his time in Thessalonica. He knew the believers there had seen his conduct toward them. They witnessed his righteous and blameless conduct while he ministered in their midst. Note also that more important than the witness of the Thessalonians was the witness of God. Paul had the assurance that his conduct in Thessalonica honoured the Lord God he represented.

Verse 11

In verse 7, Paul told the Thessalonians that he had been like a nursing mother to them. He compares himself here to a father with his children. He explains what he means by this in verse 12.

Verse 12

The apostle Paul explains what he meant in verse eleven when he told the Thessalonians he had been like a father to them. As a father figure, the apostle did three things.

First, Paul exhorted the Thessalonians. The word used here is παρακαλέω (parakaléō). It comes from *pará*, meaning alongside, and *kaléō*, meaning to help, comfort or encourage. The idea is that he came alongside the Thessalonians to comfort, console or encourage. The word seems to imply a hands-on shoulder-to-

shoulder type of encouragement and support.

Second, as a father, Paul encouraged the Thessalonians. The word encouraged is the Greek word παραμυθέομαι (paramuthéomai). Once again note the word παρά, meaning alongside of. The second part of the word is *muthéomai*, which means to speak kindly or with comforting words. The sense here is that Paul spoke encouragement and comfort to the Thessalonians. Remember that these believers faced much affliction and persecution (see [1 Thessalonians 1:6](#)), and these comforting words would have been welcome.

Finally, as a father, Paul charged the Thessalonians. The word used here is μαρτυρέω (marturéō). It refers to a witness or one who testifies to a truth seen or heard. The idea here is that Paul passed on to them what he saw and heard.

This exhorting, encouraging and charging had as its goal to equip the believers in Thessalonica to live in a manner worthy of the God who called them to be part of His kingdom and eternal glory.

Verse 13

Paul thanks the Lord for the response of the Thessalonians to the gospel he shared with them as a nurturing mother and encouraging father.

Note that Paul thanked God “constantly” for their response to the gospel. That is to say, he thanked God on a frequent and regular basis for the work of God in the church of Thessalonica.

Notice how the Thessalonians responded to the word of God presented to them by the apostle.

First, the Thessalonians received the word they heard from Paul. Imagine that you were standing at a street corner handing out gospel tracts. Many people walk by and refuse to take what you are offering. They politely say, "No, thank you, I am not interested," and walk on. Then, some stop and receive what you are offering. Receiving does not mean they believe the message in the tract, but they have at least taken what you were offering. The Thessalonians listened to the Word of God that Paul proclaimed, took it in and considered what it said.

Second, the Thessalonians not only received the word, but they also accepted it not as the word of men but of God. Upon considering the message Paul preached, they believed it was the Word of God.

Finally, note that the Thessalonians allowed the Word of God to work in them. We see this in the words, "*Which*

is at work in you believers." The Word of God began to do its work in the lives of these Thessalonian believers, transforming their lives.

Verse 14

Notice what occurred when the Thessalonians allowed the Word of God to work in them (see verse 13). They became imitators of the church of God in Christ Jesus. Paul explains what he means by this when he says, "For you suffered the same things from your own countrymen as they did from the Jews.

When the Thessalonians received the Word, accepted it as the Word of God, and allowed it to work in them, they found themselves in conflict with their Jewish countrymen. That is to say, they were persecuted and afflicted for their new-found faith. The Word of God rebukes our society and its worldly

ways. Those who stand firm on its principles will conflict with this world. Some will face persecution.

Verse 15

The fact that obedience to the Word of God brings persecution should not surprise us. Paul reminded the Thessalonians about what the Jews of their day did to the Lord Jesus, the prophets and even the apostles who brought the gospel message to them.

Notice how Paul reminded the Thessalonians that the Jews “drove us out” of their city (see [Acts 17:1-10](#) for the story of how Paul was opposed in Thessalonica). Paul experienced the same opposition as the Thessalonians when he first visited them. He identifies with their suffering.

Note what Paul says about the Jews who rejected Christ, the word of the prophets and the apostles. He tells the

Thessalonians that they displeased God. Paul understood these Jews who resisted Christ because he had,, at one time, been one of them. Before he came to know the gospel, he persecuted Christians and was responsible for their death.

Paul also tells the Thessalonians that these Jews oppose all mankind. The idea here seems to be that they saw themselves as the children of God, and everyone else was a pagan dog. They sincerely believed that if a person wasn't born a Jew, they were unclean and destined for an eternity in hell and damnation.

Verse 16

According to Paul, the Jews of Thessalonica hindered them from sharing the message of salvation with the Gentiles. In part, they did this by

stirring up a mob and driving them out of the city.

By hindering the proclamation of the gospel, these Jews of Thessalonica “filled up the measure of their sins.” If the measure of sin were a basket, these Jews filled it up to the brim, and it was now overflowing. They had exceeded the limit of God’s tolerance and would now face His judgement.

Verse 17

Paul tells the believers in Thessalonica that he had been torn away from them. This was because the Jews of the city drove them out by force. The apostle assured the Thessalonians that although they were torn from them in person, their heart was still with them, and they longed to see them face to face once again. The fact that they “endeavoured” to see the

Thessalonians shows they made efforts to visit them.

Verse 18

Paul assured the Thessalonians that they had been making efforts to return to Thessalonica, but Satan hindered them repeatedly. We need to understand that we are in the midst of a great spiritual battle. Just because we belong to Jesus does not mean that we will not be the target of Satan's arrows. He will oppose what God wants to do in our lives and ministries.

Verse 19

Paul expressed his desire to see the Thessalonians face to face in verse 17. He told them that while he had been torn away from them by the Jews who drove him out of Thessalonica, they had always been in his heart. Paul says

three things about these dear Thessalonians here.

First, they were his hope before the Lord at His coming. The word hope is ἐλπίς (elpís). Hope is an expectation of good. Now, it might be assumed that the expectation of good was a selfish motivation in Paul. That is to say, he wanted to present these Thessalonians to the Lord as the fruit of his earthly ministry to receive a reward from Christ for his faithfulness. I believe, however, that Paul's hope was not in a heavenly reward but in the Thessalonians themselves. He believed that the work of God in their lives was genuine and would endure through tribulation until the coming of the Lord Jesus. His strong expectation of good was that they would stand approved by Christ at His coming. Paul's hope was not in some future expectation of reward but in the genuine and sincere faith of the

Thessalonians being made evident on the Day of Judgement.

Second, the Thessalonians were Paul's joy before the Lord at His coming.

There is no greater joy for a parent than to see their children grow up to love the Lord and become productive members of society. It seems to me that this is what Paul is sensing here. He brought the gospel to Thessalonica, and now he watched its children grow up, mature and stand faithful in the truth. He watched them live lives that honoured the Saviour he loved and served. What greater joy could there be for Paul than to see his children walk in truth?

Finally, Paul tells us that the Thessalonians were his crown of boasting before the Lord at His coming. Writing to Timothy, the apostle reminded him of how an athlete who competed according to the rules of the

game received a crown upon completion of the race:

(5) An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. – 2 Timothy 2:5 ESV

The crown is a reward for faithful service. Peter challenged elders to be diligent pastors of the flock, and they would receive a “crown of glory” as a result:

(2) shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; (3) not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. (4) And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. – 1 Peter 5:2-4 ESV

James tells us that the crown was for anyone who remained faithful to the end:

(12) Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him. – James 1:12 ESV

The apostle Paul reminded the Corinthians that when a runner competed in a race, it was expected that he run with an anticipation of receiving the prize:

(24) Do you not know that in a race, all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. – 1 Corinthians 9:24 ESV

What is the natural response of runners who win the race? Don't they throw up

their hands in victory and shout for joy? Their efforts have been recognized and celebrated. There is great joy in the win. This is what Paul seems to be saying here. He looks at the work of God in the lives of the Thessalonians and throws up his hands in celebration before the Lord. Here in the Thessalonian believers is evidence of victory over the hosts of hell. He had fought the good fight and rescued these hostages from the enemy's grip.

Note here the nature of the victor's crown. It was not a floral wreath that perished. Nor was it a golden crown that dazzled. The crown Paul wore proudly was the Thessalonians. They were his crown of boasting. Paul boasted of the work of God in their lives. He rejoiced in them as an athlete would rejoice in his crown.

Verse 20

Paul tells the Thessalonians that they were his glory and joy.

It is easy to see how the faithful Thessalonians could be a great joy to the apostle. Their testimony amid affliction had impacted people throughout Macedonia and Achaia (see [1 Thessalonians 1:7](#)).

Note also that the Thessalonians were the glory of the apostles. The word glory is δόξα (dóxa). It literally means to think or recognize. To glory in something is to take the time to think about that object positively. It is to recognize its worth and value.

Ultimately, an object worthy of such thoughts and recognition is honoured and respected. To glory in God is to honour Him and recognize His worth.

While God is the object of our greatest thoughts, recognition and honour, to a lesser extent, we may also glory in individuals we feel are worthy of our

respect and recognition. Paul valued the Thessalonian believers in this way and saw their genuine worth as servants of the Lord and faithful warriors in the spiritual battle that raged around them.

1 THESSALONIANS 3

Verse 1

Paul continues here with what he began in chapter 2. There, he told the Thessalonians that he wanted to see them in person, but Satan had hindered him:

(17) But since we were torn away from you, brothers, for a short time, in person not in heart, we endeavoured the more eagerly and with great desire to see you face to

face, (18) because we wanted to come to you—I, Paul, again and again—but Satan hindered us. – 1 Thessalonians 2:17-18 ESV

The passion to connect with the believers in Thessalonica continued to build in the apostle to the point where he told them that he could bear it no longer.

The context of this verse is found in [Acts 17](#). Paul and Silas had been in Thessalonica, where they reasoned with the citizens from the Scriptures ([Acts 17:2](#)). When many Greeks accepted their message, the Jews stirred up a mob against them, and Paul and Silas were forced to leave for Berea ([Acts 17:5-10](#)). There in Berea, the apostle had a more favourable reception, and many people believed in the Lord Jesus ([Acts 17:11-12](#)). When the Thessalonian Jews heard of their success in Berea, however, they came

there and again stirred up the people against the apostle. This time, the believers escorted Paul to Athens, away from the Jewish mob. Silas and Timothy, however, remained in Berea ([Acts 17:14-15](#)).

Paul tells the Thessalonians, here, that while the Thessalonian Jews had forced him to leave Thessalonica and Berea, he still had their wellbeing on his heart. While he was unable to see them personally, he was willing to be left alone in Athens and send Timothy to get a report from them concerning their wellbeing.

Verse 2

Because of Paul's passion to know of the Thessalonian's wellbeing, he determined to send Timothy back to Thessalonica to establish and exhort them in their faith.

Understand that it would not have been easy for Timothy to return to a city from which they had been removed. The Jews there had stirred up a mob against them both in Thessalonica and in Berea (see notes on verse 1). Timothy was going back into the city where these Jews lived. Paul understood the danger of sending Timothy back to Thessalonica but his passion for their spiritual walk was so intense that he was willing to risk Timothy's safety for the Thessalonians' spiritual walk. Paul commissions Timothy to do two things for the new believers in Thessalonica.

First, Timothy was to establish the believers in their faith. The word Paul uses here is στηρίζω (stēρίζō) which means to stand or to fix firmly. The idea is that he was to do whatever he could to keep these believers from falling. Remember that they were under a certain amount of persecution.

Imagine a statue set up in a town with howling wind and storm battering it. To keep that statue from falling , it needs to be reenforced and secured solidly to the ground. This is the same idea here. Paul sent Timothy to secure the faith of the Thessalonian believers solidly in the truth so that the winds of persecution would not topple them.

Second, Paul sent Timothy to exort the Thessalonians in their faith. The word translated exort is παρακαλέω (parakalēō). The word comes from the Greek word pará, meaning to the side of, and kalēō meaning to call. Together we have the sense of someone coming alongside of another to help, comfort and support them.

A number of years ago my granddaughter was at a track and field event watching a race. As it passed by she noticed a young girl at the back who was struggling and almost in tears because she was so far behind. Feeling

compassion for her, my granddaughter, though she was not part of the event, immediately joined her ran beside her encouraging her all the way to the finish line. This is what it means to exhort. It is to come along side of a brother or sister who is struggling and run with them to the finish line.

Verse 3

From verse two, we see that Paul sent Timothy to Thessalonica to establish and exhort the Thessalonians. He tells them the reason for this here — “that no one be moved by these afflictions.” Paul desired that the Thessalonian believers remain firm in their faith without wavering or falling. He sent Timothy to them so they would be established and unmovable in their commitment to the truth of Jesus Christ.

Notice that Paul told the Thessalonians that, as believers, they had been called to steadfastness of faith. This steadfastness of faith would be challenged by the forces of hell and the opposition of those who resisted the gospel. Jesus warned us as believers that we would be despised and rejected for our faith. Believers will suffer for their commitment to the truth. We should not be surprised that the world that crucified the Lord would turn against us as His disciples. We are destined to stand against the world and as such will face opposition and persecution.

Verse 4

The apostle reminds the Thessalonians that when he was with them, he kept telling them they would suffer for their faith in Jesus Christ. This is exactly what was happening to them now.

This concept of taking up our cross to follow the Lord Jesus is not a popular theme. There are some who present a message of prosperity and ease. Paul did not preach such a gospel. This is quite clear from the message he declared in Thessalonica. He told them the truth about Jesus Christ and informed those who believed that the life before them would be difficult and full of trials and afflictions. Those who refused this life were not genuine in their faith. God is looking for those who stand firm for the truth amid opposition and trial. Paul sent Timothy to the Thessalonians to establish and encourage the believers to live up to this standard.

Verse 5

While the Christian life is a difficult one, we are not alone in it. Notice that while Paul does not apologize for the struggle

the Thessalonians faced, he demonstrates tremendous compassion for them in this verse. Observe several details here.

First, note the words, "*when I could bear it no longer.*" The word used here is στέγω (stégō). It means to cover over in silence. Imagine holding in one's pain to a point where it was no longer possible and needed to explode in waves of grief and agony. This seems to be the sense here. Paul could no longer hold in his feelings for the Thessalonians and needed to do something about them. In this case, he was compelled to send Timothy to discover how the Thessalonians were doing. God has given us men and women like Paul, who have a God-given pastoral heart for the wellbeing of the flock. These individuals have no rest until they know we are safe and secure in our walk with God and built up in our faith.

Note next Paul's concern. He wanted to be sure that the tempter had not tempted the Thessalonians beyond their ability to endure. The apostle understood that the enemy would be hot on their trail. The Jews of Thessalonica were quite aggressive against the message Paul preached and chased him out of two cities. These same Jews would not be any more compassionate toward Paul's followers. The apostle knew that the temptation for these young believers would be to pull back to avoid the controversy and challenge to their new faith. Satan would tempt them to compromise or return to their former ways. The apostle was aware of the spiritual battle before the Thessalonians and wanted to do all he could to strengthen and encourage them in their ongoing walk with Jesus Christ.

Note, finally, that Paul did not want his labour in Thessalonica to be in vain.

Paul did not just preach the gospel and walk away. He did not abandon those who came to faith in Jesus Christ under his ministry. He felt compelled to follow up and encourage these believers in their walk with God. He stood with them as any true father would stand with his children.

While the Christian life is not an easy one, God does raise men and women who will stand with us, support us and strengthen us along the way.

Verse 6

As Paul writes, Timothy had been to Thessalonica and returned with his report. Note what Paul heard from Timothy about the Thessalonians here.

First, Paul heard good news about the faith and love of the Thessalonian church. Despite the opposition they faced in Thessalonica, they persevered in their devotion to Christ and the truth.

Their love for Jesus Christ and His gospel had not diminished.

Second, Paul also heard from Timothy that the Thessalonians remembered the apostles kindly and longed to see them. Not only did they love the Lord Jesus, but they also loved His servants.

When asked what the greatest commandment was, Jesus responded:

(37) And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. (38) This is the great and first commandment. (39) And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. – Matthew 22:36-39 ESV

Paul seems relieved that the Thessalonians were demonstrating this two-fold command of Jesus by loving God with all their heart, soul and mind and by maintaining a good relationship

with their brothers and sisters in Christ as well.

Verse 7

The report brought back by Timothy was a great blessing to the apostle. Notice how he describes his concern for their well-being here. He tells them that he and his fellow workers had been in distress and affliction about them. There is a depth of concern in these words. Paul and his co-workers had a great passion for the Thessalonians and their faith in Jesus Christ. They agonized at the thought that persecution and trial might cause them to wander from the truth they had received from them.

Note that their concern was not in the fact that they were being persecuted but in their perseverance despite that persecution. Paul understood that anyone serious about their faith in

Jesus would suffer in this world. His deepest concern, however, was to see his children face those trials with the strength of the Lord and persevere in the truth to the end.

When Timothy arrived with his good report of their faith and love, Paul was deeply relieved and comforted. We catch a glimpse here of the tremendous pastoral heart of Paul for his spiritual children in the faith.

Verse 8

Notice the response of Paul to the good report he received about the Thessalonians from Timothy – *"Now we live if you are standing fast in the Lord."*

In verse 7, Paul spoke of being in distress and affliction, not knowing how the Thessalonians were doing spiritually. Now that Timothy had brought a good report, it was as if the

curse of death had been lifted off his shoulders, and he felt alive and joyful. The burden was lifted, and he was free again to rejoice in the Lord on behalf of the Thessalonian church.

What concern do you have for your brother and sister in the Lord? If we are honest with ourselves, we can be more concerned about their physical well-being and comfort than their relationship with the Lord. This was not the case for Paul. He could accept that they were being persecuted and facing deep struggles for their faith but was more concerned about their relationship with the Lord and perseverance in the truth. If their relationship with the Lord were right, then they would be able to face the trials afflicted upon them.

Verse 9

Paul's delight in the steadfast faith of the Thessalonians despite their trials

and afflictions can be seen in this verse. He finds himself at a loss to thank the Lord for the joy he felt for them.

Note that his thanksgiving is not directed toward the Thessalonians but to God. Paul attributed what He saw in the Thessalonian church to God and His mighty grace in their lives. Admittedly, the Thessalonian believers received that grace and walked in it, but the glory ultimately went to God.

Understand also here that the joy Paul felt in his heart was related to how the Thessalonians remained faithful to God amid opposition to their faith. Paul experienced joy in how the believers in Thessalonica dealt with their persecution and trials. He did not rejoice in their suffering but rather in the growth of their faith and relationship with God amid opposition.

Verse 10

Paul rejoiced in the faith of the Thessalonians amid opposition and persecution. That did not make him indifferent to their need and struggle, however. Note that while rejoicing in their spiritual example, he also prayed earnestly for them. Note the nature of his prayer here.

First, the apostle prayed earnestly. The word translated “earnestly” in the English Standard Version comes from two Greek words. The first is ὑπέρ (hupér), meaning over, above or beyond. The second word is περισσός (perissós), also meaning over and above or more than enough. The idea is that Paul went over and above what could be expected of him when praying for the Thessalonians. This certainly demonstrates his deep concern for them. He petitioned heaven beyond

what any normal person would do on their behalf.

Second, Paul tells the Thessalonians that he prayed night and day for them. In other words, the Thessalonian believers were regularly on his mind, and their situation drove him to pray constantly for them.

Note third that Paul prayed that God would allow him to see the Thessalonians face to face so that he could supply what was lacking in their faith. Paul's statement here is interesting and merits some consideration.

Paul wanted to supply what was lacking in the Thessalonian's faith. The assumption is that their faith was imperfect, and these believers needed to grow. Though they were an example of faith throughout Macedonia and Achaia ([1 Thessalonians 1:7-10](#)), there was still room for growth.

Consider this for a moment. The Thessalonians already had a reputation for their faith amid persecution. Paul could have been content with that. He saw even greater potential, however, in these believers and did not want them to become content with where they were. Don't stop growing. Keep reaching out for more of the Lord. Ask Him to continue stretching you and make your life an even greater example and testimony.

When Paul said that he wanted to supply what was lacking in the faith of the Thessalonians, he understood that God had equipped and gifted him to minister to believers for their growth and spiritual maturity. In telling the Thessalonians that he wanted to supply what was lacking in their faith, Paul does not see himself as perfect. Writing to the Philippians, he said:

(12) Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own because Christ Jesus has made me his own. (13) Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead. (14) I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (15) Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. – Philippians 3:12-15 ESV

While Paul did not see himself as perfect, his imperfections did not keep him from giving what God had called him to give or serving where God had called him to serve. God uses imperfect people to accomplish His purpose. He empowers those who have not yet arrived to build His kingdom. Paul knew

he was an imperfect instrument in God's hands. He expected, however, that despite his inadequacies, God would use him to support the Thessalonians and bring them to a place of new growth and maturity.

While none of us have cause to boast of our perfection, we can be powerful instruments in God's hands to support and encourage brothers and sisters in the faith.

Verse 11

Having expressed his passion to see the Thessalonians face to face, and his desire to supply what was lacking, Paul now leaves the matter in the Lord's hands. Paul prays that their God and Father and the Lord Jesus would direct his way to the Thessalonians.

What is important for us to note here is that after expressing his interest in seeing the Thessalonians, Paul does not

immediately phone the travel agency and arrange his trip. Instead, he commits the matter to the Lord, His timing and purpose. The phrase, *"May the God and Father and the Lord Jesus direct our way,"* expresses how Paul ministered. He had a passion, but even greater than His passion to serve the Lord in this way was the leading of God, His timing and blessing. If God did not lead and direct him, then despite his desire, Paul clearly would not go to Thessalonica. We need to see more people like this who commit their passions to the will and purpose of God.

Verse 12

Paul prays that the Lord God would increase the love of the Thessalonian church for one another and God's servants. Consider the words of Jesus in this regard when He said:

(35) By this all people will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another.” – John 13:35 ESV

Love for one another and God’s servants is a testimony to the world of our relationship with the Lord Jesus. Nothing will damage our testimony more than bitterness and strife between children of God.

The demonstration of love for one another is not found in the nice feeling we get when we are together but in how we care for and support each other. In the case of the Thessalonian church, this would imply supporting each other amid persecution. It may mean helping a brother who lost his job because of his faith. There were any number of practical expressions of that love required in the persecuted church of Thessalonica.

Verse 13

Paul prayed for the Thessalonians and wanted to supply anything lacking in their faith. He asked God to increase their love for one another. Paul desired that the Thessalonian church have hearts “blameless in holiness” when the Lord Jesus returned with all His saints.

How can we have a heart blameless in holiness? While all of us have fallen short of God’s standard, we can know the forgiveness and cleansing of the Lord Jesus. We can walk in obedience to Him and His purpose for our lives, turning from our sins and confessing our wanderings. We can stand before God as those who have built our lives on the foundation of Jesus Christ and His Word. We can have a clean conscience before Him as we walk in obedience and faithful service.

Note how this could become a reality in the words, “So that he may establish

your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father.” The ability to have a blameless heart is ultimately a work of God. He would establish such hearts in the Thessalonians. Their role was to walk in obedience and sensitivity to His leading as He built this heart in them.

1 THESSALONIANS 4

Verse 1

Paul began his letter by speaking to the Thessalonians about their powerful testimony throughout Macedonia and Achaia (see [1 Thessalonians 1:6-10](#)).

As we begin chapter 4, he brings a particular challenge to these faithful brothers and sisters in Christ.

Note two words in Paul's challenge. First, observe the word ask. The word is translated from ἐρωτάω (erōtáō),

meaning to inquire, request or entreat. Paul is making a request here.

Second, notice the word, urge. This translation comes from παρακαλέω (parakaléō), which carries the sense of coming alongside someone to aid, comfort or encourage. Imagine a soldier wounded in battle. As the battle rages around him, and his life is at risk, a friend comes to him, gets him back on his feet, and, supporting his weight, leads him to a safe place where he can get the medical attention needed. Getting to that safe place was not without its emotional and physical struggle. Were it not for the physical and emotional support of that friend, this soldier may have died on the battlefield. His friends "urging," however, got him to safety.

Observe that Paul asks and urges the Thessalonians "in the Lord." The idea here is that what he is telling them is

from the Lord and for the sake of His kingdom.

What is the challenge of Paul to a church that has a reputation for being faithful to Jesus Christ and walking in the truth? The apostle asks and urges them to “do so more and more.” They were not to become complacent and happy with where they were spiritually. They were to draw closer and closer to the Lord Jesus. They were to learn to be more and more fruitful. They were to aspire to greater faithfulness and intimacy with their God. Wherever you are with God right now, aspire to something greater still.

Verse 2

The apostle Paul has every assurance that he had properly instructed the Thessalonians in their walk with God. Note here that the instructions given to the Thessalonians were “through the

Lord Jesus. In other words, what Paul taught was not his own ideas but the words of the Lord Jesus. This is what gave what Paul said authority. There is a world of difference between preaching our own ideas and instructing people in the words and teachings of Jesus. Paul's bold request that the Thessalonians follow their instructions comes from the fact that it is not his ideas he is promoting but the inspired teaching of the Lord Jesus Himself.

Verse 3

All kinds of evil practices surrounded the Thessalonians. Paul exhorts them, however, not to compromise their faith or lower their standards. He reminds the Thessalonian believers that it was the will of God that they be sanctified.

The word translated, sanctified, in the original language is ἁγιασμός

(hagiasmós). It means to be holy or set apart for God, His purpose, and will. Sanctification is the process of becoming more and more like God in life, thought and passion.

The process of sanctification is a cooperative one. God works in us, transforming our minds and hearts, and we respond by surrendering to that inner work and resisting the pull of the flesh to do what is not pleasing to Him or in tune with His purpose.

Paul gives some examples of this here in the next few verses. He reminds the Thessalonians first that if they were to become more and more like Christ, they would have to resist the pull of sexual immorality. Clearly, this would have been a temptation for the Thessalonians in their city. Paul challenges them, however, to have the heart and mind of Christ in this matter of their sexuality and abstain from the

lust of the flesh and its cry for satisfaction in ungodly ways.

Verse 4

If the Thessalonians were going to be sanctified, they would have to learn how to control their own bodies with their passions and desires. According to Paul, they would do this in holiness and honour.

Note that sanctification involves controlling one's body with its passions and desires. God is at work in us, but we must submit to that work, which requires active obedience and discipline. There can be no true sanctification unless we are willing to submit to God's purpose and what He is doing in us.

How do we control our bodies?
According to Paul, we do so in holiness and honour.

First, we control our bodies in holiness. The word translated holiness is ἁγιασμός (hagiasmós) and refers to being set apart for God.

Now, some people determine that they are going to be holy. To do this, they separate themselves from everything ungodly and live a lifestyle that is in accord with the teaching of Scripture. The problem, however, is that there is a difference between holiness and a good life. You can live a good life and not be holy or set apart for God. The holiness Paul speaks about here is not of human origin but divine. The one that does the separating is God. The holiness that Paul speaks about here is the fruit of the Holy Spirit in the lives of those God has separated for Himself.

Notice what Paul says here to the Thessalonians in the phrase "*control his own body in holiness.*" Those who seek to be holy by means of their good life do so with the understanding that to

obtain holiness, they need to control their bodies. In their minds, holiness is the fruit of a disciplined and good life.

This is not what Paul is saying here. He tells the Thessalonians they were to control their body "in holiness." That is to say, they needed to be holy already to control their body. They were to draw upon their holiness in Christ to find strength to control their body's ungodly passions and desires. They would not be able to be sanctified if they did not first have this holiness to draw upon.

Second, Paul tells the Thessalonians to control their bodies in honour. The word used here is τιμῇ (timḗ) and refers to respect or reverence. It can speak of individuals who have a place of honour in society or deserve special respect.

When Paul tells the Thessalonians that they were to control their bodies in

honour, he is telling them that they were to esteem their bodies as the temple of God. Consider what Paul wrote to the Corinthians in this regard:

(18) Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. (19) Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, (20) for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body. – 1 Corinthians 6:18-20 ESV

The basis of Paul's argument against sexual immorality in [1 Corinthians 6](#) is that their bodies were the temple of God, and they were not to dishonour that temple in which God dwelt. This seems to be Paul's argument here in [1 Thessalonians 4:4](#). The Thessalonians

were to control their bodies, finding strength in the holiness that had been imparted to them by God, and they were to honour the bodies in which His Holy Spirit dwelt.

Verse 5

In verse 4, Paul challenged the Thessalonians to control their bodies in holiness and honour. Having told them what to do in verse 4, he now tells them what they should not do in verse 5. They are not to allow the passions of lust to control them. According to the apostle, this was the way of those who “do not know God.”

The apostle tells the Thessalonians here that there ought to be a difference in how believers live their lives. That difference should be seen in how they honour their bodies and walk in holiness. Of course, the application of these verses is not just for sexual

behaviour but in every aspect of life. These bodies are instruments for the glory of God. We must shun anything that would hinder that glory. We have a God-given obligation to care for and use these bodies to bring their Creator honour.

Verse 6

Paul has been challenging the Thessalonians to live sexually pure lives (see verse 4). He encouraged them to be in control of their bodies and not allow their lusts and passions to cause them to fall into sin. Here, in verse 6, he warns them not to transgress or wrong a brother in this matter.

Notice how Paul saw sexual sins here. They were transgression against a brother or sister and wronged them. Sexual sin involves another person. By engaging in sexual sin, we do not hurt

ourselves only, but also the other party involved.

Notice the warning of Paul here to those who wrong a brother or sister through sexual immorality — "*The Lord is an avenger in all these things.*" The word, avenger, is ἐκδίκος (ékdikos). It is derived from the word *ek*, meaning from or out, and *díkē*, which means justice. An avenger brings or executes justice. In other words, he will call those who have wronged another sexually to account. They will answer for the wrong they have done.

Note how Paul reminds the Thessalonians that he had already "*solemnly warned*" them about this matter of sexual sin and how they would answer for it. The words translated solemnly warned is διαμαρτύρομαι (diamartúromai). It means to bear witness repeatedly or to testify as if under oath. The word seems to imply that Paul was not just

informing them of the dangers of sexual sin, but He was warning them of the serious consequences of wronging a brother or sister in this way.

Verse 7

Paul warned the Thessalonians about wronging a brother or sister sexually and told them how God would avenge this wrong (see verse 6). He now reminds them of their calling before God as believers in Jesus Christ. They were called in holiness.

The phrase “in holiness” (ἐν ἁγιασμῷ) is quite interesting. The word ἐν speaks of the manner, circumstances, or conditions under which the Thessalonians were called. What were the conditions under which they were called? The holiness of God enveloped them. God descended in holiness like a cloud and overwhelmed them. This holiness brought them to

their knees in confession of sin and repentance. It transformed their lives and brought them into a new relationship with God. Like Moses descending from the mountain, they now reflected the glorious holiness of God. Their calling in life now was to cultivate and surrender to that holiness. They were to resist anything less than this. They were to walk now in the newness of life they had received from God.

Verse 8

According to Paul, being called “*in holiness*” was a serious matter. Such an encounter with God was life-changing and not something to take for granted. God revealed His holy presence to us. He placed His hand on our lives, pardoned us, adopted us as His children, placed His Holy Spirit in us, and chose us to be His servants. This is

not something we can walk away from or disregard. We cannot shut our eyes, block our ears and walk away from such an encounter. To do so would be to walk away from God Himself.

Verse 9

Paul commends the Thessalonians in this matter of brotherly love. This was something very important for the apostle in any church. It was also a very important priority for Jesus. Listen to what He taught in [John 13:34-35](#):

(34) A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. (35) By this all people will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another.” – John 13:34-35 ESV

While many things mark maturity in the church, brotherly love is an important quality.

According to Paul, the Thessalonians did not need any instructions on how to do this. They were already demonstrating this kind of love to one another.

Note that, according to Paul, God Himself had taught them how to love each other. In other words, this love was a natural reflection of their relationship with God.

Verse 10

The Thessalonians demonstrated brotherly love, according to Paul, toward all the brothers in Macedonia. He does not detail how they did this in the verse. Note, however, that the apostle wanted them to persevere in this demonstration. In fact, he calls

them to do what they are doing more and more.

All too often, we become content with where we are or in what we are doing for the Lord. Paul challenges this attitude here. He calls upon believers to do more and more. There is such a thing as holy discontent. We are to dispel any laziness and apathy and press on to experience more and more of what God has for us. I am not speaking here about burning out but rather striving to know God and His purpose more deeply. We need to address spiritual apathy in the church. God is looking for men and women who will strive for greater maturity and empowerment in service. Wherever we walk with God today, we can be sure that God has even more for us.

Verse 11

Paul encourages the Thessalonians to aspire to live a certain way as believers. He brings three charges to them here in this verse.

First, the Thessalonians were to aspire to live quietly. The word quietly comes from the Greek word ἡσυχάζω (hēsucházō). It means to be still, silence, and rest from labour. This type of lifestyle allows for peaceful relationships. The opposite of quiet is turmoil, confusion and agitation. Those who do not live a quiet life are constantly disturbing their neighbours and disrupting the harmony of the community. As believers, we are to create peace and harmony in our neighbourhood and not disruption, confusion and chaos. We are to strive for peace.

Second, Paul encourages the Thessalonians to “mind your own affairs.” In our day, the term “mind your own business” refers to someone who

meddles in other people's affairs. There is likely a sense of this in what Paul is saying here. Consider the words of [Proverbs 26:17](#):

17 Whoever meddles in a quarrel not his own is like one who takes a passing dog by the ears. – Proverbs 26:16 ESV

Sometimes, we must let other people work out their issues without intervening. This, however, does not take away our obligation to minister to our neighbours in their time of need.

There is another understanding of the words "mind your own affairs." Paul is telling the Thessalonians not to depend on other people for everything.

Believers were to take care of their affairs so as not to be a burden on anyone else. Paul demonstrated this when he was in Thessalonica. Consider

what he told the Thessalonians in [1 Thessalonians 2:9](#):

(9) For you remember, brothers, our labour and toil: we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. – 1 Thessalonians 2:9 ESV

Paul did not want to be a financial burden on the Thessalonians, so he worked on the side to provide for his own needs. Christians, according to Paul, need to be ministering to others and not a burden on their society.

Finally, Paul tells the Thessalonians to work with their hands. This phrase is connected with the challenge of Paul to mind their own business. They could do this by working hard, earning money and providing for their families. Paul discourages a lifestyle of dependence

on other people when it is in our power to work and earn our living.

Verse 12

Living a quiet and nondisruptive lifestyle and minding our own affairs, we “walk properly before outsiders.” In other words, we show ourselves to be productive members of society who care for ourselves and are not a burden to others.

Paul encouraged the Thessalonians not to be dependent on other people. We should not see this to mean that we don’t need anyone else or their support. Paul speaks here in the context of working with our hands (verse 11). In other words, we are to get a job, earn money and provide for our family’s needs rather than depend on others. Believers are to recognize their God-given obligation to provide

for their own families and not rely on others to do that for them.

Verse 13

Paul moves now to speak about some issues troubling the Thessalonian church. Note here the first of these issues — what happens to “those who are asleep.” The word sleep here refers to death. The question is about what happens to believers who die. Notice two details here in this verse.

First, Paul did not want believers to be uninformed about death. Death will come to each of us. More importantly, in this case, death will come to those we love. It is one of life’s most difficult challenges. What comfort do we have when a family member or loved one dies? Paul believed it was important for the Thessalonians to have the understanding necessary to answer this question.

Second, the apostle reassures the Thessalonians that they did not have cause to grieve as others do, who have no hope. What the apostle is saying is that there is hope in death for the believer. This, however, is not the same for the unbeliever. The believer's relationship with Jesus Christ completely changes how they face death. Death is not the end of hope but its beginning.

Verse 14

Note the hope the believer has in death here. Paul reminds the Thessalonians of a central truth in their faith — Jesus died and rose again. That truth has implications for us as we face the uncertainty of death. By dying and raising again, Jesus demonstrated that He had power over death and the grave. He conquered death's eternal grip and gave us hope for our victory.

Paul tells the Thessalonians that God will *"bring with Him those who have fallen asleep."* Just as Jesus rose from the death and went to be with His Father, so also will He raise those who love Him and bring them also to be with the Father. Death is not the end for the believer. Just as Jesus rose from the dead, so also will we. He will raise us, and we will be with Him forever.

Verse 15

The apostle goes on to tell the Thessalonians that, as apostles, they had specific instructions from the Lord about the matter he would address here. He told them that those alive when the Lord returned would not precede those who had fallen asleep. In verse 14, Paul reminded the believers that the Lord Jesus would bring those who were dead to be with Him. He tells us here that there is an order in which

that will take place. The first people to be with the Lord will be deceased believers. Those who are alive will need to wait for the resurrection of the dead before they rise to be with the Lord. Paul is telling the Thessalonians that they did not have cause to be overwhelmed with grief over the death of a believing loved one, for that loved one would be with the Lord before them.

Verse 16

Paul has some things to teach the Thessalonians about when the resurrection of the dead will occur. They could expect to see this resurrection when the Lord descended from heaven.

While God is everywhere present, Scripture speaks of His dwelling place in heaven. It is here that His manifestation and glory are most

powerful. Jesus is currently in heaven with the Father but will return to this earth to bring His people to Himself.

Notice what Paul tells us about the return of the Lord Jesus.

First, He will return with a "*cry of command*." The picture is of a great military commander issuing orders to his army to attack. Consider the words of [Joel 2:11](#):

*11 The LORD utters his voice before his army, for his camp is exceedingly great; he who executes his word is powerful. For the day of the LORD is great and very awesome; who can endure it?
– Joel 2:11, ESV*

When Jesus returns, He does so as a great commander with His army. He will come to conquer and defeat the enemy. The "*cry of command*" is a command to attack and destroy.

Second, the return of the Lord will also be with the *"voice of an archangel."* Scripture speaks of an archangel named Michael. In [Daniel 10:13](#), he is pictured fighting the Kingdom Persia. He is described as "the great prince" who delivered his people in [Daniel 12:1](#). In [Revelation 12:7](#), he fights the dragon Satan and casts him from heaven. The archangel, as a military commander, battles the spiritual forces of evil. Jesus is pictured here shouting like an archangel amid battle.

The trumpet was used to call an army to war. It sounded the attack. Jesus comes as a great commander, set to deliver His people from the forces of hell and the oppression of sin. The trumpet sounds His attack.

Notice what Paul tells us will happen at His appearance — *"the dead in Christ will rise."* This is no ordinary battle. This

is a battle that defeats the power of the grave and sets its captives free.

Verse 17

When the Lord Jesus returns, the dead will be raised first. When that takes place, those who are still alive will be caught up together with them in the clouds and meet the Lord in the air. Let's break this verse down and examine its individual details.

First, consider the phrase, "*we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them.*" Paul speaks here about those living at the time of Jesus' return. When the dead have been raised to be with the Lord, those who are alive will join their resurrected brothers and sisters.

Second, note the words "*caught up.*" The Greek word used here is *ἀρπάζω* (*harpázō*). It means to seize, snatch away or plunder. Remember that

Jesus returns as a great military commander. We are His plunder. We are snatched from this sin-cursed earth and from the ravages of sin to become His trophies of grace.

Third, after seizing us from the enemy, Paul tells us that Jesus will take us to be with our resurrected brothers and sisters in the clouds. We will meet the Lord "in the air." Those who are alive will be taken from this sin-cursed earth. Of course, there will be a new heaven and new earth, but before that takes place, believers alive at the return of Jesus will be taken off this earth, and it will be destroyed and replaced. Consider what the apostle John saw in his vision in [Revelation 21:1-2](#):

(1) Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. (2) And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem,

coming down from heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. – Revelation 21:1-2 ESV

Paul reminds the Thessalonians of their incredible hope despite the fierceness of that final battle –they will be forever with the Lord. Not even death could separate them from an eternity in the presence of the Lord.

Verse 18

Paul challenged the Thessalonians to encourage one another with the truth he had just taught them. Understand that the Thessalonians were wondering what happened after death. They were also being persecuted as believers, and some were possibly facing early death because of that persecution. Paul wanted to encourage them with the truth about death and the return of the Lord so that they would have no cause to fear what was ahead. This teaching

of Paul would have brought hope to these believers in Thessalonica.

1 THESSALONIANS 5

Verse 1

In chapter 4, Paul addressed questions about the resurrection and what happened to the dead. Another question needing to be considered related to when the Lord would return and take His people to be with Himself.

Paul begins this section by saying, "*You have no need to have anything written to you.*" The apostle was assured that regarding this matter and what could be known about it, the Thessalonians

were quite knowledgeable already and didn't need much more instruction. This is understood from the phrase, "For you yourselves are fully aware," in verse 2.

Verse 2

The apostle knew that the Thessalonians were aware that no one could be certain of when the Lord would return. He compares this to a thief in the night. The thief does his best to come when the homeowner is not expecting him. So it is with the Lord's return. He has not told us when He will return. Any effort to determine the exact date and time of His coming is futile. Anyone who tells us that they know when Jesus is coming should not be trusted, for our Lord Himself tells us that no one knows the day or hour:

(36) "But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the

*angels of heaven, nor the Son, but
the Father only. – Matthew
24:36 ESV*

Verse 3

Paul describes the Lord's return in two ways here in this verse.

First, he speaks of a situation where people are experiencing peace and security. Then, suddenly, without warning, the enemy falls on them and takes everything they have.

Second, he speaks about a pregnant woman who gets up one day and, without warning, begins to experience labour pains. The baby inside her does not give her any advanced notification. She has to be ready at any time to deliver.

Notice how Paul concludes the verse with the words, "*and they will not escape.*" The apostle speaks here about

those who are taken by surprise and who are not ready. The day of the Lord will come without warning, like a thief in the night, an attacking enemy invader, or labour pains to a pregnant woman. We will suddenly and without warning face our Saviour. We must be ready for that moment, which could be any time.

Verse 4

The apostle Paul has just told the Thessalonians that the day of the Lord would come like a thief in the night (see verse 2). The idea is that no one knows the day or the hour our Lord will return to this earth. He takes this illustration a step further here in this verse.

Notice first how Paul recognized that the Thessalonians were not in the dark. He calls them brothers here in this verse. Darkness in Scripture is a picture

of ignorance and alienation from Christ. As brothers, the Thessalonians, however, knew Jesus Christ and His work in their lives. They were walking in His teaching and fellowship with Him.

Because the Thessalonians were in a relationship with Christ, they would not be surprised that He returned as He promised. In fact, they waited for His return with great anticipation and longing.

The day of the Lord's return would be a joyous occasion for the Thessalonians. This will not be the case for those who are "in darkness." Consider what the apostle John tells us will be the reaction of those who are in darkness when the Lord returns:

(15) Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves

and among the rocks of the mountains, (16) calling to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, (17) for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?" – Revelation 6:15-17 ESV

The return of the Lord, for the believer, is not like a thief who takes away and steals. It will be like the return of a loved one we have longed to see.

Verse 5

In verse 4, Paul told the Thessalonians they were not "in the darkness." He tells them here that they were all "children of light." Light, in Scripture, speaks of a relationship with Jesus Christ and an acceptance of His work and teaching.

Note the contrast between day and night, darkness and light. Many evil deeds are committed in the darkness of night. Those who practice these deeds want to be hidden from view. The thief does not want people to know when he is coming, so he uses the cover of darkness for his evil deed. Children of darkness are children who practice evil. They do not walk in the truth but in sin and rebellion against God.

On the other hand, we are generally on our best behaviour during the day when everyone can see us. In the light of day, we live honestly and devotedly. Children of the light walk in truth, integrity and sincerity before everyone. Such are believers who the blood of Jesus Christ has genuinely saved.

Paul has the assurance that the Thessalonians had experienced genuine salvation and walked with all sincerity before Christ as children of the day and children of the light.

Verse 6

Because the Thessalonians knew that Jesus was coming, they were, according to Paul, not to sleep but to keep awake.

In verses four and five, Paul distinguishes between children of darkness and light. He knew that the Thessalonians had escaped the darkness of sin and come into the light of Christ's salvation. While they were no longer in darkness, there was still a temptation they needed to avoid. As children of the light, they could fall asleep.

To fall asleep here refers to becoming spiritually lax or lazy. It speaks of those who begin to compromise their faith and commitment to the Lord Jesus or their service for Him.

Notice the phrase, "Let us not sleep as others do." It is unclear who the "others" are. Paul is speaking here to

the Thessalonian believers when he challenges them not to sleep or slack off regarding their faith. It is possible, therefore, for the believer to do this. Paul may be referring to believers in other churches who had not been diligent in their faith and walk with God. Writing to the Corinthians, for example, Paul has to address division among believers ([1 Corinthians 1:10-11](#)), sexual immorality ([1 Corinthians 5:1](#)), lawsuits among believers ([1 Corinthians 6:1-2](#)), and disorderly worship ([1 Corinthians 14:26-40](#)).

The apostle encourages believers in Thessalonica to be diligent in their spiritual walk. They were to address any issues that would hinder their fellowship with each other and with God. They were to be careful never to compromise their faith or spiritual walk. They were to be highly alert to anything hindering or diminishing their

commitment to Jesus, His Word and His people.

Notice that the Thessalonians were also to be "sober." The Greek word used here is νήφω (nēphō) and speaks of being watchful. It also carries with it the sense of not allowing any substance to diminish their capacity to be vigilant and sensitive to what is happening around them.

Many things can keep us from being sober in this sense. The word nēphō can refer to how alcohol or drugs hinder discernment and judgement. There are many, however, who never use alcohol or drugs whose soberness is being hindered. As I write, I fully know how much I have taken on as a servant of Christ. I am currently taking a two-week break from my church obligations because I blacked out. Medical tests indicate that I am perfectly healthy. This led me to conclude that my dizziness, confusion

and blacking out are a result of taking on too many obligations. My lack of soberness or alertness is due to fatigue and overextending myself.

I share this personal illustration to remind the reader that many things can take away our soberness in our Christian ministry and walk. We need to be alert and mindful of anything that distracts us or diminishes our ability to be everything God wants us to be.

Verse 7

Paul reminded the Thessalonians here that sleep is for the nighttime. Those who get drunk and engage in sinful behaviour also do this at night.

The apostle tells the Thessalonians that sinful behaviour and sleep are nighttime activities. He is not condoning sinful behaviours at night here but simply reminding believers

that this is when evil deeds are generally practiced.

Paul speaks of sleep alongside drunkenness. Both of these activities keep us from being alert and diligent. To be drunk is to lack the soberness Paul talks about in verse 6. It keeps us from being diligent and watchful. To sleep is to let down our guard. Both of these activities are nighttime activities.

We can, even as believers, live as the world lives, in the darkness of sin and worldliness, or walk in the light of our faith and relationship with Jesus Christ. We walk in the darkness by the sleep of compromise, indifference and unwatchfulness. We walk in drunkenness when we allow other things to keep us from being alert, diligent and fruitful in the practice of our faith. Paul warns the Thessalonians about living as people of the night.

Verse 8

Paul has no doubt as to the genuineness of the Thessalonian's salvation. According to the apostle, they belonged "to the day." They were children of the light who had come to know Christ and the salvation He offered. As believers in Jesus, they walked in God's purpose for their lives. It is to these individuals whose testimony had an impact in Macedonia and Achaia that Paul brings his challenge here in this verse. Paul's exhortation to the Thessalonian believers is four-fold.

First, he calls them to be sober. The word νήφω (nēphō) used here speaks of watchfulness, and particularly being alert and aware of one's circumstances. The soberness Paul speaks of here relates to keeping our minds, hearts, and wills alert and in control. We often think of soberness as it pertains to

alcohol or drugs. We are sober, in this sense, when we are not being controlled by these substances. Alcohol and drugs, however, are not the only things that can keep us from being of sound mind and body. Sexual sins, fatigue, and other distractions can take over our lives and minds and keep us from being “sober,” watchful and aware. Paul challenges the Thessalonians to watch out for anything that would blind them or hinder their judgement and keep them from being alert and vigilant in their walk with God. We are in the midst of a spiritual battle, which requires soldiers who are aware of the distractions and tactics of the enemy.

Second, the apostle challenges the believers to put on the breastplate of faith. The word πίστις (pístis) refers to a conviction, belief or persuasion. This faith is based on the truth of God’s Word. This unswerving commitment and conviction of the truth would keep

them to the end. That truth would be their comfort and guide in trials and temptations.

Third, the Thessalonians were to put on the breastplate of love. The word ἀγάπη (agápē) refers to love that stirs to action. It is not a feeling but a sacrificial devotion to someone else. Jesus, for example, demonstrated this love by laying down His life on the cross.

Paul speaks of this ἀγάπη (agápē) love as a breastplate. This piece of equipment is for protection. The question we must ask here is how does agape love protect the believer? Without this sacrificial love, what would our faith look like? It would be a faith without hands and feet. It would not demonstrate the heart and work of Christ in our lives. It would be a faith of intellect and mind alone. Such was the lifeless faith of the Pharisees of Jesus' day. The faith Paul speaks about here is

active in the community and demonstrates the heart of Christ in real deeds and sacrifices. The breastplate of love shields us from the kind of faith that is filled with rules and doctrines but devoid of practical application.

Finally, Paul encouraged the Thessalonians to have for a helmet, the hope of salvation. The word hope is ἐλπίς (elpís). It is closely related to faith in that it is based on truth and the expectation of obtaining the promised truth of Scripture. Faith seems to be more connected with the conviction of truth. Hope has to do with expectation and confidence that it will come to pass.

Notice again that this hope is a piece of protective equipment in spiritual battle. Our earnest expectation of salvation will keep us strong against the forces of evil. It will give us perseverance and endurance when things get difficult.

Verse 9

The verse begins with the word “for,” connecting it to Paul’s previous thoughts. He has been challenging the Thessalonians to live as children of the light (verse 5), sober, full of faith, love and hope (verse 6). The apostle states that the reason the Thessalonians were to live sober, loving, faithful and hopeful lives was because God had not destined them for wrath but to obtain salvation through Jesus Christ.

These Thessalonians were not like the unbelievers of their day. Notice the use of the word “destined” here. The idea is that God had placed His hands on these men and women of Thessalonica, and He had a very specific purpose for them. He made them His children by opening their hearts to the salvation of Jesus Christ. He forgave them and gave them an eternal home in heaven. They could live sober lives full of faith, hope

and love because of this wonderful work of Christ in them. This was the fruit of lives transformed by Jesus Christ.

Verse 10

The faith, love and hope that filled the Thessalonians resulted from the work of Jesus Christ, who died on their behalf. The apostle reminds them that this work and the promise of Jesus were as real for those who lived as those who died. Death would not take this promise of eternal life from them, nor would being alive at the return of Jesus. All who put their hope in Christ and His work would live with Him forever.

Verse 11

The Thessalonians had experienced a wonderful work of God in their midst.

He had filled them with love, faith and hope. The work of Jesus Christ had transformed their lives. Paul encouraged them, therefore, to be sober and alert. Notice, here, that this soberness and alertness was not something they were to do independently of one another. They needed each other if they were to live as Jesus intended. Notice that Paul challenged the Thessalonians to do two things here.

First, they were to encourage each other. The word encourage comes from the Greek word παρακαλέω (parakaléō). The word is derived from pará, meaning to the side of, and kaléō, meaning to call. The idea is to call someone to your side for support or comfort. The Thessalonians were to be able to depend on one another as they lived out their Christian life. They were to humble themselves enough to call out to a brother or sister when they

needed their support or encouragement.

Second, the apostle challenges the Thessalonians to build one another up. The word translated “build one another up” is οἰκοδομέω (oikodoméō). It is a construction term and speaks of building a house. In reality, this is what the Thessalonians were doing. They were building a spiritual house with individual members as blocks in that house. Each block in the house was important and formed a part of the whole. When one block suffered, the entire house was at risk. Each block had a role to play, and building up one another ensured each block was strong and could accomplish its purpose.

Paul reminds the Thessalonians that the Christian life is a life in community. We need each other if we are going to be what God called us to be.

Paul ends the verse with the assurance that the Thessalonians were already building each other up and encouraging each other in their faith. He challenges them here to continue doing this.

Verse 12

Paul addresses various issues with the Thessalonians in this final section of his epistle. He begins with a word about those who laboured among them in the Lord. Notice first what the apostle tells us about these brothers.

First, they laboured among the Thessalonians. The word among implies that these individuals were living in Thessalonica. They were inhabitants of the city who lived and walked with the Thessalonians daily.

Second, these brothers were over them in the Lord. This is to say, they had a leadership role in the church of Thessalonica. They may have been

elders serving the church of that region.

Third, these brothers admonished the Thessalonians. The word admonish is *νουθετέω* (*nouthetéō*). It speaks of warning, rebuking, correcting or counselling. The brothers Paul speaks about here had a particular function in the body of Christ in Thessalonica. They encouraged and exhorted the church regularly, teaching and encouraging its members in their walk with God.

Paul told the Thessalonians that they were to respect these men who admonished them regularly. The word respect in the English Standard Version of the Bible comes from the Greek word *εἶδω*, meaning to see. In this context, it appears that Paul is telling the believers to take note of or have a special interest in those who taught and admonished them. They were to lift

them up for their role and honour them as servants of the Lord Jesus.

Verse 13

Paul encouraged the Thessalonians to esteem the brothers who admonished them “very highly in love.” The word esteem is ἡγέομαι (hēgéomai) and means to lead or go before. Paul seems to be conveying to the Thessalonians that they were to regard these individuals before themselves. They were to give them a place of special honour.

The word ἡγέομαι (hēgéomai) conveys sufficiently what Paul was trying to say, but notice that he underlines its importance by adding the phrase esteem them “very highly.” Adding the words very highly adds to the significance of what Paul was teaching. Spiritual leaders who serve well are to be deeply respected and honoured.

Note also that this esteem was not just because these leaders held an important position in the church. The Thessalonians were to esteem their leaders “in love.” The Greek word ἀγάπη (agápē) is used here. It is a love that stirs to action. Those who love their leaders with this kind of love demonstrate this in how they respond toward them and how they care for them through their words and actions. You cannot say you love with this kind of love if it costs you nothing.

Paul goes on to say that they were to love (in action and deeds) their spiritual leaders because of their work. In other words, they were to care for their spiritual leaders because they were God’s servants among them. They were to demonstrate their care in practical ways.

The apostle concludes the verse by challenging the Thessalonians to be at peace among themselves. That is to

say, they were to live in harmony. They were to walk together in one accord, dealing with any issue that might cause division among them. Their oneness and concern for each other and their deep respect for their spiritual leaders would be a powerful testimony in their region for the name of Christ.

Verse 14

The apostle challenges the Thessalonians to minister to three groups of people here.

First they were to admonish (warn or exhort) the idle. The Greek word Paul uses for idle is ἀτάκτος (átaktos) which speaks of those who are disorderly or who neglect their responsibilities. God has given each of us obligations in life. He expects us to be faithful in these matters. Paul believed that if the church saw members who were not taking their responsibilities seriously, they

were to speak with these believers. Our testimony for Christ is hindered if we neglect our God-given charges in family and society. As believers, we are to set a good example by being faithful in our responsibilities and obligations.

Second the Thessalonians were to encourage (comfort or console) the fainthearted. The word translated fainthearted is ὀλιγόψυχος (oligópsuchos). The word comes from olígós, meaning small and psuchḗ meaning soul or mind. The word "oligópsuchos" refers to those who are small of soul or mind. That is to say, they do not have a strong mind or soul to bear the responsibilities and trials that stand before them. They are fearful of what is ahead and do not know how to handle the obligations and difficulties that lie before them. Paul encouraged the church to recognize the struggle of such individuals and stand with them to support and encourage.

They were to loan them their strength and wisdom to face that battle.

Finally, the Thessalonian church was to help the weak. The word ἀσθενής (asthenēs) literally means without strength. That weakness may be physical, emotional or spiritual. It may be a temporary situation due to life situations or it may be a more permanent issue that places a brother or sister in a state of weakness. The church, according to Paul, was to stand beside these individuals. They were to make it a priority to help them in their time of need.

Note how Paul exhorts the church to be patient with all three groups of people. The word for patient here is μακροθυμέω (makrothuméō). It comes from the word makrós, meaning long and thumós meaning wrath or anger. Together they have the sense of remaining under the wrath or anger of another person without giving up. In

other words, those who demonstrate this kind of patience, put up with difficulties for the good of the brother or sister concerned. Admonishing, encouraging and helping our brothers and sisters will require an intense effort with many sacrifices at times. Those efforts will not always be appreciated or accepted. The apostle encouraged long suffering and patience in those times.

What is clear from this verse is that the apostle Paul believed that the church needed to watch out for each other. The spiritual life is not a life lived in isolation. It is one where we need to embrace the body with all its various members, gifts and burdens. If the church of Thessalonica was going to become all God intended it to become, each member needed to stand with the other, patiently admonishing, encouraging and helping each other.

Verse 15

In a world cursed by sin, evil is a reality. We treat each other sinfully or sometimes with evil intent. Paul tells the Thessalonians they were not to repay evil for evil. The understanding here is that we will suffer evil at the hands of our fellow human beings. This should not surprise us in a sinful world. What is important for us to see here, however, is that the apostle challenges the Thessalonians not to repay anyone with evil for evil done to them. Instead, they were to seek to do good to everyone.

What happens when someone hurts you? You respond with goodness toward them. What do you do when someone speaks evil of you? You respond in kindness and compassion.

Understand here that this does not remove the need for justice in a society. Nor does this mean that we are not to challenge those who have acted with evil intent. In verse 14, Paul

encourages the Thessalonian church to admonish brothers and sisters who are not walking as they should. He reminded the church in this letter that the day of the Lord was coming like a thief in the night and that they needed to be ready for this great day of judgment. Understand that while justice is necessary for evil deeds, and believers are to admonish those who are not walking in the Spirit, one evil deed does not justify another. As believers, we must learn to respond to evil in godly ways, demonstrating patience, goodness, kindness and love. The best response to evil is godliness.

Verse 16

The apostle challenges the Thessalonians here to rejoice (χαίρω, chaírō) always. The word always (πάντοτε, pántote) implies that they were to do so at all times and in all

circumstances. The only way this is possible is because of our hope in Jesus Christ, the inner work of the Holy Spirit, and our confidence that the Father is over every circumstance in life. If these three realities are true for believers, we have every cause to rejoice no matter what the world throws at us. In essence, Paul tells the Thessalonians to look up in times of trouble to their hope in God and not allow the circumstances of life to make them forget what they have in Him.

Verse 17

The apostle's next challenge to the Thessalonians was that they were to pray without ceasing. Prayer has to do with communication and communion with God. This is not limited to a specific time of the day when I bow my head and talk to God about my problems. Our communion with God

must be, according to Paul, “without ceasing.” The word ἀδιαλείπτως (adialeíptōs) can be translated as permanent or without stopping. The idea is that believers are to be always in communion and communication with God. There should never be a moment when we are not in communion with Him, seeking His purpose, aware of His presence and walking in tune with Him. Our goal in life is to be in constant fellowship with God. Anything that keeps us from that must be addressed.

Verse 18

The Thessalonians were to give thanks in all circumstances. The word in (ἐν, en) could be translated as within or nearby. We see this use in the phrase “in Christ,” which refers to a close and intimate connection with Christ and His work.

In this case, however, the Thessalonians were “in” various circumstances in life. For some, these circumstances related to persecution for their faith. Not all of their circumstances were negative or difficult, however. I am sure that some proved to be very positive.

Paul is telling the Thessalonians here that circumstances in life should never undermine their thankfulness to God. A thankful heart is a quality that believers are to exemplify, no matter what life throws at them. No matter how difficult life is, our souls have been saved by Jesus Christ, and our eternal destiny has been secured. Imagine a person inheriting a million dollars being ungrateful because he had to cross the street to cash the cheque. The blessings of Christ so far outweigh the trials of life that the believer’s heart has every reason to be thankful, even amid great difficulty and persecution.

There is another aspect to this thankfulness. We have a God who can use all things to accomplish His purpose. Even those things that appear to be tragic can be for our good. Joseph was sold into slavery, but God used it to rescue his family from a famine that would have wiped them out. Jesus laid His life on a cruel cross and died, but that horrible death secured our salvation by the grace of God.

If we are going to be thankful, we need to look beyond our pain and suffering to the greater purpose of God. We need to see Him seated on His throne, working out His purposes. We must understand His plan for our eternal life and blessing in His presence. To be thankful, we need to see the bigger picture and not allow our struggles to blind us to what we have in Christ.

According to Paul, it was the will of God in Christ Jesus for us to live in a

constant state of gratitude for what He has done and will continue to do in and through us for His glory and our good.

Verse 19

Next, the apostle Paul warns the Thessalonians about the possibility of quenching the Spirit. The word quench is σβέννυμι (sbénnumi) and speaks of extinguishing a light or fire so that it goes out. Paul tells the Thessalonians they were not to do this with the Holy Spirit.

It is the role of God's Holy Spirit to lead and empower the believer in service and walk with God. The Holy Spirit will enable the forgiveness, joy, communion and thankfulness Paul speaks about in verses fourteen to eighteen, but believers must be sensitive and receptive to His influence and leading. Speaking to the religious people of his day, Stephen said:

(51) "You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you. – Acts 7:51 ESV

Writing to the Ephesians, the apostle Paul said:

*(30) And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.
(31) Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamour and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. – Ephesians 4:30-31 ESV*

Notice the connection between grieving the Holy Spirit and allowing bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour and slander in their hearts. We quench the fire of the Holy Spirit in our lives by resisting or ignoring His inner work and conviction.

The fact is that you cannot live the Christian life in the flesh. You need the inner work of God's Holy Spirit to live as He intends. It is of utmost importance, then, that we come to know and embrace His inner work. We must learn to hear His voice, trust in His leading and conviction, and allow Him to transform our thoughts and attitudes. We must do nothing that would grieve Him or hinder His work in our lives.

Verse 20

The apostle moves now to speak about prophecy. The word προφητεία (prophēteía) speaks of exhortations, warning, and teaching spoken by those who have been hearing from God and speaking on His behalf. Paul believed the Lord would use His servants to proclaim His heart to His people. He challenges the Thessalonians not to despise these men and women who

spoke in God's name. At the very least, they were to consider whether what they heard from a brother or sister was truly from the Lord.

The word translated despise here is ἐξουθενέω (exouthenēō) and speaks of rejecting or treating with scorn the words of the prophet.

There are various opinions in the church today about whether the office of the prophet still exists. The reality of the matter is that God still speaks today. He does so not only through His inspired Word but also through His servants who challenge us in His name. I have had many times when the Lord spoke to me through godly men and women who shared informally with me, challenging me in one thing or another. I have had to take every rebuke, warning or challenge seriously, for it may indeed be a word from the Lord for my good.

Verse 21

This verse is a continuation of the words of Paul in verse 20. He told the Thessalonians that they were not to despise prophecies. He continues here by telling them what they were to do when someone spoke to them prophetically. They were to test everything. The testing referred to here related to what was being spoken to them by the prophet. Every word of a prophet is to be tested in two ways.

First, the prophet's word is to be examined in light of the inspired teaching of the Bible. This is what the Bereans did when they heard the word of the apostles in [Acts 17](#):

(11) Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the

Scriptures daily to see if these things were so. – Acts 17:11 ESV

Second, the word of the prophet is to be tested by experience. Consider the words of [Deuteronomy 18](#) in this regard:

(21) And if you say in your heart, 'How may we know the word that the LORD has not spoken?'— (22) when a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the word does not come to pass or come true, that is a word that the LORD has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously. You need not be afraid of him. – Deuteronomy 18:21-22 ESV

God will never lie. What He says will always come to pass. If what a prophet says does not come to pass, they are not speaking from God.

Paul offers a second challenge here in verse 21. He encouraged the Thessalonians to "*hold fast what is good.*" When the rich young ruler came to Jesus, he called Him a Good Teacher. Listen to the response of Jesus to this title:

(18) And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. – Mark 10:18 ESV

Jesus tells us that the only truly good person is God. He is absolute good and the definition of what goodness is. Paul challenged the Thessalonians to hold tightly to and persevere in what they knew to be true of God and His Word.

Verse 22

The apostle expected the Thessalonians to abstain from every form of evil. The

word translated form here is εἶδος (eidos) which means to see or appearance. The sense here is that the Thessalonians were to reject and refuse to participate in anything that had any smell, taste or sense of evil about it. When it came to evil, there was to be no compromise. It is all too easy for us to rate evil. Some evil we see as being so horrendous we want nothing to do with. In fact, this sort of evil repulses us. There is evil, however, that is actually quite attractive to us as it offers pleasure and ease, despite the fact that takes our eyes of God and His purpose for our lives. It is all too easy to compromise our standards where there is great money to be made, or great pleasure to be had. The apostle challenges the Thessalonians here never to compromise but to walk faithfully in the goodness of God and His purpose alone. Believers were to abstain or resist temptation to

compromise the truth or a life of true holiness and dependance on God.

Verse 23

Paul concludes his letter with a benediction. Notice two details here.

First, Paul prays that the God of peace would himself sanctify the Thessalonians completely. The word peace here is εἰρήνη (eirēnē) and speaks of a state of being free from physical, emotional or spiritual conflict and turmoil. The God we serve is characterized by peace. In a perfect world, there is no sickness, war, tragedy or discord. Where God dwells, there is such peace.

Understanding that the God we serve is a God of peace should help us see the kind of life He has for us. Admittedly, we live in a world of sin and evil that wants to strip away this peace. We strive, however, toward wholeness and

reconciliation with God and our brothers and sisters. We strive for health and blessing under the purpose of our God of peace.

How can we know this perfect peace of God? We can only experience it through the process of sanctification. The word ἁγιάζω (hagiázō) used here refers to the process of making someone holy. The process of sanctification is breaking with sin and evil in our lives and embracing the character and purpose of God. It is this process that gives us the peace God intends. Paul prays that the Lord God would do this work in the Thessalonians. This was not something they were capable of themselves. Only God could strip away sin and evil from their heart. This was the inner work of His Spirit in their lives as they submitted to Him and His purpose. It was the heart of Paul that all evil and sin be addressed in the lives of the Thessalonians and that they be made

holy and sanctified completely by the work of God in their inner being.

Second, it was the heart of Paul that the whole spirit, soul and body of the Thessalonian believers would be kept blameless until the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is one thing to be changed and quite another to persevere. The God who sanctified them would, however, also keep them in that state of holiness. The Spirit who transformed their lives into the image of Jesus Christ would stand with them, empowering them and giving them ongoing victory over sin, the flesh and the temptations of the devil.

Verse 24

After praying that the Lord would sanctify and preserve the Thessalonians, the apostle reminds them of the God who did the

sanctifying and preserving. He has two things to say here.

First, the God who sanctified and preserved is faithful. The word translated faithful is πιστός (pistós) and speaks of something worthy of our confidence and belief. God is trustworthy and fully able to do what He promises. The Thessalonians could place their full confidence in His work in their lives.

Note here that Paul reminded the Thessalonians that God had called them. That is to say, he had initiated this relationship through the death of His Son Jesus and the indwelling presence of His Holy Spirit. Paul adds to this now the absolute and faithful commitment of God toward those He has called in this way. God is committed to those who respond to His call.

The second point Paul makes here is a personal one. He is assured that the God who called the Thessalonians would not leave them to fend for themselves. Imagine a mother giving birth to a baby and abandoning it. This may happen in a sinful world, but this is not God's way. He cares for His children and will do everything He can to see them mature in their faith and walk with Him. Paul had an assurance of God's care for and work in the lives of all of His children.

Verse 25

The apostle asked the Thessalonians to pray for them as apostles and gospel workers. He asked them to do so because he believed in the power of prayer to move the hand of God in his ministry.

God could accomplish His purposes without us, but He has chosen to

advance His kingdom through us instead. Some seek to advance God's kingdom, relying on their human wisdom and skill. God, however, wants to empower and lead us in this work. He had made the power and wisdom required available to all who will ask Him for it.

Those who seek to advance the kingdom of God in their strength and wisdom do so without God's particular presence and enabling. They treat the work of God like a business. They raise the resources for their projects through their many fund-raising techniques. They set up programmes to attract a crowd and keep their attention. They build their churches and administer their meetings like any secular business leader. The only difference is the cause they represent.

On the other hand, there are those who rely on the power, leading and wisdom of God alone. They distrust human

wisdom and skill and choose rather to draw everything they need from God. They understand that God's ways are not the same as their ways. They know that they can achieve great things that God never asked them to achieve. These individuals pray to God for wisdom, empowerment and the blessing needed. They do not trust their ideas, programmes or experience. Instead, they seek the wisdom of God and His enabling in the work of the kingdom. Paul was one of these individuals who pleaded with the Thessalonians to pray for grace to know the purpose of God and the divine strength and wisdom to accomplish His purpose.

Verse 26

As the apostle concludes his letter, he tells the Thessalonians to greet each other with a holy kiss. He is not telling

them to receive his greetings here but rather showing them how to greet each other. They were to do so with a holy kiss. This holy kiss symbolized their relationship and was a sign that they accepted each other as brothers and sisters in the Lord. When they greeted each other, this was a sign and symbol of their bonds in Jesus Christ.

Paul is not requiring that all Christians greet each other with a kiss. The kiss was a proper cultural greeting in that culture, however, and a reminder of their bonds in Christ Jesus whenever they met. A hug or a handshake may also express this same idea.

Verse 27

The apostle placed the Thessalonians under oath to read this letter to all the brothers. The idea here is that he expected them to share what he had written with other believers in their

region. The letter was intended to be circulated for the instruction and encouragement of believers. If Paul had the internet in those days, he would likely have made use of it as a tool to make his writing available to as many people as possible.

Verse 28

Paul concludes with a prayer that the grace or unmerited favour of the Lord Jesus Christ be with the Thessalonians. This was not because the Thessalonians were less worthy of God's grace than other believers. Paul understood that not one of us can merit God's favour, but He showers that grace and mercy upon us anyway. His prayer is that God would extend this grace in abundance to the Thessalonian believers and that they would know His favour, provision, work and wisdom in their personal lives, church and region.

INTRODUCTION TO 2 THESSALONIANS

Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians addressed two main concerns in the Thessalonian church.

The first is related to the matter of the return of the Lord Jesus. Of particular concern for Paul was a letter that came to the region, supposedly from the apostles, stating that the day of the Lord had already come (see 2 Thessalonians 2:2-3). Paul takes a moment here to tell the Thessalonians that the day of the Lord would first be preceded by the coming of a lawless

antichrist. He challenges the church to be ready for this man of lawlessness by standing firm in the truth he had personally taught them.

The second matter of concern for Paul was that he had heard there were idle people in the church. He challenges the church to rebuke any such idleness and be diligent and disciplined believers in Jesus Christ and productive members of their society.

The letter has some important things to teach us about the second coming of Jesus Christ and the importance of always being ready for that great event.

2

THESSALONIANS

1

Verse 1

The letter of 2 Thessalonians was to the Thessalonians from Paul, Silvanus and Timothy.

Silvanus, is the Latin equivalent of Silas. Silas was a respected leader in the early church and a travelling companion of Paul's (see [Acts 15:39-41](#)).

Paul met Timothy in the region of Lystra and asked him to join him in his missionary journey (see [Acts 16:1-5](#)). Paul had a special connection with

Timothy throughout his ministry, calling him his “beloved and faithful child” in [1 Corinthians 4:17](#) and his “true child in the faith in [1 Timothy 1:2](#).

Note what the apostle Paul tells us about the church of Thessalonica. They were “in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” Being in God and His Son Jesus Christ implied that they belonged to Him, were covered by His work and were walking in fellowship with Him.

Verse 2

Paul’s prayer for the Thessalonians is twofold.

First, he prays for the grace of God in their lives. God’s grace is His unmerited favour. Paul understood that none of us deserve the favour and blessing of God in our lives, but God is willing to pour out upon us what we do not deserve. Paul prayed that the Thessalonians

would experience this wonderful grace showered upon them.

Second, Paul prayed that the Thessalonian church might know the peace of God. The word for peace is εἰρήνη (eirēnē). It speaks of an absence of war and turmoil but also refers to prosperity, health and general well-being. Included in this, of course, is a sense of fellowship with God and His people. Note that this peace and grace is found in the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. Such peace and grace would not be possible outside of the purpose of God and the work of His Son, Jesus.

Verse 3

Note what Paul has to say about the church of Thessalonica here.

Paul tells them that it was only right for him to thank God for them. He gives us two reasons why the Thessalonians

were worthy of this great thanksgiving to God.

First, Paul thanked God because the faith of the Thessalonian church was growing abundantly. All too often, we seem to reach a certain level of faith and remain there. We become content with what we know of God and where we are in our spiritual walk. This was not the case, however, for the Thessalonian church. They continued to grow in their faith and walk with God. Paul tells us that the Thessalonian's faith was growing "abundantly." It would be the height of arrogance to think that we do not need to see this abundant growth in our faith as well. Wherever we are in our walk with God, not one of us has arrived at perfection.

Second, Paul thanked the Lord because the love of everyone was growing for one another. The word translated love here is the Greek word ἀγάπη (agápē). This kind of love is not just a feeling

but a sacrificial devotion to one another. It is best demonstrated in the Lord Jesus and His willingness to lay down His life for us. Paul understood that this love was shown in how the believers cared for each other in practical ways. You cannot say you love if you do not demonstrate this in sacrificial actions and deeds. Note here that this kind of active love also increased in the church as they learned to truly care for each other.

Verse 4

Paul tells the Thessalonians that he boasted about them in the churches of God. The idea here is that Paul spoke positively to other churches about the steadfast faith of the Thessalonian church. He set them up as an example to follow.

Note that this “steadfastness and faith” was amid persecutions and afflictions.

Things were not easy for the church of Thessalonica. When Paul went to Thessalonica in [Acts 17](#), the Jews stirred up a riot, and he was forced to leave. The church in Thessalonica endured persecution and hardship for their commitment to Jesus Christ.

Despite the trouble they were experiencing, believers in Thessalonica remained true and steadfast. They were an example of genuine and persevering faith and the subject of Paul's boasts in other churches.

Verse 5

Paul begins verse 5 with the words, *"This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God."* Our understanding of the verse depends on what the word "this" refers to. Paul is bringing us back to what he has just said in verse 4 about the steadfastness and faith of the Thessalonian church

amid persecution. The word “this” may refer to the persecution of the Thessalonian church or its steadfastness and faith.

Paul goes on in the verse to say that this steadfastness and faith or persecution were evidence of the righteous judgement of God. The word judgement here may be seen in a legal sense but also speaks of the wisdom and decisions of God in general.

In other words, God had seen fit to allow the church of Thessalonica to endure hardship, but what they suffered, under his righteous judgement and purpose, would accomplish great good in their lives by strengthening their faith and drawing them closer to God. God was refining them through His judgement to allow persecution so they would be considered worthy of the kingdom of God.

What they endured transformed their lives and shaped them into the image of Jesus Christ. God sometimes allows difficult things to happen, but these things are for our good. God's judgement about what He allows is righteous and will accomplish its intended purpose for our lives as we endure and allow Him to work through it in us.

Verse 6

While the Thessalonians were afflicted and persecuted for their faith, Paul assured them that God would repay those who afflicted them with affliction. The apostle uses two different words here.

First, when Paul speaks of the affliction of the Thessalonians, he uses the word $\theta\lambda\acute{\iota}\beta\omega$ (thlībō), which means to press together, compress or to distress.

Second, speaking of the response of God toward those who afflicted the Thessalonians, Paul uses the word θλίψις (thlipsis), which means to crush. It is derived from the phrase thláō, which means to break. It seems to be a somewhat stronger word than what Paul used for the affliction of the Thessalonians.

What is important to note here is that God was not blind to the affliction of the Thessalonian church.

Note that Paul tells them that God considered it just to repay with θλίψις (thlipsis) affliction those who distressed His people. He would crush their enemies and bring justice for their oppression.

Verse 7

Paul has been telling the Thessalonians here that God would use their trials to make them worthy of the kingdom they

represented (verse 5) and that He would judge those who afflicted them (verse 6). Here, in verse 7, the apostle adds one more detail. He tells the Thessalonians that God would ultimately grant them relief from those afflicting them. Notice when that relief would come — *"when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels."* Let me say two things here.

First, in this world, we will have trouble. Consider the words of Jesus in this regard:

(33) I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world, you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world." — John 16:33 ESV

Jesus makes it clear that as long as we live in a sinful world, there will be affliction and struggle. All who love the

Lord Jesus need to understand that they will not be accepted in this world. Just as our Lord suffered, so will those who follow in His footsteps.

Second, Jesus has overcome the world. There is hope beyond this life. This world is not all there is for the believer. The day is coming when we will see the Lord, and on that day, all suffering will end. He will remove all pain, affliction and trial. We will be forever with Him.

In this world, we will have affliction, but God will use that affliction to draw us closer to Himself. He will bring justice and end all suffering and pain for those who love and walk faithfully with Him. This is great comfort.

Verse 8

When the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels (verse 7), He will be revealed, according to Paul, in flaming fire. Fire here is a

symbol of justice and the purifying of impurities. When the Lord Jesus returns with his angels, He returns as a warrior to conquer all sin and rebellion against God. Paul tells us that on that day, our Lord will inflict vengeance on two groups of people.

First, Jesus will inflict vengeance on those who do not know God. The word Paul uses here is εἶδω (eídō). It means to see. The word, however, implies not just seeing something but seeing, taking note of and responding. Consider what the apostle tells the Romans in [Romans 1](#):

(18) For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. (19) For what can be known about God is plain to them because God has shown it to them. (20) For his invisible

attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. (21) For although they knew God, they did not honour him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. (22) Claiming to be wise, they became fools (23) and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. – Romans 1:18-23 ESV

Paul speaks here about people who saw God in many different ways, but they did not respond appropriately to what they saw. They ignored Him, turned their backs, and rebelled against Him and His purpose for their lives.

When Paul speaks of those who do not know God here, he talks about those who have rejected Him and His purpose.

Second, the apostle tells us that God will inflict vengeance on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. What does it mean to obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ? The gospel's call is to recognize our sin, repent and turn to Jesus Christ for forgiveness. Those who do not obey the gospel reject this call. All who disobey this call to repent and turn to Jesus for forgiveness will face the fiery wrath of God's judgement.

Verse 9

Those who do not know God, as well as those who do not obey the gospel's call, will suffer punishment. Note the nature of this punishment here.

First, it is eternal. The word eternal implies that it is unending. The punishment of those who do not know God and who do not obey the gospel will have no end.

Second, Paul describes their punishment as eternal destruction. The word destruction is ὄλεθρος (ólethros), which in itself means to destroy, ruin or kill. Note, however, that Paul describes this destruction as eternal destruction. Some might see this as a once for all time destruction. In other words, those who do not know the Lord will be annihilated and be no more. The sense in Scripture, however, is that the flames of hell never extinguish, and the destruction is ongoing forever and ever. In other words, those who do not know the Lord live in an ongoing state of being destroyed. Consider, for example, the words of [Revelation 20:10](#) as it pertains to the eternal judgement of

the devil, the beast and the false prophet:

(10) and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. – Revelation 20:10 ESV

The apostle John tells us that the torment of the beast, false prophet and the devil will be forever. Their punishment was an eternal destruction that was ongoing with no end.

Third, the punishment of those who do not know God would be *"away from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his might."* That is to say, they will be separated from God and His glory. Their existence will be a godless one, separated from the power of God and given up to sin and endless death.

Verse 10

Those who do not know God or obey the call of the gospel will be separated from the presence of the Lord when “He comes on that day to be glorified in His saints.” Note what Paul tells us here about the day of the Lord’s return.

First, that day will be a day when Jesus Christ is glorified in His saints. His work has transformed their lives. This work of transformation transcends cultures, time, and languages. He has broken the hardest sinners and made them His children. People of every age, country and language have experienced the grace of Christ to change their lives. Imagine what it will be like to see that body of people spanning the globe all touched by the power of Jesus’ cross. What praise will rise to Him on that day as those men and women are separated out and bow before Him in adoration? The power of the cross will

be seen in that day. Glory will rise to Christ for the transforming work He has done. The church, with all its diversity and backgrounds, will rise and bring Him honour. This is the fruit of His work on the cross. It is a glorious thing to behold.

Note also here that not only will Christ be glorified in the church, but He will also be glorified by those who belong to Him. They will marvel at His presence and bow down at His feet in praise and gratitude. Among those who will bring honour to the Lord and marvel at His work were those saved by the ministry and message of the apostles who faithfully passed on the message of the gospel we have inherited today.

Verse 11

Paul reveals his prayer for the Thessalonians here. Note that the basis

for this prayer is the return of the Lord. The knowledge that Jesus would return motivated Paul to pray for the Thessalonian church. Paul's prayer here is three-fold.

First, He prays that God would make the Thessalonians worthy of His calling. Observe that the worthiness does not come from the Thessalonians but from God. Only God could make them worthy. He did so by pardoning their sin and removing the guilt and shame. He did so also by sanctifying and transforming them into the image of His Son through the inner work of His Spirit. The Thessalonians were unworthy, but the work of Christ and His Holy Spirit transformed them into a people worthy of His name and worthy to follow His calling.

Second, Paul prayed that the Lord would fulfill every resolve for good. The phrase "resolve for good" comes from the Greek word εὐδοκία (eudokía),

which speaks of good pleasure, intent or purpose. The word fulfill is πληρῶ (plerōō) and speaks of filling up or making full. Paul is praying that God would fulfill every good purpose in their lives. That good purpose may be for their maturity. It might be for greater service or deeper intimacy and victory over sin. Paul prayed that God would fill up whatever good was lacking in their faith and service.

Third, Paul prayed that the Lord would fulfil every good work of faith by His power. Paul wanted to see the Thessalonians stepping out in works of faith. He wanted to see them experience afresh the empowering work of God in their lives. Paul is not trying to shame the believers into religious activities. He wants them to experience the joy of knowing the empowering presence of God's Spirit in faith-filled service.

Verse 12

Paul reveals his prayer for the Thessalonians here. Note that the basis for this prayer is the return of the Lord. The knowledge that Jesus would return motivated Paul to pray for the Thessalonian church. Paul's prayer here is three-fold.

First, He prays that God would make the Thessalonians worthy of His calling. Observe that the worthiness does not come from the Thessalonians but from God. Only God could make them worthy. He did so by pardoning their sin and removing the guilt and shame. He did so also by sanctifying and transforming them into the image of His Son through the inner work of His Spirit. The Thessalonians were unworthy, but the work of Christ and His Holy Spirit transformed them into a people worthy of His name and worthy to follow His calling.

Second, Paul prayed that the Lord would fulfill every resolve for good. The phrase "resolve for good" comes from the Greek word εὐδοκία (eudokía), which speaks of good pleasure, intent or purpose. The word fulfill is πληρόω (pleróō) and speaks of filling up or making full. Paul is praying that God would fulfill every good purpose in their lives. That good purpose may be for their maturity. It might be for greater service or deeper intimacy and victory over sin. Paul prayed that God would fill up whatever good was lacking in their faith and service.

Third, Paul prayed that the Lord would fulfil every good work of faith by His power. Paul wanted to see the Thessalonians stepping out in works of faith. He wanted to see them experience afresh the empowering work of God in their lives. Paul is not trying to shame the believers into religious activities. He wants them to

experience the joy of knowing the
empowering presence of God's Spirit in
faith-filled service.

2

THESSALONIANS

2

Verse 1

Paul gets to one of the reasons for writing the letter to the Thessalonians here. There had been some questions in the church relating to the second coming of the Lord. The questions also related to believers being “gathered together to Him.” The phrase “gathered together to Him” is significant and shows us the personal nature of the second coming of Jesus. When He comes, He will gather together those

who belong to Him to Himself. They will live under His protection and acceptance. The Thessalonians wondered what it would be like to be gathered to the Lord, to see Him face to face, and to be under His protection and grace.

Verse 2

The Thessalonian church had to deal with false teachers. These false teachers had told the church that the day of the Lord had come. The word used here is ἐνίστημι (*enístēmi*). It is derived from the word *en*, meaning in or with, and *hístēmi*, meaning to stand. Together, they carry the sense of standing in something. What these false teachers were saying was that they were standing in the final days and that the Day of the Lord's return had come.

Note the impact of this teaching on the church of Thessalonica. Paul tells us that they were shaken in their mind and alarmed. This teaching shocked the church and disturbed them greatly. Had they missed the day of the Lord? Were they His children, and why had He not come to gather them to Himself?

Observe here that the reason this teaching shook the church was because of how it came to them. Paul lists three means by which this message went to the church.

First, the message came from a spirit. In other words, it was communicated to the heart of someone who believed it to be from God and spoke it to the church.

Second, it came to them by means of a spoken word. Some openly taught this false doctrine that the day of the Lord had already come.

Finally, it came to them through a letter, “seeming to be from the apostles.” In other words, someone wrote to them in the name of the apostles, proclaiming this false doctrine.

Understand from this that the church was being bombarded on all sides through different means. It is easy to believe something when we hear it in many different ways. We are called to be discerning, however. Because so many people believe something and communicate it, does not make it true.

Verse 3

Paul challenges the church not to let anyone deceive them. In doing so he rebukes the false teachers who were claiming that the day of the Lord had already come. The apostle tells the Thessonians that this day had not

come. In saying this the apostle takes a stand against this teaching.

Jesus predicted that there would be false teachers who came in His name proclaiming their falsehood:

(4) And Jesus answered them, "See that no one leads you astray. (5) For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and they will lead many astray. (6) And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet. (7) For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. (8) All these are but the beginning of the birth pains. – Matthew 24:4-8 ESV

Note here in particular that Jesus told us that this false teaching and

persecution of believers was only the beginning of the birth pains. Paul understood that before the day of the Lord, things would get even worse.

The apostle goes on to tell the Thessalonians why he rejected the teaching that the day of the Lord had already come. He told them that certain things had to happen before that great day. He speaks here about "the rebellion." Again let's look at what Jesus prophesied in [Matthew 24](#):

(9) "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. (10) And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. (11) And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. (12) And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. (13) But the one who

*endures to the end will be saved.
(14) And this gospel of the kingdom
will be proclaimed throughout the
whole world as a testimony to all
nations, and then the end will
come. – Matthew 24:9-14 ESV*

Jesus speaks of a day when believers will be persecuted and put to death. In those days lawlessness will increase and love will grow cold. All of these things needed to take place before the final day of the Lord. Jesus would go on to say that before he returned there would also be signs in the sky:

*(29) "Immediately after the
tribulation of those days the sun
will be darkened, and the moon will
not give its light, and the stars will
fall from heaven, and the powers of
the heavens will be shaken. (30)
Then will appear in heaven the sign
of the Son of Man, and then all the
tribes of the earth will mourn, and*

they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. – Matthew 24:29-30 ESV

Paul was aware of the teaching of the Lord about these matters and was not deceived by false teachers proclaiming that the day of the Lord had already come.

Not only did “the rebellion” need to manifest itself before the coming of the Lord, but Paul tells us that the man of lawlessness also needed to be revealed. The apostle John wrote:

(18) Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour. – 1 John 2:18 ESV

John speaks about an Antichrist who would come in the last days. He seems to describe this Antichrist in the book of Revelation when he wrote:

(5) And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months. (6) It opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling, that is, those who dwell in heaven. (7) Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. And authority was given it over every tribe and people and language and nation, (8) and all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain. – Revelation 13:5-8 ESV

Paul calls this man of lawlessness the son of destruction. From the passages we have examined, we can see how he will deceive many nations and make war on the saints of God. According to Paul, these things needed to happen before the day of the Lord.

Verse 4

Paul speaks further here about the man of lawlessness introduced in verse 3. Note what Paul tells us about this evil antichrist here:

First, the man of lawlessness will exalt himself over every so-called god or object of worship. In [Revelation 13](#), the apostle John saw a beast rising from the sea, which was given great power and authority by Satan the dragon (see [Revelation 13](#):-3). Listen to the words of John about this dragon Satan and his servant the beast:

(4) And they worshiped the dragon, for he had given his authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?" – Revelation 13:4 ESV

Note how the world worshipped the dragon and his servant, the beast. They were seen as gods. John goes on to tell us something more about this beast in [Revelation 13:5-6](#):

(5) And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months. (6) It opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling, that is, those who dwell in heaven. – Revelation 13:5-6 ESV

The beast exalted himself above the very God of heaven and blasphemed

His name. This is what Paul seems to be telling us. There will be a time when a great antichrist will arise with authority, lifting himself above God. According to Paul, this must happen before the coming of the Lord (see [2 Thessalonians 2:3](#)).

Second, this man of lawlessness will, according to Paul, take his seat in the temple of God and proclaim himself to be God. Compare this statement of Paul here to the words of John in [Revelation 13](#).

In [Revelation 13](#), John describes a second beast that rose from the earth. [Revelation 13:12](#) shows us the role this second beast had:

(12) It exercises all the authority of the first beast in its presence and makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose mortal wound was healed. Revelation 13, ESV

The purpose of this second beast was to act as a priest and cause people to bow down and worship the first beast. John continues in his prophecy to tell us that this second beast could perform miracles and signs and would deceive many people into believing that the first beast was god.

Verse 5

Paul's words about the end times were not new to the Thessalonians. He had taught them these things when he was with them. We understand from this that Paul believed it was important for these new converts to Christ to understand the spiritual battle ahead of them and the second coming of Jesus Christ. He does not hide from them that things would be difficult. In an age of easy salvation, we would do well to instruct believers in the dangers and trials to come.

Verse 6

The Bible speaks about the power of this antichrist to do great signs and wonders, deceiving many into thinking that he is god (see [Revelation 13:13-15](#)). Note, however, what Paul tells the Thessalonians here in verse 6. He reminds them that this great beast is restrained and cannot reveal himself until the time is right. The restraining of this man of lawlessness shows us that there is a power greater than his. As powerful as he may be, God has ultimate control. The man of lawlessness can only reveal himself when God determines it is right. What is true for his revelation is also true for his destruction. This is the clear teaching of John in [Revelation 20](#):

(10) and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulphur where the beast and the false prophet were,

and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. – Revelation 20:10 ESV

Our God remains in control despite the unleashing of great evil on the earth.

Verse 7

The apostle reminds the Thessalonians that the “mystery of lawlessness” is already at work on the earth. The word μυστήριον (mustérion) speaks of something hidden or secret that is not fully understood. Who among us can understand the plans of Satan and his lawlessness? He works in deceit and lies to unfold his hidden purpose for evil.

Paul tells us that this evil purpose is already unfolding on earth. Nowadays, we see its influence in educational institutions and the entertainment industry. An ungodly philosophy and

way of life is influencing our government. Satan has been very active behind the scenes, controlling the minds, thoughts and actions of everyone who will listen to his evil. This mystery of lawlessness is already at work in our world.

While ungodliness is at work in our world, it has not yet taken over. There are still those who belong to God standing up for the truth. Scripture does teach that this man of lawlessness will be given the power to make war on the saints:

(7) Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. And authority was given it over every tribe and people and language and nation – Revelation 13:7 ESV

Understand, however, that while God may allow the man of lawlessness to

have his way, those who perish in the Lord will be with Him forever, free from oppression and sin.

Paul tells the Thessalonians here that God will restrain the power of the lawless one until he is out of the way. In other words, his time is limited by God. He will have his day, but that day will end.

Verse 8

We understand from Scripture that the man of lawlessness, the antichrist or the beast, will be given the power to make war on the saints ([Revelation 13:7](#)). He will have a powerful impact on this world for evil, blaspheming the name of the Lord God ([Revelation 13:5,6](#)). The apostle reminds the Thessalonians, however, that the lawless one will be revealed and killed by the breath of Christ at his appearance. His evil reign will be

brought to an end when the Lord Jesus descends “from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God” ([1 Thessalonians 4:16](#)). Jesus will quickly bring an end to the reign of this man of lawlessness. That end will come swiftly and without any resistance. The breath of His mouth alone will end this dominion of evil.

Verse 9

Paul makes it clear that the lawless one who is to come is from Satan. He will do the will of Satan and be empowered by Satan to do many false signs and wonders. Satan can empower his servants to do many things. We need to be careful not to be deceived by these false signs and wonders. Our only defence in those days will be the truth of God’s Word and the presence of His

Spirit to empower and guide us into that truth.

Verse 10

Paul has told the Thessalonians that the man of lawlessness will derive his power and authority from Satan. He will deceive people through great signs and wonders. The apostle tells us that this antichrist will successfully mislead those who are perishing. The idea here is that he and his cunning will not fool believers. Note why the unbeliever is deceived, according to Paul — *"because they refuse to love the truth and so be saved."* Let me say two things about Paul's statement here.

First, we cannot be saved if we do not love the truth. Love for the truth implies opening our hearts to the gospel of Jesus Christ and receiving it. You cannot be saved from your sin if you reject the message of the gospel of

Jesus Christ. This truth is life-changing for all who receive it and respond to it.

Second, if we do not love the truth, we are open to the deception of the man of lawlessness. It is the Word of God that protects the believer from error. That Word guides them and keeps them from wandering into the path of the man of lawlessness.

Those who do not love the truth by accepting it and walking in it will be deceived by the man of lawlessness. This Word of truth will be our protection in these evil days.

Verse 11

The verse begins with the word “therefore,” implying that it is connected to the thought of the previous verse. In verse 10, Paul tells the Thessalonians that those who did not love the truth would be deceived by the man of lawlessness and his evil

ways. Because these individuals did not love the truth, God sends them a strong delusion so that they believe what is false. Let's consider this for a moment.

The individuals Paul speaks about here are those who have heard the truth but rejected it. We have met all kinds of people like this. Some of these individuals have hardened their hearts to the gospel of Jesus Christ and want nothing to do with it. We believe in a lie when we harden our hearts to the truth. This is what is happening here. The Lord withdraws His presence and allows those who reject the truth to believe their lie. Without His restraining presence, there is no end to the rebellion and falsehood. Evil and sensuality abound. People are given over to the lusts of their flesh and mind. Whole societies are devastated because they have rejected the principles of God's Word and have been

given over to the lusts of their flesh and mind.

Verse 12

Paul has been telling the Thessalonians that when individuals do not love and respond to the truth, they are given over to the deception of the evil one. This is a choice they make. By rejecting the truth, they choose a lie. When we choose to live in the lies and deception of the evil one, we find ourselves on a path that leads to condemnation. Those who choose to follow the pleasures of unrighteousness will one day answer to God.

Verse 13

Paul reminds himself that he had every reason to thank the Lord for the Thessalonian believers. He lists two reasons for this thankfulness here.

First, the Thessalonians were “brothers beloved by the Lord.” The Lord God Himself had taken note of them and loved them. How could Paul not love them as well?

Second, God chose them to be the first fruits of His salvation. The first fruits were the first crops of the harvest devoted to the Lord. Paul is saying that these Thessalonians were the first to be saved in that region. They were the Lord’s and a sign of a greater harvest to come.

Notice what Paul has to say about the salvation of the Thessalonians. They were saved through the sanctification of the Spirit and belief in the truth.

First, the Thessalonians had been saved by the sanctification of the Spirit. Sanctification is the process of being set apart for God. It is not something we can do ourselves but a work of God’s Spirit, who comes to dwell in us,

planting His life in us and transforming us into the image of Jesus Christ. This is very different from trying to live a good or religious life. Note how Paul tells the believers here that this sanctification is “of the Spirit.” The Holy Spirit of God does this work of sanctification. According to Paul, God chose to work in the lives of the Thessalonians, setting them apart for Christ, giving them new life, and transforming them into the image of their Saviour. This was not something they did for themselves but a work “of the Spirit.” Salvation is not a decision so much as it is a new life. It is not a lifestyle so much as it is the transforming work of God’s Spirit.

Second, the Thessalonians had been saved by belief in the truth. The word πίστις (pístis) here speaks of a conviction or being persuaded. The idea is that the Thessalonians had been convinced of the reality of the gospel.

They believed what they heard and accepted it as the truth of God. They acknowledged that they were sinners in need of a Saviour. They were convinced that Jesus Christ, as the Son of God, died in their place to procure their forgiveness. They trusted His work as their only hope of salvation and forgiveness and surrendered to Him as their Lord and Saviour

Verse 14

Paul begins the verse with the word, "To this he called you." This takes us back to what he told the Thessalonians in verse 13 about being chosen as the first fruits by God through the sanctification of the Spirit. The Thessalonians were called and set apart by God through the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ. God has a purpose in mind for this calling on the Thessalonians. According to Paul, it was

done so they could obtain the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. What is this glory Paul speaks about?

First, this glory relates to the transformation in their lives through the gospel's message. They were forgiven and given a new life to the glory of God.

Second, the glory they obtained related to the result of this new life and forgiveness. They would inherit a place in heaven in the presence of the Lord God. They would walk in His glory forever.

Finally, the glory they obtained was the person of Christ, who is the expression of the glory of God. Jesus would come to live in their lives. The very presence of Jesus Christ, the glory of God, would shine through them as His people.

Verse 15

An obligation is placed on all who are called and sanctified through the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul tells the Thessalonians that they were now to hold firm to the traditions. The word used for traditions is παράδοσις (parádosis), which speaks of a teaching that is passed on from one person to another. That teaching may refer to a way of life or a set of beliefs or doctrines.

Note where these traditions came from here. They were taught by the apostles either in person or through their letters. We have this tradition today in the New Testament writings. Paul encouraged the Thessalonians to walk faithfully in the truth of the Word of God as those called and sanctified by the Spirit. As believers today, we must be people of the Word. We must stand firmly on that truth; it is our authority and guide. This is our obligation as those who have

been saved and sanctified by Jesus Christ.

Verse 16

Paul offers a prayer for the Thessalonians here in verses 16 and 17. Note what he tells them about the Lord Jesus and God the Father.

First, Jesus is Lord and Christ. As Lord, we are His servants, and He is ruler over all. As Christ, He is the anointed one, chosen to be our Saviour.

Second, God is "our Father." This means that we come from Him, and as our Father, we have a special relationship with Him. He protects and guides us as a Father and cares for us as His children.

Note what Paul tells us about the Lord Jesus Christ and God our Father here.

First, they love us. That love is demonstrated in the death of Jesus

Christ for our sins. It is shown in the Father's ongoing care, provision and blessing in our lives and how He chose us to be His children, offering the life of His very own Son for our redemption.

Second, they gave us eternal comfort. The word παράκλησις paráklēsis here speaks of encouragement and strength. Note that this is an eternal comfort that nothing can take from us.

This great comfort is connected with our hope. The word used here is ἐλπίς (elpís) and speaks of the great expectation we now have because of the Lord Jesus. Because of Jesus Christ, our pardon and salvation is secure. We have an assurance of eternal life and blessedness in the presence of our Saviour.

Finally, note the reason for this love, comfort, and hope. It is through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and God our Father. There is no other reason for

this. We have obtained these blessings not because we deserve them but because God showers unmerited favour and blessings upon His people.

Verse 17

Paul's prayer for the Thessalonians is twofold.

First, Paul desires that the Lord Jesus Christ and God our Father comfort the Thessalonian hearts. Remember here that these believers were suffering for the gospel. Listen to what Paul wrote to them in [1 Thessalonians 3](#):

(2) and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's coworker in the gospel of Christ, to establish and exhort you in your faith, (3) that no one be moved by these afflictions. For you yourselves know that we are destined for this. (4) For when we were with you, we kept telling

you beforehand that we were to suffer affliction, just as it has come to pass, and just as you know. (5) For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent to learn about your faith, for fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you and our labour would be in vain. – 1 Thessalonians 3:2-5 ESV

Knowing their affliction, the apostle prays for their comfort. The word translated comfort here is παρακαλέω (parakalēō). It is derived from the word παρά, meaning to the side of and καλέō, which means to call. The idea is to call someone to one's side. Paul's prayer is that the Lord God would come to their side, stand with them and strengthen them through their affliction.

Second, Paul prayed that God would establish them in every good work and word. The word στηρίζω (stērizō)

means to stand firmly. Paul asked God to help these Thessalonians stand firmly in good words and works. In other words, they would hold firmly to the truth and live a life demonstrating that they belonged to God and were in tune with Him and His purpose.

2

THESSALONIANS

3

Verse 1

After praying for the Thessalonians, Paul asks them to pray for him and his co-workers. Note what Paul asks them to pray.

The apostle wanted prayers that the word of the Lord would speed ahead. The word Paul uses here is τρέχω (tréchō). It means to run. Imagine an athlete running in a competition. If he is to win the race, there must be no hindrance. This is what Paul is asking

the Thessalonians to pray. They were to ask God to remove all hindrances to the spread of the Word through the apostles so that it would have its full effect in the lives of those who heard it.

Paul also asks the Thessalonians to pray that as the Word of God spread without hindrance, it would be honoured as it was in their midst. When Paul spoke the word in Thessalonica, it took root in the lives of many individuals and a church was established as a result. That church became an example to the believers in both Macedonia and Achaia (see [1 Thessalonians 1:7](#)).

Verse 2

Paul's second prayer request is that they be delivered from wicked and evil men. When Paul went to Thessalonica, his message angered the Jews who

stirred up a mob against him. Note the words of [Acts 17:5](#):

(5) But the Jews were jealous, and taking some wicked men of the rabble, they formed a mob, set the city in an uproar, and attacked the house of Jason, seeking to bring them out to the crowd. – Acts 17:5 ESV

Note particularly how Luke speaks here about “*some wicked men*.” The wicked men of Thessalonica joined the mob, set the city of Thessalonica in an uproar and dragged “the brothers” before the city authorities (see [Acts 17:6](#)). They opposed the apostle’s preaching and actively resisted the gospel and its proclamation. According to Paul, these men did not have faith but resisted the truth of God’s Word.

Paul knew there would be opposition to his message and asked the

Thessalonians to pray that God would protect him from the evil intentions of those who resisted the gospel.

Verse 3

The apostle Paul had confidence in the faithfulness of God to keep the Thessalonians in their battle against the evil one. Behind the opposition to the gospel is the work of the evil one, Satan. He opposes the truth and will do everything he can to destroy the work God is doing through the proclamation of that truth. The apostle reminded the Thessalonians, however, that despite the opposition of the evil one, God would do two things for them as believers.

First, He would establish them. The word used here is στηρίζω (stērízō), which means to stand firmly. God would enable the Thessalonians to stand firmly and hold their ground.

They would be given the grace to hold onto what they had been taught and the faith they had received. Note here that the strength to do this was not in them but in God. That strength would be imparted in their hour of need.

Second, God would not only establish the Thessalonians but also guard them against the evil one. The word φυλάσσω (phulássō) means to watch over. The Lord God would take it upon Himself to care for and protect His people. Anyone who sought to hurt them would have to first go through Him. The apostle had great confidence in the Lord to keep those who belonged to Him.

Verse 4

Paul has confidence “in the Lord” about the Thessalonians. Note that the apostle’s confidence is not in the Thessalonians but in the Lord. It was

the Lord who would keep them from falling.

Paul was assured that in the strength of the Lord, the Thessalonians would do what he had commanded them. In other words, they would be faithful to the truth he had taught them about Christ and His purpose for them as believers.

The strength to live the Christian life is not in our efforts but in God and His Spirit, who lives in us. The surest way to fall is to place our confidence in ourselves, not “in the Lord.”

Verse 5

Paul’s prayer is that the Lord God would direct the hearts of the Thessalonian believers to two vital truths.

First, that God would direct their hearts into the love of God. It was Paul’s prayer that the Thessalonians saw the

love of God in a fresh way. He wanted them to understand the depth of love that reached them through Jesus Christ. He wanted them to bathe in that reality of a love that would be showered down on them from the Father in heaven and His Son who died on the cross for their pardon. A deep understanding of this love will keep us faithful in our hour of need.

Second, Paul prayed that the Lord God would direct the Thessalonian's hearts toward the steadfastness of Christ. What is the steadfastness of Christ? Consider what the writer to the Hebrews tells us about Jesus in [Hebrews 12](#):

(2) looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right

*hand of the throne of God. –
Hebrews 12:2 ESV*

[Hebrews 12:2](#) challenges the believer to look to Jesus who endured the cross, and despised the shame. In other words, He set His mind steadfastly to face the cross and the horrible shame it brought for you and me. He took our sins and paid our penalty, but He was innocent. This immense grace of Jesus Christ that fixed His decision to lay down His life is what Paul prayed the Thessalonians would understand and imitate in their lives.

Verse 6

Paul brings a specific challenge to the church of Thessalonica here. He challenges them to keep away from any brother walking in idleness. The Greek word used here is ἀτάκτως (atáktōs) and speaks of disorderliness. Paul

defines this “idleness” in the verse as not walking “in accord with the traditions that you received from us.”

The idleness Paul speaks about here is a lack of concern for the principles of godliness. The Christian life is a life of discipline and effort. To live the life God requires, we must be willing to sacrifice our time and resources. According to Paul, anyone unwilling to put in this effort in their walk with God is considered idle. He believed that brothers or sisters reluctant to put in the time and effort required to live a godly life were a bad influence on the church. The Thessalonians were to surround themselves with brothers and sisters committed to walking as Jesus walked and willing to make any sacrifice necessary to be like their Saviour.

Verse 7

Paul encouraged the Thessalonians to follow his example. When he was with them, the apostle was not idle, but he demonstrated in his life, words, and deeds what it meant to be a true servant of Christ.

Verse 8

Paul demonstrated an aspect of what it meant not to be idle by not taking advantage of the brothers or sisters in Thessalonica. He worked on the side to make money to pay for his food and chose not to be a financial burden to anyone in the church.

Understand here that Paul believed the labourer was worthy of his wages. Paul, however, was willing to preach the gospel free of charge to the Thessalonians. He did not want to be a financial burden to them. By choosing to work to earn his living, the apostle showed the Thessalonians how they

should work hard to provide for their families. He demonstrated this by his example.

Verse 9

Paul chose to get a secular job to earn a living. He did this as an example for the Thessalonian church. He knew he had a right to obtain a wage for his work as an apostle and preacher of the gospel but chose to forego this privilege to show the Thessalonians that believers could work in secular professions and still be godly. He showed them how the believer could earn a wage doing worldly things and use it for godly purposes. In doing so, Paul showed the Thessalonians what it meant to live as a believer in a secular world and that it was acceptable for a believer to work in a secular profession.

Verse 10

Paul believed every believer needed to be responsible and provide for their family. He felt so strongly about this that he taught the Thessalonians that if someone was unwilling to work, they should not eat.

The idea conveyed here is that we care for our needs instead of depending on others. As believers, we must be productive members of society, working hard to pay our bills and provide for our family needs. We should not depend on others to care for us if we can fully care for ourselves.

This principle of not being a burden on society was important to Paul. He seems to believe it was part of the Christian witness in a community that believers bought benefits and were not a burden on the economy. A lazy and irresponsible believer was not a good witness in the community.

Verse 11

Paul gets down to specifics here. He heard that some people in the church of Thessalonica were walking in idleness. He defines this as “not busy at work, but busybodies.”

We become open to temptation when we do not occupy our time with productive deeds. In this case, it meant that those who were not productive members of the Thessalonian society became busybodies. The word used here is περιεργάζομαι (*periergázomai*). It comes from the word *perí* meaning around or about, and *ergázomai*, meaning to work. Together, they have the sense of working around but never really committed to anything. These individuals could not stick with anything, and wasted their time on meaningless activities, ultimately

making them depend on others to provide for their lack.

Verse 12

Paul speaks directly to those who were idle. He commands and encourages them in the Lord Jesus to work quietly and earn their living.

Note here that the command and encouragement is in the Lord Jesus. Paul believed that it was the will of the Lord Jesus that every believer should be occupied with productive deeds. The Lord's purpose was that believers earn their own living by using the strength and wisdom He had given them.

According to Paul, every believer should do their work quietly. The opposite of quietness is disturbance and noise. The person who works quietly does not bring disturbance and disorder to the workplace. They work well with others and do not create confusion and chaos.

They function well as part of the team and contribute quietly to the business's productivity. They are good and reliable workers who create harmony in the workplace.

Finally, Paul tells the Thessalonians they were responsible before God to earn their living. The implication is that every believer is to work to provide for their needs and those of the family. We are to demonstrate by our lifestyle and work what it means to be responsible members of the society in which we live.

Verse 13

Paul has been encouraging the Thessalonians to work quietly and be responsible and productive members of society. He encourages them here not to grow weary of doing good. Now, the fact is that we can become tired and overwhelmed in the ministry and the

good work we do. The word Paul uses here, however, is ἐκκακέω (ekkakéō). It carries the sense of losing courage, especially in difficulty, to the point where we become unreliable in our duty or give up. While fatigue is the natural result of hard work, Paul tells the Thessalonians they were not to lose heart and give up. Instead, they were to get back on their feet and persevere in doing good.

Verse 14

Paul felt so strongly about working hard and not being idle that he told the Thessalonians that if they noted anyone who was not walking in obedience to his teaching in his letter on this matter, they were to separate themselves from that person. The reason for this separation was likely two-fold.

First, separation would prevent a person's idleness and slackness in faith

from spreading to other people in the church. The separation showed the church that they had an obligation to serve the Lord and that slackness was not the fruit of godly living.

Second, Paul tells us that by separating from such individuals, the church reminded the person of their shameful ways. According to Paul, it was disgraceful not to be a responsible and productive member of society. It was not godly to be slack in spiritual matters. Those who truly loved the Lord demonstrated this through diligence, faithfulness, and hard work. Those slack in their spiritual duties, responsibilities and witness were to be reprimanded. Their lives did not reflect that they belonged to the Lord or were serious about their relationship with Him.

Verse 15

Paul accepted those idle in their faith as brothers and sisters in Christ. He challenged the Thessalonians to be careful not to judge a person's salvation by how hard they worked or how serious they were about their spiritual duties. Paul knew that not all believers were at the same place spiritually. Some believers do not seem to take initiative in their spiritual walk. They seem to stagnate in their growth. This does not mean that they are not brothers and sisters in Christ.

Note here that Paul challenged the Thessalonians to warn those who were idle. It is not normal for a Christian not to serve the Lord. It is not acceptable for a Christian to not grow in their faith and spiritual walk. If you find yourself in the same place you were years ago, you must seek the Lord and ask Him to give you the grace to step out more boldly in faith. God's purpose is that all believers be useful and profitable

members of the body and their society. It is the heart of God that every believer grows increasingly into the image of His Son. He desires that we tap into the power of our salvation and be fruitful. We are to challenge believers who are not living in this reality.

Verse 16

Paul concludes his letter with a benediction. His prayer is that the Lord of Peace give them peace at all times and in every way.

Note here that the Lord Jesus is the Lord of peace. He came to bring peace with God and our brothers and sisters. He did this at the cost of His life.

Observe that this peace can be ours at all times. When things are not going right, we can still know this peace. When trials abound, His peace is still available to us.

See also that Paul's prayer was that the peace of God be with the Thessalonians in "every way." The word he uses here is τρόπος (trópos), which means to turn or a turn in direction. In other words, the peace of the Lord is available to us in any path or direction we find life takes us. Sometimes, those changes of direction are forced upon us by the death of a loved one or a change in circumstances. We can know the peace of God at every turn in the road.

Finally, it was Paul's prayer that the Lord be with each of the Thessalonians and that they would know his strength, support and fellowship in whatever path their life took.

Verse 17

The apostle tells the Thessalonians here that he had written the greeting of the letter with his own hand. He did this for a very particular reason. He

wanted the Thessalonians to know that the letter was genuinely from him.

Paul was aware that people were writing letters in his name. Those letters contained false teaching. He spoke about this in [2 Thessalonians 2](#) when he wrote:

(1) Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers, (2) not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. – 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2 ESV

Paul handwriting in the letter was confirmation that it was genuinely from him.

It is interesting to note how the enemy seeks to infiltrate into the church and the creative ways he seeks to do so. In

this case, it was through letters written to believers in Paul's name. As a church we need to be aware of the ways the enemy is seeking to deceive our members.

Verse 18

The apostle concludes with a prayer that the grace or unmerited favour of the Lord Jesus Christ would be with them all. Everything we receive from God is by grace. We do not deserve that He should care for us, but He is a God of grace and favour. This is our great confidence and hope in the gospel.

INTRODUCTION TO 1 TIMOTHY

The epistle of 1 Timothy was written to Timothy, a close coworker of the apostle Paul. Paul had urged him to remain in Ephesus to correct some practical matters in the church and address false doctrines circulating in the region (1 Timothy 1:3-4).

In the letter, the apostle encourages Timothy to be faithful in teaching and living out the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ (1 Timothy 1:18-19). He charged him to teach men not to get caught up in "irreverent babble (1

Timothy 6:20),” “teachings of demons (1 Timothy 4:1),” and “silly myths (1 Timothy 4:7).” He instructs him to warn women about falling prey to worldly standard (1 Timothy 2:9-10), and to teach them the importance of living in submission to the authorities in their lives (1 Timothy 2:11-15).

Paul instructs Timothy also on the qualifications for elders (1 Timothy 3:1-7), and deacons (1 Timothy 3:8-13). He challenges him to organize the ministry of the church toward widows (1 Timothy 5:1-15), and teaches him about the proper relationship between believing slaves and masters (1 Timothy 6:1-2).

There were a number of wealthy believers in the city of Ephesus. Paul advises Timothy on how to encourage them in a life of godliness and generosity (1 Timothy 6:17-19).

The letter has a number of practical things to teach us about the

importance of defending the truth,
walking in the truth and the role of the
church in society.

1 TIMOTHY 1

Verse 1

As he begins his letter, Paul lays out his qualifications. He was an apostle of Christ Jesus. Note that this was not a personal choice he made. It was a command of God.

God chose Paul for this role. It was His purpose that Paul be His apostle. This is important as it shows us where Paul's authority lay. God gave him this responsibility, and with it came the authority to carry out his responsibility. This would not have been the case if he had chosen this role for himself.

Note how Paul calls God his Saviour. The phrase "God our Saviour" shows us

the connection between the Father and the Son in our salvation. Salvation is not only the work of Jesus Christ but also the work of the Father. They are one in this great work.

The apostle also describes Christ Jesus as our hope. While the Father was very much involved in our salvation, the work of Jesus Christ on the cross gives us hope. The word hope used here is ἐλπίς (elpís). It speaks of an expectation. We often use the word hope with a certain measure of doubt, but this is not the case here. The word hope used here conveys assurance and certainty. We can be confident of our salvation and eternal life because of the purpose of God the Father, made possible by God the Son and applied to our lives by God the Spirit.

Verse 2

The letter is addressed to Timothy. The apostle met Timothy in the region of Lystra (see [Acts 16:1-3](#)). He had a good reputation in the community, and Paul decided to have him join him on his missionary journey. Over the years, the relationship between the two grew, and Paul considered Timothy a son.

Note how Paul calls Timothy his “true child in the faith.” Timothy was certainly a brother in that they both knew and loved the Lord Jesus, but in this case, Paul had invested so much into Timothy that he saw him as his child in the faith. Paul nurtured Timothy’s spiritual growth. Mentored by the apostle, Timothy saw Paul as a spiritual father.

Paul’s prayer for Timothy was that the grace, mercy and peace of God the Father and Jesus the Lord be his portion. Grace (χάρις, *cháris*) refers to the unmerited favour of God. Mercy (ἔλεος, *éleos*) speaks of His compassion and kindness in our misery and pain.

Peace (εἰρήνη, eirēnē) refers to the blessing of God for our emotional and physical well-being.

Verse 3

We discover here that Paul sent Timothy to the church in Ephesus to encourage them in their faith. In particular, Paul was concerned about false teaching in this region and asked Timothy to remain there to instruct the Ephesian church in the truth of the gospel.

The verse notes that Timothy's role was to "*charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine.*" The sense here is that there was false teaching already in the church. Timothy's role was to stand against these false teachers, expose their errors and reveal the truth. The verse shows us Paul's confidence in Timothy to defend the

faith and stand up against false teachers in Ephesus.

Verse 4

Not only was Timothy to stand up against false doctrines in Ephesus, but Paul also charged him to speak out against two other matters evident in the church of Ephesus.

First, there was the matter of myths. The word used here is μῦθος (múthos) and refers to tales, fables or other fabricated stories or ideas that are not based on verifiable truth. One of the great truths I learned in Bible School was that I also needed to be silent when the Bible was silent about an issue. In other words, I can imagine what the truth might be, but I have no authoritative proof for what I imagine. I can give people false hope through my imaginary concepts. We must be content with the truth revealed in

Scripture and accept that we do not have answers for what is not shown by those Scriptures. I have seen concepts without Scriptural support accepted as truth by believers. We must be cautious about lifting our human reason and imagination to the level of Scripture.

The second matter Paul wanted Timothy to address was “endless genealogies.” The word genealogy here is γενεαλογία (genealogía). The word genealogy refers to the names of people and ancestors and their history, culture, and traditions. The AMB Complete Word Study Dictionary says this about these genealogies:

The expression in 1Ti 1:4 denotes busying oneself with traditions of the past based upon the slightest historical hints which diverted the heart from God’s truth. This, as it appears from Tit 1:10, was a practice of Jewish false teachers

though this is not implied in the expression itself (see also Tit 3:9). These Jews were turning the entire historical substance into mere myth. The genealogies were not treated primarily as historical documents but instead were subjected to a highly symbolic interpretive scheme. Names, dates and places supposedly contained hidden meanings which became the basis for esoteric doctrines. - (AMG Complete Word Study Dictionary, New Testament, General Editor: Spiros Zodhiates, Th.D., Managing Editor: Warren Baker, D.R.E., Associate Editor: Rev. George Hadjiantoniou, Ph.D., L A R I D I A N, Cedar Rapids, Iowa)

What seems to be clear here is that the study of history and past generations, while important, is not a reliable and authoritative guide for our spiritual lives and cannot replace Scripture. I have

met believers who are more concerned about the teachings of historical figures than they are about Scripture. I have met people who are more concerned about their denominational heritage than they are about the truth taught in Scripture.

These myths and genealogical debates over matters not revealed in Scripture promote speculations. At best, these speculations are human ideas that cannot be proven or verified. Paul instead encourages a godly stewardship that is by faith.

The word stewardship is οἰκονομία (oikonomía) and refers to the responsible management of a home. What happens when we get wrapped up in myths, genealogies, and speculations? This creates divisions in the church. Instead, Paul called Timothy to address these divisive issues and bring the church back to the basics

of their faith, as revealed by the clear teaching of Scripture.

Verse 5

Paul has urged Timothy to deal with false teachers and those caught up with myths and genealogies. Notice here why this was important to the apostle. Paul's desire for the church in Ephesus, where Timothy was ministering, was for it to flourish in love from a pure heart, good conscience, and sincere faith.

Consider what Paul is saying here. The great desire of Paul was that the church abound in love. The word ἀγάπη (agápē) used here is a love best demonstrated by a holy God toward a sinful creation. It is a love that moved Him to send His Son to die for the forgiveness of our sins. Agape love is a sacrificial love showered upon those who do not deserve it. It is a love demonstrated in action.

Paul wanted the church of Ephesus to be a church that loved God, its brothers and sisters and its community with a sacrificial love. Listen to the command of the Lord Jesus in the Gospel of John:

(34) A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. (35) By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” – John 13:34-35 ESV

Love for one another is a testimony to the power and presence of God among us. When you see a church caught up in and divided over what Paul calls myths, speculations and genealogical arguments about traditions and practices, you know it is on the wrong track. Such a church must be corrected and returned to the basic principles of

learning to love and accept each other as Jesus commanded.

Note that Paul wanted this love to be from a pure heart. That is to say, a heart untainted with ulterior motivations of sinful passions.

The church was also to love with a good conscience. The conscience is the part of us that distinguishes right from wrong. Paul's desire here is that the Ephesian church have a conscience that is right before God and that its love for one another be from a clean and pure conscience before Him in its dealings with each other.

Finally, the love demonstrated toward each other was to be from a sincere faith. That is to say, the love they showed toward each other was the fruit of the Spirit of God working in them. It was a love not motivated by personal gain or human effort but by the inner work of the Spirit motivating and

stimulating them to walk and live as Jesus Christ.

Verse 6

The apostle reminds Timothy that certain people in the church had lost sight of the great commandment of Jesus Christ (see [Matthew 22:36-40](#)). Instead of making it their priority to love God with all their heart, soul and mind and their neighbour as themselves, they were getting caught up in “vain discussions.” These vain discussions did not promote love for God and their brothers and sisters. Instead they divided believers with speculations, obligations and practices. Notice the phrase, “wandered away into vain discussion.” According to Paul these believers had “wandered away.” They had been distracted from the goal of loving one another. They had wandered off the path God had set for

them in His Word. They lost sight of the “aim of love” (verse 5) and were getting caught up in divisiveness.

I have been in churches divided over doctrinal issues and practices. I have also seen how these churches can have little tolerance for any brother or sister who does not agree with them. I have seen believers turn against each other over secondary issues. This is not the purpose of God. Paul reminded Timothy that his aim in sending him to the church in Ephesus was to teach the church to love from a pure heart, good conscience and sincere faith (see verse 5). In order for that to take place, those who were divisive needed to be corrected.

Verse 7

Those engaged in “vain discussions” (see verse 6) wanted to be teachers of

the law. Note several details about these individuals here.

First, they “desired to be teachers.” The implication here is that they loved to be in such a position. They loved the authority and recognition that came from being a teacher in the church. To want to be a teacher and to be called by God to that role are two different matters. These individuals took this role on themselves.

Second, though these individuals wanted to be teachers, they were “without understanding.” True understanding comes from the Spirit of God. He must lead and guide us into the truth. You can teach doctrines and ideas but miss the whole point of Scripture. Even an unbeliever can teach the historical and doctrinal details of Scripture but never experience the salvation and infilling of God’s Spirit or His fruit in their lives. Such were these individuals. They taught facts and

figures but never experienced the life of Christ in its power and fullness.

Finally, these individuals taught with “confident assertions.” That is to say, they appeared to be certain in what they taught. They were very convincing in their instruction. In the New Testament, some people taught that New Testament believers were to follow the Jewish Laws and celebrations. They taught with great assurance but led many astray into Judaism and away from the work of Jesus Christ on the cross.

Verse 8

It appears that one of the things being taught by those who desired to be teachers in Ephesus was the Jewish law. The role of the Jewish law in the Christian life was often debated in those days. Some believed the Christian was obligated to follow the law in its

entirety. Others felt that believers in Jesus Christ were free from the law. Note Paul's opinion: "*The law is good if one uses it lawfully.*" In other words, the law was held to a higher standard, to which it needed to submit. What was that standard? Paul gives us the answer in verse 11 when he tells us that the law needs to be submitted to "the gospel of the glory of the blessed God." Where the law agreed with the Gospel and did not compromise its truth and purpose, it was good. For the believer, the work of Jesus Christ was the measure upon which all other practices were to be gaged. Where the law diminished the gospel's truth, it was to be shunned. When it elevated its truth, it was good. The law was held in subjection to the truth of the gospel of Jesus crucified and risen for our 0.

Verse 9

The apostle Paul continues to share his view on the Jewish Law. He has just told us it was good if used lawfully in verse 8. He goes on now to give a second point.

According to Paul, the law is not for the just but for the lawless and disobedient. The word just is translated from δίκαιος (díkaios), which refers to a righteous person. Who is righteous? Paul makes it quite clear that righteousness is not the fruit of obedience to the law but a new life through the work of Jesus Christ.

*(21) But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—
(22) the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: – Romans 3:21-22 ESV*

True righteousness is a right standing with God through the forgiveness offered by the cross of Jesus Christ. This righteousness is not a result of our obedience to the law of God but rather a consequence of our forgiveness through Jesus Christ and His work.

Paul goes on in [Romans 10](#) to tell us that Christ brings an end to the law for those who believe and have obtained a right standing through his pardon:

(4) For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. – Romans 10:4 ESV

Our hope as believers is not based on how well we can live our lives or how much we obey the Jewish law. It is solely on the pardon we have received through the cross of Jesus Christ.

Note, however, that not only do we receive pardon through Jesus Christ when we come to Him, but also those

who know that Lord and have received new life have been changed. Speaking of the Gentiles who had come to Jesus Christ, Paul says:

(14) For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature, do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. (15) They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them – Romans 2:14-15 ESV

These Gentile converts “do by nature what the law requires,” said Paul. They do this because they have received a new nature through the salvation of Jesus Christ. The prophet Jeremiah prophesied of this day when he wrote:

(33) For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. – Jeremiah 31:33 ESV

According to Jeremiah, God would put His law in the hearts of His people. They would not need an external law to guide them. The Spirit of God would be their guide. He would convict them of sin and direct them to the purpose of God. Jesus made this clear when he said:

*(7) Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.
(8) And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin*

*and righteousness and judgment:
(9) concerning sin, because they do
not believe in me; (10) concerning
righteousness, because I go to the
Father, and you will see me no
longer; (11) concerning judgment,
because the ruler of this world is
judged. – John 16:7-11 ESV*

Those in whom the Holy Spirit dwells are convicted of sin. He is our guide and counsellor. He leads us into the purpose of God and transforms our hearts into the image of Christ. The righteous person has been forgiven by Christ and indwelt by His Spirit. These individuals do not require an external law to direct them, for they have the very Spirit of God in them to direct them to truth.

Understand here that this does not mean that we do not benefit from reading the law. Scriptures reveal the purpose of God to us, but we have the

benefit as believers of the law also being written on our hearts and the conviction of the Spirit who is transforming us into the image of Jesus Christ.

Paul's understanding of the Jewish law is that it was primarily written for the lawless, disobedient, unholy and profane person. These individuals did not have any sense of God or His purpose. They needed the law written down on paper because what was natural to them was contrary to the purpose of God. Their hearts and minds rebelled against God and His plan. Their conscience was twisted and affected by sin.

Paul describes here the natural tendency of the unrighteous person. These are people who would strike their fathers and mothers or murder anyone who got in their way. When angered, there was no telling where these individuals would go. If they gave

way to their anger, they would willingly strike even a parent or murder another human being to get their way. The law was written to restrain or punish those who gave full freedom to their evil nature.

Verse 10

Paul continues to describe the heart of the unbeliever without Christ and His Spirit's inner work. These individuals practice sexual immorality, whether that be with individuals of the opposite sex or the same sex.

Among these individuals are enslavers. The word translated enslavers in the English Standard Version is ἀνδραποδιστής (andrapodistēs), which means to enslave, kidnap or sell into slavery. Those who do this have no respect for human life and take advantage of another for profit or personal gain.

The apostle also lists liars and perjurers among those who do not know the transforming work of Christ. These individuals devalue the truth and will say whatever is to their benefit, even if false. Their word cannot be trusted.

All of these things, according to Paul, are contrary to sound doctrine. The word doctrine here is διδασκαλία (didaskalía), which refers to teaching and instruction. In other words, the lives of these individuals do not conform to the sound teaching of Scripture or the purpose of God. They need that law written out to show them the truth, for that truth is not something that they have ever fully understood or accepted.

Verse 11

The sound doctrine Paul speaks about in verse 10 is “the gospel of the glory of the blessed God.” What is the

message of that gospel? It is that we are sinners in need of a Saviour. The Lord Jesus Christ came as a sacrificial lamb to take our sins on Himself and died for our pardon. Through the work of Jesus Christ, we can know forgiveness and the indwelling presence of His Spirit, who can transform our lives. We can have victory over sin and hope for eternal life through His pardon and sanctifying work. This was the message entrusted to Paul and the message he preached wherever he went. His goal was to instruct believers to live "in accordance with this gospel."

Verse 12

Paul was passionate about communicating the truth of the gospel, which he spoke about in verse 11. He thanks God here for the strength He had given him to preach this message wherever he went. He recognized that

the strength to do this was not in himself alone. He knew the wind of the Spirit in his sail, pushing and enabling Him into this ministry. He thanked God for the ability and strength he experienced to do what he had been called to do. God gives us the strength to accomplish what He has called us to do.

Notice second here that Paul was also thankful that the Lord Jesus had judged him faithful. Understand that Paul was a former persecutor of the church. He never forgot how he had watched Christians being stoned to death for preaching Christ. Before he came to Christ, he had rounded up Christians and had them imprisoned for their belief in Jesus as the Messiah. He did not take for granted the fact that this same Jesus, whom he had persecuted, now entrusted him with the message of the gospel by appointing him to His service. In his mind, this was an

undeserved privilege, and he took it very seriously.

Verse 13

Paul humbly reminds Timothy here of his past blasphemy and persecution of the church. As a spiritual father, Paul shared his failures with his spiritual son. He confessed he was an “insolent opponent” to the gospel but had received mercy from Jesus Christ, His Saviour. He does not pretend that he was anything more than a forgiven sinner, pardoned by the grace of God.

Note here that Paul received pardon because he acted in unbelief. Unbelief is a sin for which there is forgiveness. Paul did not believe in Jesus as the Messiah at that point. He persecuted the church because he thought that Jesus could not possibly be the Messiah. However, when he met the Lord Jesus on the road to Damascus,

he came to see the error of his ways. He confessed his sin and was pardoned by the grace of Jesus Christ. If you don't believe today, that same pardon is available if you open your eyes to what His Spirit reveals.

Verse 14

Paul testifies here that the grace of God overflowed for him. Remember that grace is an undeserved favour. Paul was aware of the fact that as a blasphemer and persecutor of the church, he did not deserve this favour of God in his life. God, however, demonstrated His kindness in two ways.

First, He gave Paul faith. That faith opened his eyes to the truth he had not understood previously. It revealed Jesus to Him and transformed his life, giving him forgiveness of sin and a hope of eternal life.

Second, God's grace also revealed Christ's love for Him. The Christ that he persecuted had died for him to secure his pardon. This Christ was willing to forgive and call him into his service. Jesus became Paul's passion and greatest delight.

The grace of God in Jesus Christ transformed Paul. He was never the same after coming to faith and experiencing the love of Christ for Him.

Verse 15

The apostle seems to refer here to a saying that is not directly found in Scripture but is in complete agreement with its teaching. We don't know its source, but Paul affirms it as trustworthy.

The saying declared that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. He was born for this purpose, and His death accomplished that plan.

Note here that Paul goes on to say that he was the foremost of sinners. He speaks in the present tense here. He still saw himself as a sinner. He never forgot his past and what he did against the church of Jesus Christ. He knew that he would likely fall short of God's standard in the future. While Paul saw himself as a sinner, this must be taken in the context of the entire verse. Jesus came into the world to save great sinners like Paul. The apostle still identified as a sinner but also knew that none of the sins he committed in the past, present or future would keep him from eternal life. The pardon of Christ covered them all.

Verse 16

The apostle shares with Timothy how he received the mercy of Christ through the forgiveness of his great sins against the church. Note how Paul declared

that God had a purpose in saving him as the greatest sinner and persecutor of Christians.

God saved Paul as the foremost sinner and persecutor of the church to demonstrate His patience. God used Paul as an example of grace and lovingkindness. If God could save a vile sinner such as Paul, then He could save anyone who believed in His Son and accepted His work on their behalf. Eternal life was possible for even the vilest offender. God used Paul's violent past to accomplish good.

Verse 17

As he reflects on the grace and lovingkindness of God toward him, the apostle breaks out in praise. Notice what he tells us here.

First, God was the "King of the ages." This is to say, He is an eternal king from age to age. His reign will never

end, nor will the expression of kindness and grace to those who love Him.

Second, God is immortal. He will always be God. Unlike earthly kings who weaken and die, our God will never grow weary, weak or die. He is life and sustains all life. Death has no power over Him.

Third, God is invisible. He cannot be seen with the human eye, but His existence is not questioned. Listen to the words of [John 1:18](#):

(18) No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, has made him known. – John 1:18 ESV

While we have seen Jesus in the flesh, and He is God, no one has seen the Father. Certainly, people have seen manifestations of His presence, but no one has ever been able to look at His face or see Him as He is.

Fourth, He is the only God. Other entities have been considered gods by many, but there is only one true God who created the universe and sent His Son to die for our sins. All other gods are the creation of humankind.

This God, King of the ages, immortal, invisible and only God, deserves all honour and glory forever. No other god was worthy of such praise and glory.

Verse 18

As he concludes the chapter, Paul speaks directly to Timothy. He reminds him that he had entrusted him with a charge when he sent him to Ephesus. Notice that this charge was in accordance with a prophetic word spoken to Timothy. We do not have that prophetic word, but Paul seems to refer to this again in [1 Timothy 4:14](#) when he said:

(14) Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you. – 1 Timothy 4:14 ESV

It appears that one or more of the elders had a prophetic word for Timothy from the Lord. Paul expected Timothy to take this word seriously and walk faithfully in it.

Paul recognized that walking faithfully following that prophetic word would not be easy. Timothy, however, was to wage a good warfare. He was to fight and persevere to the end without giving up. He was to push through the obstacles and move on to victory.

Verse 19

In verse 18 Paul challenged Timothy to wage a good warfare. He tells him how he was to do this here in verse 19.

First, he was to hold onto his faith. The word πίστις (pístis) used here refers to a conviction of the truth and a faithfulness to that truth. Timothy would wage a good warfare if he remained true to the Word of God and the truth that had been passed on to Him.

Second, Timothy was to hold onto a good conscience. The conscience is the part of us that distinguishes right from wrong. Not only was Timothy to hold fast to the truth, but he was also to live a life that honoured God and demonstrated the truth he believed in. He was to live with a good conscience before God and his fellow human beings.

Paul reminds Timothy that some people had made a shipwreck of their faith by rejecting these principles of holding fast to the truth and a good conscience. We must grasp what Paul is telling Timothy here.

While the truth never changes, we can impair our faith, testimony and fellowship with God in one of two ways.

First, by turning from the truth of the Word of God. I have met believers who struggled to accept certain principles in the Word of God. They cannot seem to accept the God of the Bible or understand His ways. This will always create a barrier between that believer and his God. God is who He is, and we must accept Him as He is. We cannot change Him or His purpose but must submit to His ways. Only in full surrender can we know true fellowship and blessing. Rejecting anything the Bible teaches us about Him or compromising what it tells us will only harm our faith.

Second, we will damage our faith and fellowship by not walking with a good conscience before God. Any disobedience or compromise in our walk with God may make our lives

easier but will always drive a wedge between us and our God. Only in full surrender to God and His purpose can we know true fellowship and victory. Any compromise in our daily walk will hinder our faith and fellowship with God.

Notice the word shipwreck here. This is a strong word. Paul, however, wants to show us what can happen to believers if they are not diligent in holding the truth and a good conscience. Maybe you have met believers who fell into sin. In some cases, they have destroyed their families, damaged the testimony of the church, and wandered into a life of misery and sin. They struggle with God and seem to resist fellowship with His people. I am not saying that these believers have lost their salvation. What I am saying, however, is that they will have much to answer for at the judgement.

Verse 20

Having told Timothy that some people had made shipwreck of their faith in verse 19, the apostle now gives an example of what he meant by citing the names of Hymenaeus and Alexander.

Paul speaks of Hymenaeus in [2 Timothy 2:16-18](#):

(16) But avoid irreverent babble, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness, (17) and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus (18), who have swerved from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already happened. They are upsetting the faith of some. – 2 Timothy 2:16-18 ESV

We discover that Hymenaeus “swerved from the truth” and was teaching that

the resurrection had already happened.

Paul also speaks of Alexander in [2 Timothy 4:14-15](#) where he wrote:

(14) Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds.

(15) Beware of him yourself, for he strongly opposed our message. – 2 Timothy 4:14-15 ESV

Alexander did great harm to the apostle though we are not told exactly what he did. We see, however, that he “strongly opposed” Paul’s message.

Both of these men rejected Paul and what he taught. They were somehow connected with the church in Ephesus but rejected the apostolic teaching. Both of these men were a detriment to the church in Ephesus. Paul accused them of blasphemy against the Lord Jesus.

Note Paul's response to them — "I have handed them over to Satan." There is much debate about what Paul meant by handing someone over to Satan. The closest example of this is what happened to Job in the Old Testament. God allowed Satan to afflict him. Satan took his family, his friends and his health from him. God allowed this to happen, all the while keeping Satan on a leash so that he could not kill him. The result was that Job was refined and purified through the process. He came to see God through his trials in a new way. When everything was stripped from him by Satan, he had nowhere else to go but to God.

It appears that this is what is happening here in this verse. Paul, like God, has handed these two individuals over to Satan to buffet them with the understanding that if they were truly God's children, Satan's efforts to afflict them would only drive them into God's

arms in the end. They would be crushed, battered and beaten, but this discipline would transform their lives and bring them back into fellowship with God and His people.

1 TIMOTHY 2

Verse 1

Paul begins the chapter by urging Timothy to bring “all people” before the Lord. I have been in ministry long enough to know that unless the Lord breaks through, nothing of any lasting significance will happen in the lives of those to whom we minister. The work of changing lives belongs to the Holy Spirit. Prayer is not an option in the work of the Kingdom. God has given us a responsibility to minister in His name, but the power to change lives belongs to Him. We are as dependent on Him as the branches are on the vine. The advance of the kingdom depends on

God. To know God's life-changing and powerful work, we must remain in communion with Him. Here, Paul uses different words to describe the type of communion we need to maintain with God on behalf of "all people."

First, we are to bring supplications to the Lord. The word δέησις (déēsis) refers to making one's need known. It is a prayer for a particular blessing or need for ourselves or others. Believers are to have open eyes to see the needs around them and a heart that cries out to God on behalf of those experiencing those needs.

Second, we are to offer prayers for "all people." The word προσευχή (proseuchē) comes from the word proseúchomai. It is derived from *prós*, meaning *to* and *eúchomai*, meaning *to wish*. The idea is to bring our wishes to God for those around us. To pray is to express our heartfelt desires for the people we meet daily.

Third, believers are to intercede on behalf of all people. The word used here is ἐντεύξις (énteuxis), which speaks of meeting with God to petition Him on behalf of ourselves or others boldly.

Finally, we are to offer thanksgiving for “all people.” Not everyone blessed by God recognizes that these blessings are from Him. Not everyone returns thanks and praise to God for His goodness. As believers, we are to have open eyes to see God’s kindness and compassion and grateful hearts that come to Him with thanksgiving for His goodness.

What is important for us to see here is not the difference between these words but rather that believers are to be people of prayer and communion with God. We are to see the goodness of God and give Him thanks. We are to be aware of the needs around us and commit them to the Lord. We are to petition God on behalf of others and

recognize that our God is the source of all blessing and support.

Verse 2

Note that Paul urged Timothy to offer supplication, prayer, intercession, and thanksgiving not only for “all people” but also for *“kings and all who are in high positions.”* These leaders had a very particular responsibility for the welfare of their nation. They made important decisions that affected the well-being of their society. They needed people to stand with them, calling down the wisdom of God and His blessing. Understand that many of these kings and rulers did not know the Lord. The intercession of God’s people, however, was still necessary, for God would respond from heaven and direct these unbelieving rulers as His people prayed.

Why is it important that believers pray for kings and rulers in high positions? Paul tells Timothy that it was so that they could “lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.”

What would it take for Satan to rile up kings and rulers against Christians? The world as we know it is not directed by Biblical principles. We stand against the immoral standards of an unbelieving world. We reject ungodliness in any form. This angers an ungodly world. Left to itself, this world would wander farther and farther from the principles of righteousness. Believers would quickly be seen as enemies of their way of life. We are in the midst of a great spiritual battle. Kings and rulers play an important role in how that battle unfolds. Their decisions and policies can make the difference between a believer living a quiet and godly life in peace and being persecuted for our faith. We are called to petition God to

live this peaceful life as believers in Jesus Christ.

Verse 3

Paul has been telling Timothy to pray for kings and those in authority so believers could live a quiet and peaceful life in godliness. According to the apostle, it was good and pleasing to God that believers should live such a life. There are many places on this earth where Christians are persecuted for their faith. There are regions where evil abounds, chaos reigns, and godliness is rare. This is not the heart of God. It is His purpose that believers be able to live in quiet and godliness at peace with each other and their society. This is why Paul challenged Timothy to pray to this end.

Verse 4

According to Paul, God desires that all people be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. Understand that just because God desires something does not mean it will happen. Sin exists. God has given us free will, and with that free will comes the possibility of rebelling against God and His purpose for our lives. This grieves that heart of a God who wants all people to know His grace and forgiveness and to walk in His purpose. God takes no delight in wickedness and rebellion:

(4) For you are not a God who delights in wickedness; evil may not dwell with you. – Psalms 5:4 ESV

He finds no delight in punishing the wicked:

(23) Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, declares the Lord GOD, and not rather that he

should turn from his way and live? – Ezekiel 18:23 ESV

Knowing that God desires all people to come to the knowledge of the truth ought to drive us to pray for God to enable us to be a people who demonstrate that truth in word and deed before our friends and neighbours.

Verse 5

What is the truth God wants all people to know? Paul answers this here in verse 5 when he says that *"there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."*

First, there is a mediator between God and men. The word μεσίτης (mesítēs) refers to someone who arbitrates between two parties. The mediator's purpose is to bring peace and agreement between these two people.

In this case, sin was the barrier between God and men. It needed to be addressed before we could have peace with God.

Second, Jesus came to be the mediator between God and men. He was the solution that would bring both parties together. He did this by paying the penalty for our sins. The penalty for sin was death.

(23) For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. – Romans 6:23 ESV

(4) Behold, all souls are mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is mine: the soul who sins shall die. – Ezekiel 18:4 ESV

Jesus took our place and died on the cross to pay our penalty. With this

penalty paid, reconciliation with God was now possible.

Note how Paul speaks of Christ Jesus as "the man." For Jesus to take our place, He needed to be one of us. God could not ignore sin. The penalty needed to be paid by a man. The problem was that no man was worthy of paying this penalty because God demanded a perfect sacrifice. No blemished lamb was allowed as a sin offering. This is where Jesus came into the picture. He took on flesh, became a man, lived a perfect life, and died on our behalf.

(5) Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, (6) who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, (7) but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.

*(8) And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. –
Philippians 2:5-8 ESV*

The death of this perfect man paid the penalty for sin and opened the door for peace between God and men.

Paul reminds Timothy here that there is only one God. This means there is no other god with whom we must be reconciled. He also tells Timothy that there is also only one mediator. There is no other way to this one God but through the “man Christ Jesus.” He alone is the means of forgiveness and peace with God.

Verse 6

The “man Christ Jesus” gave Himself as a “ransom for all.” According to Paul,

this was “the testimony given at the proper time.

First, Jesus gave Himself as a ransom. The word ransom is ἀντίλυτρον (antílutron), which refers to a price paid to redeem or restore someone or something to its proper place or condition. In this case, we had fallen away from God and were bound by sin and rebellion. Jesus paid the penalty so we could be restored to fellowship with God.

That ransom was paid for “all.” That is to say, no one can say that the death of Jesus Christ was insufficient to redeem and restore them to fellowship with God.

According to Paul, this act of Jesus Christ was a “testimony given.” The word testimony is μαρτύριον (martúrion). It refers to a statement from personal experience and knowledge that declares a truth. What

did Jesus declare by His death on the cross? He showed us that fellowship and peace with God was possible. He declared the grace and favour of God toward sinners.

This testimony of the grace and favour of God toward sinners was declared "*at the proper time.*" Prophets spoke about the Messiah who was to come. They longed to see this day. He came in God's perfect time. He came in fulfillment of all these Old Testament prophecies exactly when God determined it should take place.

Verse 7

Paul declares to Timothy that he had been appointed a preacher, apostle and teacher to the Gentiles.

His choice of the word "appointed" implies that this was not a personal decision the apostle made. It was a responsibility placed on him by Jesus

Christ, who called and anointed him for this task. Many choose to be full-time servants of Jesus Christ. They have various reasons and motivations for this choice. Paul, however, did not choose this responsibility. He was selected for it by God.

Paul tells us that this calling on his life involved being a preacher. The word used here is κήρυξ (kêrux) and refers to someone who rallies people to proclaim a message. That message, of course, is centred on the truth of the Gospel. The preacher gathers people and declares the truth of Jesus Christ and His work.

Paul's calling also involved being an apostle. The word ἀπόστολος (apóstolos) comes from the word apostéllō meaning to send. The apostle was sent as an ambassador to represent the Lord Jesus and His purpose on the earth. The Lord Jesus chose twelve apostles to be His

representatives in the early church. He empowered them as His representatives to establish the church in its practices and teaching.

Note how, after declaring that he had been chosen as an apostle, Paul assures Timothy that he was telling him the truth. The impression we have here is that Paul felt unworthy of his calling as an apostle. He was always reminded of his past persecution of Christians and felt he did not deserve such a privilege. While unworthy of an apostle's calling, Paul accepted his appointment and became one of the church's most important and influential apostles. We dare not let our unworthiness keep us from proving worthy of God's calling on our lives.

Paul's appointment also involved being a teacher. The word διδάσκαλος (didáskalos) involves instructing people in the truth. This can be done in many ways that do not necessarily include

gathering a crowd. Paul was a teacher to Timothy, his son in the faith. He did this through his one-on-one interaction with Timothy.

Note finally that Paul's appointment was to the Gentiles. Other apostles were called to minister to the Jews of the day. Paul had a specific calling to minister to the Gentiles. Observe here that he was to preach, be an apostle and teach these Gentiles in faith and truth. In other words, it was his obligation to strengthen the faith of Gentile converts and instruct them in the truth of the Gospel.

Paul understood not only his calling but also its limits. He focused his attention on the Gentile community.

Verse 8

Verse 8 comes in the context of Paul's declaration that it was God's will that believers live a peaceful and godly life

and that all come to the knowledge of the truth. If that were going to happen, it would require men to pray.

The word men here is ἀνὴρ (anēr) and refers specifically to a male. It is not that Paul did not value women's prayers, but he called for males everywhere to pray in this particular case.

Note how Paul wanted these men to pray. They were first to lift their hands. The concept of lifting one's hands is a reference to the common practice of the day of stretching out one's hands to God, as a beggar would stretch out his hands for support.

The hands to be lifted to God were to be holy. That is to say, they were not to be defiled by sin and evil. Those men who cried out to God were to be in fellowship with Him and walk in tune with His purpose so that nothing hindered their prayers.

Observe how Paul mentions that the hands lifted to God were to be undefiled by anger and quarrelling. If we are to expect blessings from God, we must have a proper relationship with each other. We must address any bitterness or division between us as Christians. We cannot expect God's blessing if we are not willing to be a blessing to our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Verse 9

Paul speaks now to women in the church. In verse 8, he tells Timothy that men are to lift holy hands. That is to say, if they were going to pray to God for blessings, they were to live lives honouring Him and submit to His purpose. They were to be in control of their natural tendency to defend their territory, rights and beliefs. Similarly, women were also to live in a way that

pleased God and demonstrated their submission to His will and purpose.

The apostle encouraged women to demonstrate modesty and respect in how they dressed. According to Paul, Christian women were to adorn themselves "*in respectable apparel.*" Today, the sale of women's clothing, cosmetics, and beauty supplies is a big business. Massive advertising campaigns seek to encourage women to invest heavily in their appearance. This is not new. Even in Paul's day, women were tempted to focus on outward appearance and draw attention to themselves. Paul encouraged Christian women to dress respectfully. He explains this in more detail in the verse.

First, the Christian woman is to dress with modesty. The word κόσμιος (kósmios) comes from the word κόσμος, meaning order or proper arrangement. The person who dresses

modestly does not stir up confusion or strife. They are not trying to make a statement or draw attention to themselves.

Second, women who dress respectfully exercise self-control. Paul uses the word σωφροσύνη (sōphrosúnē) here. It speaks of moderation in one's passions and conduct. The idea seems to be that the Christian woman is not to flaunt or parade her beauty. Instead, she was to control her impulses and desire to be noticed. Paul gives some examples of self-control here.

He speaks of the natural desire of women to braid or style their hair, wear gold jewellery, pearls or expensive designer clothes. The apostle is not saying these things are wrong in and of themselves, but they can become an obsession. According to Paul, the Christian woman has more important things to consider than her external beauty, jewellery, and clothes—all of

these things need to be viewed from the perspective of God's priorities for her life.

Verse 10

For Paul, Christian women were to dress in a way that was appropriate for one who professed godliness. He explains what he means here by adding the phrase "with good works." In other words, for a Christian woman, it was more important to do good than to look good. A godly woman demonstrated godliness by how she lived her life and ministered to those around her. This was to be a greater priority than what she wore and the style of her hair.

Verse 11

Paul begins a section here about the different roles of men and women in the church. The question we must

address in this regard is whether this was a specific teaching of Paul for that time and culture or whether it continues to apply to the church of our day. Some see what Paul says to apply only to a culture where women were not traditionally educated and prone to theological error or misunderstanding of the Scriptures. Others feel that Paul was trying to avoid controversy in a male-dominated society. Putting these controversies aside for the moment, let's examine the text to see Paul's counsel to Timothy about the role of women in the church of Ephesus.

Paul begins by telling Timothy that women were to learn. This in itself is an important statement. The IVP Bible Background Commentary on the Old Testament has this to say about women in the days of Paul:

Although exceptions were made for elite women (for example, Philo

praised the empress as "almost male" in her intellectual capacity; Embassy to Gaius 320), and some intellectuals praised the ability of women (or particular women) to learn, most men considered intellectual activity a predominantly male exercise. Women were less likely to be literate than men (sometimes estimated at ten percent as often as men of the same social class), were trained in philosophy far less often than men, were trained in rhetoric almost never, and, more importantly here, in Judaism were far less likely to be educated in the law. Boys were raised to recite the Torah; girls were not, although they could listen in synagogues and remember what they heard at home.

(Walton, John H., Matthews, Victor H., Chavalas, Mark W., Comments on [1 Timothy 2:11](#), The IVP Bible

Background Commentary: Old Testament: Marion, Iowa, Laridian)

With this as the predominant cultural idea, Paul's statement that women should learn is somewhat radical for the time. Paul wanted women to understand the gospel's truth and challenged Timothy here to teach them.

While Paul wanted women to learn the truth, he had two requirements.

First, they were to learn in quietness. The word quiet is ἡσυχία (hēsuchia) and speaks of silence or stillness. This stillness and silence implied that they would have an open heart to receive what was taught and that there would be no public arguments, debates or challenges to the teaching they received.

Second, Paul told Timothy that women were also to learn in submission. This submission implied respect for those

who taught and obedience to their instruction.

Verse 12

Next, Paul tells Timothy that he did not permit a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man. Paul's statement shows us that he believed there were different roles in the church for men and women. In his mind, men were to be leaders and teachers of truth.

Note Paul's words: "teach or to exercise authority over a man." Paul seems to connect teaching and exercising authority here. The teaching Paul forbids is a teaching that takes authority over a man. In Paul's mind, God gave man a specific role. He was to be a leader and teacher in both his family and church. He was to guide his children and his fellow church members into the truth of God's Word. This was his God-given obligation and duty. The

woman was not to take this role from him but rather encourage him to be the leader God called him to be. The quietness Paul speaks about here is a willing submission to the purpose of God. The woman's role is not just not talking but a quiet submission to God's purpose that stands strongly behind those God has called to be leaders and instructors of His people.

Verse 13

The question we must ask here is this: Where did Paul get the idea that men were to be leaders and teachers in the church? He answers this question in this verse. Paul takes us back to creation to back up his view. He reminds us that Adam was created before Eve.

What we need to understand here is that the firstborn of every family was

dedicated to the Lord and belonged to Him:

(2) "Consecrate to me all the firstborn. Whatever is the first to open the womb among the people of Israel, both of man and of beast, is mine."- Exodus 13:2 ESV

While the firstborn of every animal needed to be redeemed, God set apart the Levites in the place of every firstborn child in the nation of Israel to be devoted to Him:

(40) And the LORD said to Moses, "List all the firstborn males of the people of Israel, from a month old and upward, taking the number of their names. (41) And you shall take the Levites for me—I am the LORD—instead of all the firstborn among the people of Israel, and the cattle of the Levites instead of all the firstborn among the cattle of

*the people of Israel.” – Numbers
3:40-41 ESV*

In everyday life, the firstborn male was the head of the home when the father passed away and would inherit a double portion of the father’s estate (see [Deuteronomy 21:15-17](#)).

The fact that Adam was the firstborn was significant in Paul’s mind. As the firstborn, he was specifically devoted to God and had a God-given obligation to be a spiritual leader.

Verse 14

Paul lists a second reason women were not to teach or have authority over men. He again goes back to the book of Genesis, but this time to the fall of humankind into sin.

In [Genesis 3](#), Satan came to Eve in the garden and tempted her to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and

Evil. While Eve understood the command of God not to eat from this tree, Satan persuaded her that what God said about it was untrue. He convinced her she would not die if she disobeyed God's command, but her eyes would be opened to know both good and evil (see [Genesis 3:1-5](#)). Deceived by Satan, Eve took the forbidden fruit and ate it. [Genesis 3:6](#) tells us that she also gave some to her husband, who ate as well.

Consider what took place in the Garden. Satan appeared to Eve to tempt her. His lies deceived her. Now, I understand that Satan could have deceived Adam, but he approached Eve instead. She was the one deceived by his lies. She committed the first act of disobedience.

Note something else about this story. What was Eve's first act after eating the forbidden fruit? [Genesis 3:6](#) says, "She also gave some to her husband who

was with her.” Not only did she disobey the command of God, but she also tempted Adam by offering him that same fruit. There is a double sin here—first, the sin of disobedience and second, the sin of causing her husband to sin with her.

There is a lot of speculation around these verses. Did Adam know the fruit was from the forbidden tree when he ate it? Was he standing with her during the temptation? Was he aware of how Eve was tempted and the arguments of Satan? Did she tell him what had happened and share why she ate of the tree? We have no way of knowing the answers to these questions. All we know is that it was not Adam who was deceived by Satan that day but Eve. She picked the fruit off that tree, ate it and gave it to her husband. Just as Adam was the first to be created, Eve was the first transgressor of God’s law, bringing sin into this world.

What was God's response toward Eve because of what she did that day? [Genesis 3:16](#) tells us:

(16) To the woman he said, "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you." – Genesis 3:16 ESV

God tells Eve two things here. First, she would bring forth children with great difficulty and pain. Second, her husband would rule over her. In the next verse, Paul speaks about childbearing. What is of particular concern for us here is that second statement of God to Eve.

God told Eve that her husband would rule over her because she had disobeyed His command. In other words, God commanded to her that she

was to live in submission to her husband. Man, the firstborn, is given here the responsibility by God to be the head of his wife and leader in the family. Paul uses this to demonstrate theologically that it was wrong, therefore, for a woman to take authority over a man.

Verse 15

We have seen how Paul refers to [Genesis 3](#) and the fall of humankind into sin in his argument about women not taking authority over men. After Satan deceived Eve, God said to her:

(16) To the woman he said, "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you." – Genesis 3:16 ESV

We examined the second statement of God in [Genesis 3:16](#) in the comments on [1 Timothy 2:14](#). Of concern for us now is God's words about Eve's pain in childbearing. God told Eve that He would multiply her pain in childbearing. Paul tells women here that they would be "saved through childbearing." The word saved is σωζω (sōzō). Christians have used this word to speak of the salvation offered through Jesus Christ, but this is not its only use in the New Testament. It means to be delivered, preserved or safe from danger. Let's consider what Paul is saying to women here.

The context of the apostle's statement is the curse of God and His declaration that He would multiply women's pain in childbearing. Paul is telling women, however, that while their pain would be increased, God would preserve them in it. He would keep them safe and deliver them in their time of giving birth. While

childbearing is a painful experience, it is relatively safe. God delights in bringing new life into this world, and His hand is upon women who give birth. If you have ever been at the birth of a baby, the whole experience is quite overwhelming. To see a life being born is nothing short of a miracle. Through the pain and suffering, new life is brought into this world, and there is great joy and rejoicing in the end. Women have a unique ability, given to them by God, to bring new life into this world. God's blessing is upon them in this.

Even though Eve brought sin and death into this world by her sin, the blessing of God was still upon her. She would become the mother of the human race, a title of great honour. Her daughters would also have this wonderful privilege. While the blessing of God is on women in childbirth, Paul challenges them not to take this blessing for

granted. Women were to continue in faith, love and holiness. They were to live self-controlled lives and learn to walk in God's holy purpose. God did not give up on women. He challenges them, however, not to repeat the error of their mother, Eve, but instead to exercise self-control in the face of temptation and walk in faith, love and holiness.

1 TIMOTHY 3

Verse 1

Paul begins the chapter with a “saying.” The Greek word used here is λόγος (lógos), which is translated as word – not just a spoken word, however, but more specifically, the expression of wisdom and intelligence. The λόγος (lógos) Paul was about to impart, was trustworthy. What is this wisdom? Paul tells us that if a person aspired to the office of an overseer, he desired a noble task. The word translated noble is καλός (kalós) and speaks of something beautiful and good.

The responsibility of an overseer (ἐπισκοπή episkopē) involved the care

and oversight of the church. It is a general term encompassing the roles of elders and pastors.

Verse 2

Because the role of overseer was a noble and respectable function in the church, not just anyone could serve in this capacity—the man who aspired to this position needed to meet certain qualifications. Over the course of the next few verses, Paul lists sixteen requirements for anyone serving as an overseer in the church.

Above Reproach

The first quality of an overseer is that he is to be above reproach. The Greek word us here is ἀνεπίληπτος (anepílēptos). It is derived from the word “a,” meaning without and “epilambánō” meaning to seize. The idea here is that this man has nothing

an enemy could seize upon to accuse him of wrongdoing.

The Husband of One Wife

Paul tells Timothy that an overseer should be the husband of one wife. There are various interpretations of this second requirement.

Paul may be saying that in light of the temptation in the world to immorality, an overseer should be married. This is in line with his teaching in [1 Corinthians 7:32-40](#). The problem, however, is that Paul was never married and was an overseer in the church. He also taught that celibacy was a legitimate lifestyle:

(7) I wish that all were as I myself am. But each has his own gift from God, one of one kind and one of another. (8) To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is good for them to remain single, as I am. (9) But if they cannot exercise self-

control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion. – 1 Corinthians 7:7-9 ESV

While marriage is good for an overseer, we should not see it as a requirement.

Others see Paul telling Timothy that an overseer should only be married once in his lifetime. The problem with this interpretation is that Paul taught that a person could marry a second time if their first partner died, and marriage vows were only binding as long as the partner was alive:

(39) A wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord. – 1 Corinthians 7:39 ESV

If Paul is saying that an overseer should be the husband of one wife and

his wife has died, would it be wrong for him to marry a second wife?

This leads us to the next interpretation, which states that an overseer was to be the husband of only one wife at a time. This meant that in a time when polygamy was accepted in society, the overseer was only to have one wife and be faithful to that one wife. He was to be an example of a true Christian marriage –one man and one woman united under Christ for life.

Sober-minded

Next, the overseer was to be sober-minded. The word νηφάλιος (nēphálios) speaks of a mind free from excesses. These excesses might be through the influences of alcohol or drugs or possibly uncontrolled sexual passions and appetites.

Self-controlled

Closely related to the matter of sober-mindedness is the next quality of self-control. The word *σώφρων* (*sōphrōn*) speaks of restraint and discipline in one's life. This self-control may be in regards to outside influences or even of one's emotions and passions.

Respectable

The word *κόσμιος* (*kósmios*) speaks of order and proper arrangement of things in one's life. Paul uses this word to talk about how women were to dress in [1 Timothy 2:9](#). In that verse the word is translated as modest. The sense here is that the overseer is not to behave in a disorderly way. His behaviour is to be orderly and dignified.

Hospitable

The word *φιλόξενος* (*philóxenos*) is derived from the words *phílos* meaning love and *xénos* meaning stranger. The

overseer is to be a lover of strangers. In this sense, hospitality shows compassion and kindness to those not in the immediate flock. It reaches out to the lost and wanderer. The Lord Jesus told a parable about the lost sheep and the shepherd's compassion to leave the ninety-nine in the fold to reach out to one sheep that had wandered away. The overseer is one who sees that one sheep that has left that fold and demonstrates compassion and kindness toward it.

Able to Teach

One of the requirements for the position of an elder is the ability to teach. For this to occur, that overseer needed to be teachable, but the word used here seems to carry with it the sense that the overseer was to be a teacher. It was his responsibility to feed the flock he oversaw. He was tasked with passing on and guarding sound

doctrine as an overseer. This did not necessarily mean that he had to be a gifted public speaker, but he did have to know the truth and be able to communicate and defend that truth in some capacity.

Verse 3

Paul continues his list of qualifications for an overseer.

Not a Drunkard

The word used by Paul here is *nápoivos* (*pároinos*). It is derived from the word “*pará*,” meaning near and “*oínos*” meaning wine. The sense here is that he was not to be attached to or dependent on wine. What is true for wine is also true for any other addictive substance. The overseer was to be free from addictions.

Not Violent

The word translated as violent here is πλήκτης (plēktēs), which means to strike. The overseer does not get angry and unleash his anger in physical or verbal assaults.

Gentle

Instead of getting angry, the overseer is gentle. The word ἐπιεικής (epieikēs) refers to someone who does not push himself on another or demand his way. Instead, he accepts others, is tolerant, and patient with differences.

Not Quarrelsome

The word ἀμάχος (ámachos), translated as not quarrelsome, is derived from the word "a" meaning without and "máchē" meaning battle. The one who is not quarrelsome is a person who is not always looking for a fight. That fight might be over matters of Christian liberty or secondary doctrines. It might also be the result of a lack of self-control. The quarrelsome person does

not demonstrate compassion or permit liberty or difference of opinion in secondary matters of the church. They want things to be their way and do not easily recognize that they could be wrong.

Not a Lover of Money

A lover of money is one whose motivation is about enriching themselves. They love money and what they can buy for themselves. There is nothing wrong with paying a servant of God for their service, but when money becomes a motivating factor in ministry, we are on the wrong track. I have met pastors who have determined where to serve the Lord based on how much money they will receive from that church. Our motivation must be the love of God in our hearts and His call upon our lives. The overseer must be willing to serve whether there is money

involved or not. Financial gain should never be a primary motivation.

Verse 4

When selecting an overseer, it is important to look at his family. How an overseer manages his household will be how he manages the church. Paul tells Timothy that an overseer must manage his household well. He defines what he means by “well” in two ways here in the verse.

First, the overseer must manage his household with dignity. The word σεμνότης (semnótēs) speaks of decency and seriousness. That is to say, he must demonstrate that he takes his responsibility seriously and exercise that responsibility with care, concern and diligence.

Second, the overseer must also keep his children in submission. To be in submission here carries the sense of

walking in obedience and respect. He is not to let his family get out of control. He will correct and discipline his children when they lack respect or turn from the path of righteousness. He will do this with dignity.

This does not mean that the overseer's children need to be perfect. The question is how does the overseer deal with his children who wander from the path of righteousness. Does he pursue them and seek to restore them to faith, or does he abandon them in their need? How he treats his children will be how he treats people in the church. If you want to know what kind of overseer an individual will be, look at how he leads his family.

Understand here also that Paul is showing us that an overseer should not ignore his family. His primary responsibility is ministering to his wife and the children God has given him. An

overseer who ignores his family is not qualified to serve in the church.

Verse 5

Paul shows us why it is important for the church to look at the family life of an overseer. He tells us that if he cannot care for the family God has given him, he will not be able to care for the spiritual family. He must first demonstrate his ability and seriousness in his own family before being given responsibility for the church.

Verse 6

Another qualification for the overseer is that he is not to be a recent convert to Christ. According to Paul, the reason for this is that "he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil."

Some qualities must be learned over time. One of those qualities involves learning how to depend on the Lord. How many godly saints have fallen flat on their faces because they had an inflated view of what they could do with their strength? How many have forged ahead in the service of the Lord, running ahead of God's purpose? The idealism of the new convert often has to be toned down to reflect the real world. Learning how to face disappointments and failures is vital to maturity in Christ.

Note the phrase "*fall into the condemnation of the devil.*" The word "condemnation" comes from the Greek word κρίμα (kríma), which speaks of a judgement or sentence. In other words, the "condemnation of the devil" refers to his judgment. The book of Revelation recounts the judgement of Satan. We read in [Revelation 12:7-9](#) that he was cast out of heaven:

(7) Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, (8) but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. (9) And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world— he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. – Revelation 12:7-9 ESV

Satan's ultimate condemnation is to be cast into the lake of fire, where he will be tormented forever:

(10) and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and

*night forever and ever. – Revelation
20:10 ESV*

Paul is not saying that new converts to Jesus Christ will be lost forever. What he is showing us, however, is the seriousness of pride. In his pride, Satan stood up against God Himself and suffered serious consequences for his rebellion. Those who do not learn dependence and obedience take the same path as Satan, and you can be sure that they will find themselves, like him, suffering the consequences of their sin.

Verse 7

The final qualification for an overseer is that he must be “well thought of by outsiders.” We need to understand this phrase in the context of what Paul told the Galatians in [Galatians 1:10](#):

(10) For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.- Galatians 1:10 ESV

There is a difference between being well thought of and being a people pleaser. To be a people pleaser often involves compromising our standards to gain the affection and attention of people around us. This is not what Paul is saying here.

When he tells us that the overseer is to be "*well thought of*," he means that he must be respected and trusted by the outsider. They must know him to be honest in his dealings, generous and compassionate in his relationships and holy in his walk with God.

The overseer is to have a good testimony before the outsider so that he will not fall into disgrace. The word

Paul uses here, translated as “disgrace,” is ὀνειδισμός (oneidismós), meaning to revile. The sense is that his sins will be discovered, and people speak out against him. His testimony in the community would then be destroyed, and the name of the Lord Jesus would be blasphemed.

Note also that if an overseer does not have a good reputation in the community, he will fall into the devil’s snare. His sins will be a means of Satan snaring him and destroying his witness. It will also be a way for Satan to damage the reputation and witness of the church in that community.

Verse 8

Paul goes on here to speak of a second office in the church—the office of deacon. The Greek word for deacon is διάκονος (diákonos), which means servant. Deacons work alongside the

overseer, freeing them up to minister in prayer and preaching that word. We see this in [Acts 6:2-4](#) where we read:

(2) And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. (3) Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. (4) But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." – Acts 6:2-4 ESV

These deacons were like the Levites of the Old Testament who worked beside the descendants of Aaron. They assisted them in a variety of ministries, freeing them up to serve in their capacity as priests.

Like the overseer, the deacon must also meet certain qualifications to serve. Paul takes the time here to list these qualifications.

Dignified

First, the deacon was to be dignified. The word σεμνός (semnós) refers to something that is revered and has a good reputation. The deacon is to be well respected in his community.

Not Double Tongued

Next, the deacon was not to be double-tongued. The idea of having two tongues conveys the sense that one of those tongues speaks the truth and the other speaks falsehood. In other words, you cannot trust the words of a double-tongued person. They say what is convenient but are not committed to the absolute truth. The words of a deacon must be trustworthy. He speaks the truth even when it hurts him to do

so. You can rely on what he says. He is to be a man of his word.

Not Addicted to Much Wine

Deacons are to be free from addictions. Paul speaks particularly here about wine, but this is not the only type of addiction in our day. Drugs and other kinds of drinks can also be addictive. The deacon is not to be controlled by any of these substances.

Not Greedy for Dishonest Gain

Deacons are not to be greedy for dishonest gain. Note here that there is such a thing as honest gain for work well done. This is not the issue. Paul speaks here about two sins in particular.

First, there is the sin of greed. Greed tends to degrade moral principles. It is

an imbalanced passion for something that willingly compromises moral standards to obtain the object of its passion. The deacon must never allow anything to keep him from walking in absolute integrity. He will suffer loss rather than compromise godly standards.

Second, there is also the sin of dishonesty. Paul speaks here about “dishonest” gain. Dishonest gain defrauds, steals or compromises God’s standard of righteousness to obtain personal gain. A deacon must be honest in his dealings. His commitment is to the purpose of God first and foremost. He must be known as one who walks upright in his business dealings in the community.

Verse 9

Next deacons were to hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience.

Note two details here.

First, observe the phrase, “mystery of the faith.” The word used for faith here is πίστις (pístis). It refers to a firm conviction of truth. The word mystery is μυστήριον (mustérion) and refers to a secret or something hidden from human understanding. The conviction of the deacon is in something that is often hidden from him or something too great for him to understand.

There is a mystery to the Christian faith. We are called to trust in a God we do not see with our eyes. We are called to put our confidence in a Saviour who lived long before we were born. We cannot possibly understand His ways, but we rely completely on Him for life and breath. He is beyond our ability to comprehend, but we trust him totally. We are convinced of His words. We place our future in His hands and lay our lives down for Him we have never seen with our eyes or heard with our

ears. The deacon was to demonstrate this type of faith.

Second, the deacon was to live with a clear conscience. The conscience is the part of us that distinguishes right from wrong. The deacon was to live with a conscience right before God, knowing that he was walking in a way that honoured the God he could not see with his eyes or hear with his ears but knew with his heart and soul to be real.

Verse 10

A deacon was to be tested. The word δοκιμάζω (dokimázō) implies being proven, approved or demonstrating worthiness. Paul explains this in the verse when he says that deacons were to prove themselves to be blameless. The idea here is that the church was not to be quick to elect a deacon. A potential deacon was to demonstrate that he was able to do the work and

worthy of the title. When I served overseas, I remember a co-worker telling me he had never elected anyone to a church office who was not already doing the work. I found great wisdom in that advice. Anyone called to serve the Lord as a deacon will do that work without a title. The church will see them demonstrate their calling by how they live their lives. These individuals will have a passion for ministering and will do so without needing recognition. They will live godly lives well before they are recognized as deacons. We test a potential deacon by watching their lives. We see their passion and walk with God before we elect them to a position in the church. We do not elect to the role of deacon anyone who has not already demonstrated by life and service that they are faithfully doing the work.

Verse 11

Paul goes on to speak of the deacon's wives. The word γυνή (gunē) used here can be translated as woman or wife. Whether Paul refers to a woman in general or a wife when using this word depends on the context. The vast majority of translations see the word γυνή (gunē) in this context to refer to the wives of deacons.

We need to understand that the deacon's wife could harm his ministry. For this reason, Paul required that the church also examine the deacon's wife before electing him to office.

The deacon's wife was to be dignified. The word σεμνός (semnós) speaks of someone who has a good reputation and is revered in the community.

Next, she was not to be a slanderer. The Greek word διάβολος (diábolos) is a word used to speak of the devil, but it refers in this case to a false accuser. A slanderer is a person who spreads

falsehoods and insinuations about people for their harm. Deacon's wives were to be careful about speaking the truth. They were not to use their words to harm a brother or sister.

Third, a deacon's wife was to be sober-minded. The word νηφάλιος (nēphálios) implies self-control and not under the influences of wine or anything else that would impede their judgement. The sober-minded person does not allow their passions or lusts to control their actions or thoughts.

Finally, the deacon's wife was to be faithful in all things. The word πιστός (pistós) in this sense, implies trustworthiness and reliability. She was to be a loyal wife, friend and believer in Jesus Christ. She was to demonstrate her commitment to the Lord by how she lived and what she said. She was to cling to the gospel's truth and walk faithfully with her God.

Verse 12

Paul continues here to speak about the deacon's family. He tells Timothy first that they were to be the husband of one wife. Let me repeat what I have stated in verse 2 regarding the qualifications of an overseer.

Paul may be saying that in light of the temptation in the world to immorality, a deacon should be married. This is in line with his teaching in [1 Corinthians 7:32-40](#). The problem, however, is that Paul also taught that celibacy was a legitimate lifestyle and even preferable to marriage in some cases:

(7) I wish that all were as I myself am. But each has his own gift from God, one of one kind and one of another. (8) To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is good for them to remain single, as I am. (9) But if they cannot exercise self-

control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion. – 1 Corinthians 7:7-9 ESV

While marriage was proper for a deacon, it should not be seen as a requirement.

Other Bible commentators see Paul telling Timothy that a deacon should only be married once in his lifetime. The problem with this interpretation is that Paul taught that a person could marry a second time if their first partner died. Marriage vows were only binding as long as the partner was alive:

(39) A wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord. – 1 Corinthians 7:39 ESV

If Paul is saying that a deacon should be the husband of one wife and his wife has died, would it not be proper for him to marry a second wife?

This leads us to the next interpretation, which states that a deacon was to be the husband of only one wife at a time. This meant that in a time when polygamy was accepted in society, the deacon was only to have one wife and be faithful to that one wife. He was to be an example of a true Christian marriage –one man and one woman united under Christ for life.

Note also that Paul tells Timothy that the deacon was to manage his children and his household well. The proof of whether a deacon would do a good job in the church was in his household. Was he able to pay his bills? Did he provide adequately for his family? Did he maintain discipline and raise respectable children? Did he direct those children into the ways of the

Lord? If you want to know how a deacon will act in the church, you need to examine his family life. What he is in his family, he will be for the church.

Verse 13

Paul told Timothy that deacons who served well would experience two particular blessings.

First they would gain a good standing for themselves. The office of a deacon was an noble position in the church. Those deacons who served well, however, were to be particularly honoured. Not only did they exercise an important role in the church, but they did so with diligence and faithfulness.

Second, they would gain great confidence in the faith. Compare what Paul says here with the words of the apostle John in Revelation 20:12:

(12) And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. – Revelation 20:12 ESV

Imagine a deacon who has served well standing before the Lord on that day of judgement. As the books are opened and his works considered, he knows that he has done all he could for the sake of the kingdom. That day he hears the words of the Master saying:

(21) ... 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.' – Matthew 25:21 ESV

How can we have confidence in our faith? How can we know it is real? The

only way to confirm our faith in Jesus Christ is to put it to the test. As we step out in service and obedience, the genuineness of our faith is confirmed. When we stand faithfully up to persecution and opposition, we see God's preserving power and boldness demonstrated in us. When we face the unknown, we experience a trust and assurance that comes from the Spirit of God working in us. We know the presence of Christ in us. We experience the power of His Spirit in our ministry. This gives us great confidence in faith and assurance that we are His.

Verse 14

Paul expresses his desire to see Timothy personally. In the absence of a personal presence, however, the apostle takes the time to write this letter. Not all ministry takes place in person. In our day, there are many

ways to communicate encouragement and hope to believers worldwide. It falls on us to discover how to do this. For Paul, he picked up a pen and wrote a letter.

Verse 15

Notice why Paul wrote this letter to Timothy. He was not sure when he would be able to see him personally, so he wrote to show him how “one should behave in the household of God.” This phrase is not only directed to Timothy but also to the church in general. Consider what Paul has been writing about in this letter.

- 1) Admonition against false teachers — [1 Timothy 1:3-7](#)
- 2) Charge to Timothy to wage a good warfare – 1 Timothy 1:18-20
- 3) Exhortation to pray for all people – [1 Timothy 2:1-3](#)

4) Challenge to men to deal with anger
– [1 Timothy 2:8](#)

5) Encouragement to women to be
submissive and modest in their dress –
[1 Timothy 2: 8-15](#)

6) Teaching about the qualifications of
elders and deacons – [1 Timothy 3](#)

These teachings were part of Paul's exhortation on how to behave in the household of God. Christians needed to live lives that honoured the Lord God. The unbelieving world should see the difference coming to Christ makes in the lives of those who profess Him as Saviour and Lord. Paul wrote this letter to teach Timothy and the church of Ephesus what it meant to live as members of the household of faith.

Note also here why believers needed to know how to behave as members of the household of God. According to Paul, this household was the church of the living God. The word ἐκκλησία

(ekklēsia), translated as church, literally means “called out.” In other words, the church is a group of people called out by God to be renewed in heart and mind to represent Him on this earth. God has put His hand upon us. He has saved us from sin and given us eternal hope. The Spirit of Christ has transformed to represent the King of kings and Lord of lords. This is nothing to be taken lightly. We are His ambassadors in this world. We are a light shining in the darkness, pointing men and women to eternal life. This is a huge privilege and an awesome responsibility. It also places us under a serious obligation.

Observe also that the church is the pillar and buttress of the truth. The word pillar here is στύλος (stúlos) which refers to a column that supports a building. The church needs to hold up the truth of the gospel. The gospel will be assaulted in many ways. There will

be those who mock it. Others will stand in opposition to its message. The enemy will seek to water it down or compromise its truth. The church, however, like a strong pillar, stands strong against the assault of the day, defending and opposing those who seek to belittle, compromise and defy its truth.

According to Paul, the church is also a buttress. The word translated buttress is ἑδραίωμα (hedraíōma). It means to make stable and refers to a support or foundation. A building, for example, is built on a solid foundation that ensures the structure is stable and will not fall.

The church's foundation is the truth of the gospel. Without this message, we have no foundation upon which to build. A church denying the foundational truth of the gospel is not a gospel church. Jesus Christ and His work is the basis upon which every true church is built, and without this

foundation, we have nothing to base our hope upon.

According to Paul, the church's foundation is the gospel's truth. It is this truth it preaches and defends. Part of the defence and proclamation of this truth is in our lives and how we demonstrate that truth in our behaviour as members of the household of God.

Verse 16

Paul takes a moment to speak about the truth the church is built upon and defends. This truth, according to Paul, was "great." There was never a message so life-changing and blessed as the gospel the church of Jesus Christ confesses.

Observe how the apostle speaks of this "great" truth as the "mystery of godliness." The mystery of how to be in a right relationship with God was

hidden from our eyes until Jesus Christ revealed it to us.

According to Paul, the mystery of a right relationship with God was found in flesh. It was revealed in the person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who took on human form and became a man.

Next, Paul tells us that the Spirit has vindicated the mystery of truth we proclaim. The word translated vindicated is δικαιόω (dikaióō) and speaks of justice and righteousness. The idea here is that the Spirit applied the work of Jesus Christ to the lives of those God called out, giving them a right relationship with God.

Angels saw this wonderful work of salvation through the man Christ Jesus. Writing about this, the apostle Peter says:

(12) It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves

but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look. – 1 Peter 1:12 ESV

Peter tells us here that the angels long to look at the work of the Holy Spirit through the gospel.

[Revelation 5](#) recounts how a Lamb (a picture of Jesus Christ) was found worthy to open the scroll and unfold God's purpose of ransoming a people from every language and nation (see [Revelation 5:9](#)). Note the response of the angels on that occasion:

(11) Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of

thousands, (12) saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honour and glory and blessing!" – Revelation 5:11-12 ESV

The angels of heaven rejoiced and sang for joy at the work of the Lamb of God who ransomed a people from every nation.

The apostles declared the message of salvation to both Jews and Gentiles. The truth of salvation through Jesus Christ has been declared now throughout the world, and people from many nations have experienced the power of the gospel to save and restore their relationship with God. That message continues to spread despite persecution and multiple obstacles. People worldwide are coming to know the Lord Jesus and experience the power of the cross every single day.

They are believing in the Lord Jesus Christ and experiencing the gospel's transforming work.

Finally, this Jesus, who was revealed in the flesh and whose work has been applied to men and women worldwide, was taken up into glory. His ascension reveals that He conquered death and that the Father was pleased with His sacrifice, guaranteeing our salvation.

1 TIMOTHY 4

Verse 1

Paul takes a moment here to speak about future events. He tells Timothy that people will depart from the faith in the coming days. Note a few details here.

First, note the phrase, “the Spirit expressly says.” Paul tells Timothy that the idea that people would abandon their faith in days to come was not new. He understood this when he told the Thessalonians to expect a man of lawlessness who would bring rebellion against the faith:

*(3) Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, –
2 Thessalonians 2:3 ESV*

Consider also the words of Jesus about the days to come:

(18), and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles. (19) When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. (20) For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. (21) Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death, (22)

and you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. – Matthew 10:18-22 ESV

Scripture is clear that as the day of the Lord approaches, there will be great rebellion and a turning away from God and the faith.

Second, note what Paul says will be the source of this great turning away. People will devote themselves to deceitful spirits and the teaching of demons. The work of Satan will become more and more evident as the day of the Lord's return approaches. Satan and his demons will increase their influence and distort the truth and principles of godliness. They will promote a way of life contrary to God's purpose. Many will fall prey to this influence and accept it as normal. By accepting this teaching of demons, many will wander from the

purpose of God into an ungodly lifestyle.

Verse 2

Paul told Timothy that people in the last days would turn from the faith and devote themselves to deceitful spirits and the teachings of demons. How will people hear these deceitful spirits and demonic teachings? Paul answers this here.

The deceit and false teachings of demonic spirits will be promoted by "*the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared.*" Consider what Paul is saying here.

First, demonic teachings would be promoted by insincere liars. These liars would be men and women with flesh and blood like you and me. It is not surprising that Satan would seek out men and women of questionable character who were willing to lie and

deceive. Jesus described the Pharisees as children of the devil because of their willingness to lie and deceive:

(44) You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies. – John 8:44 ESV

Satan will use men and women who are willing to compromise the truth of God's Word to deceive and promote his lies. These individuals are insincere in that they speak about what is right and godly, but it is not in line with the purpose of God as found in His Word.

Note also that the consciences of those Satan uses are seared. The King James Version of the Bible says that their

conscience is seared with a hot iron. The word seared in the Greek language is καυτηριάζω (kautēriázō). We get the English word to cauterize from this. When you apply a hot iron to the end of a tube, you melt the end and seal it so that nothing can pass through it again.

The conscience is that part of us that distinguishes right from wrong. When you sear or cauterize the conscience, you harden it to such an extent that it can no longer discern right from wrong. A seared conscience is one that no longer warns a person of wrong. It no longer bothers someone who is sinning or walking away from God and His purpose. By hardening the conscience of these insincere liars, Satan can use them more effectively in promoting his ungodly lifestyle and teachings. To prevent this searing of our conscience, we must accept the truth of God's Word

as the standard by which we live our lives and commit to walk in obedience.

Verse 3

The deceptive and ungodly teaching of demonic spirits can take many different forms. Some of those teachings may even seem godly, but they do not agree with Scripture, or they take the Word of God out of its context to promote their agenda. Paul gives some examples of this here.

First, demonic teaching may forbid marriage and abstinence from certain foods. Now, it is clear that the Old Testament did have food laws, and there were certain foods God did not want His people to eat. Paul taught that there was nothing wrong with abstaining from particular foods and that one could do so to the glory of God:

(31) So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. – 1 Corinthians 10:31 ESV

Similarly, the apostle Paul taught that celibacy was an acceptable choice:

(8) To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is good for them to remain single, as I am. – 1 Corinthians 7:8 ESV

If abstaining from marriage or certain foods was an acceptable practice, how could it be said that these were the teachings of demons? How can such teachings become tools in the hands of Satan? Note two details in the verse that help us understand what Paul is saying.

First, note the words “forbid marriage” and “require abstinence.” These words speak of control and manipulation.

People are judged based on whether they live in compliance or not. Under this system, you are a sinner if you marry or eat certain foods. Your right standing with God is based on whether you comply with these regulations. This diminishes the work of Jesus Christ on the cross. It promotes a religion of works that no longer need the blood of Christ and his sacrificial work for salvation. Satan will do anything he can to distract people from their need for the cross of Jesus Christ.

Secondly, this forbidding marriage and requiring abstinence from foods hinders thanksgiving in the hearts of those who "*believe and know the truth.*" Paul told Timothy that God "richly provides us with everything to enjoy."

(17) As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on

God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. – 1 Timothy 6:17 ESV

Speaking to the inhabitants of Lystra, Paul said:

(17) Yet he did not leave himself without witness, for he did good by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness.” – Acts 14:17 ESV

The blessings of God are for us to enjoy. We are to receive them as gifts from His hands with thanksgiving and rejoicing. If there is one thing Satan detests, it is a heart filled with gratitude to God that enjoys His blessings and gives Him praise. The teaching of demons calls these blessings of God sinful and evil. Satan will do all he can to depreciate the goodness and grace of God. He told Eve that His desire to

protect her from death was a way to control her and keep her from experiencing greater knowledge. He will tell you that a committed sexual relationship with one marriage partner of the opposite sex is restraining and outdated. Demonic teaching will seek to diminish the blessings of God in our lives in an attempt to make Him seem like an enemy rather than the Gracious Giver of great blessings for us to enjoy.

Verse 4

Paul declares here that everything created by God was good. This is in line with the words of [Genesis 1:31](#) which says:

(31) And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. – Genesis 1:31 ESV

We understand that everything in creation was created by God and declared by Him to be good. What is true of his creation is also true of other things He has established in His Word. In the context of [1 Timothy 4](#) we know that God also created marriage and declared it also to be good (see [Genesis 2:21-25](#)).

Shall we call what God has declared good to be evil? Shall we forbid what He has permitted? Paul tells us that whatever God has declared good should not be rejected as evil.

Notice one more detail here. Paul tells Timothy that nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving. In this context, Paul is speaking about food and marriage. To understand what Paul is saying here, consider it in the context of his teaching in [1 Corinthians 8](#) about food sacrificed to idols. In this passage Paul told the Corinthians that some people had a negative association

with meat sacrificed to idols. They could not eat this meat with thanksgiving because of its association with pagan idol worship. In their mind, eating this food would be participating in this evil. For these individuals it was only right to reject this food. They did so to the glory of God.

Paul would go on to teach, however, that there is only one God and all other gods were merely the creation of a corrupt imagination:

(4) Therefore, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that "an idol has no real existence," and that "there is no God but one." (5) For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as indeed there are many "gods" and many "lords"— (6) yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus

*Christ, through whom are all things
and through whom we exist. – 1
Corinthians 8:4-6 ESV*

For those who understood this reality,
they could eat all meat with
thanksgiving whether it had been
sacrificed to an idol or not. On the
other hand Paul went on to say:

*(7) However, not all possess this
knowledge. But some, through
former association with idols, eat
food as really offered to an idol,
and their conscience, being weak,
is defiled. – 1 Corinthians 8:7 ESV*

Those who did not understand that
these idols were nothing, could not eat
meat sacrificed to them with
thanksgiving and would defile their
conscience if they did. For these
individuals, though all that God created
was good, because they could not eat
with thanksgiving and a clear

conscience, it was better for them to abstain.

Verse 5

Paul tells Timothy that everything in creation is made holy by the word of God and prayer. Let's break this down.

First, everything God created is good and made holy by the Word of God. In other words, God declares all He has created to be good and holy in His Word. Paul has been speaking to Timothy about food and marriage in this context. Consider what the Word of God has to say about this in the following verses:

(14) I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean. – Romans 14:14 ESV

*(8) Food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do.
– 1 Corinthians 8:8 ESV*

(8) To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is good for them to remain single, as I am. (9) But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion. – 1 Corinthians 7:8-9 ESV

Eating all foods and marrying are condoned by Scripture as acceptable and holy practices.

Second, Paul tells Timothy that prayer also makes these practices holy. What do we do when we pray? When we pray before a meal, we thank God for what we are about to eat. We recognize Him as the source of this food and receive it with thanksgiving. We also devote it to Him and ask Him to use it

for the sake of His kingdom in our lives.

The word translated holy here is ἁγιάζω (hagiázō) and refers to consecrating and setting something apart for sacred use. Isn't this what we do when we commit our food and activities to the Lord? We devote what we eat or do to Him, setting it apart for His glory and expanding His kingdom. God hears those prayers and takes them seriously.

Verse 6

Note Paul's purpose in writing this letter and his challenge to Timothy here. He encourages his son in the faith to "put these things before the brothers." The word translated "brothers" here is ἀδελφός (adelphós). It comes from the word (*delphús*), which means womb. In other words, it is a person who shares the same womb. The meaning of the word would be

expanded from this sense to refer to members of the same family or fellowship. It does not refer to any one gender exclusively but can refer to a fellowship of men and women. Paul challenges Timothy to share what he wrote with the church of Ephesus in which he was serving.

The apostle tells Timothy here that if he faithfully shared what he was writing to him in this letter with his brothers and sisters in the faith, he would be a good servant of Jesus Christ. What is Paul's definition of a good servant? According to this verse it is one who is "trained in the words of the faith," followed "good doctrine," and faithfully shares what he has learned and followed with the body of Christ. Good servants, therefore, know and demonstrate the truth through their lives and words, for the edification and building up of the church of Jesus Christ

Verse 7

It appears that people in the early church were getting caught up with what Paul described as "irreverent, silly myths." The word used here, translated as myths, is γρᾰῶδης (graōdē). It comes from the word "*graús*" which refers to an old woman. The King James Version translates myths as "*old wives fables*." The idea is that these were stories passed on by uneducated people who had nothing to do but share and fabricate stories. These stories and teachings were not based on the Word of God but fabrications of the human mind.

Paul tells Timothy that he was not to get caught up in these myths but rather train himself for godliness. Listen to the words of Moses to the children of Isreal:

(29) "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law. – Deuteronomy 29:29 ESV

There are things that God has not revealed to us. I have been in conversations with believers that have speculated about these secret things. Ultimately, we can only truly know and prove what God has made clear. This is to be our focus. What God has made known to us in His Word is for our sanctification and growth in godliness. I have found that seeking to understand and apply what He has made clear requires a lifetime of study and application. I am still learning, and I have certainly not been able to perfectly apply that truth to my daily walk –I still fall short. It is, however, something I continue to strive for. This is profitable for my spiritual walk.

However, endless discussions and speculations about what God has not made clear profits me nothing in the end.

Verse 8

Paul compares “bodily training to training in godliness here. ” Paul tells Timothy that “bodily training” is of some value. The word training here is γυμνασία (gymnasia) and speaks of disciplining or exercising the body. This may be through physical exercise or disciplined abstinence from certain practices. According to Paul, exercise and control over one’s body are useful and promote good health. He does not diminish the significance of such practices.

As important and useful as bodily training may be, it is only useful as long as we are in this body. The day will come when we will lay it down in

death. It did not matter how healthy we were at that point. What will matter, however, is how we live our lives. Did we live a godly life? Did we honour God with our bodies? According to Paul, this will have value in every way, not only in this life but also as we stand before our Saviour to give an account of our lives.

Verse 9

Paul speaks here of a saying. It is unclear if he is referring to verse 8 or verse 10. If the reference is to verse 8, Paul assures Timothy that the practice of godliness is of great value in this world and the life to come. If the reference is to verse 10, he assures him that striving to live a godly life is worthwhile and blessed, for we serve a living God who is the Saviour of all who believe.

Verse 10

The apostle has just told Timothy to train himself for godliness (see verse 7) because it held promise not only for this life but also for the life to come. He goes on here to tell him that this was what they were to strive for as believers in Jesus Christ — a godly life that honoured their Lord.

Note the word “because” here. This shows us that Paul is about to tell Timothy why godliness was to be their goal. It was because they had their “hope set on the living God, who is the Saviour.” What greater motivation for godliness could there be than to know that we have a Saviour who laid his life on the cross to pardon our ungodliness and rebellion? What an insult it would be to the one who died for us if we continued in sin and rebellion when He died to set us free. We serve a living God who is our Saviour. Our only legitimate response to such grace is to

live for Him and walk in His purpose for our lives.

Note how Paul tells Timothy that the living God is the Saviour of all people, especially those who believe.

Observe first that the living God is the Saviour of all people. This does not mean that all people are saved but that all people have a Saviour. Many will never turn to this Saviour and, as a result, will perish in their sin. The offer of a Saviour, however, extends to all people.

Second, see how Paul tells Timothy that while the living God is the Saviour of all people, this is especially true for those who believe. In other words, those who believe experience the reality of this salvation. They are forgiven and obtain new life in Jesus Christ. Their destiny is secure, and they enter the family of God.

Verse 11

The apostle challenges Timothy as a teacher in the Ephesian church to teach the things he has been explaining to him in this letter. Specifically, he was to instruct the church on how to live a godly life.

Verse 12

Paul has some personal words for Timothy in this section. He speaks as a spiritual father to his son in the faith. He begins with a word about Timothy's age.

Timothy was still a young man at this time. As a young man without much experience, it was easy for people to look down on him. Paul tells Timothy not to let anyone despise his youth. The word used here is καταφρονέω (kataphronéō). It comes from two words. First, "katá" means against and

second, “phronéō” means to think. The idea is to hold something against someone. In this case, Timothy’s youth was held against him, and he was not respected for His work.

It would be easy for Timothy to take this personally and not exercise the authority God had given him as leader and teacher in the church. Despite his age, Paul challenges Timothy to be the leader God called him to be. He was to be an example to the believers in the church by how he spoke, and how he lived his life. He was to love the church and walk in faith and purity.

What could those who looked down on Timothy’s age say when they saw his godly example among them? Many church leaders with years of experience and authority do not understand what Paul is saying here. The key qualification for any leader is that they walk in love, faith and purity. All good leadership flows from this.

Verse 13

In [1 Timothy 1:3](#), Paul shared with Timothy the reason he sent him to Ephesus:

(3) As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, – 1 Timothy 1:3 ESV

There were people in Ephesus getting caught up in false teaching. Paul wanted Timothy to instruct the believers there in the truth. Note here how Timothy was to do this.

First, Paul encouraged Timothy to devote himself to the public reading of Scripture. Remember here that copies of the Scripture were very rare in those days. People would only hear the reading of Scripture when they got

together. Paul wanted Timothy to read the Scriptures publicly so that people would have an opportunity to be exposed to their truth and recognize the error around them.

Second, Timothy was also to devote himself to exhortation. The word exhortation is translated from παράκλησις (paráklēsis), which means to encourage, comfort or admonish. This was done through preaching and applying the truth of the Scriptures. Timothy was to challenge believers in Ephesus in their spiritual walk. He was to comfort them in their pain and suffering. He was to strengthen them in their weakness. The word of Scripture was the basis for this challenge, comfort and strengthening. He was to apply the truth of these Scripture to their life circumstances.

Finally, Timothy was to teach the church in Ephesus. The word teach here is διδασκαλία (didaskalía). It

refers to instruction in doctrine and Biblical precepts. The church needed to understand who God was and what He had done for them.

Understand here that Timothy could not truly encourage or comfort the church until he understood the doctrinal truth and precepts of Scripture. The church could not truly receive Timothy's exhortations until they understood the basis for them. That basis was found in the doctrines and precepts of Scripture. Paul encouraged his son in the faith to teach these doctrines and spiritual concepts. He then challenged him to apply them to life by comforting, encouraging, and challenging the Ephesian church through his exhortations.

Verse 14

The apostle reminds Timothy here about a special gift he had been given.

The word gift in the original language is χάρισμα (chárisma). It refers to a special grace given by God to His people. It differs from a natural ability. Paul uses the same word when he speaks of these special gifts in [1 Corinthians 12](#), where he says:

(7) To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. (8) For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, (9) to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, (10) to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. (11) All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to

*each one individually as he wills. –
1 Corinthians 12:7-11 ESV*

What is important to note here is that Paul tells the Corinthians that these gifts were empowered and apportioned by the Holy Spirit as he willed. It appears that the Spirit of God had given Timothy a special gift to assist him in His calling.

This gift was not natural to Timothy, nor was He born with it. It was given to him by prophecy when the council of elders laid hands on him. Note two details here.

First, the gift was given to him by prophecy. Prophecy is a word from the Lord. In this case, a word from the Lord was given to Timothy about his ministry. The proof of that prophecy was found in the fact that along with the word came the empowering of God through a special gift.

Second, that gift was given to Timothy when the church elders laid hands on him, praying and committing him to the ministry God had revealed to them through that prophetic word.

In light of this prophetic word and anointing, Paul now challenges Timothy not to neglect his gift. The word translated neglect here is ἀμελέω (ameléō). It means to be careless or unconcerned. Paul is showing us here that it is quite possible to ignore or neglect a spiritual gift from God. There are many Christians who are unaware of their calling and gifting. Others, through lack of discipline and effort, never reach their potential. Then some hear the call of God but hesitate, through lack of faith, to step out into the purpose of God for their gift. Paul's challenge to Timothy speaks to all believers, for as Paul says in [1 Corinthians 12:7](#):

(7) To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. – 1 Corinthians 12:7 ESV

Verse 15

Timothy is encouraged here to “practice these things.” To what things is Paul referring here? He has just told Timothy to devote himself to the public reading of Scripture, exhortation, and teaching. He also encouraged him not to neglect the spiritual gift given to him. These are likely the “things” Paul refers to in this context. Note what Paul tells Timothy about these matters.

First, he was to practice these things. The word used here is μελετάω (meletáō). It means to meditate or ponder. Timothy was to carefully consider what Paul was saying about his gifts and put those gifts into practice in the church. He was to seek

the Lord about preaching and teaching the people in Ephesus. If God has called you to a specific role, you must take the time to seek Him about that role. He has a purpose for you in what He has gifted you to do. Too many people receive their gift and run with it but don't take the time to seek the heart of God for how to use it. The word μελετάω (meletáō) implies truly seeking God in our ministry.

Second, Paul told Timothy to immerse himself in these things. The word translated immerse is ἰόθι (ísthi), which means to be. The idea seems to be that Timothy was to be devoted to the things Paul was teaching in the letter. He was not to be distracted but to dedicate his life and whole being to living out what Paul taught.

The goal of seeking God in these things and devoting his whole being to demonstrate what Paul taught was to progress in his faith and personal walk

with God. People would see this progress and be inspired to do likewise.

Verse 16

The apostle concludes the chapter by encouraging Timothy to watch himself and his teaching closely. Note that Timothy's teaching and lifestyle are important here. I have known pastors to be very diligent in teaching truth but not so careful about their lifestyle. We have all seen ministries destroyed as a result. We also know very moral pastors who have been caught up in error. Paul calls us to watch the truth we teach and our lives closely. Both must walk hand in hand if we are to have a ministry that honours our Lord.

Note how Paul tells Timothy that he would save himself and his hearers by watching his life and ministry. It is important to note that the word save does not necessarily speak of the

salvation Jesus came to offer. The word σωζω (sōzō) means to deliver, preserve or keep from destruction or danger. Timothy's salvation was based on the finished work of Jesus Christ. That salvation was not dependent on how much he watched his life.

When Paul speaks of Timothy saving himself and his hearers, he is telling Timothy that by teaching the truth and carefully watching his life, he would keep himself and the church from serious harm and danger. Too many churches have been destroyed by false teaching and those who have not walked faithfully with the Lord. Too many believers have made shipwrecks of their faith by falling into error and immorality.

In saying this, I do not want to underestimate the fact that the preaching of truth and the godly lifestyle of sincere believers have brought many to faith in Jesus Christ.

1 TIMOTHY 5

Verse 1

In this chapter, the apostle gives some general instructions to Timothy about relationships and ministries in the local church. He begins with a word about men.

First, Paul tells Timothy that he was not to rebuke an older man. The word ἐπιπλήσσω (epipléssō) used here is derived from *epí*, meaning upon and *pléssō* meaning to strike. The idea is to beat someone. Beating someone is not something we do with our fists alone. We can beat someone with our words as well. Paul is calling for patience and respect for older men. He

tells Timothy that he was to treat older men as he would treat a father. The commandment of the Old Testament was quite clear about how one was to treat a father:

(12) "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you. – Exodus 20:12 ESV

Notice the connection between honouring one's father and mother and living long in the land the Lord gave them. The idea here is that God would take this land from them if they did not honour their father or mother.

Jesus took this a step further when He said:

(4) For God commanded, 'Honor your father and your mother,' and 'Whoever reviles father or mother

*must surely die.’ – Matthew
15:4 ESV*

The death penalty was given to those who reviled a father or mother.

Paul challenges Timothy here to treat every older man with dignity and respect.

Second, Paul tells Timothy that he was to treat younger men as brothers. There is a bond between brothers. They stand up for each other. An insult to one insults the other. The bond of brotherhood is such that they support and defend each other in times of need. There is a connection between brothers that does not exist with a stranger or even friends outside the home. Paul encourages Timothy to treat a younger man as a brother for whom he is accountable.

Verse 2

The apostle tells Timothy that every older woman should be treated as a mother. As we saw in the comments in verse 1, death was the penalty for reviling a mother in the Old Testament. Mothers were to be respected and treated with dignity. Like the older men, they were not to be reviled or mistreated by words, actions or attitudes. Timothy was to be careful to show grace and patience with older women, protecting and honouring them like he would his mother.

Younger women were to be treated as sisters. A sister is one we want to protect from harm and abuse. More than this, however, Paul specifically tells Timothy that he was to treat younger women with all purity. The word ἁγνεῖα (hagneía) refers to one's moral attitude toward his sister. This implies purity of thought and intention toward every young woman in the community.

Verse 3

Another group mentioned here is widows. Understand that widows had a particular struggle in those days. Many of these women were uneducated and unemployed. When their husband died, their source of income went with him, so they were genuinely needy.

Paul tells Timothy to honour these women. To honour them involves providing for their need. Note here that the apostle expected that the church not only be involved in preaching and teaching the truth but also demonstrating the love of Christ in the community through the care of those who were genuinely in need.

Observe the words "*widows who are truly widows.*" A genuine widow had no one to care for her. Some widows had family to provide food and shelter. Others had no family support and were genuinely in need. A genuine widow

had no support system behind her. Paul will explain this in the next verses.

Verse 4

While all widows were to be treated with dignity and respect, Paul expected that if she had a family, her family would care for her and not leave this up to the church. A widow's children or grandchildren were to show godliness by caring for a mother or grandmother in need. According to Paul, caring for a mother or grandmother in need was godly and "pleasing in the sight of God."

God has placed us under an obligation to care for and provide for our own families. This will cost us time, resources and energy, but it is what God expects of us, and it pleases Him when we take this responsibility seriously.

Verse 5

The word widow here is χήρα (chêra). It refers to a woman who has lost her husband. While Paul understood the general meaning of this word, he made a distinction between widows who had family to care for them and widows who were all alone. He describes women who had lost their husbands and had no family to look after them as “truly widows.”

According to Paul, these women, who had no one to care for them, were forced to trust in God alone. Their hope was in Him to provide, and they prayed day and night for His supply, encouragement and support.

Verse 6

In Paul’s mind, there was a second type of widow. He describes this woman as “self-indulgent.” The word he uses here

is σπαταλάω (spataláō). It speaks of a person who lives in excess, luxury and pleasure, gratifying the needs of the flesh. Self-indulgent people live to please themselves. According to Paul, this kind of widow was “dead even while she lived.”

Consider this for a moment. In a day when most women stayed at home occupied with household duties, what did this woman do with her day, now that she had no husband? In this case, Paul describes a widow who spent her day indulging in every pleasure this world had to offer. Her concern was not to minister to others, but to fill her life with every pleasure and delight.

For Paul, there is no meaning in a life that seeks only the things of this world. Those whose goal in life is to please themselves will soon find their lives empty of meaning. This kind of life was not the life of a true believer. A widow

who lived this way lived an empty life devoid of true purpose.

Verse 7

Note the phrase "*command these things.*" The word translated as command is παραγγέλλω (paraggéllō). It is derived from pará, meaning to the side of, and aggéllō, which means to tell or to declare. Paul seems to be telling Timothy to go to the self-indulgent widows described in verse 6 and challenge them about their lifestyle. He hoped that by doing this, these widows would correct their ways, repent and live a godly life, beyond reproach.

Verse 8

According to Paul, it was a divine obligation for Christians to care for the members of their family.

Note first that this obligation was toward members of his household. The word household is οἰκεῖος (oikeíos) which refers to a particular home with its immediate family members. Likely this would speak of mother, father and unmarried brothers or sisters.

Paul does not limit the believer's responsibility, however, to the immediate family. He speaks here also about "his relatives." The word he uses is ἰδίος (ídios) which speaks of anything that belongs to an individual. The King James Version translates this as "his own." The idea is that we are to care for everyone who belong to us or our family. This seems to extend our responsibility from the immediate family to the extended family of relatives.

Paul feels so strongly about the need for believers to care for their immediate and extended families that he tells those who refused to do so that they had denied the faith and were worse

then an unbeliever. Observe two details here.

First, whoever did not care for his family denied the faith. One of the ten commandments of the Old Testament states:

(12) "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you. – Exodus 20:12 ESV

Consider also the law of the Old Testament about a brother who died without giving his wife a son to carry on the family name:

(5) "If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the dead man shall not be married outside the family to a stranger. Her husband's brother shall go in to her and take her as his wife and perform the duty of a

husband's brother to her. (6) And the first son whom she bears shall succeed to the name of his dead brother, that his name may not be blotted out of Israel. – Deuteronomy 25:5-6 ESV

This law required a brother to marry and provide a child for his deceased brother's widow so that she would not bear the shame of being childless and ending her husband's line.

The Old Testament required that a rebellious son be stoned to death. Consider the law of [Deuteronomy 21](#):

(18) "If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and, though they discipline him, will not listen to them, (19) then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his

city at the gate of the place where he lives, (20) and they shall say to the elders of his city, 'This our son is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard.' (21) Then all the men of the city shall stone him to death with stones. So you shall purge the evil from your midst, and all Israel shall hear, and fear. – Deuteronomy 21:18-21 ESV

What is important to note here is that the family unit was very important to God. There were strict punishments for dishonouring or neglecting ones familial responsibilities. Paul underlines this by telling believers that if they neglected their family, they were denying the faith.

Second, Paul tells Timothy that those who did not provide for their family members in need were worse than an unbeliever. The idea seems to be that

even unbelievers understood their obligations toward the members of their own family. Consider what the Lord Jesus taught in [Matthew 5](#):

(46) For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? (47) And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? (48) You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. – Matthew 5:46-48 ESV

While the context is different from what Paul is teaching here, what Jesus is saying is that even unbelievers greet their brothers and sisters and love those who love them. If as a believer you don't love, care for and greet your own family, your attitude and actions are worse than those of an unbeliever who does this naturally.

Verse 9

The apostle Paul speaks about “enrolling” a widow here in the verse. It is unclear what this enrolment was about. There seem to be two opinions here in this regard.

Some commentators believe that the names of these women were put on a list for church support. Others feel they were enrolled as servants of the church, involved in a variety of local ministries. Either way, they would likely have been supported by the church in some way for services rendered.

Note that there were qualifications for being enrolled as a widow. Paul tells Timothy that an “enrolled widow” was to be at least sixty years old. From the context of verse 11, we see that the reason for this was that the passion of younger women might distract them, and they might abandon their Christian service to the church and choose to be

married instead. Paul's preference for younger widows was that they be remarried and supported by a Christian husband.

Note a second requirement here for those widows enrolled by the church on this list. They were to be the wife of one husband. There are various opinions about this.

Some see here a reference to being married to only one man in a lifetime. The problem with this is that there would have been women who, through, no fault of their own, lost two husbands, being widowed twice. If the "one husband" rule implied only one husband in a lifetime, these legitimate widows would have been excluded from enrolment, even though they did no wrong.

Others see the "one husband" rule to apply to one husband at a time. In other words, the widow was faithful to

her husband as long as he was alive. This may seem to be a more realistic understanding of what Paul is saying here.

Verse 10

Paul goes on to describe the qualifications for a widow to be “enrolled” by the church (likely as a servant).

An enrolled widow was to have a reputation for good works. The apostle gives some examples of “good works” to Timothy here in the verse.

First, an enrolled widow who had children was to have a reputation for bringing up her children well. Note the phrase: *“If she had brought up children.”* The understanding here is that not all widows would have children. If she did, it was their responsibility to take care of her so that she would not be a burden to the

church. Some widows may have had children who died or were unable to care for them. For a widow to be enrolled as a church servant, she needed to prove faithful in the responsibility of raising her family.

The next good work that Timothy was to watch for in a widow to be enrolled for church service was that she had shown hospitality in her life. The word hospitality is φιλόξενος (philóxenos). It comes from the word *phílos*, meaning love or friendship, and *xénos*, meaning stranger. In this context, hospitality refers to a love for strangers. The concept of showing kindness to strangers is quite foreign to us in our day. Hospitality is generally relegated to our friends and close associates. This widow, however, was not to limit her acts of compassion and generosity to those who loved her. She was to be willing to love those she didn't know

and show compassion to whomever she encountered in the day.

Next, a widow enrolled as a church servant was to have demonstrated humble servanthood toward the saints. She was to have washed the feet of the saints. The phrase "*washed the feet of the saints*" is probably best seen in a figurative sense. This widow may never have gotten down on her knees with a basin of water to wash the feet of a saint, but it was not beneath her to do so. She was not so proud that she would not humble herself to minister to the needs of God's servants. She would willingly sacrifice herself, her resources and her time to care for her brothers and sisters in Christ.

The widow was also to demonstrate care for those who were afflicted. The word translated as "care" here is ἐπαρκέω (eparkéō), which means to hold up or to hold back. Imagine a defenceless soldier in battle being

bombarded by a slew of arrows, expecting at any time that one of those arrows will strike a vital organ. Along comes a friend with a shield. That friend stands between him and the arrows, shield in hand, holding back the danger until he can catch his breath and find a safe place to shelter. That friend has held back the force of evil, relieved him, and demonstrated true care and concern. This was to be the attitude that the enrolled widow was to demonstrate.

According to Paul, the widow enrolled by the church for service was to be devoted to every good work. That is to say, her life was to demonstrate a passion for doing good in the community.

Verse 11

Paul uses strong words here in this verse. He tells Timothy to “refuse to

enroll younger widows.” The word translated refuse here is παραιτέομαι (paraitéomai). It is derived from *pará* implying, in this sense, something more than is proper and *aitéō* meaning to beg. The idea is to beg for something that is not acceptable. Of course, when someone does this, their request will be ignored or rejected.

Younger widows (under 60 years of age according to verse 9) were not to be enrolled in the list of church as widows. Consider this for a moment. If the enrollment spoken of here is simply to receive church support, why would a younger widow be refused the church’s aid if she was legitimately in need? This leads us to assume that the enrollment spoken of here was more than financial or practical support of food and shelter. The widow was being taken into the service of the church and represented

the church in practical ministries in the body and community.

The reason a younger widow was not to be enrolled in this full-time service of the church was because she was still of marriageable age, and she may abandon her church responsibilities to marry. Younger widows were not to be placed under a vow of faithfulness to church service as long as there was still an opportunity for them to marry and be part of a family. She was to wait until she was at least sixty years of age before committing the rest of her life to full-time church service. This way she would not make a vow to full-time service and break it to be married instead.

Verse 12

Younger widows were not to be enrolled as church servants because they may want to remarry and, in doing

so, "*incur condemnation for having abandoned their former faith.*" We need to break down what Paul is saying here to get a sense his meaning.

Understand the purpose of the enrolment as widows. These women were committing themselves to act as full-time servants of Jesus Christ and His church. They were devoting the remainder of their lives to His kingdom. What would happen if a widow determined that she wanted to get married instead of continuing in her commitment to the church? She would be forced to abandon her full-time commitment to the church for her husband.

Notice the phrase "*their former faith.*" What was the faith these widows were abandoning? The word faith here is πίστις (pístis) and refers to a conviction. It can be a commitment to a belief or way of life. By marrying, the widow was not abandoning her belief in God or

even the doctrines of the church. What she was abandoning, however, was her faith conviction that God wanted her to serve as a celibate in full-time ministry. By agreeing to be enrolled, the widow was making this faith commitment. By choosing to abandon this role, she was abandoning her former conviction. To avoid this, Paul determined that it would be better for younger women to delay such a decision in the event that they might want to change their mind, marry and have a family (see verse 14).

Verse 13

Wisdom and discernment come with age. Life teaches us many important lessons. We learn through our failures and successes. We come to see that there are consequences for our words and actions and are more careful, as a result, about what we say and do.

Youth is full of enthusiasm, but it is also filled with shortcomings.

Paul addresses the temptations for younger widows here. With no family to care for or full-time occupation, these women had time on their hands. It was easy for them to fritter the day away in meaningless activities and idleness. They had time to go from house to house gossiping and getting involved in other people's affairs, saying things they should not say.

Admittedly, older women can do the same thing, but they at least have the benefit of greater maturity and experience in life. That should, at least in theory, keep them from falling into the same trap. Paul encouraged younger women, with a full life ahead of them, to marry, have a family and occupy their time in that way (see verse 14).

Verse 14

While Paul did not require Christians to be married, he did encourage younger women, who were tempted to idleness and gossip, to find a husband, bear children and manage their households well.

Understand that the culture of that day did not provide great opportunities for women to be involved in full-time occupations outside the home. This meant that women who did not have a family to manage often had time on their hands. According to Paul, in verse 13, that free time could easily lend itself to idleness and gossip. To avoid this and the problems it would create, younger women were to marry and occupy their time with their families, giving the enemy no opportunity to slander them because of a lifestyle of idleness and gossip.

Verse 15

What Paul says here about younger women is not theoretical. According to verse 15, he had already had experiences with some of these women "*straying after Satan*." He is responding to known situations where younger widows, with free time on their hands, had caused problems for the church and were wandering from the faith and falling into the trap of the enemy through idleness, gossip, and getting involved in other people's affairs.

Satan is looking for those who have nothing to do. He finds great delight in wasting their time on meaningless activities that will ultimately lead them astray and compromise their faith.

Verse 16

Paul repeats what he told Timothy in verse 8. Church widows were to be cared for by their families (immediate or extended). There is some difficulty in the translation of this verse. The King James Version translates:

If any man or woman that believeth have widows, let them relieve them...

The New International Version excludes the word "man" and reads:

If any woman who is a believer has widows in her family, she should help them...

The English Standard seems to follow in the same line as the NIV and speaks of women only when it says:

If any believing woman has relatives who are widows, let her care for them...

The phrase τις πιστὴ used here literally means anyone who has faith, or anyone trustworthy. It is unclear if Paul is making a general statement about believing families caring for their widows, or if he is still speaking to women here.

What is clear is that believers were to provide for any widows in their family. Where there were believing relatives to care for a widow, the church was not to be burdened by this responsibility. On the other hand, it was to take on those who were truly widows and did not have anyone to care for them.

Verse 17

Paul moves now from the role of widows in the church and the church's responsibility toward them, to speak about elders.

The word elder is πρεσβύτερος (presbúteros). It refers to an old man

or senior but came also to refer to a senior leader in the early church. It is clear from the words, "*elders who rule well*" that Paul is speaking here about church leaders when he speaks about these elders.

Note what Paul has to say about "*elders who rule well.*" They were to be considered worthy of double honour, especially if they laboured in preaching and teaching.

Note first, that the elder who ruled well was worthy of double honour. The word honour in the Greek language is τιμή (timḗ). It refers to respect, esteem, dignity or favour. Some see a reference here to an elder being paid for his services. This seems to fit the context of verse 18. Payment for services may be a means to express gratitude and favour, but not the only way.

Observe also the phrase "*especially those who labour in preaching and*

teaching.” The phrase is interesting in that Paul seems to be telling Timothy that there were elders who focused on preaching and teaching and others who did not. While all elders cared for the spiritual well-being of the flock, it appears that not all were involved primarily in teaching and preaching, at least in a formal capacity.

The care of the flock certainly involved preaching and teaching, but this was not the only obligation of the elder. Visiting and ministering to individuals one-on-one in their homes, counselling and providing pastoral care and spiritual guidance were also of vital significance. While all elders need to know the truth, not all are great public speakers. Some share the truth quietly with individuals in their homes or coffee shops.

Consider finally the word “especially.” Paul uses this word, in conjunction with those who “*labour in preaching and*

teaching." The word labour is translated from κοπιᾶω (kopiáō) which speaks about becoming worn out, fatigued or weary through exertion and toil. The individuals Paul speaks about here have worked very hard communicating the truth, instructing and exhorting believers in the faith. Their role was a vital one in the church. Understand here that these were days when you could not go to the internet and download the latest teaching from great saints and teachers. There were no Christian books to buy, podcasts to listen to, or radio broadcasts to tune into. Believers did not even have copies of the Scriptures to read on their own. They were dependent on the teaching of faithful elders who studied the Scriptures and proclaimed them faithfully. These men were vital to the health of the early church, and those who faithfully taught the truth deserved great respect and reward.

Verse 18

While there are many ways of expressing gratitude, honour and respect for elders who instruct us in the Word, Paul challenged believers to consider the Old Testament law of [Deuteronomy 25:4](#) which says:

"You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain"

The Old Testament law required that a hard-working ox be allowed to refresh itself by eating the grain it was treading. The apostle reminded the church that elders who faithfully instructed them in the Word worked hard for their benefit and deserved something in return for their efforts.

Paul also quotes the words: "*The labourer deserves his wages.*" It is difficult to know where this particular phrase comes from, but the Old

Testament was very clear that a labourer needed to be paid for his services. Consider, for example, the law of [Deuteronomy 24:14-15](#) which states:

(14) "You shall not oppress a hired worker who is poor and needy, whether he is one of your brothers or one of the sojourners who are in your land within your towns. (15) You shall give him his wages on the same day before the sun sets (for he is poor and counts on it), lest he cry against you to the LORD, and you be guilty of sin. – Deuteronomy 24:14-15 ESV

If a labourer deserved his wages, certainly the elder who faithfully and diligently instructed them in the truth of Scripture also deserved to be compensated for his efforts on their behalf. While Paul did not personally obligate anyone to pay him for his services, he did teach that it was

acceptable to pay an elder for faithful services rendered.

Verse 19

An elder, because of his responsibility, has a greater standard of accountability. He is to be an example to the people of God in holiness, and his life will be closely examined by those he serves. No elder is perfect. Even spiritual leaders fall short of God's standard. The Bible does not hide the failures of great saints.

Paul tells Timothy, however, that he was not even to entertain a charge against an elder if it was on the evidence of only one witness. For a charge against an elder to be considered, there would have to be two or three witnesses to his sin. This was nothing new. The law of the Old Testament had the same requirement

for the average citizen. We read
in [Deuteronomy 19:15](#):

(15) "A single witness shall not suffice against a person for any crime or for any wrong in connection with any offence that he has committed. Only on the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses shall a charge be established. – Deuteronomy 19:15 ESV

Understand that elders would sometimes have to make unpopular decisions. It would be easy for someone to falsely accuse an elder of sin, ruining his ministry and testimony in the church and community. For this reason, any charge against such a leader needed to be proven by multiple witnesses.

Verse 20

When a charge against an elder was proven, he was to be corrected. If that elder persisted in his sin, he was to be publically rebuked. According to Paul, the reason for this public rebuke was so that *"the rest may stand in fear."*

The words translated *"the rest"* come from the Greek word λοιπός (loipós) which means the remaining ones. The "remaining ones," in this case, are the other elders in the church. The elder being publically rebuked was a reminder to the remaining elders of their obligations to live a holy life. According to Paul, these remaining leaders were to see his rebuke and "stand in fear."

The word translated as fear is φόβος (phóbos). In this case, it could also be translated as reverence, respect or honour. It also has a sense of terror. The idea is that the remaining elders were to stand in deep reverence for God. This implied a turning from sin

and anything that would dishonour His holy name. The public rebuke of an elder persisting in sin was a reminder to others of the seriousness of their responsibility in the church.

Verse 21

The apostle challenges Timothy here to follow his instructions carefully. Note several details in the verse.

First, Paul charged Timothy in "*the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and the elect angels.*" The idea seems to be that while the apostle wrote these rules and regulations to Timothy, they had the approval of God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. Even the angels of heaven witnessed what Paul wrote and stood in agreement with His instructions. This placed Timothy under a serious obligation to faithfully observe the instructions in Paul's letter.

Note the phrase “*elect angels*.” This distinguishes the angels of heaven who minister in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, from the fallen angels who serve the purpose of the devil.

Second, observe that Paul encouraged Timothy to keep the rules he had laid out without prejudging. The word translated as prejudice is πρόκριμα (prókrima). It comes from the word pró, meaning before and κρίνω, meaning to judge. The idea is that no judgment was to be made until all the evidence had been examined.

Finally, Paul expected that Timothy judge and act in all cases, with impartiality. The word πρόσκλισις (prosklisis) used here is derived from the word πρόσ, meaning to, and κλίνω, meaning to incline or have a leaning toward. Timothy was not to allow any prejudices, preconceived ideas or preferences to stand in the way of each

person in the church receiving a fair and impartial judgement.

Verse 22

Paul lays out three challenges to Timothy in this verse.

First, he was not to be hasty in the laying on of hands. We have an example of the laying on of hands in [Acts 6:3-6](#):

(3) Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. (4) But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” (5) And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and

Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. (6) These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them. – Acts 6:3-6 ESV

In this case, the apostles laid hands on these individuals to ordain them as deacons. What Paul appears to be telling Timothy here is that he was not to be quick to ordain people to public ministry. Church servants were to prove themselves qualified by their life and ministry before being recognized in any official capacity.

Second, Paul warned Timothy about taking part in the sins of others. If there is one thing the enemy can do to encourage sinful behaviour in the church, it would be to convince people that everyone is doing it. "If everyone is doing it, then it can't be all that bad." Paul warned Timothy about this attitude. He was not to fall into this

trap. Timothy was to know the truth and the standards of holiness as taught in the Scriptures. He was not to stray from this. He was to be willing to stand alone on the principles of God's Word.

Finally, Timothy was to keep himself pure. This purity involved keeping himself from anything that would defile his mind, spirit or body. He was to be fully devoted to God in every way, resisting the ungodly influences of the world, the flesh and the devil.

Verse 23

Paul offers a very personal word of advice to Timothy here. We learn that Timothy was not in the best health. It appears that he had "*frequent ailments.*" In particular, it seems that he had an issue with his stomach. We are left in admiration of a man who had so much sickness but whose influence was still so powerful in the early church.

Note that Timothy was drinking only water. There were not a lot of options in those days for drinks. We are not told why Timothy was avoiding wine and drinking water only. This may have been a personal conviction or preference.

Paul's advice to Timothy was to use a little wine for the sake of his stomach. The phrase "*use a little wine,*" may reveal that Paul knew Timothy's preference to abstain from wine. He also knew, however, that wine had a medicinal value to it that might help ease the troubling symptoms Timothy was experiencing with his stomach. Paul encouraged Timothy to take a "*little wine*" for medicinal purposes.

It is important to understand that God had not healed Timothy's stomach. He was living with these frequent ailments in the service of His Lord. Paul, I am sure, prayed for Timothy and these afflictions, but for some reason, God

had not healed them. His advice was to take wine for its medicinal value. Paul was not averse to the use of medicine to ease ailments that God had chosen not to heal.

Verse 24

Paul speaks of two types of sin here in this verse.

First, there are “conspicuous” sins. The word used here is πρόδηλος (pródēlos), which comes from the word *pró*, meaning before and *dēlos*, meaning manifest. In other words, the sins of some are manifest before all or known and evident to everyone. Imagine an elder being caught in an open lie or being exposed as unfaithful to his wife. These sins are revealed to the public and he is forced to confess his guilt.

The second type of sin is sins that “*appear later*.” The word ἐπακολουθέω (epakolouthéō) means to follow after.

The idea is that a person passes by without anyone noticing their sin but evidence of it becomes clear at a later point. Paul does not go into detail about how these sins become evident or exposed. In some cases, they are exposed in this world. In every case, they will be exposed in the judgement to come.

Some sins are hidden from our view. Sins of the heart and mind are not easily discerned. Sometimes the sin is only revealed when the individual has died. The words "*the sins of others appear later,*" however, show us that no sin will be left uncovered. Each of us will give an account of what we have done. We must all stand before the judgment seat of the all-knowing God to whom nothing is hidden.

Verse 25

In verse 24, Paul told Timothy that there were conspicuous sins and hidden sins that would be exposed later. He moves on now to tell him that what is true for sin is also true of good works.

Some good works are conspicuous. In other words, they are seen by everyone and many people benefit from these works. Consider the case of Dorcas who lived in Joppa.

(36) Now there was in Joppa a disciple named Tabitha, which, translated, means Dorcas. She was full of good works and acts of charity. (37) In those days she became ill and died, and when they had washed her, they laid her in an upper room. (38) Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, hearing that Peter was there, sent two men to him, urging him, "Please come to us without delay." (39) So Peter rose and went with them. And

when he arrived, they took him to the upper room. All the widows stood beside him weeping and showing tunics and other garments that Dorcas made while she was with them. – Acts 9:36-39 ESV

Dorcas is described as a lady *"full of good works and acts of charity."* When she died, the widows of that region showed Peter the tunics and garments she had made them. There was clear evidence of her good work in the community. Her good works were "conspicuous."

Other good works are not so clear. Some believers follow the advice of Jesus in [Matthew 6](#) where He taught:

(2) "Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others.

Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. (3) But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, – Matthew 6:2-3 ESV

These believers give in secret, with no need to be noticed for their good work. Paul is telling Timothy here that no good work will go unrewarded. The Lord God sees every deed done in His name and will reward those who honour Him in this way. The implication is that while we may never be noticed or rewarded for our faithfulness in this life, be assured that God knows your heart and sees your every deed.

1 TIMOTHY 6

Verse 1

Slavery was a reality in the world in which Paul lived. Even believers found themselves in this situation, both as slave owners and as slaves. The apostle Paul takes a moment here to address this matter.

Note Paul's advice to slaves who had come to Christ. They were to regard their masters as worthy of all honour. The word honour here is τιμὴ (timḗ) and speaks of showing respect and reverence. Paul expected Christian slaves to obey their masters and work faithfully in their service.

Admittedly, slavery was not ideal. Christians, however, who found themselves in this situation, were to make the best of it. They were to serve as honourable servants so that the name of the Lord was not reviled. They were to persevere in less-than-ideal circumstances for the glory of their heavenly father.

We live in a world cursed by sin. Terrible things happen in life. You may not be a slave, but you might be bound by physical affliction. You might find yourself in a difficult job or marriage. What do you do when you find yourself in such a situation? You choose to live for the glory of God. You choose to honour Him in your pain and affliction. You trust Him for the strength and grace necessary to live for Him in whatever situation you find yourself.

Verse 2

Paul goes on to speak to slaves who had believing masters. Consider what he told the Galatians in [Galatians 3:28](#):

(28) There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. – Galatians 3:28 ESV

As believers, we understand that we are all sinners saved by the grace of Jesus Christ. Not one of us could save ourselves. We have all fallen short of God's standard and were it not for the pardon and forgiveness of Jesus, we would all be lost and eternally separated from God our Father. As believers, we see ourselves on an equal standing as brothers and sisters in Christ and fellow heirs of eternal life.

Imagine a Christian master and his believing servant in the same household. They shared a common

relationship with Jesus Christ. They may have worshipped at the same church. Maybe other servants in the household did not know the Lord. These unbelievers did not have the same bond with the master as the believing servant did. It would be possible for believing servants to feel that they should have a special standing with their master because of their common relationship with Jesus Christ. They might feel that their master should treat them with special favour because they were brothers or sisters in Christ. Note, however, what Paul tells these servants.

Believing slaves were to serve their Christian masters with respect. Should believers take advantage of each other simply because they have a common Saviour? Does being a believer give one permission to disrespect a brother or sister? Paul argues that the opposite was the case. If believing slaves had

Christian masters, this obligated them even more to respect and honour them because they belonged to the same family.

A truly Christian master had the desire to honour his Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. By serving such a master, the slave also advanced the cause of Jesus Christ. This should give them greater motivation to be faithful and diligent in their service.

Paul urged Timothy to teach these things to the members of his church so that the name of Jesus Christ was honoured in their society.

Verse 3

The apostle Paul has been instructing Timothy about how Christian slaves should respect their masters, especially if they were believers. He continues here to show Timothy how strongly he

felt about this teaching. Note two details in this verse.

First, observe the phrase: "*If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" Paul is telling Timothy here that his teaching about slaves and masters was in agreement with the words of Jesus Christ. He describes his teaching as the "*sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" The word translated as sound is ὑγιαίνω (hugiaínō) and refers to something healthy, pure and uncorrupted.

Second, Paul goes on to describe his teaching as a "*teaching that accords with godliness.*" Not only were Paul's instructions theologically in sync with what Jesus taught, but they also promoted a godly lifestyle that honoured their Saviour.

Verse 4

In verses 4 and 5, the apostle Paul has some strong words for those who taught anything that was not in accord with the sound words of Jesus Christ.

First, such people were puffed up with conceit. Anyone who could deny what the Lord Jesus Christ had to say and claimed to know better than Him was guilty of great pride. They lifted themselves above the Son of God, claiming to know more than Him.

Second, those who denied the truth the Lord Jesus taught, understood nothing. Consider this for a moment. What is life all about? We were created by God for fellowship with Him. That fellowship was broken by sin, resulting in condemnation and death. The Lord Jesus came to this earth to save sinners. Only in him is there any hope of salvation and eternal life. As the apostle Paul himself said:

*(21) For to me to live is Christ, and
to die is gain. – Philippians
1:21 ESV*

The apostle defined his life by Christ and his relationship with Him. Life was all about Jesus Christ, serving Him, and enjoying Him forever. To deny Jesus and His teaching was to miss the whole point of life.

Third, the one who taught anything other than the sound teaching of Jesus Christ had an unhealthy craving for controversy. The word unhealthy is νοσέω (noséō) and refers to sickness. It comes from the word *nósēma* meaning disease. The idea is that individuals who promoted another doctrine had a diseased craving for controversy. Their hearts and minds were sick and separated from God. They stirred up strife and dissension among brothers and sisters in Christ by

their unhealthy fascination with falsehood.

Fourth, in their sickness of mind, heart and spirit, these people quarrelled about words. Understand that this was the tactic of the devil in the Garden of Eden. Listen to what he told Eve in [Genesis 3:1](#):

(1) Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?'" – Genesis 3:1 ESV

The devil attempted to twist the words of God to say what he wanted them to say and not what God intended.

Fifth, one of the fruits of this sick and distorted mind, heart and spirit is envy. The word envy is φθόνος (phthónos). It can be defined as jealousy with evil

intentions or thoughts toward those who are better, happier or more prosperous than I am in life. The mind that does not submit to Christ and the work of His Spirit is often self-centred and proud. It is a mind that grasps for attention, possessions, and reputation even at the expense of another.

Sixth, another fruit of the sick mind that refuses Jesus Christ and His purpose is dissension. It follows that a conceited and envious spirit will create division among brothers and sisters in the church. Anyone who rejects Jesus Christ and promotes a doctrine that is contrary to His teaching, will create controversy and division in the church.

Seventh, slander is also a fruit of a divisive, conceited and rebellious heart. The word slander is βλασφημία (blasphēmía) from which we get the word blaspheme. To slander is to blaspheme another person. That is to

say, it is to speak evil or to use words to hurt someone or their reputation.

Eighth, where slander and dissension reign, there will always be "*evil suspicions*." Falsehood will always raise suspicion. There will be those who believe these lies and blasphemies. Sometimes these lies will cause people to question even those whose lives are godly. Casting suspicion on true believers can damage their witness even if what is said is a complete lie.

Paul's words here are very strong. He took the rejection of Jesus and His teaching very seriously. It is not hard to see the damage such individuals could cause in the church of Jesus Christ.

Verse 5

Paul continues with his description of those who reject the sound teaching of Jesus Christ.

According to the apostle, these individuals were a source of "*constant friction*" among people. The word used here is παραδιατριβή (paradiatribē) which comes from two words. First, the word *pará* means aside, implying something untrue or wrong. Second, the word *diatribē* can be translated as waste or idleness. Together they carry the sense of wasting one's time in error or falsehood. The word is translated differently by various Bible translators. The King James Version uses the phrase "*perverse disputings*." The idea is that these individuals engaged in senseless controversies. The NIV and the ESV translate the word as "*constant friction*," implying that these debates and controversies were divisive.

These endless controversies by those who rejected the sound teaching of Jesus were the fruit of a depraved mind. The word translated depraved is διαφθείρω (diaphtheírō) and refers to

something that is defiled or corrupt. This was a mind that rejected the truth of Jesus Christ and promoted another doctrine. It was a mind that could not submit to God and His purpose through His Son Jesus Christ.

Paul tells us that this mind was also a mind deprived of the truth. In other words, the truth of Jesus Christ had not had its impact on these people. These individuals were still living in the darkness of sin and had never seen the light of Jesus Christ.

What is perplexing here is that while these individuals had never seen the light of truth, they still sought to live a religious life. Notice their motivation for such a lifestyle. According to Paul, they believed that "godliness" (or their definition of godliness), was a means of great gain. They believed that there was personal benefit to living a godly or religious life and anticipated a reward for their efforts. Not understanding that

doctrine of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, they sought to obtain their righteousness through their good life.

Verse 6

Those who rejected Christ believed that living a “godly” life was beneficial. Their understanding of this, however, was that their spiritual efforts would bring personal reward and give them a place in heaven. They believed in salvation by good works.

Paul rejects this doctrine but tells Timothy that true godliness is indeed beneficial if it is accompanied by contentment. The word, *contentment* in the original Greek language is αὐτάρκεια (autárkeia). It speaks of satisfaction in one’s condition.

Contentment implies submission to God and His purpose. It requires satisfaction in the truth and a surrender to the

gospel of Jesus Christ. It demands a willing resignation to the purpose of God for my life and a passion to walk faithfully in His plan.

There is no true godliness apart from contentment in God's purpose and truth. Contentment implies submission to God and His will.

Verse 7

Notice how Paul connects contentment with the fact that we brought nothing into the world and will take nothing out of it. We were born with nothing to claim our own. We will die leaving all we have achieved and procured in life for someone else. What benefit do we ultimately achieve from the accumulation of worldly goods and privileges? The end of a poor man's life is the same as that of a king, both lie side by side in the grave.

Beyond this, however, is the fact that the accumulation of possessions, pleasures and privileges does not necessarily bring contentment in life. You may have everything this world has to offer and not be content. Consider the words of Solomon in [Ecclesiastes 2](#):

(9) So I became great and surpassed all who were before me in Jerusalem. Also, my wisdom remained with me. (10) And whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I kept my heart from no pleasure, for my heart found pleasure in all my toil, and this was my reward for all my toil. (11) Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had expended in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun. – Ecclesiastes 2:9-11 ESV

Solomon saw vanity in the accumulation of possessions, pleasures, and privileges. In the end, he declared:

(24) There is nothing better for a person than that he should eat and drink and find enjoyment in his toil. This also, I saw, is from the hand of God, (25) for apart from him who can eat or who can have enjoyment? – Ecclesiastes 2:24-25 ESV

In other words, enjoy what you have, whatever it is. Be content with what God has given you. Find pleasure in God's blessings and you will find true joy and satisfaction in life. We brought nothing into this world, and we will take nothing out of the world. What is important is that we learn to rejoice in what God gives us for the time we are here.

Verse 8

Paul tells Timothy that he was to learn to be content with food and clothing. These were the necessities of life. Understand here that this does not mean that we should sell everything and live in poverty. What the apostle is telling us here is that our goal is to serve the Lord, accept His purpose, and honour Him in whatever circumstances He gives us. If God chooses that you live in poverty, learn how to honour Him in that state. If God should bless you with more, then learn how to be content and use what He has given for His glory.

Verse 9

According to Paul, those who refuse to be content with what God has given will fall into temptation. He uses an example of individuals who want to

become rich. Having money, possessions and privileges become a passion for these individuals. This passion rapidly becomes a god in their lives. Because of their passion and love for riches, these people may defraud a brother or sister to benefit themselves. They might resort to stealing or dishonesty to achieve their financial goals.

What is true of finances is true of worldly pleasures and privileges. Some people will abandon their marriage vows to satisfy their fleshly passions. Some will lie or slander another person to achieve a higher status in the eyes of their community or church.

Paul tells us that those who are not content with God's purpose for their lives will be tempted to stray from the path of godliness. In straying from that path, they will find themselves on a road that leads to ruin and destruction in the end.

Verse 10

The love of money or riches, according to Paul, is the root of all kinds of evil. What sins have not been committed because of a lust for riches? Murder, theft, or slander have all had their roots in the love of money and a passion to have more of it. Paul tells us that some have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many grievous wounds because they lusted for money and possessions.

We have, in our day, seen believers become distracted from the truth because they lusted for worldly goods. The message they preach is no longer the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ but of prosperity and wealth in this life. Such people have wandered from faith in Jesus Christ into worldliness and greed. They have not learned the benefit of godliness with contentment (see verse 6).

Verse 11

Paul speaks directly to Timothy here. Note how he calls him a man of God. This is a reflection of Timothy's life and passion. God had His hand on Timothy and had chosen and equipped him for service. Timothy was obedient to that call and was living a life that honoured his Creator and Saviour. While Timothy was a man of God, note Paul's warning.

The apostle commanded Timothy to "*flee these things.*" Paul has just written about the temptation of riches (see verse 10). This likely is what Paul is warning Timothy about in this context. Instead, he was to be content with what God provided (see verse 6). Instead of pursuing the things of this world, Timothy was to pursue five qualities in life.

First, Timothy was to pursue righteousness. The word δικαιοσύνη (dikaíosúnē), used here refers to doing

what is just and right. The measure of what is right is God Himself. To pursue righteousness is to pursue God and His purpose for our lives.

Understand that none of us could ever meet this perfect standard of righteousness. The only righteousness that is truly counted toward our salvation is the righteousness of Christ, who stands as our advocate and redeemer. Having said this, as believers, we are still to pursue a life of righteousness. We are to strive to be like Christ in our actions, thoughts and motives. We do this not to merit salvation but to honour the Lord Jesus, whose righteousness alone counts for our salvation.

Second, the apostle challenged his son Timothy to pursue godliness. The word for godliness is εὐσέβεια (eusebeia). It speaks about devotion and reverence toward God. This devotion and reverence impact how we live our lives,

the decisions we make in life and our attitudes.

Third, Timothy was to pursue faith. The word πίστις (pístis) speaks about a conviction or belief in the truth. The truth referred to here is about Christ and the gospel He came to present. Timothy was not to be distracted from this faith in Christ Jesus. In the context of [1 Timothy 6](#), Paul has been speaking about individuals who were preaching another gospel. These individuals had been tempted by the world and its riches. As a result, they had "*wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs*" (verse 10). Paul encouraged Timothy to be faithful to the truth of Jesus Christ by resisting the many temptations around him.

Fourth, Paul encouraged Timothy to pursue love. Understand here that Paul is not telling Timothy to seek this love for himself but to be one who loved. The word ἀγάπη (agápē) is giving love.

It is the love of the Saviour who died for those who were unworthy of His salvation. Timothy was to mature in his ability to love the unlovely and undeserving. He was to learn how to love others just as his Saviour had loved him.

Fifth, the quality of steadfastness was to be Timothy's next pursuit. The word ὑπομονή (hupomonē) is the ability to persevere or to remain under pressure without giving up. The Christian life is not an easy one. There will be persecution and trials ahead for every believer. Many will cave into this pressure and wander from their faith. Paul is telling Timothy that he was to stand fast and hold his ground when the attacks came. He was not to give up but to stand strong in the face of opposition.

Finally, Paul encouraged Timothy to develop the quality of gentleness. The word πραότης (praotēs) speaks of

meekness or mildness. It also refers to a submission to God's purpose. It does not fight against God and His plan. It does not draw its sword quickly when provoked but learns from affliction. It accepts rebuke and grows from it.

Verse 12

Timothy was to "fight the good fight of faith." Notice that Paul challenges Timothy to fight. The word ἀγωνίζομαι (agōnízomai) speaks of contending or wrestling. The battle before us will not be easy. It will require a great and sometimes agonizing effort on our part if we want to win.

The battle we are to fight is the "*good fight of the faith*." Paul understood that every Christian lived amid a battle. That battle is for our devotion and love. Satan bombards us each day with his arrows of temptation. He seeks to distract us from the goal set for us.

Many have wandered from that path and strayed from the truth. Others have fallen into the traps set for them and broken their fellowship with God. There are many casualties on the battlefield before us. For this reason, Paul challenges Timothy to fight. This means taking an active stand against the enemy, being vigilant and standing firm in the truth of the gospel.

Paul challenges Timothy to “*take hold of eternal life.*” The idea here is to sink your teeth into eternal life and don’t let go. Now I believe that when we are saved, we cannot lose that salvation. Having said this, however, I also believe that we are to do what Paul tells us here. We are to take hold of eternal life and not let go. That is to say, we are to hold onto God as tightly as He holds onto us. He is to become our passion and delight. He is to be our goal and our confidence. We must not let anything come between us.

Paul tells Timothy that he had been called to eternal life. This was the purpose of God for him. He was to strive for this. His life was to be dedicated to this eternal life. Note how Paul recognized here that Timothy had been doing just that. He had made a good confession in the presence of many witnesses. His life had declared that he had been called to this eternal life.

Verse 13

Paul has a charge to bring to Timothy here. He brings this charge "*in the presence of God.*" Because Paul charged Timothy in the name of God, it was something he needed to take seriously.

Note what Paul tells Timothy about this God before whom he brought his charge. This God was the One who "*gives life to all things.*" In other

words, all creation depends on this God. Nothing would exist without Him.

Paul's charge to Timothy was not just in the presence of the God who gives life to all things, but also before Christ Jesus. While we know that Christ Jesus is also God, Paul makes a distinction here between the Father and the Son. Observe what he told Timothy about the Son Jesus Christ. He made a good confession before Pontius Pilate.

Pontius Pilate was the one who sentenced Jesus Christ to death. Jesus, knowing the sentence before Him, did not shrink back, but remained faithful to death. Why did Jesus die? He died for you and me. His faithfulness was not only to the Father and His eternal purpose but also to us as sinners in need of a Saviour.

Verse 14

Paul's charge to Timothy is that he "*keep the commandment.*" Observe that the word commandment is singular. The phrase "the commandment." seems to imply that Paul has something particular in mind. The King James Version translators added the word "*this*" to the verse so that it reads:

"Keep *this* commandment." The word "*this*" is not in the original Greek but the translators felt it was implied by the context. The idea is that Paul is telling Timothy to keep the commandment he had just given him.

Paul told Timothy to fight the good fight, lay hold of eternal life, flee from the love of money and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness and gentleness. It appears then that this is the commandment Timothy was to keep. Note how Timothy was to keep this commandment.

First, he was to do so “*unstained*.” He was to keep this commandment free from blemish or stain. In other words, nothing was to tarnish his service and faithfulness to this command of God.

Second, Timothy was to be free from reproach. The word Paul uses here is ἀνεπίληπτος (anepílēptos). It is derived from the words “*a*,” meaning without, and “*epilambánō*” meaning to seize. The idea is that Timothy was not to give his critics anything to use against him. He was to live such a life that his enemies could never accuse him of error.

Finally, Timothy was to be true and faithful to his charge until the appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was to stand guard until he was relieved of duty by the Lord Himself. Until that time, he was not to let down his guard. He was to be faithful to the end.

Verse 15

Timothy was to keep Paul's charge until the appearance of the Lord Jesus. Note that while no one knows the day of Jesus' appearance, according to Paul, "He will display at the proper time."

The phrase "*He will display at the proper time*," can be somewhat confusing. Who is the "He" referred to in this verse? The context of verse 13 indicates that Paul has been speaking about both God the Father and Christ Jesus. The question we must address here is this: Who will display the appearance of Christ Jesus at the proper time? [Mark 13:32](#) may be helpful in this. Here Jesus declared that it was only the Father who knew the day and hour of His appearance:

(32) "But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son,

*but only the Father. – Mark
13:32 ESV*

It appears then that God the Father will display the appearance of His Son at that proper time. Observe what Paul has to tell Timothy about the Lord Jesus who would appear at the proper time.

First, He is blessed. The word μακάριος (makários) implies having the favour of God. Jesus knew the Father's favour and blessing. He was the perfect Son of God who fully satisfied the requirements of the Father on our behalf. The blessing and favour of God were upon Him.

Second, He is the only Sovereign King of kings and Lord of lords. The word sovereign is translated from the Greek word δυνάστης (dunástēs) meaning to be able. The idea is that He is all-powerful and has full authority. The words "King of kings and Lord of lords,"

reveal that Jesus Christ's power and authority are over every king and lord. There is no power or authority greater than His.

Verse 16

Paul continues his description of God the Father and the Lord Jesus from verse 15.

This God alone has immortality. The word ἀθανασία (athanasía) means without death. The idea is that God will never die. He is the only source of eternal life. There is no eternal life apart from Him and the work of His Son Jesus Christ.

The Father and His Son Jesus dwell in unapproachable light. The light here refers not just to the absence of night but to glory, holiness, and majesty. The triune God is glorious, holy and majestic. These qualities are so overwhelming that no human being

could ever approach Him and live. To stand before such holiness in our sinful state would be fatal. Our human frame could not take in such majesty and survive. Writing to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul said:

(50) I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

(51) Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, (52) in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. (53) For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. – 1 Corinthians 15:50-53 ESV

We will indeed one day enter the presence of God, but it will not be in these sin-cursed earthly bodies. We will be given new, imperishable bodies free of sin and its effects. It will also only be those who know the full pardon of Jesus Christ who will approach His throne with confidence:

(15) For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. (16) Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. – Hebrews 4:15-16 ESV

Next, Paul tells Timothy that no one has ever seen God nor can they see Him. Consider these words of Paul in the context of the conversation between Philip and Jesus in [John 14](#):

(8) Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us." (9) Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? – John 14:8-9 ESV

Jesus told Philip that if he had seen Him, he had also seen the Father. Jesus, as the Son of God took on flesh and became a man. As a man, we saw Jesus, touched Him and heard Him speak. We saw the human form of Christ and, in this sense, saw God, for He is God. Having said this, we need to understand, however, that God the Father and the Spirit do not have a body like we do. They are invisible to our human eye and we cannot see them. We can indeed know their presence. People have also seen manifestations of God's presence. The people of Moses day saw fire and

smoke when God descended upon the mountain but God's people were not to worship fire or smoke. These were not God but mere manifestations of a much greater presence that could not be seen by the human eye.

This blessed, sovereign, immortal, and invisible God is deserving of all honour and dominion. That is to say, every knee needs to bow to such majesty, holiness and sovereignty. He alone was Lord and King. There was no dominion or authority over His.

Verse 17

Here in verses 17-19, the apostle has a word for wealthy believers in the church of Ephesus.

He begins by telling them that they are not to be haughty. The word haughty is ὑψηλοφρονέω (*hupsēlophronéō*). It is derived from *hupsēlós*, meaning high and *phronéō* meaning to think.

Together they carry the sense of thinking highly of oneself. To be haughty is to be arrogant and proud. It is to lift oneself above another person. In this case, the reason the rich lifted themselves above others was because they had more money and possessions. The idea that money and possessions equal greater value and worth is foreign to the Christian faith. Consider what Paul wrote in [Galatians 3](#):

(26) for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. (27) For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. (28) There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. – Galatians 3:26-28 ESV

The rich were not to think of themselves as better than anyone else because they had money and

possessions. In Christ, the slave had as much value as the rich.

Secondly, Paul challenges the rich not to put their hopes in the uncertainty of riches but on God. How easy it is to trust our money and possessions. The reality of the matter, however, is that riches are uncertain. Consider the words of Jesus in this regard:

(19) "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, (20) but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. – Matthew 6:19-20 ESV.

Not only can our riches be taken from us, but Jesus tells a parable about a rich man who decided to build bigger

barns to store this accumulated wealth. Notice what God told him in [Luke 12](#):

(20) But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' – Luke 12:16-20 ESV

Our lives are in the hands of God. He can take everything we have from us in an instant. Our confidence cannot be in the uncertainty of riches. It must be in the Lord God alone.

Notice one final detail here. While riches are uncertain and unworthy of our confidence, they are provided by God for our enjoyment. Understand that those riches don't have to be expensive homes and fancy cars. The riches of God are often very simple and inexpensive. If you open your eyes you will see these blessings all around you. It might be the sunrise in the morning

or the colours of the flower that opens up in the afternoon. All these things are rich blessings from God given to us to enjoy.

Verse 18

Paul encouraged those who had abundant money and possessions to do good, be rich in good works, be generous and be ready to share what they had with others.

It is easy for us to say: "I worked hard for what I have. Why should I give it to someone else? Shouldn't I have the right to enjoy the fruit of my labours?"

While there is an element of truth to this, what we need to understand is that were it not for the grace of God, we would not have been able to obtain that wealth. We owe our lives, skills and everything to Him. If He is our Lord, then He is the Lord of everything

we have. He is Lord of our possessions, money and wealth.

Inspired by the Lord, the apostle Paul tells the wealthy in Ephesus to be rich in good works. He doesn't tell them specifically what those good works were to be but clarifies what he means by explaining that they were to be generous with what they had and share it with others. The Lord would make it clear to them what they were to do if they were willing to surrender what they had to Him as their Lord.

Verse 19

Paul assured the wealthy who were generous that they would store up treasure in heaven. Jesus spoke about this in [Matthew 6](#) when He taught:

(19) "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves

break in and steal, (20) but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. – Matthew 6:19-20 ESV

No effort for our Lord will be unrewarded. God sees all we do for Him and takes note of our service. Scripture speaks of rewards and crowns for faithful service. We can live our lives seeking our reward here below or we can live with an eye to a reward above.

Next, Paul challenges the rich to lay a good foundation for the future. Writing to the Corinthians, Paul said:

*(12) Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw—
(13) each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by*

fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. (14) If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. (15) If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire. – 1 Corinthians 3:12-15 ESV

Paul encourages the rich to build on the foundation of Jesus Christ with precious stones, gold and silver. They were to use their wealth to advance the purpose of God's kingdom. According to Paul, by doing so, they took "*hold of that which is truly life.*" True purpose in life is not found in expensive homes and clothes. It is not found in luxurious vacations and resorts. Paul tells the rich that to take hold of what was truly lifegiving, they had to be building on the foundation of Jesus Christ. This alone would bring true satisfaction in life.

Verse 20

The apostle concludes with some personal words to Timothy.

First, Paul encourages Timothy to “*guard the deposit entrusted*” to him. The word deposit is παρακαταθήκη (parakatathēkē). It is derived from *pará*, meaning with, and *katatíthēmi*, meaning to place down. The sense is that something has been placed with someone or given to them to keep securely.

The question we must ask here is this: What was the deposit entrusted to Timothy? Paul seems to give us a hint in the second part of the verse when he challenges Timothy to avoid irreverent babble and false knowledge. If Timothy was to guard the deposit by avoiding irreverent babble and false knowledge, then one might assume that the deposit entrusted to Timothy was the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Paul began this epistle to Timothy by reminding him why he urged him to remain in Ephesus:

(3) As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, – 1 Timothy 1:3 ESV

Timothy was asked to stay in Ephesus to oppose those who were teaching a different doctrine.

Paul would go on in [1 Timothy 1:18](#) to charge Timothy to wage good warfare by holding faith and a good conscience.

(18) This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, (19)

holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith, – 1 Timothy 1:18-19 ESV

The faith spoken of here is the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Later in [1 Timothy 4:16](#), Paul told Timothy:

(16) Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers. – 1 Timothy 4:16 ESV

Once again, Paul encourages Timothy to guard or to “keep a close watch” on his teaching so that it did not stray from the truth he had taught him.

Finally, consider Paul’s words in [1 Timothy 6:13-14](#):

(13) I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, (14) to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, – 1 Timothy 6:13-14 ESV

Repeatedly, in this epistle, Paul challenged Timothy to guard the truth that had been given him and teach it without compromise. It is reasonable then to assume that the deposit given to Timothy was the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Note that individuals in Ephesus were engaging in irreverent babble. The word used here is κενοφωνία (kenophōnía). It comes from the word *kenós*, meaning vain, and *phōnē*, meaning voice. The idea is speaking of vain and useless things.

Not only were these words empty and vain, but they were also “contradictions.” The word contradictions is translated from ἀντίθεσις (antíthesis). The word is derived from *antí*, meaning against, and *títhēmi*, meaning to place. The sense here is to oppose. In other words, what was being taught by these individuals opposed the truth of the gospel.

Notice how these vain teachings that opposed the gospel were “falsely called knowledge.” The devil is the father of lies. Consider what he told Eve in the Garden of Eden:

(4) But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. (5) For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." – [Genesis 3:4-5](#) ESV

Satan tempted Eve with the knowledge of good and evil. This, however, was not knowledge she was intended to have. Satan continued to push this false knowledge in Ephesus and promoted it in opposition to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Timothy was to stand firm against this demonic effort by guarding the deposit of truth that had been entrusted to him.

Verse 21

Paul encouraged Timothy to guard the deposit of truth that had been entrusted to Him and avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions taught by certain individuals in Ephesus. These individuals, who professed this "false knowledge" (verse 20), had swerved from the faith. In other words, instead of trusting in the gospel of Jesus Christ, they strayed into falsehood and error.

The apostle concludes with a prayer for the grace of God for Timothy.

Everything we have is a result of this grace. Timothy needed God's grace to guard and preach the truth entrusted to Him in a city that promoted falsehood and error. Paul entrusts Timothy, however, to this grace, knowing that the God who had called him to defend the faith, would also equip him for the task.

INTRODUCTION TO 2 TIMOTHY

2 Timothy is a personal letter from the apostle Paul to Timothy expressing his desire to see him. As he writes, Paul encourages Timothy to “fan into flame” the spiritual gift given to him (1:6).²

Timothy is a personal letter from Paul to Timothy expressing his desire to see him. As he writes, Paul encourages Timothy to “*fan into flame*” the spiritual gifts he had received. He encouraged him to persevere in the good work he was doing in Ephesus.

The apostle reminds his son in the Lord that the Christian life and service would not be without its obstacles. He was

not to get distracted, however, by false teaching and futile religious debates. Instead, he was to preach the truth he had learned from Paul without compromise, watching his life so that he would be an example for others to follow.

Paul exhorts Timothy to be bold in his preaching and Christian service because the days were coming when there would be a great turning away from the Lord. In light of this reality, Timothy was to preach, teach and exhort everyone to remain true to the Word of Christ.

Paul sets his own life as an example for Timothy to follow. As he wrote this letter, Paul was in prison awaiting sentence for preaching the gospel.

2 TIMOTHY 1

Verse 1

As the author of the epistle, Paul declares himself to be an apostle of Christ Jesus. The word apostle comes from the Greek word ἀπόστολος (apóstolos) meaning sent one or ambassador. Note here that Paul tells us that this particular calling and anointing as an apostle was "*by the will of God.*" Paul did not choose to be an apostle. God chose him. This was the purpose of God for Paul's life.

Observe also that the apostle's calling was not only "*by the will of God,*" but also "*according to the promise of the life that is in Christ Jesus.*" This was the

focus of his message and ministry –to proclaim the promise of life in Christ Jesus. In other words, he was an apostle of the gospel. That gospel was a message of new life and hope in Jesus Christ.

Verse 2

The epistle is addressed to Timothy. Paul met him in Lystra and saw great potential in him as a servant of God (see [Acts 16:1-5](#)). He invited Timothy to accompany him on his missionary journeys. Paul would see Timothy as a son and Timothy owed much to the apostle as a spiritual father. Note how Paul addresses Timothy as his "*beloved child*," demonstrating the tenderness that existed between them.

Paul expresses his prayer for grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus his Lord. For Timothy to do the work of God, he required the

gracious favour and mercy of God on his life. The work we are called to do demands the strength and wisdom of God. This is a gift from HIm to all who call out for it. Note also that Paul wanted Timothy to experience "*peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus.*" There are many obstacles in ministry. If we are going to face these trials, we need this peace to fill our lives and minds. In this peace, we have strength to endure and confidence in the affliction that comes our way.

Verse 3

The apostle begins with a word of thanksgiving to God for Timothy and a description of his ministry as an apostle. Note first what Paul tells us about his ministry.

First, he served God. There was no greater privilege than this. His calling

was very high for He represented the King of kings and Lord of lords.

Second, Paul saw himself in a long line of faithful servants. His ancestors also served this same God. The God Paul ministered to was an eternal God who existed from ages past. Paul was part of these servants, throughout the ages, called and chosen by God as His representatives.

Third, Paul served the Lord God with a clear conscience. As a servant of Almighty God, Paul was faithful. He had nothing to be ashamed of in his service. He could stand unashamed in his walk and ministry for the Lord God.

Paul assured Timothy, his "*beloved child*," that he remembered him constantly in his prayers both night and day. Timothy, as a son in the Lord, was a deep concern for the apostle and he regularly sought God's blessing for His life and ministry.

Verse 4

Note the depth of Paul's compassion for Timothy. He tells him that he remembered his tears. While Paul is not clear in this verse about what had caused Timothy's tears, many commentators believe it was related to Paul's parting from Timothy in Ephesus. Let's consider this for a moment.

We discover from Paul's first letter to Timothy that he had charged him to stay in Ephesus when he was going to Macedonia:

(3) As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine. – 1 Timothy 1:3 ESV

[Acts 19:21](#) recounts that while Paul was in Ephesus (see [Acts 19:1](#)), he had a

desire to go to Macedonia and on to Jerusalem:

(21) Now after these events Paul resolved in the Spirit to pass through Macedonia and Achaia and go to Jerusalem, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome." – Acts 19:21 ESV

Note how Paul describes going first to Macedonia, then to Jerusalem, and from there, being compelled to travel to Rome. Paul explains the reason for this trip to Rome in [Acts 20:22-23](#) when he says:

(22) And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, (23) except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. – Acts 20:22-23 ESV

Paul would be imprisoned in Jerusalem for his preaching. This imprisonment and the resulting trial would ultimately bring him to Rome where he would appeal to Caesar (see [Acts 28:17-20](#)).

When the elders of Ephesus heard Paul's prediction of "*afflictions and imprisonment*" they wept and embraced him, knowing that this would likely be the last time they would see him:

(37) And there was much weeping on the part of all; they embraced Paul and kissed him, (38) being sorrowful most of all because of the word he had spoken, that they would not see his face again. And they accompanied him to the ship. – Acts 20:37-38 ESV

Timothy may very likely have been among those Ephesian elders weeping and embracing Paul when he headed to

Jerusalem, imprisonment and trial in Rome.

The picture of Timothy's tears that day lingered with Paul and developed in him a deeper passion and longing to see him again.

Verse 5

Note the depth of Paul's compassion for Timothy. He tells him that he remembered his tears. While Paul is not clear in this verse about what had caused Timothy's tears, many commentators believe it was related to Paul's parting from Timothy in Ephesus. Let's consider this for a moment.

We discover from Paul's first letter to Timothy that he had charged him to stay in Ephesus when he was going to Macedonia:

(3) As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at

Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine. – 1 Timothy 1:3 ESV

[Acts 19:21](#) recounts that while Paul was in Ephesus (see [Acts 19:1](#)), he had a desire to go to Macedonia and on to Jerusalem:

(21) Now after these events Paul resolved in the Spirit to pass through Macedonia and Achaia and go to Jerusalem, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome." – Acts 19:21 ESV

Note how Paul describes going first to Macedonia, then to Jerusalem, and from there, being compelled to travel to Rome. Paul explains the reason for this trip to Rome in [Acts 20:22-23](#) when he says:

(22) And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, (23) except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. – Acts 20:22-23 ESV

Paul would be imprisoned in Jerusalem for his preaching. This imprisonment and the resulting trial would ultimately bring him to Rome where he would appeal to Caesar (see [Acts 28:17-20](#)).

When the elders of Ephesus heard Paul's prediction of "*afflictions and imprisonment*" they wept and embraced him, knowing that this would likely be the last time they would see him:

(37) And there was much weeping on the part of all; they embraced Paul and kissed him, (38) being

sorrowful most of all because of the word he had spoken, that they would not see his face again. And they accompanied him to the ship. – Acts 20:37-38 ESV

Timothy may very likely have been among those Ephesian elders weeping and embracing Paul when he headed to Jerusalem, imprisonment and trial in Rome.

The picture of Timothy's tears that day lingered with Paul and developed in him a deeper passion and longing to see him again.

Verse 6

The apostle begins the verse with the phrase, *"for this reason."* This connects what he is about to say with the fact that Timothy's grandmother and mother had passed down their faith to him. These ladies had entrusted this

faith into Timothy's keeping. They expected that he walk faithfully in it and be true to the Lord's call on his life. Timothy had an obligation to honour these ladies by keeping his faith.

Paul challenges Timothy, therefore, to fan into flame the gift of God. Paul does not explain the nature of this gift in the verse but it was a gift that came to Timothy through the laying on of Paul's hands. Commentators vary as they speculate about what this gift might be. Some see it as a spiritual gift for service. Others see it as a special endowment of power through his ordination into ministry. In other words, a special work of God's Holy Spirit enabling Him and giving him authority and power in his ministry in Ephesus.

How do you fan a gift into flames? Consider the embers in a fire. If we leave those embers alone, they will eventually burn out. If we blow on them and feed them, they will burst

into flames and consume the material we put in the resulting fire. This is how it is with the gifts of God. We must cultivate them and put them to use. The flames of all too many gifts perish because they are not used or fanned into flames.

Verse 7

The gifts of God must be fanned into flames. We must not hesitate to use them for His glory. All too many people fear stepping out in faith, uncertain of how people will respond. Others fail to use their gifts for fear of failure. This means that many gifts lie dormant and their embers burn out.

Paul rebukes this fear. He reminded Timothy that God did not give us a spirit of fear but of power, love and self-control. Let's break this down briefly.

First, in the use of our spiritual gifts, God has given us a spirit of power. The gifts of God, by nature, are endowments of power. They are not natural talents but special abilities from God. These gifts are miraculous. They break down the powers of hell and the flesh and, as arrows, penetrate through the hard shields held up against them. The gifts God gives are designed to break through the resistance set up against them to advance the kingdom of God.

Second, regarding the gifts of God, they are given, motivated and exercised in love. Those who belong to the Lord Jesus have been transformed into His image. One aspect of that image is love. Consider the love of the Lord Jesus who left the glories of heaven to come to earth for our sake. That love now resides in us. We are compelled by the love of Christ to minister to those who are bound in sin. We are

constrained to reach out to them with the gifts God has given us to set them free from oppression and lostness. His love overcomes our fear of stepping out.

Finally, the gifts of God are exercised in self-control. The word translated as self-control is σωφρονισμός (sōphronismós). It refers to discipline, clear mind and judgement. The King James Version of the Bible translates the word as "sound mind." Consider the words of Paul to the Corinthians when he writes:

(16) "For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ. – 1 Corinthians 2:16 ESV

What happens when we come to Jesus Christ? We no longer have the same heart and mind. The apostle Paul

challenged the Ephesians to be renewed in their minds when he wrote:

(20) But that is not the way you learned Christ!— (21) assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, (22) to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, (23) and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, (24) and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. – Ephesians 4:20-24 ESV

This renewal of our minds transforms our lives, and we no longer have the same passion for the world and its temptations. Instead, we find ourselves focused and disciplined in the ways of truth and godliness. Our minds have been set free from their former lusts

and desires and captivated by the Spirit to live for Christ and His purposes.

The spiritual gifts God has given us come with a renewed mind that is no longer captivated by the world and its lusts but transformed by the work of Christ into a sound and healthy mind that can know the leading of God and His purpose. What a difference this makes! Those who belong to God are led now by His Spirit and their mind and hearts have been transformed so that they can walk in fellowship with Him and know His will. For this reason, we have no cause to hold back. We must stand firm and be bold.

Verse 8

Because God has given us power, love and a sound and disciplined mind, we have no cause to be ashamed. Paul brings three challenges to Timothy here in this verse.

First, he tells Timothy not to be ashamed of the testimony about the Lord Jesus. Understand here that some believed the preaching of the gospel was foolishness.

(18) For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God. – 1 Corinthians 1:18 ESV

Timothy would face opposition in preaching the truth to unbelievers. They would mock him and his understanding of the work of Christ. Paul reminds Timothy, however, that the power, love and renewed mind of Jesus Christ were powerful motivators to persevere.

Second, Paul tells Timothy that he is not to be ashamed of him or his imprisonment. There is something about being in prison that brings about

a negative emotion. We do not readily declare that a friend or family member has been sent to prison. There is a certain shame in this, even if that person is innocent. Sometimes, we can feel abandoned by God in our prison cell. We can begin to believe that we did something wrong even when we were imprisoned for the cause of Christ. Paul encouraged Timothy not to be ashamed of him and his imprisonment. The apostle was confident that he had been faithful to the Lord. He was not ashamed to suffer for Christ or be mocked and insulted for His name. Timothy was to stand firm. He was not to lose heart. He was to see Paul's imprisonment as a sign of his faithfulness to the gospel.

Finally, Paul invited Timothy to join him in suffering for the gospel. When Timothy fanned into flame the powerful gift God had given him, he was to expect opposition. What soldier going

to war is surprised that the enemy shoots to kill? Timothy was to fight as a good soldier, expecting that he would be opposed, mocked and insulted. He might even be captured by the enemy and suffer at their hands like his spiritual father, Paul. The apostle challenged Timothy not to back down but to keep bombarding the gates of hell in the power of God no matter the cost.

Verse 9

Paul encouraged Timothy to endure hardship for the sake of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It was no shame to suffer for His sake.

The apostle reminds Timothy that Jesus saved us from our sin by His death on the cross of Calvary. He was not ashamed to lay down His life and suffer the shame of the cross for us.

Jesus also called us to a holy calling. The calling referred to here relates to a new life and purpose through the work of Jesus Christ and His Holy Spirit in us. Our salvation transforms our lives and gives us a new purpose. We are called to walk faithfully in that calling to His honour and glory.

Note how the apostle reminds Timothy that this salvation and calling was not a result of any effort or merit of his own. Timothy did not merit his salvation or his calling as a servant of God. According to Paul, the reason Timothy was saved and called to a life of godliness was because of God's "*own purpose and grace.*"

Timothy was saved because it was God's purpose for Him. God rescued him from sin, forgave him and called him into service. This was a work of God from start to finish. The question I ask myself is this: Why should I be saved from my sin and equipped to live

for Christ when so many people around me know nothing of this life and pardon? One thing I can guarantee is that I have the very same sinful nature as everyone around me. I am as much a sinner as anyone else. If I had any desire for God, it was because he put it in my heart. If I became a child of God, it was not because I was better than anyone else. Ultimately it was because God had a purpose for my life and graciously touched me and made me His own. I will not take any credit for being a believer. He deserves all the praise for anything good in me.

Observe the phrase "*before the ages began.*" Paul connects this phrase with the salvation and calling of God in Timothy's life. God is an all-knowing God. Before the ages began, He knew Timothy and the purpose He had for his life. Before time began, he knew my name and His plan for me. What a

privilege it is to live out that purpose by His grace.

Verse 10

The purpose of God from before the ages was manifested through the person of Jesus Christ our Saviour. He was the Messiah who came to save His people from sin. It is through the work of Jesus Christ alone that salvation is possible. Note what Paul tells us about the work of Jesus here. According to Paul, Jesus Christ, our Saviour, *"abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."*

First, Jesus Christ abolished death. This does not mean that since Jesus died on the cross, we no longer have to die. Unless He returns, we can all expect to die. When Paul tells us that Jesus abolished death, he is telling us that He has broken its curse. Consider what

took place in the Garden of Eden when Satan tempted Eve. Eve made it clear to him what the result of sinning against God would be when she said:

(2) And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, (3) but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" – Genesis 3:2-3 ESV

The result of sin and disobedience was death. That death was not just for Eve but for all of creation. The curse of death has affected everything on this earth. Everything dies and is subject to this curse.

When Jesus died on the cross and brought pardon for sin, He also opened the way to eternal life. These earthly, sin-cursed bodies will indeed die, but

that is not the end. We will receive new bodies, imperishable bodies that will live forever in His presence. This earth as we know it will be destroyed, but we will see a new heaven and a new earth where there will be no more sin or death. This is the power of the cross. Death will be abolished.

Second, Jesus brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. The gospel is the good news of salvation through the pardoning blood of Jesus Christ. This work of Jesus on the cross opened the door for forgiveness, removal of the curse of death, and eternal life in the presence of the Triune God.

Verse 11

The apostle has been telling Timothy about how the purpose of God for salvation was manifested through the coming of Jesus Christ to this earth. It

was for this hope that Paul had been appointed a preacher, apostle and teacher. Paul describes his ministry as three-fold here.

First, he was appointed as a preacher. The word κήρυξ (kêrux) speaks of a proclaimer or herald. This is the person who gathers people together to pronounce an important message. The preacher proclaims the truth to the masses of people who will listen to his proclamation.

Second Paul was also appointed to be an apostle. The word ἀπόστολος (apóstolos) comes from the word *apostéllō* meaning to send. The apostle was an ambassador. While there are many preachers proclaiming truth to the masses, the apostle had a very special connection with the Lord who sent him. Just as an ambassador represents the king in a very special way, these apostles had a particular charge to convey the specific purpose

of Christ to the church. They spoke on His behalf and especially represented His purpose.

Finally, Paul also saw himself as a teacher. The word used here is διδάσκαλος (didáskalos) and speaks of an instructor. As a teacher, Paul instructed the church in the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul's teaching was, in some cases, one-on-one. At other times it was larger groups or even through his writing. Our understanding of the great doctrines of the faith is due in large part to the teaching of the apostle Paul in his writing.

While each of these ministries has its unique flavour, Paul's purpose here is simply to show that his ministry was multi-faceted. That is to say, he did a variety of things in the calling of God.

Verse 12

Paul's calling as a preacher, apostle and teacher placed him before people who would often reject him and the message he proclaimed. This resulted in suffering and persecution. We should not assume that being a servant of God and representing the truth will be easy.

While Paul suffered in his presentation of the gospel, he was not ashamed. He gives two reasons why this rejection did not bring him shame.

First, the apostle declared: "*I know whom I have believed.*" Paul had personal acquaintance with the Lord Jesus. Jesus Christ was real to Him. He had complete confidence in His Saviour and knew His fellowship in the harshest of suffering. He was convinced of the truth of Jesus Christ, had experienced His salvation, and knew Him intimately. He was willing to lay down his life for this Saviour.

Second, Paul was convinced that Jesus was able to guard what He had entrusted to Him. There were several things Jesus had committed to Paul. Jesus had given His pardon and salvation to the apostle. Paul was convinced that Jesus would keep Him in that salvation until the day He returned. The Lord had also committed a ministry and message to Paul. Despite the suffering he had to endure, the apostle was convinced that the Lord would keep him faithful in the declaration of that message without compromise. God had committed a ministry to Him and Paul knew that the Lord would bless that ministry and support Him every step of the way.

Paul knew his Saviour and he knew His support. As long as Christ stood with him, there was absolutely nothing to be ashamed of. He represented the Lord and had His blessing. In this, he was proud, even in the midst of suffering

and rejection. He could lift his head high as a servant of Jesus Christ.

Verse 13

The apostle challenges his son Timothy to *"follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me."* The idea is that Timothy was to teach exactly what Paul had taught him. He was not to be distracted from this.

Some feel it is important to have individual thoughts and expressions of faith. They don't like the idea of following someone else and not having their ideas. They feel that faith needs to be upgraded to fit the needs of our society. This is not what Paul is saying here. He is challenging Timothy to follow exactly what he taught him and not to be distracted from it. Society was to submit to the unchanging truth of God's Word. God's Word was not to

change to meet society's wants or desires.

Paul encouraged Timothy to preach the truth he taught him. While the proclamation of unadulterated truth was vital, that truth also needed to be preached in a certain way. Paul charges Timothy to preach the pattern of truth he had heard from him in faith and love.

First, the unchanging truth of God's Word must be preached in faith. The word faith is πίστις (pístis) and refers to a conviction and belief. In other words, Timothy was to be convinced of the truth he preached. He was to be persuaded that the message he preached was true and reliable. I admit that there have been times I preached the truth but was not one hundred percent convinced that God would be faithful to His promise. Can you stand on what you preach, or are you merely speaking words and doctrines you are

not convinced of personally? There is a world of difference between preaching and teaching something we truly believe and teaching what the Bible says, although we are not convinced that it is true. Those who preach must believe what they proclaim.

Second, Paul challenged Timothy to teach the truth in love. It is quite possible to teach the truth without love. We can condemn those who walk in sin. We can preach without compassion for the lost. We can speak the truth in bitterness and anger of heart. Paul encouraged Timothy to examine his heart to be sure that what he preached came from a heart that loved as Jesus loved. He was to speak the truth with a heart that sought to bless and honour those who heard the message. He challenges Timothy to preach what he truly believed from a heart that loved those who would listen.

Verse 14

Notice how the apostle challenged Timothy to "*guard the good deposit entrusted*" to him. That good deposit is the gospel of Jesus Christ, its life and its truth.

Observe how this good deposit could be guarded in the words "*by the Holy Spirit who dwells within us.*" It is the ministry of the Holy Spirit to keep us in the salvation and truth of the gospel. He does so by empowering, leading and convicting us. He is our Teacher, Comforter and Guide. Without Him, we would fall, but with His enabling, we can overcome any obstacle that comes our way.

Note that the word "*guard*" is a command. Timothy had the responsibility of guarding the deposit. Understand, however, that this was not something he could do himself. He needed to rely on the Holy Spirit and

walk in His power for this deposit to be truly guarded. The strength and wisdom necessary to guard the deposit was in the Holy Spirit. Timothy was to tap into this source if he was to be faithful to the end.

Verse 15

Paul has been telling Timothy that he was not to be ashamed of his suffering as an apostle. At this point in Paul's life, he was imprisoned for preaching the gospel. Consider what the apostle would tell Timothy in [2 Timothy 2:3](#):

(3) Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. – 2 Timothy 2:3 ESV

Suffering for Jesus Christ is something we must be willing to do.

One of the most difficult things Paul had to deal with was seeing believers

turn their backs on him and his teaching. We see evidence of this in [2 Corinthians 10:1](#) where some believers accused him of being very meek when with them but bold in his statements when he was away from them:

(1) I, Paul, myself entreat you, by the meekness and gentleness of Christ—I who am humble when face to face with you, but bold toward you when I am away! — – 2 Corinthians 10:1 ESV

Men like Alexander who appeared to have confessed faith at one point (see [1 Timothy 1:19-20](#)) turned their back on Paul and did much to hinder his ministry:

*(14) Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds.
(15) Beware of him yourself, for he strongly opposed our message.*

In his trial, Paul lamented the fact that no one came to stand with him. They deserted him in his hour of need:

(16) At my first defense no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. May it not be charged against them! – 2 Timothy 4:14-16 ESV

Here, in this verse, Paul expresses his grief over the fact that "*all who are in Asia*" had turned away from him. He mentions two men in particular (Phygelus and Hermogenes) who may have been leaders in this resistance to Paul and His teaching.

We need to give Paul some poetic license here in the use of the phrase "*all who are in Asia.*" Ephesus, for example, was part of Asia at that time. There were believers in the church of Asia who stood behind Paul and his ministry. Timothy was the

principal among them. What Paul is lamenting, is a large number of believers who were falling away from the truth he preached.

Paul knew what it was like to have people reject him and his message. Jesus experienced the same thing in His ministry on this earth. Our calling is not to be approved by people but by God.

Verse 16

In those times of discouragement, when Paul felt abandoned and rejected, God brought households like that of Onesiphorus to him to refresh him in his need.

We know nothing about the household of Onesiphorus. The name only appears in this epistle. All we know is that they had a ministry to the apostle when he was in prison. They refreshed him and were not ashamed of his "chains." It

may be that they came to visit him or provided him with necessities. In any case, they blessed and encouraged Paul in his chains. Paul's prayer was that the Lord be merciful to this household for their kindness toward him.

Verse 17

We are not told where Onesiphorus lived but note here that he came to Rome and searched "earnestly" for the apostle. The impression we get here is that there was some effort involved in finding Paul in the big city of Rome. Onesiphorus did not give up searching, however, until he found the apostle and was able to minister to Him.

Not all ministries fall into our lap. Sometimes, like Onesiphorus, we must work hard to find what God has called us to do.

Verse 18

Paul was very grateful to Onesiphorus for the effort he took to find him and minister to his needs. We can only imagine what it would have been like for Paul to see this man walk through the door!

Paul's prayer is that the Lord would grant him mercy on the day of Christ's appearing. It was Paul's desire that Christ reward this man for his valiant efforts to minister to His servant in his time of need.

Onesiphorus appears to have had time in Ephesus, where Timothy was ministering at this time. It may be that he travelled from Ephesus to Rome to see Paul. What is clear is that Onesiphorus was well-known for his Christian service not only to Paul but also in the city of Ephesus.

2 TIMOTHY 2

Verse 1

Speaking directly to Timothy, Paul expresses his desire that he would be strengthened by the grace found in Jesus Christ.

Note first that Paul calls Timothy his child. Paul had a special relationship with Timothy. He had taken him under his wing and trained him in the faith. He saw himself as a spiritual father and mentor to him.

Second, Paul challenged Timothy to be strengthened by grace. This is a concept that is often difficult for us to understand. When we think of growing in our Christian life we think of all the

things we need to do to become strong in the Lord. Now, admittedly, we do need to be faithful and diligent in our spiritual walk and disciplines, but I have had many times in my life when I have attempted to attain spiritual maturity in my strength and failed. The source of my strength and ability to mature in Christ and be fruitful is not in human effort but in the grace that comes from Jesus Christ. He must be in our efforts for them to be fruitful. He must be our strength for us to mature. The Christian life is not about what I do so much as it is about what Christ and His Spirit do in and through us. We are saved by the grace of Christ but we must also learn to walk by His grace as well. We are born into the kingdom by grace, and we mature by that same grace.

Observe the source of strengthening grace. It is in the person of the Lord Jesus, whose death and resurrection pardoned us, gave us new life and

continues to sustain us in that life until He comes again.

Verse 2

Paul has just told Timothy that he was to be strengthened by the grace of Jesus Christ. His second word of advice here is to entrust what he had heard from him to faithful men who could teach others.

Timothy was to be faithful to what Paul had taught him. Much of this teaching is found today in the pages of Holy Scripture. Paul's counsel to Timothy was to be committed to the truth of the gospel and never deviate from that truth. There are many conflicting ideas in this world. Christian servants, however, must have eyes only on the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Anything that distracts from this central truth must be shunned.

Notice, second that the truth Paul spoke was in the presence of many witnesses. It is unclear who these witnesses were but they also heard the truth Paul declared to Timothy. Not only did they hear that truth but they also experienced its reality in the transformation that had taken place in their lives. The truth Paul declared was not his understanding but was confirmed by many people.

Timothy could be confident in the truth he had learned from Paul. What he had heard was not for himself alone. It was to be declared to "faithful men." Understand here that Paul is not limiting the teaching of this truth to this select group. Timothy was to preach the gospel to whoever would listen. Paul, however, gives him specific instructions to train faithful men in the ministry of the church. A vital part of the training of these church leaders

was in the basic truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

These faithful leaders were to be trained in gospel truth so that they could, in turn, instruct others. The gospel was not to be kept to oneself but carefully passed on so that others could learn and grow.

Verse 3

The third word of advice Paul offers to Timothy is that he be willing to share in suffering as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

Observe that Timothy was to “share” this suffering. Timothy was not alone in facing opposition to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul was in prison for his faith. The apostle invites Timothy here to join him in this great cause.

Note how Paul does not hesitate to ask Timothy (who was very dear to him) to

join him in suffering. The gospel of Jesus Christ was so important to Paul that he was willing to be imprisoned or even lay down his life for it. He does not think twice about asking others to join him in death, if need be, to communicate this vital truth.

Paul calls Timothy to be a good soldier of Jesus Christ. In saying this, he was reminding him that he was in the midst of a great spiritual battle. This battle demanded that Timothy stand strong and be willing to suffer. There would be opposition to the message he preached. Timothy, however, was to expect this. As a good soldier, he was to hold his ground and never give up, even if that meant suffering or death.

What is striking here is how Paul speaks so plainly about this matter of suffering for the gospel. The truth about Jesus Christ, in his mind, was a cause worth suffering for. To suffer for

this gospel, was not shameful but a great honour.

Verse 4

Paul reminds Timothy here that being a good soldier (verse 3) requires certain sacrifices in life. Imagine a soldier getting entangled in “civilian pursuits.” Maybe he wants to build a nice home for his family, and so instead of training for battle, he spends his time working on his home. Maybe he wants to advance in his career and so finds himself dividing his time between his career advancement and his military service. These “*civilian pursuits*,” will only hinder this man’s ability to be a devoted soldier.

Good soldiers must be devoted full-time to the cause they represent. They must not be distracted by other things but fully committed to those who enlist them. They must be ready at any time

to leave everything. They must be in good shape and focused if they are to represent their country well.

Paul is telling Timothy that he, too, must always be ready for battle. As a servant of Christ, he was to be alert, for he never knew when the enemy would shoot his arrow. He was to leave no unguarded place in his life. His sword was always to be ready. He was to be watchful and diligent, never letting down his guard.

Verse 5

The fourth word of advice to Timothy here relates to the importance of competing "*according to the rules.*" The apostle uses the illustration of an athlete. Imagine a runner of a cross-country race who chooses to deviate from the course laid out and take a shortcut to the finish line. Would this athlete not be disqualified from the

race for cheating? You can't win the competition if you are unwilling to compete according to the rules of the race. There is no winner's crown for cheaters.

So it is in the Christian life. If you want to receive your reward for a job well done, you must minister faithfully according to the principles of God's Word. You must stand firm in that truth and walk in God's purpose. You can't serve God any way you want. You must study the Scriptures and commit yourself to walking in absolute obedience. In our day we have seen all too many people ignore or compromise the truth. God's work must be done in His way by those who walk in obedience to His Word. If you want the crown, you must compete according to the rules.

Verse 6

There is a blessing for suffering and hard work. Paul illustrates this by using the example of a "*hard-working farmer*." Such a farmer gets "*the first share of the crops*." The law of the Old Testament permitted the ox who was treading the grain to eat the grain it treaded:

(4) "You shall not muzzle an ox when it is treading out the grain. – Deuteronomy 25:4 ESV

There is a reward for those who suffer and work hard. No service for God will go unrewarded. Consider the words of Jesus in His parable of the talents. Speaking to the man who had been faithful with his talents, the master said:

(23) His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into

*the joy of your master.’ – Matthew
25:23 ESV*

When Paul called Timothy to share in suffering for the cause of Christ, he also called him to receive his reward for faithful service.

Verse 7

As the apostle concludes his exhortation to Timothy here, he challenges him to reflect on what he had been telling him. The idea is that Timothy was to take time to meditate on Paul’s advice and challenges.

Note also that Paul believed that if Timothy was willing to “*think over*” what he said, the Lord would give him an understanding of its application. For Paul to say this, he had to believe that what he spoke was from the Lord and the will of the Lord for Timothy. He also had to believe that if Timothy was

willing to meditate on these words, the Spirit of God would give him an understanding of how to live in obedience.

Paul understood the need for God to work in his writing and preaching. It was not within his ability to bring a true understanding of spiritual truth. This was the work of God through what he said. Paul knew that unless the Lord opened eyes, minds and hearts, there could be no true understanding of these vital truths. He spoke the truth but God needed to apply it in a life-transforming way in Timothy's life.

How important it is for us to understand this in our ministries. Unless God chooses to illuminate, what I am communicating to your spirit, soul and mind, what I write is mere words. If He gives understanding, however, those words become life.

Verse 8

Timothy was to hear and teach the gospel Paul taught him. Notice three details about Paul's gospel.

First, the gospel was about Jesus Christ. There is no other name through which we can be saved. There is no other means of salvation apart from His shed blood. Any gospel that does not centre on Jesus Christ and His work is false.

Second, the message of the gospel declares Jesus Christ to be risen from the dead. This means that Jesus died on the cross, was buried and overcame the power of death on the third day. The resurrection is proof of Jesus' victory and the Father's acceptance of His work on the cross. Death could not hold the Lord Jesus. Because He overcame death, we have hope of eternal life through Him.

Third, Paul's gospel declared Jesus to be the offspring of David. Let me explain why this is important.

First, God promised that David's throne would be established forever. and that there would always be someone on his throne.

(16) And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.” – 2 Samuel 7:16 ESV

The fulfillment of this promise would be through the Lord Jesus as a descendant of David. The gospel writer Luke records the words of the angel Gabriel who said to Mary:

(31) And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. (32) He will be great and will be called

the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, (33) and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.”- Luke 1:31-33 ESV

Note what the angel told Mary here. The child she bore would be great because he was the Son of the Most High (the Son of God). He would receive the throne of David through the Lord God. His kingdom would never end, but He would reign forever. It was understood that the Messiah would be a descendant of David and He would reign forever.

Paul’s gospel declared Jesus to be the promised Messiah of the Old Testament, who died for the sins of the world. He conquered sin and death and reigns as Lord and King forever. To Him every knee will bow. The gospel

Paul taught, declared the Lordship of Jesus Christ over all.

Verse 9

In verse 8 Paul described the gospel he preached. He reminds Timothy here now that it was for this vital message that he was suffering. Note that, at the time of writing, he was "*bound with chains as a criminal*." Paul was in prison for preaching the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

While the message of the gospel is precious and beautiful to us, it is foolishness to those who are lost in their sin:

(18) For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God. – 1 Corinthians 1:18 ESV

In fact, for many, the gospel is offensive. I remember being in a coffee shop when a believer and an unbeliever left. It appears that on the way out, the believer began to talk to the unbeliever about the Lord. I was still in the coffee shop when the unbeliever returned and raising his hand with his thumb and index finger about an inch apart, he said to his friends: "I was this close to punching him in the face." He was offended that a believer would attempt to share the gospel with him. We are in the midst of a spiritual battle. When the arrow of the gospel pricks the unbeliever, they are repulsed and sometimes retaliate in anger.

Observe Paul's comfort in his imprisonment – "*The word of God is not bound.*" Paul knew that while he was bound in chains, the word of God was still going out. He was able to write to Timothy and encourage him in the truth of the gospel. He was able to

share with the guards the truth he believed. Timothy and many others like him were still preaching the truth about Jesus Christ in relative freedom. This word was having its effect in the lives and hearts of people throughout the Roman empire and many were coming to know the Lord Jesus as a result.

Verse 10

The Word of God was not bound as Paul was at this time. It was affecting the lives of men and women around the world. They were being saved and transformed by this wonderful truth about Jesus Christ. For this reason, Paul was willing to “endure everything.” He was willing to be imprisoned for this powerful truth. He was willing to suffer or even die for the proclamation of this wonderful and life-changing gospel.

Paul desired that the “elect” should come to know this salvation of God that

“is in Christ Jesus” and share in His eternal glory. Not everyone will come to know the Lord Jesus and the salvation He offers. Some will turn their back on Him. The word elect here refers to those who would hear the call of God and respond. I confess that I do not know why I should hear and respond to the gospel when I am as much a sinner as anyone else. I give the glory to God for giving me ears to hear and for softening my hard heart to respond. I do not take any credit for this myself.

While I give all glory to God, who worked in my life to open my heart to the truth, note here that Paul told Timothy that he was willing to suffer to proclaim the gospel for the sake of the elect. The fact that God saved me does not take away from the necessity of declaring the truth to those who need to hear. God worked miraculously through Paul’s proclamation of the gospel and brought people to Himself.

We have been given a life-changing message that God will use to transform lives. We must be diligent in its proclamation.

Verse 11

Paul is in chains as he writes this letter to Timothy. He expresses, in this context, his willingness to accept suffering for the "*sake of the elect*" (verse 10). Note here that he quotes a "*saying*." The saying is found in verses eleven to thirteen. While the saying is biblical in its content, it is not a quote from Scripture. Some commentators note the fact that it is written in poetic form and may have been a hymn used in the early church. We are uncertain, however, of its origin.

The apostle tells Timothy that the saying is trustworthy. While not a direct quote from Scripture, it was in line with

Biblical teaching and conveyed truth. Let's take a moment to examine the saying Paul refers to here.

Note the words: *"If we have died with him, we will also live with him."* The question we must ask here is what does it mean to die with Christ? The immediate answer that comes to our mind is dying as a believer in Jesus Christ and going to heaven to live with Him forever. While this is certainly an element of what Paul refers to here, we need to understand this phrase in light of Paul's teaching in [Romans 6](#).

(6) We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. (7) For one who has died has been set free from sin. (8) Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. (9) We know

that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. (10) For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. (11) So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. – Romans 6:6-11 ESV

Paul teaches the Romans that they were legally crucified with Christ when He died on their behalf. That legal transaction was not just on paper but it had a profound impact on the lives of every believer. Jesus' death set them free from the consequences of sin and opened the door for the Spirit of Christ to give them new life. Every believer experiences that new life even on this earth. Christ's death also sets us free from the dominion of death and its eternal hold on all who do not know the Saviour and His work.

The saying Paul quotes here refers to the new life we have received in Jesus Christ by our death with Him on the cross. That death brought us new life. That life is here now but also throughout eternity in His presence.

Verse 12

In verse twelve, Paul quotes two more phrases from the saying he referred to in verse eleven.

The first of the two phrases is found in the first half of the verse and reads as follows: *"If we endure, we will also reign with him."*

The phrase is not as easy to understand as it first appears. On the surface, it conveys the truth that those who persevere in their salvation and walk with God will reign with Christ. This seems to be the understanding of the writer to the Hebrews when he says:

(36) For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised. – Hebrews 10:36 ESV

Both of these verses convey the importance of endurance if we want to receive our reward and reign with Christ.

Listen also to what the apostle John saw in his vision on the island of Patmos in [Revelation 20](#):

(4) Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands.

They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. – Revelation 20:4 ESV

Note here that it was those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and had refused to worship the beast or receive his mark who came to life and reigned with Christ for one thousand years. There is a connection between enduring and reigning.

The Christian life is about holding fast to the truth of the gospel. Understand here, however, that not every believer lives to their full potential. Some fail in their walk with Christ, and like Peter, they deny Him. Like David, there are times when they fall into sin. Some even die in their sin and will stand before God to give an account of their lives. Others will waste their lives and not use them to serve the Lord. Paul addresses this in his letter to the Corinthians when he challenges them

to build their lives on the foundation of Jesus Christ with gold, silver and precious stones. Note what he says about those who fail to do so:

(15) If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire. – 1 Corinthians 3:15 ESV

The Lord does not abandon those who are His. Some of His children are unfaithful. They waste their lives in foolishness and worldliness and do not mature in Him and produce fruit for eternity. Paul tells us that God will not abandon these children. They will be saved but "*only as by fire.*" That fire of God's judgement will consume their fruitless works and they will stand naked before Him with very little to show for a life lived under His grace.

While God does not renounce those who are His, there are rewards for faithful service. Those who endure have the confidence that they will reign with Christ. Victory will be theirs and they will be more than overcomers in Him. This is great motivation for endurance to the end.

The next phrase in the saying is this: *"If we deny him, he also will deny us."* This phrase takes us back to the words of Jesus in [Matthew 10](#) where He taught:

(32) So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, (33) but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven. – Matthew 10:32-33 ESV

There is a sense here in which we could understand the word deny to refer to an eternal condemnation. Those who refuse the Lord Jesus and His work will be condemned to an eternity in hell.

Note, however, what Jesus said in [Luke 12](#):

(8) "And I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man also will acknowledge before the angels of God, (9) but the one who denies me before men will be denied before the angels of God. (10) And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but the one who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven. – Luke 12:8-10 ESV

Note particularly that Jesus offered forgiveness to the individual who *"speaks a word against the Son of*

Man."We understand from this that a person may initially deny the Lord Jesus, speak evil of Him and still be saved if they come to see the error of their ways and confess their sin. This was the case for the apostle Paul who initially denied Jesus but came to know Him and accepted Him as His Saviour.

There is something else we need to understand here, however. Consider the case of the apostle Peter as recorded in [Matthew 26](#):

(70) But he denied it before them all, saying, "I do not know what you mean." (71) And when he went out to the entrance, another servant girl saw him, and she said to the bystanders, "This man was with Jesus of Nazareth." (72) And again he denied it with an oath: "I do not know the man." (73) After a little while the bystanders came up and said to Peter, "Certainly you too

are one of them, for your accent betrays you.” (74) Then he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, “I do not know the man.” And immediately the rooster crowed. (75) And Peter remembered the saying of Jesus, “Before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times.” And he went out and wept bitterly. – Matthew 26:70-75 ESV

Peter denied Jesus three times as a believer. If we see the word deny in [2 Timothy 2:12](#) to refer to eternal damnation, we will find ourselves struggling to understand what happens to Peter here in [Matthew 26](#). Peter was not condemned for all eternity because he denied Jesus. Instead, he was forgiven for the sin of denying Jesus as a believer when he repented of that sin and “*wept bitterly.*”

Those who deny Jesus in the sense that they reject Him and His work will also be denied and rejected on the Day of Judgement. There is, however, a denial that is not related to eternal condemnation. This denial refers instead to grieving of God's Spirit and a break in fellowship with our Saviour. God steps back from us, withdraws His blessing and is grieved by our actions. The call of God, of course, is to do nothing that would cause Him to deny us fellowship and blessing or grieve His heart so that He is forced to turn His face from us.

Verse 13

The final statement in the saying Paul quotes here is this: *"If we are faithless, he remains faithful— for he cannot deny himself."* Peter denied the Lord Jesus but found Him to be faithful to him. Jesus pardoned him and opened

His heart to receive and use him as a powerful instrument in the early church. Our unfaithfulness to God does not diminish His faithfulness to us.

[Deuteronomy 7](#) describes God as faithful to His promises and love for His people:

*(9) Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations, —
Deuteronomy 7:9 ESV*

Jeremiah reminds us that the faithfulness of God is demonstrated every morning in His steadfast love and never-ending mercies:

(22) The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; (23) they

*are new every morning; great is
your faithfulness. – Lamentations
3:22-23 ESV*

This quality of faithfulness will never change in our God. As the Lord said through the prophet Malachi:

*(6) "For I the LORD do not change;
therefore you, O children of Jacob,
are not consumed. – Malachi
3:6 ESV*

For God to be unfaithful would be to deny Himself. It would be like me saying that I have no head. Faithful is who God is.

Verse 14

Paul encouraged Timothy to teach the church of Ephesus the truth of the gospel (verse 8) and the fact that good soldiers of the cross must discipline

themselves and be ready to suffer for the cause of Christ (verses 3,4). He was to remind his listeners that God was faithful (verse 13) and that they would know His life and reign with Him if they endured to the end (verses 11,12).

Note here that some in the church were getting caught up in quarrels about words. Paul does not get into details about the nature of those quarrels or words they were arguing about. What we need to see, however, is that instead of focusing on the message of the gospel, they were dividing minor details in theology.

We must have a good grasp of theology. The problem, however, is that not everyone will have the same perspective. Brothers and sisters in Christ will not agree on every point of theology. There has never been a time when every believer agreed on all points, and there will never be a time

on this earth when we will come to a complete agreement.

What we can agree on, however, is defined by Paul in [2 Timothy 2:8](#):

(8) Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel, – 2 Timothy 2:8 ESV

As true believers, we have a clear understanding that the gospel is centred on the person and work of Jesus Christ, who was born as man and prophesied Messiah from the offspring of David. He died for our sins and rose from the dead, overcoming sin and death for us.

There are many other details about God, our relationship with Him, and His purposes that are not so clear. We are to reflect on these things but arguing with other believers about these matters is not always beneficial.

According to Paul, it may even “*ruin the hearers.*” Who among us has not experienced a heated theological debate with each side seeking to prove the other wrong? Who among us has not felt belittled by a brother or sister who pushed their point too hard?

The fact of the matter is that there will be differences among believers in understanding God’s Word and purpose. We are to learn how to accept these differences and walk in fellowship. The message of the gospel unites us as brothers and sisters. We must not allow our differences on minor theological matters to divide what God has joined through the work of His Son.

Verse 15

Speaking particularly to Timothy in words that apply to us all, the apostle tells him to do his best to present himself to God as one approved.

In [Luke 18](#), Jesus told a parable about two men who went to the temple to pray:

(11) The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. (12) I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.' (13) But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' (14) I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted." – Luke 18:11-14 ESV

This parable of Jesus is important in the context of Paul's words to Timothy. Jesus speaks in [Luke 18](#) about the

Pharisee who fasted, gave a tithe, didn't commit adultery, and tried to live justly before his fellow human being. These were just some of the things the Pharisee did. His prayer indicated that he fully expected to be approved by God for these efforts. The reality of the matter, however, was that God rejected his efforts and accepted the humble tax collector instead. We see from this that we can do a lot of religious things and not be approved by God.

What does it mean for us to do our best to present ourselves as one approved? While Paul does not get into much detail about this here, he does leave Timothy a few points to consider as he seeks to present himself to God as one approved.

Notice first the phrase, "*present yourself as one approved.*" The phrase indicates that Timothy has already been approved. Timothy is not attempting to gain God's approval by his efforts but

presenting himself to God as one who has already been approved by God through the work of His Son Jesus Christ.

Second, observe that as an approved servant of God, Timothy was to be a worker who had "*no need to be ashamed.*" Timothy's sins were forgiven, and he lived his life as one who belonged to Jesus Christ. He devoted himself to the ministry to which he had been called. He lived his life according to the principles of God's Word. Paul challenges Timothy to do his best to live as a faithful and obedient servant of God so that he could stand before God unashamed of the life he had lived as an approved servant of God.

Third, Paul encouraged Timothy, as God's approved servant, to "*rightly handle the word of truth.*" Rightly handling the word of truth implied three things. First, being true to the

intentions of that Word. Second living in obedience to its teaching. Third, preaching and teaching it without compromise.

Verse 16

Timothy was to rightly handle the Word of God. Some feel that rightly handling the word involves endless controversy and debate over words and doctrines. These individuals, according to Paul “ruin *the hearers*” (verse 14) through their divisive controversy and “*battle for truth.*”

The word translated babble is *κενοφωνία* (*kenophōnía*). It is derived from *kenós*, meaning vain, and *phōnḗ*, meaning voice. Together, they carry the sense of useless speech or debates that are of no spiritual benefit to the hearers. Note also that these useless debates and words are “*irreverent.*” The fact that they are

"*irreverent*" indicates that they are spiritual but blaspheme the name of God or hinder the work of the kingdom. It is possible to hinder God's kingdom by our battle for the truth.

Timothy was to avoid unprofitable spiritual debates and discussions. Paul tells him that such controversies did not accomplish the purpose of God but only led people into "*more and more ungodliness*." Have you ever been in a discussion where tempers flared, and people began to take sides and accuse each other of error? Have these discussions given you a greater sense of the glory of Jesus Christ and His work, or have they just made you angry as you watched believers divide over their understanding of Biblical truth? As important as it is for us to seek a greater understanding of the deeper things of God, we must not do so at the expense of our relationship with genuine believers. Yes, we must

stimulate each other to greater commitment to the truth, but there comes a time when our endless debates and controversies become “*irreverent babbling*” that no longer stimulates brothers and sisters to greater godliness but rather to bitterness and controversy. Paul challenges Timothy to teach truth in a way that challenges believers to godliness and avoids vain and useless discussions that have no spiritual benefit to the hearer.

Verse 17

Paul speaks here of two individuals whose “irreverent babblings” (verse 16) spread like gangrene through the region. We meet Hymenaeus in [1 Timothy 1](#) where we read:

(18) This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance

with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, (19) holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith, (20) among whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme. – 1 Timothy 1:18-20 ESV

We understand from this that Hymenaeus was not "*holding faith with a good conscience.*" Paul rebuked him and handed him over to Satan so that he could learn not to blaspheme with his "*irreverent babble*" ([2 Timothy 2:16](#)). His ungodly and false teaching was having an impact on others in the church. Paul goes into further detail about the "*vain babblings*" of Hymenaeus and Philetus in the next verses.

Verse 18

Hymenaeus and Philetus, according to Paul, had “swerved” from the truth by declaring that the resurrection had already happened. They were discussing their views with other Christians in the church and seeking to promote their position. Their efforts had upset the faith of some. The idea is that this teaching was causing believers to question what they had heard from Paul and the apostles. Hymenaeus and Philetus were beginning to gain a following and people were wandering from the truth. The apostle declares their teaching on the resurrection to be false.

Verse 19

Having declared the teaching of Hymenaeus and Philetus about the

resurrection to be false, Paul points Timothy to *"God's firm foundation."*

What is the firm foundation Paul speaks about here? Paul seems to answer this in the second half of the verse by stating two truths:

The first truth is found in the words: *"The Lord knows those who are his."* While this is not a direct quote from Scripture, it is nonetheless a truth it teaches. [Psalm 1:6](#) reminds us that God knows the way of the righteous:

(6) for the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish. – Psalms 1:6 ESV

The prophet Nahum teaches that the Lord knows those who take refuge in him:

(7) The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; he

knows those who take refuge in him. – Nahum 1:7 ESV

Jesus Himself, as the Good Shepherd, declared:

(14) I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me – John 10:14 ESV

While Hymenaeus and Philetus deceived believers into false teaching, God knew those who were His. We can understand this in two ways. First, Hymenaeus and Philetus might deceive believers into thinking that they belonged to the Lord, but they would have to answer to God in the end, and they would not deceive Him. Second, while some immature believers may have fallen into the error of Hymenaeus and Philetus, God was able to see past this to their hearts. Some of God's children have fallen into doctrinal error. They have been deceived by the clever

arguments of false teachers. They may have been deceived doctrinally by people like Hymenaeus and Philetus, but they still belong to the Lord. The Lord knows those who belong to him. I believe that we will find people in heaven who belonged to churches who did not preach the truth.

The second foundational truth Paul declares here is this: *"Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity."* Once again, it is hard to pinpoint a particular verse that Paul is quoting here, but the truth of this statement is confirmed by Scripture. Writing to the religious leaders of his day, the prophet Isaiah challenged them with these words:

(11) Depart, depart, go out from there; touch no unclean thing; go out from the midst of her; purify yourselves, you who bear the

*vessels of the LORD. – Isaiah
52:11 ESV*

He also declared to his people:

*(16) Wash yourselves; make
yourselves clean; remove the evil of
your deeds from before my
eyes; cease to do evil – Isaiah
1:16 ESV*

The apostle James challenges his
readers in [James 4](#) to walk in purity of
heart and mind when he wrote:

*(8) Draw near to God, and he will
draw near to you. Cleanse your
hands, you sinners, and purify your
hearts, you double-minded. –
James 4:8 ESV*

While God alone knows those who are
His, we can see evidence of true faith
in the way individuals live their lives.
Those who love the Lord will “depart

from iniquity." They will want to please Him in word and deed. This was a lesson that Hymanaeus and Philetus needed to learn. Their lives were not demonstrating true faith either in teaching or in lifestyle. They were dividing the church and upsetting the faith of believers. They needed to "depart from this iniquity" if they were true servants of God.

Verse 20

Paul has been speaking about Hymenaeus and Philetus, false teachers, who were "*upsetting the faith of some*" (verse 18) in the church of Ephesus. Paul was not surprised to see false teachers in the church of his day. He compares the church to a great house with vessels of every kind. Some are made of gold and silver, while others are made from wood and clay. Some vessels are very honourable; others are dishonourable. Consider what Paul is saying here.

Note how the apostle compares the vessels of gold and silver with those of wood and clay. The vessels of gold and silver are of greater value than those of wood and clay. The apostle uses a similar illustration in his letter to the Corinthians when he says:

(12) Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw — (13) each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. (14) If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. (15) If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire. — 1 Corinthians 3:12-15 ESV

In [1 Corinthians 3](#), the apostle describes a house built with various kinds of material. Some are of inferior quality and will be burned up by the fire of God's judgment. Others will endure because they are of superior quality.

In the visible church of our day, there are people of all kinds. Some like gold and silver, are valuable assets and bring great honour to the name of the Lord Jesus. Others, however, like wood and clay, do not bring the same honour to their Saviour. As Paul describes in [1 Corinthians 3](#), the fire of God's judgement will consume their wooden works. Their clay efforts will crack under the pressure of His wrath.

Lest we be too critical of others, we need to examine our own lives and ask ourselves whether we have been truly vessels of honour in the body of Christ. Have we been faithful servants? Do our lives reflect the person of Jesus Christ? Will we hear Him say to us: "Well done,

good and faithful servant” ([Matthew 25:21](#)).

In the case of the church in Ephesus. They were dealing with men like Hymenaeus and Philetus, who were “*upsetting the faith*” of believers in the church. We must always be watchful as servants of God in the church. There is a great spiritual battle raging for the glory of Christ. The enemy has taken that battle into the church of our day.

Verse 21

Paul reminded Timothy that there were vessels of various kinds in the church of his day. Some were honourable, others were dishonourable. As you examine your life, maybe you have come to understand that you have not brought the honour you should to the Lord Jesus. Things do not have to remain that way. The apostle reminds us here that this can change.

Paul tells Timothy that *"if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonourable, he will be a vessel for honourable use."* The difference between a vessel of honour and a vessel of dishonour is in the cleansing. Writing in [1 John 1:9](#) the apostle John says:

(9) If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. – 1 John 1:9 ESV

It is sin that makes us dishonourable vessels. This sin may be related to things we are doing or the attitudes of our hearts. We may also be sinning by our unwillingness to obey the Lord in stepping out in faith. These sins must be confessed to God and we need to repent and make things right with Him. The apostle assures Timothy that those who cleanse themselves from what is

dishonourable can become vessels of honour, set apart as holy and useful to God as the master of the house. By repenting of their sin and cleansing themselves, these individuals are ready instruments in the hands of God for every good work He wanted to do through them.

Verse 22

The verse begins with the word “so.” The implication is that what Paul is about to say is directly related to what he has just said.

In verses 20 and 21 the apostle told Timothy that there were honourable and dishonourable vessels in every house but whoever cleansed himself could be set apart as holy and useful to the master for every good work. Paul encouraged Timothy to cleanse himself and keep himself clean and free from sin so that he could be useful to the

Master for any work He had for him to do. One of the greatest obligations of every servant of God is to walk in obedience and faithfulness to the Lord God. Sin in our lives will only hinder the work of the kingdom.

Paul challenges Timothy here, in particular, to flee youthful passions. What is important for us to understand is that what is natural to us is not always godly. If Timothy allowed his natural passions to reign, he would fall into sin. Our passions have been affected by sin and need to be controlled and brought into submission to the greater purpose of God. Note how Paul encourages Timothy in this verse to pursue five things:

First, Paul encouraged Timothy to pursue righteousness. The Greek word δικαιοσύνη (dikaiosúnē) refers to a submission to the standard of God. Now we must admit that none of us could ever claim to have been able to

uphold this standard perfectly. We have all fallen short. None of us could claim to merit our salvation based on our ability to live according to God's purpose. Our salvation is based solely on the work of Jesus and not on our ability to live a perfect life.

Note, however, the word, "*pursue*" in this verse. While Paul understood that Timothy would never be able to perfectly adhere to God's standard, he challenged him to pursue it nonetheless. Timothy was to make it his priority to discipline himself to walk in the purpose of God. He was to resist his natural passions and choose God's way instead. He was to make it his ambition to pursue God and His purpose.

Second, the apostle encouraged Timothy to also pursue faith. The word πίστις (*pístis*) means to persuade or to have a firm conviction or belief. Of course, that belief, in this case, is in the

Lord Jesus and His work. Many things can distract us from faith in Jesus Christ and His work on our behalf. Whether that be false teaching, pride or sin. Timothy was to set his heart and mind on the truth of Jesus Christ and His work. He was to place his full hope and confidence in Jesus Christ and shun anything that would depreciate His work on our behalf.

Third, Timothy was to pursue love. The Greek word ἀγάπη (agápē) refers to goodwill or benevolence. It is not a feeling so much as an action. It is the kind of love that would cause the Lord Jesus to lay His life down for the sinner. It is a love for the undeserving.

Timothy was to seek God's love in his interactions with his community. He was to put aside pride, prejudice, anger and resentment and demonstrate the love of God in his life for all he met.

Fourth, the apostle challenged Timothy to pursue peace. The Greek word

εἰρήνη (eirēnē) encompasses more than our English word peace. It does speak of the absence of conflict but also of health and prosperity as well. Prosperity is the absence of conflict over whether I will have something to eat or not. It is the freedom from worry over whether this sickness will mean I will not be able to feed my family or pay my bills. The word reveals what Paul expected of Timothy as a servant of God. Timothy was to seek the welfare of his community. Not only was he to preach the gospel, but he was to demonstrate the love of God in acts of compassion and mercy, giving those he ministered to peace in the midst of the many conflicts they endured. Maybe that required a financial contribution to help a brother pay his bill. Possibly it referred to a helping hand to get a task done that had been worrying a sick brother or sister unable to care for their responsibilities.

There is another aspect to peace as well. This peace related to the relationship between brothers and sisters. Timothy was to do his best to live in harmony with fellow believers in Christ. He was also to strive for peace with unbelievers in his community. He was not to be a troublemaker but to make every effort to live peacefully as a productive citizen of his town. In doing so, he would be a good witness to the Lord Jesus.

Finally, note that Timothy was to pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace "*along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.*" In other words, he was not to live out the purpose of God in isolation but in fellowship with the larger body of sincere believers. Timothy needed the body of Christ if he was to be what God had called him to be. He needed the interaction, rebukes and encouragement of brothers and sisters

if he was to mature in his walk with Christ. We need each other to become all that God requires us to be.

Verse 23

Paul continues to advise Timothy here. In verse 22 he listed five qualifications of the servant of God. He adds a sixth here in this verse.

The apostle challenged Timothy to have nothing to do with foolish and ignorant controversies. Note that these controversies were foolish. The word used here is μωρός (mōrós), which speaks of something worthless or without purpose. The controversies that Paul speaks about here have no spiritual value for the believer, though they may be spiritual.

Note also that the apostle described the controversies as ignorant. The word ἀπαιδευτος (apaídeutos) is derived from the word, "a" meaning without and

“paideúō” meaning instruction. These controversies are engaged in by people who have no instruction. In other words, they don’t know what they are talking about and speak out of ignorance of the subject.

There are some things we just don’t know because God has not revealed them to us. We can invent doctrines based on our ideas. Many people throughout history have predicted the day of Jesus returns, but no one knows that day. We waste our time trying to figure this out.

According to Paul, these controversies only cause quarrels. With no authority to back up our opinions, nothing can be proven definitively and there will always be those who disagree. We can spend endless hours debating what we can never prove, or we can master the essentials of the faith, which are laid out for us in the Word of God. How the enemy loves to divide the church over

practices and beliefs. Paul called Timothy to peace and love. This meant accepting that there would be differences of opinion on secondary matters. The apostle challenges Timothy to focus on the essentials of the faith and not get caught up in arguments over matters that God has not revealed clearly in His Word.

Verse 24

Continuing from verse 23, Paul declares that the servant of the Lord must not be quarrelsome. The word used here is μάχομαι (máchomai) which speaks of fighting, striving or disputing. It is true that as servants of the Lord, we must stand up for the truth. There is, however, a difference between standing firm in our convictions and being quarrelsome. In verse 23 the apostle speaks of quarrels as being foolish. The

word indicates that they are of no value or benefit to the church.

To understand what Paul is saying here, we need to grasp the fact that as servants of God, we cannot change people. The work of salvation and genuine Christian maturity belongs to the Spirit of God. When we quarrel, we generally take it upon ourselves to convince people rather than trusting the work of God's Spirit through the simple proclamation of truth.

The second thing we need to understand about quarrelling is that it tends to be divisive and stirs up ungodly thoughts and attitudes of the flesh. Who among us has not been in a heated debate with a brother or sister and found the ungodliness of the flesh rising to the surface? This is not helpful, nor is it the way of the Spirit.

Instead, Paul tells Timothy that the genuine servant of God was to be kind

to everyone. The word translated "*kind*" here is ἡρίος (ēpios). It speaks of meekness, gentleness and tolerance. How does this kindness manifest itself in the life of the servant of God? Paul answers this in the final section of the verse.

First, the kindness of the servant of God is demonstrated in his or her ability to teach. The phrase able to teach implies two things. First, it implies that the person in question is teachable and able to learn from others (even their enemies). Second, it implies that they can take what they have learned and instruct others in it. Kindness is demonstrated, therefore, in our willingness to learn from others but also in our passion to teach the truth in gentleness and compassion to those who are trapped in error and falsehood.

Second, kindness is also demonstrated in the ability of the servant of God to

patiently endure evil. What does it mean to endure evil? The evil spoken about here is often perpetrated against us as preachers of the gospel. Not everyone will accept our message. Jesus warned that persecution would arise for those who were faithful to Him and the truth He taught. The servant of God is patient in this persecution, trusting God and committing his way to Him. Patience endures suffering without seeking revenge or retaliation. It continues to demonstrate kindness even to those who make life difficult.

Verse 25

While we are to be patient and kind with our opponents, Paul challenges Timothy also to correct those who wander into error, falsehood and sin. He was to correct them with two goals in mind.

First, Timothy was to correct his opponents with patience, and kindness in the hope that God would grant them repentance. Note here that while God could use Timothy's efforts, it was He who granted repentance. We are the means by which God may work repentance in the life of the sinner, but that repentance is not the fruit of our labours but God's touch. Timothy's correction was a seed, but the life of that seed was from God. God could take the seed he planted and grant that it would grow and produce fruit. As servants of God, we plant seed, but God gives the increase. What a privilege we have to plant seeds that can transform the hearts and lives of men and women around the world. Understanding that God gives repentance, helps us to trust Him for a miracle. It also shows us that our role is not to quarrel and persuade so much as it is to trust God to grant repentance.

The second goal of correction is that God would lead men and women to a knowledge of the truth. Once again, note that it was God who would lead men and women to the truth. Maybe you sat under the teaching of the word and understood it intellectually. Then, the day came when God opened your mind and heart to the truth you had heard all your life. What God did that day, however, was life-transforming. You understood in a way you never understood before. Your life could never again be the same. What you experienced was a powerful work of God taking what you understood intellectually and making it real in your life.

By correcting those in error, Timothy was planting a seed that God could use to bring repentance and genuine conviction to the hearts and lives of those who received the correction.

Verse 26

Those who receive correction and are given repentance and understanding by God can experience two wonderful realities in their lives.

First, they can "*come to their senses*." Those trapped in sin and error are blinded intellectually and spiritually. They cannot see or understand the reality of Jesus Christ. Through the correction offered by genuine believers, their eyes can be opened by God's Spirit to see and know the truth of the Saviour.

Second, those who receive correction can "*escape from the snare of the devil*." According to Paul, these individuals had been captured by Satan to do his will. The story of how Satan captured the human race is found in [Genesis 3](#). Captured and blinded by Satan, humanity was under the curse of sin with Satan as their master. Through

the simple correction by a servant of God and the powerful work of the Holy Spirit opening their eyes, these individuals can have the opportunity to escape the curse of sin by embracing the work of Jesus Christ on the cross. That work sets them free from Satan, the power of sin over them and makes them children of God and heirs of eternal life.

2 TIMOTHY 3

Verse 1

Paul takes a moment here in this section to discuss what will take place in the last days. The phrase "the last days" generally refers to the period just before the return of the Lord. The apostle describes these days as "*times of difficulty*." The word he uses here is χαλεπός (chalepós) which is defined as violent, fierce, or distressing. The difficulty Paul refers to here is severe. In other words, the lives of believers will be in peril as the enemy rages against the church of Jesus Christ.

Verse 2

Having told Timothy that the last days would be difficult, the apostle now moves on to describe the people who will live in that period. Here, in verse 2, Paul describes eight qualities in those who live in the days before the return of our Lord.

First, they will be lovers of self. Individualism and a focus on doing what pleases oneself, even at the expense of others, will prevail. People will not be concerned for each other but only for their own needs and desires.

Second, money will become a god. Materialism will become a focus of the last days as people seek to accumulate money for the benefits, privileges and pleasures it brings. Of course, the love of money will bring all kinds of evil with it. Paul told Timothy in his first epistle:

(10) For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through

this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs. – 1 Timothy 6:10 ESV

Third, the people of the last days will be proud. The word translated proud is ἀλαζών (alazōn) and refers to a boaster. The word is derived from *alazoneía* which refers to a person who proudly speaks of things they have never done and boasts of things they have never possessed. The idea here is that they are trying to make an impression or make themselves look bigger, or more important than they are.

Fourth, these individuals will be arrogant. The word arrogant is ὑπερήφανος (hyperēphanos). It is derived from *hupér*, meaning over or above, and *phainō*, meaning to shine or to show. The idea is that these individuals seek to shine brighter than

anyone else. They want to be seen and noticed. Being seen as better than other people is their goal.

Fifth, those who live in the end times will be abusive. The word used here is βλάσφηημος (blásphēmos). It speaks of slanderers or those who are disrespectful of others. These people do not hesitate to destroy the reputation of someone else if it profits themselves.

Sixth, there will be a lack of respect for parents. When there is a lack of respect at this level, we can be sure that there will be no respect for others in authority either. Listen to what the Law of Moses had to say about a son who refused to obey his parents in [Deuteronomy 21](#):

(18) "If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and, though they

discipline him, will not listen to them, (19) then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his city at the gate of the place where he lives, (20) and they shall say to the elders of his city, 'This our son is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard.' (21) Then all the men of the city shall stone him to death with stones. So you shall purge the evil from your midst, and all Israel shall hear, and fear. – Deuteronomy 21:18-21 ESV

A disobedient son was to be stoned to death. [Proverbs 30](#) speaks in the same tone when it says:

(17) The eye that mocks a father and scorns to obey a mother will be picked out by the ravens of the valley and eaten by the vultures. – Proverbs 30:17 ESV

Disrespect for parents and, ultimately, any authority will be a theme in the days before Christ's return.

Seventh, people will be ungrateful. The word ἀχάριστος (acháristos) means without favour, kindness, or thankfulness. Those who are ungrateful demonstrate a sense of entitlement. They feel that people owe them. They are not grateful because they believe that what people give them is rightfully theirs anyway. There is no appreciation for the sacrifice of others on their behalf.

Eighth, Paul describes the people of the last days as unholy. The word ἀνόσιος (anósios) means without consecration or righteousness. These individuals are ungodly with no sense of God or desire to follow after Him. They do whatever they please with no reference to the purpose of God for their lives.

Verse 3

In verse 2 Paul listed eight qualities of those who lived in the last days. He adds another six characteristics here in this verse.

The ninth characteristic of those living in the end times is heartlessness. The word ἀστόργος (ástorgos) is derived from "a" meaning without, and "storgḗ" which refers to family love. We have already seen from verse 2 that the people of the end times would be disrespectful to parents. This word takes this quality further and shows us that they have no natural love for their parents. Family love also implies a love for children as well. The implication is that children would be abandoned or even aborted if they did not fit into the life plan of the parent.

Tenth, Paul uses the word unappeasable to describe those who lived in the last days. The Greek word

is ἀσπονδος (áspondos). It is derived from "a," meaning without, and "spondē," meaning drink offering. The drink offering was part of the regular offering to God and reminded people of the covenant relationship they had with Him. To be without a drink offering was to be without an agreement. The word ἀσπονδος (áspondos) refers to someone who will not accept an agreement. They are stubborn and reject any peace or settlement with another person. They want their way, and reject any compromise with anyone else.

Eleventh, people of the last days will be slanderous. The word διάβολος (diábolos) means to accuse. It is also the name given to Satan when we call him the devil. Consider how John described Satan in [Revelation 12](#):

(9) And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent,

who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. (10) And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. – Revelation 12:9-10 ESV

John speaks of the devil (diábolos) as a deceiver and accuser of the brothers. The people of the last days will be like the devil who deceives and falsely accuses believers. Lies and deceit will prevail and people will not hesitate to destroy another person by their slanderous remarks.

The twelfth characteristic of the end times will be a lack of self-control. The

word ἀκρατής (akratēs) comes from "a," meaning without, and "krátos," meaning strength. This lack of strength relates to the inability of these individuals to control their appetites, passions and desires. They allow their flesh free reign ungoverned by moral or spiritual principles. They do whatever pleases them.

Thirteenth, before Christ's coming, we can expect that people will be brutal. Paul uses the word ἀνήμερος (anēmeros) here. It means to be without gentleness. The word seems to describe people who are aggressive and hostile. They are ready to protest and do battle at any time. They are unsympathetic to anyone who disagrees with them.

The fourteenth quality of the people who live in the days before Christ's return is that they will not love good. To describe what it means to be good would take an entire book. Let me

simply refer you to the words of Jesus in [Matthew 10](#) where He said:

(18) And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. – Mark 10:18 ESV

Ultimately, to be good is to be godly. God is the ultimate definition of good. The people who live in the last days will be godless and devoid of good. They will do whatever pleases them. They will not take God or His purpose into consideration.

Verse 4

Continuing from verses 2 and 3 we see that the fifteenth characteristic of those living in the end times is treachery. The word προδότης (prodótēs) means to give away or betray. You will not be able to rely on people or depend on

them because their words, commitments or relationships will not mean anything to them.

Sixteenth, Paul defines the inhabitants of the earth in the end times as reckless. The Greek word προπετής (propetēs) comes from the word "pró," meaning forward, and "pípto," meaning to fall. A person who falls forward is one who carelessly rushes into things and falls flat on their face. They do not give careful thought to what they are doing. They don't use common sense but foolishly make decisions without consideration of the implications of what they do. They act on emotion and impulse rather than reason or study of Scripture.

The seventeenth characteristic of the end times will be that people are "*swollen with conceit*." The word τυφῶν (tuphṓō) comes from the word *túphos* meaning smoke. The idea is that a person is surrounded by

smoke and cannot see clearly. They are blinded to the reality around them and think they are something they are not.

Eighteenth, the end time will be filled with "*lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.*" Pleasing themselves and satisfying the lusts and desires of their flesh will be their governing principle in life. God will have no part in their lives. He will be seen as an obstacle to their pleasures and passions in life.

Verse 5

The final characteristic of those who live in the end times, according to Paul, is that they will have an appearance of godliness but deny its power. Godliness without power is only an appearance. It is not true godliness. The only way we can be godly is through the ministry of Jesus Christ on the cross and His Holy Spirit in our lives. The power for godly living is not in our sinful flesh but in the

person of the Holy Spirit who indwells every believer in Jesus Christ. Without His power and life-changing work, all our efforts to be godly are in vain. Godliness requires God and His work. It requires the forgiveness of Jesus Christ and the ministry of His empowering Spirit.

The people of the last days deny the power of godliness. They deny the work of Jesus Christ, who has the power to forgive, and the person of the Holy Spirit who enables us to live as God requires. When we deny the work of Christ and His Spirit, all we have is an appearance of godliness — a set of traditions and beliefs but nothing that can save our souls or give us eternal life.

Notice Paul's warning to Timothy about the kind of people he describes here in verses 1-4 — "Avoid such people." They have nothing of value to offer the believer as far as their relationship with

Christ is concerned. They can only hinder them in their spiritual growth and witness.

Verse 6

In verse 5 Paul challenged Timothy to avoid the kind of people he described in verses 1-4. What is important to note here is that Paul tells Timothy that while these people would appear in "*the last days*" (see verse 1) they were also present in Paul's day as well. We can expect to see more and more of these people as the day of the Lord's return draws closer.

Paul tells Timothy that the kind of people he has been describing are those who "*creep into households and capture weak women.*" Notice the kind of women Paul describes here.

First, they are "*weak women.*" The word used here is γυναικάριον (gunaikáron). It describes a gullible

woman who is immature. She is likely uneducated and susceptible to false teaching.

Second, the kind of women these people seek to influence are "*burdened with sins.*" The word translated as "burdened" is σωρεύω (sōreúō) which means to heap up. These are not godly women but those who have lived a life of sin.

Third, these women have been "*led astray by various passions.*" Note the phrase "*various passions.*" These passions may be sexual, societal or even materialistic. The word passion is ἐπιθυμία (epithumía) and speaks of a strong desire or lust. These women surrendered to their fleshly appetites and committed themselves to fulfil these desires.

The women Paul speaks about here are not godly. They are governed by their lusts and passions. They do not control

these passions and sinful appetites but choose to feed them. They live to be satisfied and pleased.

Paul is telling Timothy that the people of the last days will embrace this kind of woman (or man). They will accept them and encourage them in their ungodly lifestyle. They will not, however, embrace godly people because the light of their godly lifestyle and beliefs would expose their deeds of darkness.

Verse 7

Verse 7 is not a separate thought but a continuation of Paul's sentence in verse 6 about "*weak women, burdened with sins and led astray.*" These women, though weak, burdened by sin and led astray, were not incapable of learning. Paul tells us that they were always learning new things but they never seemed to arrive at the "*knowledge of*

the truth.” The truth of the gospel was either hidden from them or they were unwilling to open their heart to it because of their “passions” (verse 6).

Verse 8

Note how Paul moves from the illustration of women who rejected the truth to an example of two men who did the same. He speaks here about Jannes and Jambres. The IVP Bible Background Commentary has this to say about these two men:

Paul here employs Jewish tradition not found in the Old Testament. In a widespread Jewish tradition (various elements appear in Pseudo-Philo, the Dead Sea Scrolls, rabbis, etc.), Jannes and his brother Jambres were Pharaoh’s magicians who opposed Moses in Ex 7:11. Even pagan accounts (Pliny the

Elder and Apuleius) record them as magicians of Moses' time (presumably dependent on Jewish tradition). Because Paul's opponents appeal to Jewish myths (1Ti 1:4; 2Ti 4:4; Tit 1:14), Paul cites such stories to fill in the names for these characters. - (The IVP Bible Background Commentary". Marion, IA: Laridian, Inc., 2023.OT: © 2000 by John H. Walton, Victor H. Matthews and Mark W. Chavalas; NT: © 2014 by Craig S. Keener. All Rights Reserved.)

Jannes and Jambres watched Moses perform his miracles before Pharaoh but despite these powerful works of God, they closed their hearts to the truth Moses proclaimed. Notice what Paul tells us about these two men.

First, their minds were "*corrupted*." The word καταφθείρω (kataphtheirō)

speaks of something that has been destroyed morally. The effects of sin on their mind, like a wasting disease, had stripped them of every ability to discern truth or receive it.

Second, these men were "*disqualified regarding the faith.*" The word translated as "disqualified" is ἀδόκιμος (adókimos). It is derived from the word "a," meaning without, and "dókimos," meaning acceptance. The idea is that these men were unacceptable for faith. Understand here that faith is a gift given to us by God. While we are all unworthy of this gift, these men, in particular, were judged by God to be unacceptable. I cannot answer why God saw them as unworthy of faith, especially when he gave that same faith to me. Suffice it to say that Jannes and Jambres, though they saw evidence of God's power, resisted it and perished without faith in the God of Israel. I can only thank God that what

He refused for Jannes and Jambres, He
gave to me, though I was just as
unworthy as them.

Verse 9

The people Paul describes in verses 1-4 denied the truth like Jannes and Jambres. They lived their lives resisting the gospel of Jesus Christ and promoting their “folly.” Note that Paul tells us that this folly was plain to all. The lifestyle these individuals promoted was contrary to common sense and reason. They stood in opposition to the principles of righteousness and godliness. Everyone knew this, but they continued in their stubborn resistance to godliness and morality, just like Jannes and Jambres. These two men saw the power of God but turned their backs on it and continued to believe a lie. But for the grace of God, that would be me.

Verse 10

After speaking at length about those who had denied the Lord Jesus and whose "*folly will be plain to all*," (verse 9), Paul now turns his attention to Timothy. As his spiritual father, Paul expresses gratitude that Timothy had followed his example. He shares seven qualities his son in the Lord had learned from him here in verse 10. You can sense Paul's pride as he sees these qualities in his son.

First, Timothy followed Paul's teaching. Timothy had not wandered from what he had learned from the apostle but preached and taught faithfully what Paul had given him.

Second, Timothy imitated Paul's conduct. The word ἀγῶγῇ (agōgē) refers to how a person lives his or her life. Timothy lived what he preached and taught. In this he followed Paul's example.

Third, Timothy's aim in life was the same as that of the apostle Paul. The apostle does not explain this but writing to the Philippians he said:

(20) as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. (21) For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. – Philippians 1:20-21 ESV

It was Paul's ambition in life to honour the Lord Jesus Christ in his body either in life or in death. His aim in live was to live for Christ. Timothy shared this aim.

Fourth, Paul's faith was also Timothy's faith. The word faith is πίστις (pístis) and speaks of a belief or conviction. That conviction was in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Like Paul, Timothy's hope was in Jesus, His work

on the cross, and the forgiveness and new life He gave.

Fifth, Paul and Timothy shared the same patience. The word μακροθυμία (makrothumía) refers to the ability to remain under pressure without giving up. In Paul's case, it was his ability to suffer for the cause of Christ. Timothy demonstrated this same quality of endurance under pressure.

Sixth, Timothy had the same ἀγάπη (agápē) love in his heart as Paul. This love is an active love and not just a feeling. It is a self-sacrificing love that gives itself freely to others. It is the love of Jesus who laid down His life on the cross for unworthy sinners. Both Paul and Timothy had their hearts full of this love and willingly sacrificed time, effort and resources for those they served.

Seventh, Paul saw evidence of the kind of steadfastness God had given him in

his son in the Lord. The word used here is ὑπομονή (hupomoné) refers to the ability to keep one's hope alive under pressure. The one who is steadfast keeps his or her eyes fixed on the goal and refuses to give up until they reach that goal.

Verse 11

Paul adds one more quality he saw in his son Timothy here — "*my persecutions and sufferings.*" In particular, Paul describes what happened to him in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra.

[Acts 13:45](#) tells us that in Antioch, the Jews were filled with jealousy and began to contradict and revile Paul when he spoke:

(45) But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and began to contradict

what was spoken by Paul, reviling him. – Acts 13:45 ESV

[Acts 14](#) tells us that in Iconium the Jews stirred up the Gentiles, poisoned their minds and an attempt was made to mistreat and stone Paul:

(1) Now at Iconium they entered together into the Jewish synagogue and spoke in such a way that a great number of both Jews and Greeks believed. (2) But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers... (4) But the people of the city were divided; some sided with the Jews and some with the apostles. (5) When an attempt was made by both Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to mistreat them and to stone them – Acts 14:1-2,4-5 ESV

Finally, when Paul went to Lystra in [Acts 14:8](#), Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, persuaded the crowd against them, stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city thinking he was dead:

(19) But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having persuaded the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead. – Acts 14:19 ESV

Paul's suffering and persecution for the gospel were seen in these three cities. Note how he praises the Lord for rescuing him from the hands of his persecutors here in verse 11. Timothy had the same spirit as Paul and was willing to suffer and lay down his life for the sake of the gospel he preached.

Verse 12

Paul did not see himself as unique in suffering for the gospel. He tells Timothy here that anyone who committed themselves to live a godly life in Christ Jesus would be persecuted.

Note the phrase, "*a godly life in Christ Jesus.*" While we know that there is no true godliness apart from Christ Jesus, many people live good and religious lives by their efforts. Being a good person or even being religious is relatively acceptable in this world. Living a godly life in Christ Jesus, however, is a different matter.

Those who believe in Jesus see Him as the only means of salvation. They preach a gospel that demands submission to Him alone and a denial of all other gods. They teach that we are sinners destined for eternal separation from God unless we receive the forgiveness of Jesus Christ. They believe that Jesus is Lord and we must

submit to His ways, renounce sin and be willing to live and die for Him. Those who live godly in Christ Jesus renounce the world and its ways and choose to walk in the purpose of God instead. They die to their sin and their fleshly desires. This kind of life is threatening and offensive to the world. They do not want to believe they are sinners. They don't want to surrender to Christ alone. They love the world and its attractions and react strongly to anyone who calls them to repent and renounce their ways.

Verse 13

It is a strange world where those who live godly lives in Christ Jesus are persecuted but evil people who get worse and worse never seem to experience this same rejection. These evil impostors are deceived by the devil and his worldly ways. They, in turn,

teach their deception to others who follow whole heartedly their evil purposes. All this is left unguarded while principles of godliness and holiness are banned, mocked and rejected.

Verse 14

Speaking directly to Timothy, the apostle challenges him, despite the persecution that awaited those who lived a godly life in Christ, to continue with what he had been taught. He was not to allow persecution and rejection of his message to keep him from being faithful in the proclamation of the gospel.

Note that Paul understood that Timothy "*firmly believed*" the message taught him. He also understood that there were individuals who firmly believed the gospel message but, because of persecution and difficulty,

wandered from it. Paul encouraged Timothy to continue with what he had learned and not get distracted.

Observe that Paul told Timothy that one of his motivations for continuing in the teaching was "*knowing from whom he had learned it.*" Not only did Timothy learn the gospel message from Paul as an apostle of Jesus Christ but also from his mother and grandmother who were true examples of godliness for him.

Verse 15

Continuing from verse 14 Paul reminded Timothy about how he had come to know the truth of the gospel.

First, he learned as a child from his grandmother and mother who instructed him in the ways of the Lord.

Second, Timothy learned about salvation through the Scriptures that Paul, his grandmother and his mother

had taught him. These Scriptures pointed Him to the Lord Jesus as the Messiah who came to save His people from sin.

Finally, Timothy came to know and accept the message of Scripture through faith in Christ Jesus. That faith in Jesus Christ, as a gift of God, convinced him and assured him of the truth of the Scriptures taught him.

Verse 16

The apostle Paul concludes this section with a powerful statement about the Scriptures. We need to see this in the context of what Paul has been saying in chapter 3. Paul has been telling Timothy that the last days would be "*times of difficulty*" (verse 1). People would turn from the principles of righteousness and do as they please (verses 2-5). False teachers would creep into the church leading people

astray (verses 6-8). Paul warns Timothy that all those who wanted to live a godly life in Christ Jesus would be persecuted (verse 12).

How was the believer to live in those days? How could the followers of Jesus know the truth in times of confusion and diverse opinions? Paul points Timothy to the unchanging, authoritative and inspired Scriptures. Here he would find the support and guidance he needed to persevere in the truth of God's purpose. Notice what Paul has to tell Timothy about these Scriptures which will be so important in these last days.

Paul begins by telling Timothy that "*all Scripture is breathed out by God.*" The word used here is θεόπνευστος (theópneustos). It is derived from the words "*Theós,*" meaning God, and "*pnéō,*" meaning to breathe or to blow. The idea is that the Scriptures came from God and were blown into

the hearts and minds of those who faithfully recorded what He gave them. In essence, God is the author and source of the Scriptures. The human writers were merely scribes recording what He told them. Because Scriptures are breathed out by God, we can have absolute confidence in their authority and His protection of those Scriptures handed down to us.

Next, the apostle teaches that all Scripture is profitable for four particular purposes. Let's consider these purposes briefly.

First, all Scripture is profitable for teaching. The word διδασκαλία (didaskalía) refers to instruction. What Paul is telling Timothy here is that because the Scriptures are God-breathed, they are a reliable and authoritative source of doctrine and truth. If we want to know the truth we must find it in these Scriptures. If we

want to know God's purpose for our lives, we must seek it in its pages.

Second, all Scripture is profitable for reproof. The word reproof comes from the Greek word ἔλεγχος (élegchos). It is a legal term that refers to a conviction brought against a guilty person. Scripture is the legal standard by which all behaviour must be measured. It is the law by which we will all be judged.

Third, all Scripture is profitable for correction. The word ἐπανόρθωσις (epanóρθōsis) refers to making something straight again. If there is one thing sure in life, it is that we will get distracted. The influence of this world surrounds us and impacts our decisions, attitudes and actions. We will be tempted to wander from the path of God. I am not saying here that we will fall into great sin and turn our back on God and His purpose. I have, however, often found that I have not walked as

closely to my Saviour as I should have. Scripture has a way of correcting me and bringing me back into line. For that to happen, however, I need to read it and listen to its instructions. If I do, it will bend me back into shape and restore me to the right path.

Finally, all Scripture is profitable for training in righteousness. The word παιδεία (paideía) means to instruct. It is derived from the word *paideúō* which refers to the process of raising a child and teaching them how to live a good life. Scripture is like a father or mother to us. It comforts us when we need encouragement. It corrects us when we begin to wander. It disciplines us when we go astray. It guides us into the truth. It instructs us in the way we should walk.

As the days of the end approach, we need a reliable guide to teach us what is right, to convict us when we wander, to correct us when we have left that

path, and to be a reliable and faithful comfort and support when times are difficult (see verse 1)

Verse 17

Note one final detail about the Scriptures. They teach us, reprove us, correct and train us for a very specific reason. God wants us to be equipped for "*every good work*." If you want to be a true servant of God, you must be instructed in the Scriptures. They will show you the truth you must proclaim. They will reveal God's requirements for service. You must allow those Scriptures to rebuke you. You must allow them to bring you back in line when you have wandered ever so slightly. You will need them to train you in God's purpose for life and ministry. They will be your comfort in the difficult times.

If you want to do the "*good work*" God expects of you, there is nothing so important as the Scriptures. All too many have ignored the Word of God and fallen into error and sin. Even worse, they have led others astray because they have not allowed this Word to train them and equip them in God's purpose. We ignore this Word to our peril.

2 TIMOTHY 4

Verse 1

As he begins chapter 4, Paul charges Timothy with a particular responsibility. Notice the nature of this charge here.

Paul charges Timothy in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus. God the Father and Son both witness and approve this charge to Timothy. Timothy would step out understanding that he did so under both apostolic and divine authority.

As if this were not enough, Paul goes on to remind Timothy of Jesus Christ's credentials. He is the judge of the living and the dead. Every human being who ever lived will stand before the Lord

Jesus and give an account of their life.
He will determine their destiny.
Everyone is accountable to Him as their
Lord and Creator.

Second, Jesus Christ will appear again
on this earth. He will come to judge but
also to set up his kingdom. This
kingdom will be an eternal kingdom
where all enemies of the cross are
banished and cast eternally from His
presence. Sin, suffering and death will
be no more. Those who belong to Him
will reign forever in His presence.

The charge given to Timothy was
serious. It was a responsibility laid on
him by God Himself. Timothy would
stand before this God to give an
account of how he handled the
obligations Paul was about to place on
him.

Verse 2

We see here the charge that was given to Timothy from Paul in the presence of God the Father and the Son. The charge is five-fold.

First, Timothy was to preach the word. The word used here for preach is κηρύσσω (kērússō) which means to proclaim or herald. This was done in a public setting so that the masses of people could hear. The word Timothy was to preach was the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He was to boldly proclaim this message so that all could hear.

The second aspect of Timothy's charge was to "*be ready*." The word "ready" in Greek is ἐφίστημι (ephístēmi) which is derived from *epí*, meaning near, and *hístēmi* meaning to stand. The idea is to stand near someone or something prepared to take action. Paul does not tell us what that action might be. We can assume, however, that this would vary according to the circumstances.

When false teachers came to Ephesus, Timothy was to be ready to proclaim the truth. When brothers and sisters in Christ were suffering, Timothy was to be ready to bring them comfort and assurance.

Note here that Timothy was to be ready *"in season and out of season."* The idea is that he was to be ready day and night, holidays and workdays. He was to be prepared to do everything he could to minister to the needs before him. Just as a soldier was to be always vigilant, knowing the enemy could come at any time, Timothy was never to let his guard down. He was to keep his sword at his side, prepared to use it whenever necessary.

Third, Timothy was to "reprove." The word ἐλέγχω (elégchō) used here means to convict or to prove someone to be in error. The person who reproves makes people aware that they are in

the wrong or are sinning before God. Timothy's role was to warn people about their sins and wandering ways. The purpose of this was to bring them back to the path of God for their lives.

The fourth charge given to Timothy was to rebuke. The word ἐπιτιμάω (epitimáō) is derived from ἐπί, meaning upon, and τιμάω, meaning to evaluate. Together they speak about making an evaluation of one's actions and placing consequences upon that individual. In other words, it speaks of pronouncing punishment or a sentence against an individual for their actions. While reproving points out the errors of our ways, rebuking makes us accountable for those actions.

Finally, Timothy was to exhort. The Greek word used here is παρακαλέω (parakaléō), which is derived from παρά, meaning to the side of, and καλέω meaning to call. The idea is to call someone to the side of another. The

purpose of this is support and encouragement. Timothy was not just to preach, reprove and rebuke from a pulpit. He was to get down from that pulpit and stand beside those who were struggling.

Notice how Timothy was to exhort. He was to do so with "*complete patience*." The word "patience" is translated from the Greek word μακροθυμία "makrothumía" which speaks of restraint and long-suffering. The patient person, in this sense, is compassionate and merciful to those who have fallen short of God's standard. They are not quick to condemn and bear with them as they seek to learn how to live in the truth and overcome their sinful ways.

Timothy was also to exhort with teaching. He was to correct errors and instruct those who had fallen. He was to show them God's purpose for their lives.

Timothy was charged to guard the truth of the Gospel, proclaim it to all who would hear and watch over those who received it so that they did not stray from it through the temptations of this world or those who would teach another gospel.

Verse 3

The apostle prophesied to Timothy about the kind of people who would live on the earth in the days to come.

First, he told him that the time is coming when people "*will not endure sound teaching.*" The word endure is ἀνέχω (anéchō) means to hold up or to keep from falling. Those who endure keep themselves from falling. They stand firm. Paul tells us that in the last days, people will not hold onto "*sound teaching.*" They will let it fall like something of no value. They will not stand firm in it but wander from its

truth. Teaching that is sound is healthy and without error or falsehood. The truth of sound teaching will become of no importance and people will no longer hold onto it as something of value.

Next, Paul prophesied that people would have "*itching ears*" in days to come. When something itches it needs to be scratched to relieve the discomfort. To have itching ears is to long to hear something pleasing to those ears. Paul explains what he means when he tells Timothy that these individuals would accumulate teachers "*to suit their own passions.*" The itch these individuals experienced was to have their teachers condone their sinful behaviour. They didn't like to hear that they needed to submit to the purpose of God. They wanted people to tell them that their fleshly passions were legitimate. Instead of submitting to the truth, they

would gather around them people who supported their sinful passions and desires.

Verse 4

Paul tells Timothy that in the last days, people would turn from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. The word translated myths is μῦθος (múthos) which refers to a fable or tale that is not based on facts and truth but an invention of the human mind. These myths and fables are held in contrast here to the authoritative Word of God, which was divinely authored and a reliable source of truth. Paul is telling Timothy that in the last days, people turn away from the Word of God in favour of their own ideas.

Verse 5

Paul challenges Timothy to be "*sober-minded*" in light of what he prophesied would take place in the last days. To be sober-minded is not to allow oneself to be distracted by other things. The word νήφω (nēphō) used here means to be watchful and diligent. We often speak of a person who is sober as one who has refrained from the use of alcohol or drugs. These substances hinder clear thinking and keep a person from making wise decisions. Alcohol and drugs, however, are not the only things that can hinder wise decision-making. Anything that distracts us from God or influences us to stray from His purpose must be put away.

Next Paul challenges Timothy to endure suffering. He preached to those who only wanted to hear teachers who condoned their sinful passions. Timothy proclaimed sin as a barrier between humans and their God. He rebuked sin and called people to turn from their

sinful ways. This kind of message would meet rejection. As a result, Timothy would suffer as people turned from him and the truth of the gospel he declared. Paul tells Timothy to stand firm and not allow this rejection to keep him from doing what God had called him to do.

Thirdly, the apostle calls Timothy to do the work of an evangelist. An evangelist declares the message of the gospel. Timothy was not to allow anything to distract him from this role. He was to preach Jesus Christ, Son of God and Saviour. He was to point men and women to Him as their salvation and hope of forgiveness and eternal life.

This was Timothy's ministry. He was called to that ministry by God. He was to do everything in his power to be faithful to that calling, even if it meant suffering alone for the cause he represented.

Verse 6

Paul has charged Timothy with the responsibility of enduring suffering for the sake of the gospel. He does not ask him to do what he himself was unprepared to do. Paul tells Timothy here that he was being poured out *"as a drink offering and the time of his departure has come."*

A drink offering was poured out before the Lord. Jacob, after meeting the Lord at the place he called Bethel, set up a pillar and poured a drink offering on it to commemorate it and set it apart.

(14) And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he had spoken with him, a pillar of stone. He poured out a drink offering on it and poured oil on it. (15) So Jacob called the name of the place where God had spoken with him, Bethel. – Genesis 35:14-15 ESV

Paul saw his life as a drink offering poured out for God. He was expending his limited resources for God. He was devoting his energy and time to Him and pouring them out in His service. Paul knew, however, that the time would come when that energy would come to an end. Like the last drops of a bottle dripping out, Paul's life would cease. For Paul, that time was now in sight. He knew that the last of his drink offering was now being poured out before God and the time of his departure was drawing near, when he would leave his earthly vessel and go to be with his Saviour.

Verse 7

Paul has just declared that the time of his departure has come. He knew that he did not have long to live. As he reflects on his coming death, he

considers the life he lived. He states three things about his life here.

First, Paul had confidence that he had "*fought the good fight.*" That fight was a fight for truth. The truth he fought for was the message of the gospel. It was the fact that Jesus Christ, as the Son of God, came to this earth to save sinners. He died on the cross, rose victoriously over death and ascended to the Father to be the judge of the living and the dead. He offers pardon through His work on the cross, and all who believe in him will have eternal life. There were many opposing messages, but Paul resisted them and continued to declare the truth without compromise. He suffered abuse for this message but proudly bore his suffering for His Saviour. He stood at death's door with confidence that he had fought the good fight.

Second, Paul was assured that he had "*finished the course.*" On the one

hand, we could look at this phrase and interpret it to mean that Paul knew that his end was drawing near and that he was going to die soon. In this sense, the course he refers to is his life. There is, however, a deeper sense to this phrase. The course Paul refers to here is not just his life but his calling and service. God had called him to a particular ministry. Paul reflects on that ministry calling and can say that he had been faithful to what God had given him to do. He had followed the course that had been set for him by His Lord. He stood now at the end of his life with the assurance that he had not deviated from the path but had completed the task assigned to Him.

Finally, Paul had the assurance that he "*kept the faith.*" The faith Paul speaks about here is the truth about Jesus Christ and His work. Paul had not wandered from the truth about Jesus Christ. He declared Him to be Saviour,

Lord and God. Paul's faithfulness, however, was more than just to a doctrinal position. He also lived His life in a way that represented his Lord and Saviour. His faith impacted his behaviour, attitudes and actions. His life demonstrated the truth he believed. He was a changed man and lived in the power of his changed life.

Verse 8

The apostle Paul had the assurance that he had fought the good fight, finished the race and kept the faith. Note, however, that while he tells us that he was going to die soon, he does not see this as the end. As any athlete who wins the race expects to receive his trophy, so Paul expected to receive his crown of righteousness. The crown spoken of here was given to an athlete in recognition of his completion of the race.

The crown Paul expects, is a crown of righteousness. It was, on the one hand, a recognition of his faithful service. On the other hand, however, it was the ability to truly live a righteous life. He would be released from the effects of sin and its curse. There, in the presence of his Saviour, He would be free of the old fleshly nature he had battled all his life. Now he could truly live in the righteousness of Christ without hindrance. There in his heavenly home, Paul could enjoy His Saviour and Lord unhindered by the ungodly world, his sinful flesh or the temptations and trials of the devil. There he would know what it meant to live a truly righteous life.

Notice what Paul says about this crown of righteousness. He tells us that it would be given to him "*at that day.*" In other words, when his life was over and he stood before his Saviour, he would receive this crown. He promised that

everyone who loved Christ's appearance would receive this crown.

Now there is a sense in which we have been given the righteousness of Christ here and now. Those who have accepted the Lord Jesus and His work on their behalf are given a right standing with the Father, based on what Jesus has done. If I am honest with myself, however, I cannot say that I live a perfectly righteous life. The Lord continues to reveal that I have wandered from His purpose in attitude, thought or deed. It is not my righteousness that will get me to heaven but the righteous work of the Lord Jesus who has pardoned me and set me free from condemnation.

I expect, however, that the day is coming when my sinful flesh will be no more. I will be given a new body, and my heart will be forever changed. I will stand in the presence of my Saviour and the righteousness of Christ in me

will take on a whole new meaning. I will be given the ability to honour Him in a way I could never have done so with my fleshly nature. I will serve Him as I ought. I will love him with a heart unhindered by sin. The fullness of Christ's righteousness will be fulfilled in me as never before. Yes, the crown of righteousness is a reward for faithful service, but I believe it is not just something to wear as a badge of honour. It is a life-transforming event where free from this body of sin, I will be granted the privilege of being truly righteous and holy without hindrance or obstacle, free finally from the flesh to bring Him the honour He deserves.

Notice finally here the phrase "*them that have loved his appearing.*" The day of the Lord's return will not be a glorious day for everyone. Consider the words of John about that day in [Revelation 6](#):

(15) Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, (16) calling to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, (17) for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?" – Revelation 6:15-17 ESV

For those who do not know the Lord, this day will be a day of great terror. Those who love the appearance of the Lord are those whose sins are forgiven and who have already entered into a relationship with Him through his work on the cross.

Verse 9

Paul believed that the time of his departure from this world was at hand (see verse 6). In light of this reality, he asked Timothy to come to see him. Note two words here.

First, observe the phrase "*give diligence*." Paul wanted Timothy to make it a priority to come to see him. He wanted to see Timothy before he died. This shows us the relationship that existed between Paul and Timothy.

Second, note the word "*shortly*." Paul wanted his son in the Lord to come to him as soon as possible. He told him that the time of his departure was "*at hand*." The implication is that Paul did not know how much longer he was going to live and so he wanted Timothy not to delay in coming to see him.

Verse 10

Paul's need for Timothy's visit was magnified by the fact that Demas had

forsaken him. We have two other references to Demas in Scripture.

Writing to the Colossians, the apostle says:

(14) Luke the beloved physician greets you, as does Demas. – Colossians 4:14 ESV

Paul lists Demas as one of his fellow workers when he wrote to Philemon:

(23) Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends greetings to you, (24) and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow workers. – Philemon 23-24 ESV

Demas, however, was distracted from the faith by his love for the "*present world*." We are not told how that love was manifested, but it certainly hindered his relationship with Paul, and

he was forced to leave for Thessalonica. Some commentators believe that this was his hometown.

We know nothing about Crescens, whom Paul mentions here in this verse. He was clearly a fellow worker with Paul. Paul tells Timothy that Crescens had left for Galatia. He does not give any reason for this departure. We have no reason to believe that it had to do with a break in fellowship with the apostle. He may have gone to minister in that region.

Paul also mentions Titus here in the verse. Titus worked alongside Paul in His missionary journeys. According to Paul in [Galatians 2:3](#), Titus was an uncircumcised Greek:

(3) But even Titus, who was with me, was not forced to be circumcised, though he was a Greek. – Galatians 2:3 ESV

Paul called Titus, his "*true child in common faith*" when he wrote to him in [Titus 1:4](#):

(4) To Titus, my true child in a common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior. – Titus 1:4 ESV

Like Timothy, Titus also had a special place in Paul's heart. According to the apostle, Titus went to the region of Dalmatia (east of Rome, across the sea). Once again, we are not told why Titus went to Dalmatia. We can assume that he went there for ministry purposes. With the absence of Demas, Crescens and Titus, Paul was likely feeling a bit lonely in his prison cell.

Verse 11

At this point in Paul's life, only Luke was with him. Demas had abandoned the

apostle and Crescens and Titus had travelled to other cities. Paul seems to be feeling a certain loneliness at this point in his life. He needed people around him.

In verse 9 Paul asked Timothy to come to see him as soon as possible. Note here how he asked him to bring Mark with him. Mark is likely the John Mark who was the source of conflict between Paul and Barnabas in [Acts 15](#):

(36) And after some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us return and visit the brothers in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord and see how they are."

(37) Now Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark. (38) But Paul thought best not to take with them one who had withdrawn from them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work.

(39) And there arose a sharp

disagreement so that they separated from each other. Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus, (40) but Paul chose Silas and departed, having been commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord. – Acts 15:36-40 ESV

While Mark had left Paul on his missionary journey, note how Paul does recognize that he was very useful in ministry. Working with Barnabas, the encourager, was likely a good thing for Mark and had matured him in ministry. At the end of his life, Mark is now one of the people Paul wants by his side.

Verse 12

Tychicus was a fellow worker with Paul. We read in [Acts 20](#) how Paul was forced to leave Greece when a plot against his life was discovered. Note

the reference to Tychicus as part of the team that had been with him in Greece:

(3) There he spent three months, and when a plot was made against him by the Jews as he was about to set sail for Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia. (4) Sopater the Berean, son of Pyrrhus, accompanied him; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy; and the Asians, Tychicus and Trophimus. (5) These went on ahead and were waiting for us at Troas, – Acts 20:3-5 ESV

Paul described Tychicus as a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord in his letter to the Colossians:

(7) Tychicus will tell you all about my activities. He is a beloved brother and faithful minister and

*fellow servant in the Lord. –
Colossians 4:7 ESV*

We discover here that Paul had enough confidence in Tychicus that he sent him to Ephesus to help in the ministry there.

Verse 13

Paul has a request to make of Timothy. He asked that when he came to see him, he could bring three particular articles.

First, Paul asked for his cloak. He had left this in Troas with a man by the name of Carpus. We are uncertain why the cloak was left. Some commentators believe that Paul had to leave in a hurry and, as a result, was forced to leave it. What is important to note here is that Paul is now looking for it. That cloak would keep him warm. Paul does not have much to his name at this point in

prison and a cloak to wrap around himself in those cold and damp nights would have been a tremendous blessing.

Second, Paul asks for his books. The word used here is βιβλίον (biblíon) and speaks of a scroll. We have no way of knowing what these scrolls contained. They could have been legal documents or even copies of the Scriptures.

Particularly of concern for Paul was what he called parchments. The Greek word used here is μεμβράνα (membrána). Parchments were used for writing and were usually made from the skin of an animal. It is uncertain if these parchments had anything written on them or not. In a day when paper is readily available, we cannot fully appreciate the luxury of having parchment on which to write. Paul wrote many of his letters from prison. He may have been requesting parchment to write those letters for the

encouragement of believers in the regions where he had travelled. If this is the case we can see his genuine concern for the wellbeing of God's people. It was important to him that he remain in contact with them and at this point, being in prison, writing to them was the only contact he had.

Verse 14

Paul speaks here about Alexander the coppersmith. We read about him in [1 Timothy 1:19-20](#):

(19) holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith, (20) among whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme. – 1 Timothy 1:19-20 ESV

We understand from this that Alexander was likely part of the church of the day but had wandered from the faith. We are uncertain if he was a true believer. What is clear is that he appears to have been living a life of blasphemy and was handed over to Satan by Paul in the hope that he would repent. In the meantime, however, Alexander opposed Paul and "*did much evil*" to the apostle. We are uncertain as to the evil Alexander did, but the reference quoted above would seem to indicate that this may have come in the form of blasphemous words against the apostle and his teaching. Paul handed this man over to Satan and trusted that the Lord would discipline and correct him.

Verse 15

We see more clearly here the evil Alexander did to Paul through his blasphemous words. Paul warns

Timothy about him. It appears that this opposition was not quiet, but Alexander had taken it upon himself to actively oppose the message Paul declared. The fact that Paul warns Timothy about him shows that in Paul's mind, Alexander might spread his opposition as far as Ephesus.

Verse 16

Paul was in prison awaiting trial at this time. As a Roman citizen, he was given the right to defend himself. Note how Paul went to this defence alone. Everyone deserted him and left him to fend for himself before his accusers. This seems to have hurt Paul, but he asked God not to hold this desertion against his friends.

Paul's confidence was not in his witnesses and fellow workers but in the Lord God. Note, however, that he felt the absence of friends and supporters.

Their presence and support would have been a great blessing to him in his hour of need.

Verse 17

Despite the desertion of his friends and supporters, Paul testified that he experienced the strength of the Lord as he stood before his accusers in his defence.

Observe here the passion of Paul in these days of imprisonment and trials in the phrase: *"So that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it."* Paul believed the Lord strengthened him so that he could be a witness to his Gentile accusers. It was his passion to proclaim the gospel to those who heard his defence, and those who guarded him. Paul chose to use his circumstances for the glory of God. He was strengthened in his prison cell and

in his trials to proclaim boldly the truth of Jesus Christ.

Note also the phrase: "*I was rescued from the lion's mouth.*" It is uncertain what Paul is referring to when he speaks about the lion. Some see reference to the Roman emperor of the day, or possibly even to Satan. Others see it as a reference to his death at the hands of the Roman officials. Whatever we understand about this, what is clear is that not only did Paul experience the strengthening of the Lord in those days, but also His protection.

Verse 18

Observe Paul's confidence here as he awaits his sentence.

First, he believed that the Lord would rescue him from "every evil deed." Understand here that this did not mean that Paul believed that he would be released from prison and his life

spared. He had just told Timothy in verse 6 that he believed the time of his departure had come. Paul's understanding of what is meant to be rescued was not limited to this world. This takes us to the second conviction Paul had as he stood trial in those days.

Second, Paul believed that the Lord would bring him "*safely into his heavenly kingdom.*" Paul accepted the fact that he was going to die at the hands of Roman officials for preaching the gospel. He also believed that God would deliver him from this evil sentence by opening the door of the heavenly kingdom to him. Paul would be freed from the sin and evil of this world and conducted directly into the presence of Jesus Christ his Saviour.

Note what this reality did for Paul. Despite his impending death, he cries out: "*To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.*" Yes, he stood at death's doorstep, but his heart was filled with

praise and gratitude to God for the victory that would be his as he passed from this life to the next.

Verse 19

As Paul concludes his letter, he asks Timothy to give greetings to Prisca and Aquila and the household of Onesiphorus.

Prisca and Aquila are likely the people he met in Corinth who shared with him the trade of tent-making.

(1) After this Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. (2) And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. And he went to see them, (3) and because he was of the same trade he stayed with them and worked, for they

were tentmakers by trade. – Acts 18:1-3 ESV

We learn more about them in [Romans 16:3-5](#) where Paul writes:

(3) Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, (4) who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks but all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks as well. (5) Greet also the church in their house. Greet my beloved Epaenetus, who was the first convert to Christ in Asia. – Romans 16:3-5 ESV

Prisca and Aquila were "fellow workers in Christ Jesus" who "risked their necks for Paul," and who hosted a church in their home.

We know much less about the household of Onisiphorus. Paul

mentions them in [2 Timothy 1:16-18](#) where he says about him:

(16) May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains, (17) but when he arrived in Rome he searched for me earnestly and found me— (18) may the Lord grant him to find mercy from the Lord on that day!—and you well know all the service he rendered at Ephesus. – 2 Timothy 1:16-18 ESV

Onesiphorus “often refreshed” Paul. He appears to have sought him out in Rome and visited him in prison. Paul recognized that he also rendered service to the believers in Ephesus where Timothy was ministering.

Verse 20

The apostle gives Timothy some news about some of his co-workers here.

First, he told Timothy that Erastus was in Corinth. From [Acts 19:21-22](#) we see that Erastus worked with Timothy in Macedonia:

(21) Now after these events Paul resolved in the Spirit to pass through Macedonia and Achaia and go to Jerusalem, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome." (22) And having sent into Macedonia two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, he himself stayed in Asia for a while. – Acts 19:21-22 ESV

Second, Paul informed Timothy that he had to leave Trophimus at Miletus because he was ill.

Trophimus is listed as one of Paul's co-workers in [Acts 20:4-5](#):

(4) Sopater the Berean, son of Pyrrhus, accompanied him; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy; and the Asians, Tychicus and Trophimus. (5) These went on ahead and were waiting for us at Troas, – Acts 20:4-5 ESV

It also appears that he was the source of a great controversy in Jerusalem when the Jews accused Paul of defiling the temple by taking Trophimus, a Gentile, into the temple:

(27) When the seven days were almost completed, the Jews from Asia, seeing him in the temple, stirred up the whole crowd and laid hands on him, (28) crying out, "Men of Israel, help! This is the man who is teaching everyone everywhere against the people and the law and this place. Moreover, he even brought Greeks into the

temple and has defiled this holy place.” (29) For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian with him in the city, and they supposed that Paul had brought him into the temple. – Acts 21:27-29 ESV

Paul’s purpose here in this verse is simply to update Timothy on what has been happening to his fellow workers.

Verse 21

Paul asks Timothy to do his best to visit him before winter. He possibly wanted his cloak before that time (verse 13). It may have been more difficult for Timothy to travel in the winter and Paul was keen to see him before then.

Paul sends greetings to Timothy from a number of believers of whom we know nothing but their names: Eubulus,

Pudens, Linus and Claudia, along with some unnamed brothers.

Verse 22

Paul concludes this letter with a prayer that the Lord be with Timothy's spirit and that His grace be upon him.

By praying that the Lord would be with Timothy's spirit, Paul was praying for his emotional and spiritual encouragement in the Lord. He was asking God to strengthen Timothy in his inner man.

He ends by asking God also to pour out His unmerited favour upon his son in the Lord. That He would shower him with undeserved blessings, wisdom and power.

It is an amazing reality that we can experience the presence of the Lord in this way.

INTRODUCTION TO TITUS

The Epistle is written to Titus, an uncircumcised Greek (Galatians 2:3) who became a travelling partner of Paul's (Galatians 2:1). At the time of writing, Titus was ministering in Crete (Titus 1:5). Paul had left him there to appoint and train spiritual leaders for the church (Titus 1:5). Crete did not have a good reputation. One of their own, a famous prophet and writer described them as "*liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons*" (Titus 1:12). Paul commissioned Titus to address these matters in the church.

Titus' role in Crete appears to be three-fold. First, he was to teach sound doctrine (Titus 2:1). Second, he was to silence (1:11), rebuke (1:13; 2:15), exhort (2:15), and remind (3:1) the church of their obligations in Christ. Finally, he was to appoint and train a spiritual leadership to oversee the work of the church and resist the false teaching of the "*circumcision party*" that wanted to return them to the Jewish law of Moses.

Paul writes to Titus to encourage and guide him in his ministry. He shows him the kind of leaders the church needed if they were to advance in the cause of the gospel (Titus 1:5-9). He reminds his "*true child in a common faith*" (Titus 1:4) of the power of the gospel to transform lives and shows Titus the kind of people God wanted to see in the church of Crete (2:1-10). The apostle clarified the message of the gospel Titus was to teach in Crete

(2:11-15; 3:4-8). Finally, Paul challenges Titus as a servant of God not to get distracted by "*unprofitable and worthless*" dissensions, controversies and quarrels (3:9). Instead, he was to devote himself to teaching "*what accords with sound doctrine*" (Titus 2:1).

The Epistle is a reminder of the power of the gospel not only to forgive but also to transform lives. It is also, however, a challenge to remember that we are in the midst of a spiritual warfare and that we must be diligent as believers to strive for godliness in life and practice.

TITUS 1

Verse 1

As we begin, Paul introduces himself as a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ. It is important to see these two titles together. Some use their titles to promote themselves and lift their name above others. This is not what Paul is doing here. The Greek word translated servant is δοῦλος (doulos) which means slave or a person whose whole purpose is to serve another. The word apostle is ἀπόστολος (apóstolos) which comes from the word apostéllō, meaning to send. An apostle represented the Lord Jesus and was sent by Him as an ambassador. The

ambassador's only responsibility was to convey and represent the wishes of his Lord. A servant and apostle were to die to their ideas and wishes and do the will of the person they served.

Note the purpose of Paul's service and apostleship here. He was given these roles first for the sake of the faith of God's elect." The word elect is ἐκλεκτός (eklektós), which simply means to choose, or in this case, the chosen.

[1 John 4:19](#) tells us:

(19) We love because he first loved us. – 1 John 4:19 ESV

While we could get into all kinds of theological debate here, the reality of the matter is that if Jesus Christ did not take the first step, none of us would ever have been saved from the consequences of our sins. If His Holy Spirit did not open my eyes to the truth of the Gospel, I would still be in my

blindness. I owe my salvation completely to the Lord Jesus and His initiative. He chose to speak to my heart. He chose to break my resistance to the gospel. He chose to die in my place. He chose to work in me before I chose Him. He loved me before I knew Him. He reached out to me before I could reach out to Him.

Note here that God desires to reach out to me and bring me into His kingdom, but he also wants me to grow in my faith and understanding of Him and His purpose. The word faith is πίστις (pístis) and it refers to a persuasion or conviction of the truth. Paul's role was to help believers to understand and be convinced of the truth Jesus taught. This would take place for Paul through his teaching, writing, preaching and personal interactions with people.

Paul also describes his responsibility as a servant and apostle to be one of bringing "knowledge of the truth, which

accords with godliness.” Paul’s calling was not just to fill churches with theologically correct believers but also to teach them how to live godly lives.

Faith in the truth of God’s Word and a knowledge of how to live godly lives are both vital components of the Christian life. Paul was called as an apostle to cultivate both of these qualities in the church of Jesus Christ.

Verse 2

In verse 1, we learned that Paul was called by God for the sake of the elect, and their faith and knowledge of a truth that led to a godly lifestyle. Now the reality of the matter is that this kind of knowledge and lifestyle will lead us into trouble in this sinful world. Believers will be persecuted and called to live a life that conflicts with the world and its sinful ways. Why would anyone want a knowledge and lifestyle that might

cause persecution in this world? Paul answers this in verse 2. It was because of the hope of eternal life which God promised in eternity past.

This hope of eternal life in Jesus Christ was worth suffering for. The love of God in Jesus Christ and this promise of eternal life compelled those of faith to surrender all to Him. Notice two details here about this eternal life.

First, God promised this life before the ages passed. It was His intention from the very beginning of time to set apart a people who would know His salvation and experience eternity in His presence.

Second, eternal life in Jesus Christ is promised by a God who never lies to all who accept His Son. It cannot be taken from them.

Verse 3

Paul was a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ for the faith of God's people and their knowledge of what it meant to be godly (verse 1). To those who belonged to Him, Jesus promised eternal life (verse 2). These truths were "*manifested in His Word*" through the preaching of the gospel entrusted to Paul "*by the command*" of our Saviour and God. Note a few details here in this verse.

Our faith is based on "*His Word.*" That is to say, our faith must be solidly founded on the Word of God. This is the source of all truth we need to know about God and His purpose. Human philosophies and ideas cannot be the foundation for faith.

Second, God has ordained that faith and godliness be taught through the preaching of His inspired Word. All preaching must be based on the truth of the Scriptures and not human ideas. God has chosen the preaching of truth

to be a vital means of communicating His heart to the church.

Third, Paul tells us that the Word we preach was manifested "*at the proper time.*" The Word that was revealed at the proper time was found in the person of Jesus Christ. John makes this clear when he begins his Gospel with the words:

(1) In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (2) He was in the beginning with God. – John 1:1-2 ESV

The word Paul preached was the truth about Jesus Christ and His salvation.

Note finally that this word of the gospel was entrusted to Paul by a command of God the Saviour. The apostle was divinely commissioned to preach the truth about Jesus and His work. What Paul preached was not his ideas but a

revelation of God to Him about His Son Jesus Christ.

Verse 4

The letter is written to Titus. Paul speaks of him as his *"true child in common faith."*

According to [Galatians 2:3](#), Titus was an uncircumcised Greek.

(3) But even Titus, who was with me, was not forced to be circumcised, though he was a Greek. – Galatians 2:3 ESV

He was a travelling companion of Paul's:

(1) Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me. – Galatians 2:1 ESV

We have evidence of Titus being sent by Paul to minister in the city of Corinth:

(17) Did I take advantage of you through any of those whom I sent to you? (18) I urged Titus to go, and sent the brother with him. Did Titus take advantage of you? Did we not act in the same spirit? Did we not take the same steps? – 2 Corinthians 12:17-18 ESV

Titus appears to be well-loved and respected by the apostle. Paul's prayer for him was that the grace and peace of God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be his portion.

Verse 5

The verse tells us that Titus ministered in Crete. Paul reminds Timothy that he

had left him there for two specific reasons.

First, Titus was to "*put what remained in order.*" The apostle does not go into detail about these matters. We can assume that Paul likely went with Titus to Crete, preached the gospel and saw some converts. While Paul moved on to another location, he left Titus to organize a church and get it established. Each of us has our role. Paul travelled from one place to another, but he understood the importance of follow-up and establishing the churches so that they could continue in his absence. Titus had the gifts and ability to help these early believers establish themselves in churches and continue in the truth Paul had taught them.

Second, Titus was also to appoint elders in every town where there was a church. Titus appears to follow behind Paul. Paul preached the gospel and saw

souls saved and brought into the kingdom. Titus remained and trained leaders to continue the work of the church, and then he, too, left to go to another city to do the same thing. These local believers would then continue the work on their own. The apostles or their coworkers would visit or write to the church, as they had the opportunity, to encourage them in the faith.

Verse 6

To assist Titus in the role of selecting elders for the churches, Paul takes a moment to show him the kind of men he needed to be looking for.

First, an elder was to be above reproach. The word ἀνέγκλητος (anégklētos) is a legal term that speaks of a person who is free from any legal charge. He is a law-abiding citizen. Not only does he follow the law of the land,

however, but he also follows the law of God and walks faithfully with Him.

Second, Timothy was to seek men who were the husband of one wife. God intended that a man marry one woman and live faithfully with her. The implication is that the elder only had only one wife at a time and was faithful to that wife as long as she lived.

Third, the elder's children were to be believers and not charged with "*debauchery or insubordination.*" The word translated "*believers*" here in the ESV is πιστός (pistós), which refers to trustworthiness or faithfulness. The King James Version translates the word as "*faithful children*":

(6) If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. – Titus 1:6 KJV

Paul seems to explain what he means here by "*faithful children*" when he says that these children were not to be open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination.

The word debauchery is ἄσωτία (asōtía) and speaks of a prodigal or one who is easily influenced to wander from a godly life into worldliness and improper living.

The word insubordination is ἀνυπότακτος (anupótaktos), derived from the word "α" meaning without and "*hupotássō*" meaning to sit under or to subject oneself to another. The idea here is that these children do not submit to authority and live as rebels.

Paul is telling Timothy that an elder should be a man who did not have children, who lived ungodly lives, and who rebelled against authority. The idea is that if the elder was not able to keep his children in submission or raise

a family that respected the laws of the land and the laws of God, then how could he do so in the church?

Verse 7

In [Titus 1:5](#) Paul told Titus that he left him in Crete to "*appoint elders in every town.*" The apostle then proceeds in verse 6 to list the qualifications of such an elder.

Verse 7 begins with the word "for." The Greek word is γάρ (gár) and links what Paul has been saying in verses five and six to what he is about to say in verse 7.

Note here that Paul switches from the word elder in verse 5 (πρεσβύτερος, presbúteros) to overseer (ἐπίσκοπος, epískopos). The Greek word ἐπίσκοπος (epískopos) is derived from "ἐπί," meaning upon, and "σκοπός," meaning a watchman. Together they carry the meaning of someone who watches

over. Paul seems to be using the word elder and overseer interchangeably here. An elder was an overseer. We do not need to see a separation between the role of an elder and that of an overseer.

The overseer, according to Paul, was God's steward (οἰκονόμος, oikonómos). A steward was an administrator of a home, family or business tasked with assuring that everything was running as intended. This is the role of the elder/overseer. He was to oversee the work of the church according to the principles laid out in the Word of God.

An overseer was to be above reproach. The word used here is ἀνέγκλητος (anégklētos) and refers to someone who has been accused in court. An overseer was to be free from legal impediments. He was to be a law-abiding citizen. Not only was he to obey the law of the land but he was also to

obey the law of God and walk faithfully with Him.

Next, an overseer was not to be arrogant. Paul uses the word αὐθάδης (authádēs) here. It is derived from “*autós*,” meaning himself and “*hēdomaí*” meaning to please. Together these words speak of someone whose interest is to please themselves. Paul tells Titus that when he was looking for leaders, they were to be self-sacrificing men with a passion to minister to the needs of others.

Overseers were also not to be quick-tempered. We sometimes say that this kind of person has a “short fuse.” Imagine a stick of dynamite that has a very short fuse. When it is ignited, it is not long before the flame reaches the dynamite and blows up. The kind of person Paul speaks about here gets angry very quickly and does not have patience with people. An overseer must be patient with the members of the

church. His quick temper will only be a hindrance to his ministry.

Drunkenness and substance abuse were not to be part of an overseer's life. He was not to be a drunkard or controlled by any substance. This impairment would only hinder his judgement and give him a bad testimony in the church.

An overseer was not to be a violent man. The word πλήκτης (pléktēs) means to strike. We should not see this only to refer to someone who physically strikes another person with his fists. We can strike people with our words as well. The type of person Paul refers to here is one who is looking for a fight. That might be physical but it might also be verbal. This kind of man loves to quarrel and disagree. He hurts people in word and deed, to prove his point.

Next, the overseer was not to be a greedy person. The word αἰσχροκερδής

(*aischrokerdēs*) comes from "*aischrós*," meaning dishonourable or indecent, and "*kérdos*," meaning gain. This kind of person is willing to compromise his moral and spiritual standards if, by doing so, he may obtain personal benefit. The overseer was to be a man who held firmly to his convictions and would give up everything to walk in truth and integrity.

Verse 8

The apostle lists another six qualities of an elder/overseer here in this verse. He begins by telling Titus that as he sought out leaders for the various churches he was establishing, he was to look for hospitable men. The word φιλόξενος (*philóxenos*) refers to a friend of strangers. We often think of hospitality as the quality that brings friends together. This, however, is not

the sense of the word Paul uses. The elder was to be one who was able to show kindness and compassion to those outside of the church. He was open to receiving people who were different from him and not inside his social circle. He embraced all people and demonstrated the love of Christ without prejudice.

Second, the kind of leader Titus was to seek out was a lover of good. The word φιλάγαθος (philágathos) is derived from "*phílos*," meaning friend, and "*agathós*," meaning benevolent. Together these two words convey the sense of a friend to benevolence, or a person who loves doing what is good and right. Note that the person Titus was to look for was not someone who did good because, if he didn't, it would be bad for his reputation. The person Titus was to seek out was one who "loved" to do good. In other words, it was his passion and delight.

Third, the elder/overseer was to be self-controlled. The idea here is that he was in control of his emotions, passions, and body. He was not an individual quick to become angry but a master of his emotions. He would not lash out at another in words because he was in control of his tongue. He would not seek revenge or retaliation for wrongs done to him because he was in control of his actions. All of these things were held in submission to the higher principle of godliness and obedience to God.

Fourth, Paul required that an elder/overseer be upright. The word δίκαιος (díkaios) refers to righteousness and justice. Such a person walked in obedience to the laws of the land and the laws of God. These individuals honour God by walking faithfully in His purpose.

Fifth, elders/overseers were to be holy. The word ὁσίος (hósios) refers to

someone who is unpolluted by sin and evil and lives a life in conformity with the purpose of God.

Finally, the elder/overseer was to be disciplined. The word ἐγκρατής (egkratēs) refers to being in control of oneself or one's circumstances. The idea seems to be that other things or people are not hindering his ability to make the right decisions and take the right actions. He is not distracted from his purpose or hindered from doing what is right.

Verse 9

According to Paul, an elder/overseer was to "*hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught.*" In our day, we encourage free thinking and independence. This is not what Paul is teaching here. He is telling Titus that the elder/overseer was not looking for new truths but rather one who held

firmly to the "*word as taught.*" If we want to know the truth we must look to what has been passed on to us from generation to generation. We must not despise the unchanging message of the gospel. It must be our focus and commitment. We cannot compromise the truth of that age-old gospel in any way. Titus was to look for men who stood firm on the truth as taught by the apostles and accepted it as sufficient for life and godliness. It was these men who held firmly to the word taught, that Titus was to commission as elder/overseers in the church.

Paul tells Titus that the elder/overseer was to be able to instruct in sound doctrine. This did not need to take place in the pulpit on a Sunday morning. Not all elders/overseers are gifted or capable public speakers. Elders, however, were to be able to recognize the truth and share that truth with others. They were to be able

to "*give instruction in sound doctrine.*" That might take place in the context of a pastoral visit with a member of the church or in informal conversations with individuals. What is important is that the elder understands the truth and can convey that truth to the members of the church.

Observe secondly that not only was that elder/overseer to understand and speak the truth of sound doctrine, but he was also to be able to rebuke those who contradicted it. To do so an elder first needed to be able to recognize false teaching. Secondly, however, he was to have the ability to rebuke those who brought that teaching. The word ἐλέγχω (elégchō) used here means to convict or to prove wrong. In other words, the elder was to be able to demonstrate the truth before those who contradicted it.

The role of the elder/overseer was to guard the truth and stand in its

defence, lest falsehood and error invade the church and lead its members astray.

Verse 10

The apostle has been instructing Titus about the kind of leaders God wanted for the church. He reminds him that not all men demonstrate these qualities. Some men were insubordinate. The Greek word Paul used here is ἀνυπότακτος (anupótaktos). It is derived from the word “a,” meaning without, and “*hupotássō*,” meaning to be subject to or to sit under someone or something. In other words, some men refuse to submit to any authority but do as they please. This kind of man was unfit to be an elder in the church.

Second, other men were “*empty talkers*.” The idea is that they had nothing of real value to speak about. Understand that the words we speak

are a reflection of the heart and mind. What a person speaks about reflects their priorities. This empty talk might also be related to false doctrines or futile discussions that only led to quarrels about things that had no value in the scope of eternity. If elected to the office of elder, these individuals would only hinder the work of the church and cause controversy.

Finally, some deceivers identified as Christians. Paul gives an example of this here when he speaks about members of the "*circumcision party*." These individuals believed that Christians needed to follow the law of Moses and submit to circumcision as a spiritual obligation. The idea is that if you were to be a good follower of Jesus you needed to observe the Jewish laws. Paul taught that believers in Jesus Christ were free from the law. Their salvation and relationship with God had

nothing to do with how well they kept the law of Moses.

Paul is making an important point here. Some men believed that salvation was through the law. They measured spiritual maturity by how well an individual observed that law. Their focus was all about how a person lived their life and not about their forgiveness in Jesus Christ. These individuals diminished the significance of the cross by telling believers that they could be right with God apart from the work of Jesus Christ. All they had to do was follow the law of God the best they could. Any elder who believed this was unfit for office in the church. While it is important that we walk in obedience to God and His Word, it is the work of Jesus Christ alone that guarantees our salvation. It is the work of His Spirit in us that brings true maturity and not how well we can live by our efforts.

Verse 11

Paul challenges Titus to silence insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers (verse 10). He explains why this was so important in the church.

These men were “*upsetting whole families.*” The word, “upsetting” is ἀνατρέπω (anatrépō) and means to overturn. When Jesus was in the temple and saw the money changers, He overturned their tables. The result was that whatever was on those tables was spilled out onto the floor. Imagine upsetting a table holding a precious vase. The vase falls on the floor and shatters into thousands of pieces. This is what these men were doing. They were upsetting whole families with their quarrels, division and falsehood. They needed to be stopped.

Notice also that these men were “*teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach.*” They were

false teachers who were receiving money from those they deceived. They profited financially from gullible people and, in return, upset and divided their families by teaching heresy. Titus was to silence these individuals and stop them from profiting from their lies.

Verse 12

Paul quotes from a Cretan prophet here. Most commentators believe this prophet to be a man by the name of Epimenides who was born about 600 years before Christ. He was known for his religious and poetical writings and did not always cast the people of his nation in a positive light. He was particularly known for his statement that all Cretans were liars. Paul attributes him to have also said of his people that they were evil beasts and lazy gluttons.

The words Paul quotes here were to remind Titus of the task he had before him. He was to make a special effort to establish the church in Crete so that the gospel of Jesus Christ could transform the reputation of these Cretans.

Verse 13

In verse 12, Paul quoted Epimenides, who wrote that "*Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.*" Note what the apostle has to say in this verse to Titus over 600 years later — "*This testimony is true.*" The reputation of the Cretans had not changed though hundreds of years had passed.

It would be easy to just accept that this reality could never be changed. Paul is not of this opinion. He challenged Titus here to take a stand against this six-hundred-year reputation. He tells him

to rebuke the Cretans sharply. The word "rebuke" is ἐλέγχω (elégchō) and means to shame, disgrace or to prove wrong.

Paul is making an important point here. The reputation of Crete had been well-established and firmly rooted in their culture for over 600 years. Maybe you have had sinful habits or attitudes that go back as far as you can remember. Maybe there are issues in your marriage or friendships hindering your relationship, but they have been firmly rooted for years. What would the apostle Paul say to you today? He would tell you to rebuke these deeply rooted attitudes, sins and habits sharply and determine in your mind that you will dig deeply down to the roots and pull them out for the glory of God.

Notice the reason for the sharp rebuke. It was Paul's desire that by exposing their error, they would become "*sound in the faith.*" The word sound is ὑγιαίνω

(*hugiaínō*) and speaks of something healthy. The goal of rebuking the Cretans was to strengthen their faith.

Paul believed that the gospel was able to transform the Cretan's lives for good. It was able to take a 600-year-old bad reputation and transform it into a godly one. Such is the power of the gospel.

Verse 14

Titus was to charge the Cretans to stop devoting themselves to Jewish myths. The Greek word μῦθος (*múthos*) refers to a story or idea invented by the human mind but not based in reality. The fact of the matter is that the only reliable source of truth about God and His purpose are the Scriptures which He has given us. Anything that does not conform to them must be seen as error. The New Testament ends with this warning:

(18) I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, (19) and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book. – Revelation 22:18-19 ESV

We can get distracted by many things in this world. Human philosophies, ideas and programmes are not to be held on the same level as the Word of God. That Word must be taken as it is without adding our own ideas and philosophies. We must not subtract anything from this Word but receive it as it is written to be our authoritative guide into all truth. Instead of devoting themselves to human ideas, myths and fables, the Cretans were to submit to the truth of God's inspired Word. This

was their only hope of transformation in their church and society.

Note also that Paul challenged Timothy to tell the Cretans not to devote themselves to "*the commands of people who turn away from the truth.*" We have an example of this in the "*circumcision party*" of verse 10, who wanted to bring all Christians under the obligation of circumcision and the observation of the law of Moses. These individuals multiplied laws and regulations as a means of demonstrating devotion to God and proving spiritual maturity. In doing so they took all attention away from the cross of Jesus that alone is our guarantee of forgiveness and eternal life.

Verse 15

In this chapter, Paul has been speaking about "the circumcision party," who

wanted to bring believers in Jesus Christ under the law of Moses. This included the practice of circumcision, the observation of the laws of Moses concerning clean and unclean food, and Jewish rituals and celebrations.

Consider what Jesus had to say about this in [Matthew 15](#) when the Pharisees were offended because His disciples did not wash their hands according to the Jewish traditions:

(11) It is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but what comes out of the mouth; this defiles a person.” (12) Then the disciples came and said to him, “Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?” (13) He answered ... (17) Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth passes into the stomach and is expelled? (18) But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this

defiles a person. (19) For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. (20) These are what defile a person. But to eat with unwashed hands does not defile anyone.” – Matthew 15:11-12,17-20 ESV

Jesus brought a new perspective on what it meant to be “pure.” For the Pharisees purity was external and required the washing of hands in a special way, observing special days and only eating food approved by the law. Jesus’ concern was not so much for the external as it was for the internal. Purity began in the heart.

Writing to the Romans, the apostle Paul addressed this matter of clean and unclean foods when he said:

(14) I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is

*unclean in itself, but it is unclean
for anyone who thinks it unclean. –
Romans 14:14 ESV*

Paul told the Romans that he was “*persuaded in the Lord Jesus*” that nothing was unclean in itself. This was a departure from the law of Moses, which had lists of clean and unclean foods. Believers, in Jesus, however, were free to eat what they wanted because their relationship with Him did not depend on the kind of food they ate.

Observe, however, in [Romans 14:14](#) that Paul says that food is “*unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean.*” Consider this for a moment. Two brothers are sitting at a table to eat. There before them is a delicious pork roast. The first believer sticks his fork in a generous portion, brings it to his plate, and begins to eat, thanking God for every bite. The second believer,

can't get past the fact that the Old Testament forbade eating pork. He feels that if he were to eat, he would be dishonouring his Creator. What does he do? If he eats the pork before him, he goes against his conscience and willfully disobeys what he believes to be the purpose of God for his life. If he eats, believing that he is sinning against God, then he does sin because he is willing to do what he believes God does not want him to do. One person praises God for the meal by eating, and the other honours Him by refusing to eat.

What is true for food is also true for the Jewish holy days. Listen to what Paul would go on to say about this in [Romans 14:5-6](#):

(5) One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced

in his own mind. (6) The one who observes the day observes it in honour of the Lord. The one who eats eats in honour of the Lord since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains abstains in honour of the Lord and gives thanks to God. – Romans 14:5-6 ESV

Paul reminds the Romans in these verses that there will be differences of opinion about holy days and food. What is important to observe from what Paul writes to the Romans is that each person needs to be convinced "*in his own mind.*" He goes on to remind the Romans that both the one who eats and the one who abstains do so to honour the Lord. God sees the heart and accepts their worship.

Here in [Titus 1:15](#) Paul tells us that to those who are pure, all things are pure. This does not mean that we can sin

with a clear conscience. What it does mean, however, is that I need to be less focused on judging a person by externals. There may be a legitimate reason why you saw your brother coming out of that bar. It was not to get drunk but to speak to that sinner who needed the Saviour. There may be a reason why your brother was speeding in his car. He was on the way to the hospital with a dying friend. It is all too easy to judge what we see without understanding the reasons. Jesus was judged for eating with sinners. I can assure you, however, that He did not do this because he loved and wanted to participate in their sin, but because He wanted to rescue them from it. His heart was pure in what He did.

On the other hand, however, Paul reminded Titus that to those who were defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure. The man who associates with

sinner to please and satisfy his
ungodly desires and passions is sinning.
Those who eat what they believe God
has forbidden, sin by their willingness
to disregard what they see as His
commandment. Their attitude, disbelief
and willingness to disregard the
purpose of God, defile them and render
their actions repulsive to Him.

Verse 16

Paul spoke to Titus in verse 15 about
those who were "*defiled and
unbelieving*." These individuals were
religious people who professed to know
God. They observed the externals of
religion with all its laws and
celebrations, but their hearts were far
from God. Paul has four things to say to
Titus about these people.

First, they denied God by their works.
These individuals may have been
faithful church attenders but because

their religion was one of externals, their hearts remained unchanged. Because they were not right with God, their actions soon followed. They rejoiced in what the world rejoiced in. They thought like the unbeliever. They did not have the mind of Christ or the inner work of His Spirit to transform their hearts. Their lives were, therefore, indistinguishable from the unbeliever except that they did religious things, and claimed to know God, making them hypocrites. Paul went as far as to say that they denied Christ by their works. In the case of the circumcision party, they claimed to know Jesus but when it came to their salvation, they depended on the law of Moses more than they did on the work of Jesus Christ.

Second, Paul calls them detestable. The person, who claims to know God but does not live for Him blasphemes the name of Jesus. One of the great charges against the church by the

unbeliever is that there are too many hypocrites in it. The person who confesses to be a believer in Jesus must demonstrate this by their life. To do otherwise is to show great disrespect and dishonour to the Saviour. This was detestable to the apostle.

Third, the lives these "so-called" Christians lived, proved they were not genuine. Paul tells us that they lived in disobedience, doing what they wanted and disrespecting the purpose of God for their lives.

Paul tells Titus fourthly that such people are unfit for any good work. This was especially true when it came to being leaders of the church. The work that these individuals did came from a heart that was not in tune with God. This had no place in the church.

TITUS 2

Verse 1

The verse begins with the word “but.” This ties it to the final verses of [Titus 1](#) where Paul speaks to Titus about individuals who claimed to know God but whose consciences were defiled and whose works demonstrated that they did not know Him ([Titus 1:16](#)). Paul also spoke in chapter 1 about men who were “*insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers*.” There were also individuals among them belonging to the circumcision party who diminished the work of Jesus and sought to bring believers back under the law of Moses ([Titus 1:10](#)). In light of this reality the

apostle charges Titus with the responsibility to “teach what accords with sound doctrine.”

These false teachers were promoting falsehood and dividing the church of Jesus Christ. Believers needed to be instructed in the truth about Jesus Christ and His work. This role fell to Titus.

Verse 2

Paul has charged Titus to teach sound doctrine. What we need to understand here is that sound doctrine is not just about knowing facts about Jesus and His work. Sound doctrine changes how we live our lives. Paul demonstrates this in the verses following his charge to Titus by showing him how this doctrine was to impact the lives of the people in the church. He begins here with the older men.

Older men, who understood sound doctrine were to be "*sober-minded*." The word used here is νηφάλιος (nēphálios) which implies that they were to be in control of their passions, lusts and desires. Their lives were surrendered to the purpose of God and, denying themselves, they walked in the truth.

Second, older men who knew sound doctrine were to be "*dignified*." The word σεμνός (semnós) is the quality of someone whose life is respected and whose reputation is unblemished.

Third, older men were to be "*self-controlled*." The word σώφρων (sṓphrōn) speaks of an individual who can discipline himself and restrain his passions and emotions.

Fourth, older men were to be sound in faith. The word sound implies health. This kind of faith requires exercising. You cannot have sound faith if you are

not putting it into practice regularly. Soundness also implies freedom from compromise and corruption. Such faith requires constant vigilance and addressing any sin or shortcoming.

Fifth, older men were to be sound in love. Once again, they were to be individuals whose love for God and the body of Christ was healthy and active. Their love was demonstrated in how they lived and how they responded to brothers and sisters in their midst.

Finally, older men were to be sound in steadfastness. The word is ὑπομονή (hupomoné), which is the ability to remain under pressure without giving up. These men were to demonstrate a healthy patience under tribulation.

Verse 3

Women who understood sound faith were to demonstrate this in their lives and behaviour. Paul lists four qualities

in this verse that older women who understood sound faith were to demonstrate.

First, they were to be reverent in behaviour. The word ἱεροπρεπής (hieroprepēs) used here speaks of something sacred or holy. Of course, God is the measure of holiness. These women were to live lives that reflected the character of the God they had come to know.

Second, women who understood sound doctrine were not to be slanderers. The word διάβολος (diábolos) is the name given to the devil and refers to the quality that falsely accuses and speaks lies about another.

Third, women of sound doctrine would not be "*slaves to much wine*." Paul is not speaking here about total abstinence from wine but about being a "slave" (δουλόω, doulóō) to it. Sound faith would keep these women from

being drunkards, abusing alcohol and in doing so risk defaming the name of their Lord.

Finally, women of sound doctrine would teach what is good. The apostle goes on to qualify what he means in the next verse by encouraging them to teach younger women how to be sober and love their husbands and children.

Verse 4

In verse 3, Paul challenged older women to “*teach what is good.*” He explains what he means here in verses four and five.

Note first who these older women were to teach. They were to train younger women. The word train here in the Greek language is σωφρονίζω (sōphronízō) and speaks of disciplining and correcting. Older women were to be active in the lives of the younger. They were to take it upon themselves

to be their mentors, teaching, correcting, and even disciplining them when they began to wander from the path of righteousness. In verses four and five Paul lists six things the older women were to teach younger women.

First, older women were to teach the younger to love their husbands and children. Paul uses two words here. The first is φιλανδρος (phílandros), which comes from the Greek words "phílos," meaning a friend, and "anēr," meaning a husband. Older women were to teach younger women how to be true friends to their husbands.

The second word used here is φιλότεκνος (philótekños), which is derived from "*phílos*," meaning a friend, and "*téknon*" meaning a child. The older women in the church were to help the younger ones to know how to be true friends to their children.

The use of the word “phílos” implies a caring and genuine relationship with the husband and children in her life. Older women who had experience in these matters were to share their experiences with these younger women who were still learning how to maintain this kind of relationship with their husbands and children.

Verse 5

The second thing older women were to teach the younger was how to be self-controlled. The word σώφρων (sôphrōn) speaks of being restrained or disciplined in one’s passions and desires. With all the pressures of being a mother and wife, this would not always be easy. Older women uniquely understood these pressures and temptations and were able to share their insight and support with the younger, helping them to be in control

of their passions and emotions for the good of their family and their testimony in the community.

Thirdly, older women were to instruct the younger to be pure. The word ἁγνός (hagnós) here refers to freedom from any sin that would defile them. It can also speak of being emotionally and sexually faithful to their husband.

Fourthly, older women were to teach the younger to work at home. Culturally, most women did not work outside the home in those days. While our modern situation needs to be taken into account, Paul challenges older women to help the younger to understand their obligation to their husbands and children. These younger women were to make their husbands and children a priority and do what they could to provide and care for them. Of course, this was a massive undertaking and would require the

support and advice of older women who had experience in these matters.

Fifthly, older women were to teach younger women to be kind. The word translated as kind here is ἀγαθός (agathós), which means profitable or useful. In other words, younger women were to seek what benefitted another. They were to use their time, energy and resources to profit their husbands, children and people in their community.

Sixthly, older women were to teach the younger ones to be submissive to their own husbands. The word submissive is ὑποτάσσω (hupotássō). It is derived from "hupó," meaning beneath or under, and "tássō," meaning to arrange or to order. Together they carry the meaning of arranging herself under her husband and his leadership.

Understand here that this was not a forced but a voluntary act. Older women were to teach younger women to arrange themselves under the

authority of their husbands and not to be in opposition to Him and his leadership.

Note the reason why older women were to teach these things to the younger — *"that the word of God may not be reviled."* By teaching younger women these qualities, the older women were playing a vital role for the glory of God and His truth. In observing these qualities, the younger women honoured God and His purpose for their lives.

Verse 6

Paul moves his attention now to the younger men in the church. How would sound doctrine (verse 1) impact their lives? Sound doctrine would equip these young men to be self-controlled. The Greek word σωφρονέω (sōphronéō) implies discretion and moderation in one's actions, passions and emotions. They were not to allow

their passions, emotions or any other outside influence to keep them from doing what was in accordance with sound doctrine. Those who understood sound doctrine would control their passions, actions and emotions and keep them in submission to the truth they had come to understand.

Verse 7

Speaking directly now to Titus, Paul challenges him to be a model of good works. That is to say, Titus was to demonstrate by his actions the purpose of God for the Christian life. He was to live out the truth he preached to others. The apostle also has some things to say to Titus about his teaching.

First, he was to show integrity in his teaching. The word ἀδιαφθορία (adiaphthoría) speaks of something that does not have any corruption. The

truth of the gospel Titus preached was never to be compromised, altered or adjusted in any way.

Second, Titus was to teach with dignity. The word dignity is σεμνότης (semnótēs) and speaks of respect, decency and seriousness. He was not to take the word he taught lightly but treat it with all seriousness and respect, honouring it as the Word of God.

Verse 8

In verse 7 Paul challenged Titus to teach with integrity and dignity. He adds one more detail here. Titus was to teach with sound speech that could not be condemned. The word sound carries with it the sense of wholeness or healthiness. In other words, the things Titus spoke were to be godly, and true to the Word of God. His teaching was not to be mixed with false motives or intentions. I have to admit that there

have been times when I spoke the truth with the wrong motives. There have been occasions in my preaching when my desire for personal glory contaminated my words, rendering them impure before God. Titus was to guard his motives and intentions and keep them pure before His Saviour.

Note here the reason why it is important to be sure that our speech is sound, healthy or godly in word, motive and attitude — *"So that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us."* While our opponents may not like the words we speak, they cannot fault our intentions, motives and attitudes. Nor can they demonstrate that the truth we speak is not in agreement with the Word of God. They see the compassion and love in the words we share. They see our lives and how they demonstrate the truth of what we speak. Try as they may, they find nothing in us that would cause

them to accuse us of untruth, hypocrisy, selfish motives, or greedy ambitions.

Verse 9

The final group Paul addresses here is slaves. The apostle is not promoting slavery by addressing them in this verse. The institution of slavery was, however, firmly entrenched in that culture and the question that had to be addressed was what a Christian slave bound to a master by law was to do. How did the believing slave's understanding of sound doctrine impact how they lived their lives and performed their duty in a society that held them in bondage against their wishes?

First, Paul tells Titus that slaves were to be submissive to their masters in everything. The implication is that there may even be things that would not be

considered fair or just but Christian slaves were to obey their master even in those circumstances. They were to serve their masters to their own hurt. I would like to add here that there may have been one exception to this rule (although Paul does not address it here). That exception was when their masters wanted them to disobey the higher authority of God.

Second, Paul tells Titus that slaves were to be well-pleasing. To be well-pleasing implied that the slave was to seek the well-being of their masters whether they be honourable or cruel. They were to perform their duties to the best of their ability.

Finally, slaves who understood sound doctrine were not to be argumentative. That is to say, they were to submit to the wishes of their master without disagreement or bitterness. They were to obey without question his or her

wishes without talking back or questioning their wishes.

A servant who was submissive, hardworking, obedient and did not argue or question their master's authority would be well-pleasing to their master and demonstrate what it meant to be a true believer in Jesus Christ. Remember that Jesus laid down His life for us and took on the role of a servant for our sake. A slave demonstrated by his or her life the truth of the gospel.

There are many times we find ourselves in situations that are difficult and unpleasant. How we handle those situations will show those around us what it means to be a true servant of Christ.

Verse 10

The apostle adds one more quality for the Christian slave here. The slave was

not to pilfer. The word νοσφίζω (nosphízō) speaks of stealing, depriving or keeping something that belongs to another. Admittedly, the slave lived in poverty while the master bathed in luxury. This, however, did not mean that the slave had any right to what belonged to the master. In particular, a Christian slave was to be faithful and honest in everything.

Notice here that they were to be honest and faithful so that they could adorn the doctrine of God the Saviour. This ties the verse to what Paul said in verse 1 to Titus. He was to teach "what accords with sound doctrine." Sound doctrine, according to Paul is not just something we understand in our heads but something we "adorn." We wear sound doctrine by what we do and how we live our lives. The truth about Jesus Christ impacts our behaviour and shapes our personality. It touches everything we do and affects our every

action. When a slave adorned sound doctrine, it transformed how they served their master.

Verse 11

Paul begins the verse with the word “for,” connecting it to the preceding verses. In those verses, the apostle spoke about how sound doctrine was to impact the lives of older women, younger women, younger men and slaves. Sound doctrine was found in the message of the gospel of God. That gospel spoke of the Lord Jesus, the Son of God who appeared on this earth, died for our sins and rose victorious over the grave to reign with His Father. It tells us that He will come again to judge both the living and the dead.

Note how Paul tells Titus, that the Lord Jesus brings salvation for all people. Consider what Jesus tells us in the Gospel of John:

*(16) "For God so loved the world,
that he gave his only Son, that
whoever believes in him should not
perish but have eternal life. – John
3:16 ESV*

The offer of salvation is extended to the whole world. This, of course, does not mean that the whole world will be saved from their sin. Some will turn their back on this offer and be condemned. Were it not for the conviction of the Spirit of God and His work in my life, I would have been among those who rejected this gospel. No one will be without excuse, however, for the cross of Jesus Christ and the salvation He offers is extended to all. No one will stand before the Saviour and say, "There was no Saviour for me. There was no sacrifice made on my behalf." The grace of God is extended to "all people."

Verse 12

Note here what Paul tells Titus about the gospel he spoke about in verse 11. This gospel trains us in two things.

First, the gospel of Jesus Christ trains us to "*renounce ungodliness and worldly passions.*" There is something about the power of the gospel that transforms lives. Those who lived in ungodly passions are forever changed. The gospel is not just a message but the power to live a whole new life. Through the death of Jesus on our behalf, our sins are legally pardoned. That is not all that happens, however. The Spirit of Christ is now free to indwell the believers, transforming their lives, giving them a new passion, purging out evil desires and opening their eyes and ears to the person of Jesus Christ and His work. Those who know this work of the Spirit are not the same. Ungodliness and sinful passions

no longer have the same appeal. Their hearts have been renewed and brought in tune with the purpose of God. Such is the power of the gospel.

Not only does the gospel train us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, but it also trains us *"to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in the present age."* This also is the work of God's Holy Spirit in our lives. He empowers us to live for Christ. One of the fruits of the Spirit is self-control. This self-control is the power to resist the flesh with its passions and lusts. The Holy Spirit, as our Counsellor and Teacher, teaches us how to live upright and godly lives as the Father requires. He convicts us of sin and unrighteousness and strengthens all who submit to His conviction, enabling them to walk aright.

The present age in which we live brings its temptations and trials. We can, through the gospel of Jesus Christ and

its life-changing power overcome the world and live godly and upright lives. The Gospel and its life-changing power give us the ability to do this.

Verse 13

The gospel, according to Paul in verse 12, trains us in godliness. We strive for this as we await the appearing of the glory of our God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Note here that this appearance of the Lord Jesus is the blessed hope of all who have been transformed by the power of the gospel. It is blessed in that it is something we long to see. We await with eager anticipation for this wonderful appearance.

Observe also what Paul tells us about the Lord Jesus who will appear at the proper time.

First, His appearance is glorious. Something glorious is honourable and worthy of worship and praise.

Second, the Lord Jesus is “great.” The word great in Greek is μέγας (mégas). It can refer to something great in size, value, power, honour or any number of ways. Jesus is great in that we cannot compare with Him in character, power, glory or perfection. He is infinitely bigger than us in every way.

Third, the Lord Jesus is our God. Paul makes it quite clear that Jesus Christ, as the Son of God, is not only equal to God but He is God, one with the Father and the Holy Spirit and deserving of our praise and worship.

Fourth, Jesus is our Saviour. He rescued us from hell and eternal condemnation. He laid down His life for us, taking our place so that we could be forgiven and know the joy of eternal life with Him.

Finally, Jesus is the Christ. The word Christ means anointed one. He was anointed by the Father to be our High Priest and Messiah. He stands between us and the Father bridging the gap so that we can cross over into His presence.

Verse 14

Note what Paul tells us about this glorious, great God and Saviour Jesus Christ (verse 13).

First, He gave Himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness. Lawlessness refers to the breaking of the law of God. This is where we were before we met the Lord Jesus. As lawbreakers, we were under the condemnation of God and destined for eternal punishment.

Jesus redeemed us from this penalty by paying our debt. He laid down His life and took our sentence upon Himself. With our sentence served and the debt

paid, we were legally released from guilt and restored to a right relationship with the Father.

Second, Jesus purified for Himself "*a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.*" Note several points here.

Jesus purified us as a people through His redemptive work on the cross. He removed sin and guilt by legally taking our condemnation on Himself. This is what the apostle Paul told the Romans in [Romans 8](#):

(1) There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. (2) For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. – Romans 8:1-2 ESV

All my sins, past, present and future, are covered by the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ. I am pure before the

Father in that there is now no sin
Christ's death does not cover.

Next the work of Jesus Christ makes us children of God and the possession of Jesus Christ. Paul tells Titus that Jesus *"purified for Himself a people for His own possession."* He bought us through His death. We who have been forgiven belong to Him and owe everything to Him. He is our Lord and Master. We live only because of Him. We live only in Him. He is the Lord of everything I possess. My goal in life is to walk with Him, obey Him, serve Him and glorify His name in every word, thought and deed.

Finally, it is the will and purpose of Jesus, who redeemed us for His own possession, that we be a people who are zealous for good works. We are His instruments on this earth. He chooses to work through us to accomplish His great purpose. Those who have been

redeemed are called to be His servants for good works on this earth.

Verse 15

The apostle ends the chapter with four challenges for Titus.

First, Paul exhorts Titus to declare what he had been writing to him. The word used here is λαλέω (laléō) and means to talk randomly with individuals. The idea appears to be that Titus was to make these matters part of his everyday conversations with those he met.

Second Titus was to exhort. The word παρακαλέω (parakaléō) is derived from "*pará*," meaning to the side of and "*kaléō*," meaning to call. The idea is to call someone to your side for support, and encouragement. Titus was to come alongside people to challenge, support and encourage them in their

walk with God, helping them to apply the principles Paul taught in this letter.

Third, Titus was to rebuke with all authority. The word ἐλέγχω (elégchō) means to convict or to prove someone in the wrong. The idea is to expose shortcomings to correct behaviour. Titus was to do this with authority. That authority came from the Word of God and its purpose for those who wandered. Titus was not to hold back when he saw someone wander from the truth. He was to challenge them, reveal their error, and restore them to the fold.

Finally, Paul encouraged Titus not to let anyone disregard him. Titus was called by God and commissioned by the apostle to do the work of the gospel. That commission and calling demanded respect. In the Old Testament, God often sent prophets to his people. Many times they ignored or mocked those prophets. Titus was God's messenger to

the church. He was to understand the seriousness of his role and stand firm. The word translated as “disregard” is περιφρονέω (periphronéō). It means to ignore or depreciate. Titus was not to let people ignore him or the call of God on his life. He was to make his voice heard as a representative of God. He was to take the authority given to him by his calling and walk boldly in it for the glory of His Saviour.

TITUS 3

Verse 1

In verses 1-3, Paul exhorts Titus to remind believers about how they were to live in their community as servants of Jesus Christ. Here, in verse 1, he shares with him the first three points.

First, believers were to be submissive to rulers and authorities. The word ὑποτάσσω (hupotássō), used here, means to arrange oneself under another. This is a voluntary act and not forced. Believers are to respect those who have been given authority in the church and community. They are to see them as God's servants to maintain order.

Second, believers were to be obedient. The word πειθαρχέω (peitharchéō) speaks of obeying a person in authority. This takes submission to a deeper level. The believer is not only to submit to authorities but also to obey them. One day, Jesus was asked if it was proper to pay taxes to Caesar. He responded:

(20) And Jesus said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" (21) They said, "Caesar's." Then he said to them, "Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." – Matthew 22:20-21 ESV

It is the will of God that believers be law-abiding citizens of their nation. In doing so, they demonstrate submission to those in authority and honour God.

Third, Paul challenged believers to be ready for every good work. The good

works Paul refers to here are of various kinds. What he is telling Titus is that believers should be making a difference in their communities through their efforts. The Christian life is not a life lived in church but in the real world. As we reach out in acts of compassion and concern, we make a difference in our communities and demonstrate the heart of Christ.

Verse 2

Paul continues from verse 1 with his list of qualities the believer needs to demonstrate in their community.

Fourth, believers were not to speak evil of anyone. The word used here is βλασφημέω (blasphēméo), which means to blaspheme or to damage the reputation of another through the words we speak. Believers are to be in control of their words. Now admittedly, there are times when we need to

expose error and falsehood. What Paul is saying, however, is that there is a time to hold one's tongue and not use it to unnecessarily hurt another person or damage their reputation. There are times when gossip needs to stop with us and does not need to be passed on. We are not to spread bitterness and dissension.

Fifth, believers are to avoid quarrelling. The word Paul uses here is ἀμάχος (ámachos). It is derived from the word "a," meaning without, and "máchē," meaning battle or controversy. Believers are not to be people looking for a controversy or a fight. Understand that we are, as Christians, in the midst of a spiritual battle. We put on the armour of God and stand up for righteousness, but we are not a people who are always looking for controversy. We prefer peace and harmony.

Sixth, believers are to be gentle. The word ἐπιεικῆς (epieikēs) refers to treating people with fairness and being patient and unassertive. Gentle people do not actively pursue their interests at the expense of another but consider the needs of their friends and neighbours even placing their interests above their own.

Seventh, believers are to demonstrate "perfect courtesy toward all people." The word πραότης (praotēs) refers to someone who is accepting of circumstances and submissive to God and the situations or trials He allows in our life. This means that when someone else receives a position that we want for ourselves, we are accepting and do not become angry or jealous. When someone jumps ahead of us in the line, we do not become angry with them but are willing to give that place to them. When someone

slaps us on one cheek, we turn the other.

Verse 3

Paul exhorts believers to demonstrate the qualities listed in verses 1 and 2 because they were themselves, at one point, in the circumstances of those they were showing gentleness and courtesy toward now.

Paul reminds Christians that they were at one time foolish, lacking understanding of the salvation and work of Jesus. Some of them were disobedient to the law and the authorities of their land. They were all disobedient to God and His purpose. Before they came to Christ they had been led astray by their passions and pleasures, living to please their flesh with its lusts. Before knowing God's salvation and the transformation it brought, they passed their days living

with malice, envy and hatred in their hearts, attitudes and words.

Paul asked believers to remember what it was like for them before they came to know Christ. He does this to help them be more compassionate and understanding toward those whose eyes were not yet open to the truth of the gospel. This does not mean that they were to excuse or justify evil behaviour, but rather understand that those who practiced these things did not know Christ and were acting out of ignorance of His work and salvation.

Verse 4

Paul has been teaching believers how to live in an ungodly society. They were to be submissive and obedient to authorities and not seek quarrels with them. He encouraged Christians to be gentle and courteous toward all people. This included the unbeliever. Paul

reminds them that at one time they were themselves ungodly, foolish, disobedient and slaves to their fleshly passions and desires. Believers were to remind themselves that but for the grace of Jesus Christ, they would still be among the ungodly. The goodness and loving-kindness of the Lord Jesus Christ, however, appeared to them, and that made all the difference. Consider two points here.

First, the only difference between the believer and the unbeliever is Jesus Christ and His work. Without Jesus, there is no eternal life. Without Him, there would be no holiness.

Second, observe the phrase: "*The goodness and loving kindness of God our Saviour appeared.*" My salvation is not a result of anything I did or believed. I am saved from my sin and a child of God today simply because the "goodness and loving kindness of God my Saviour appeared" to me. I did not

deserve this. I was not necessarily seeking it, but God appeared. His Spirit revealed His Son to me and opened my eyes. He softened my heart and gave me understanding. I was saved because God appeared and poured out his goodness and loving-kindness upon me. I am no different in my natural self from anyone else. The only difference between me and an unbeliever is that God's goodness and loving kindness appeared to me and transformed my life. I owe everything to Him.

Verse 5

Notice what Paul tells us about salvation here.

First, Jesus Christ saves us. There is no other means of salvation apart from the work of Jesus Christ. No effort of our own could ever make us right with God. His sacrifice alone can bring forgiveness and pardon.

Second, Jesus did not save us because of any righteous works we did.

Salvation has nothing to do with how good a life I can live. Many faithful churchgoers do not know the salvation of Jesus Christ. The worst sinner can experience the salvation and forgiveness of God.

Third, salvation is "*according to His own mercy*." That is to say, the only explanation for my salvation is the mercy of God in Jesus Christ. I did not deserve to be saved but I received His pardon. If my salvation is not based on how good I am or how well I can live, then the only other explanation is a God who willingly gives what I do not deserve.

Fourth, salvation is by the "*washing of regeneration*." The word regeneration is παλιγγενεσία (paliggenesía). It comes from "*pálin*," meaning again and "*génesis*" which speaks of origin, beginning, race or being. The sense

here is that regeneration is a new beginning. It changes us and makes us a new people. In reality it is a new birth into a race of people belonging to God. Note how this regeneration takes place.

Regeneration takes place through washing. This washing is the result of the work of Jesus Christ on the cross that cleanses us from our sin and removes our shame.

Regeneration also takes place by means of the "*renewal of the Holy Spirit.*" We are not washed and left to fend for ourselves. God places His Holy Spirit in us to give us new life and power. Those who know the work of the Holy Spirit are no longer the people they used to be. They have new life and are being transformed day by day into the image of Jesus Christ.

Regeneration is the result of the work of Jesus Christ on the cross pardoning us from sin and the ongoing work of

His Spirit who gives us spiritual life and power to live the Christian life.

Verse 6

Paul reminds believers that the Lord God poured out His Holy Spirit richly through Jesus Christ the Saviour.

The Holy Spirit is the life of Christ in us. His presence gives us life. His power is our only ability to live for Christ. His enabling is our only strength for service. We could not live the Christian life without the Holy Spirit. Human effort is tainted with sin. What He does through us, however, is powerful, godly and accepting to the Father. What a comfort it is to know that the Father is willing to pour out His Holy Spirit "*richly*." We will have all we need of His presence for life, service and godliness. The problem is that we do not always avail ourselves of His person.

Note also that while the Holy Spirit is given richly to enable us to live and serve our God, there is no question as to who the Saviour is. The Holy Spirit is poured out richly "*through Jesus Christ our Saviour.*" It was Jesus who laid down His life for us. The Holy Spirit could not work apart from this sacrificial offering of Jesus Christ. He dwells in those who have been forgiven by the Son of God and cleansed of their sin. It is only because of the work of Jesus Christ that the indwelling ministry of His Spirit in us is possible.

Verse 7

In verse 5, Paul spoke of how we were regenerated or given new life through the pardon of Jesus Christ and the renewing of the Holy Spirit. He uses another theological term here in verse 7. He tells believers that they had been "*justified by His grace.*" The word

justified is derived from the Greek word "díkaios" meaning just or righteous. To be justified means to be declared just or right before God. Note here how this declaration takes place. According to Paul, it is "*by his grace.*" The word grace is χάρις (cháris) and speaks of a free and often unmerited favour or acceptance. Paul is telling us that we have been given a right standing with God by means of the unmerited favour of God. We did not earn this standing. Christ's death on the cross pardoned us of our sin and His Holy Spirit gives us new life. We are born again into the family of God through these works of God and are declared to be in good standing with God.

Paul goes on to tell us that this new standing with God now assures us of eternal life. We were given new life through Christ's washing of regeneration, the renewal of the Holy Spirit, and declared to be in good

standing with God all because God is a gracious God who appeared to us and made these things a reality. As we look back at what happened we confess that all of this was a wonderful work of God despite our unworthiness.

Verse 8

Note how Paul begins with the words, "*The saying is trustworthy.*" The Greek word used here is λόγος (lógos) which means word or intelligence. It can also refer to a discourse. Paul is telling Titus that the discourse he has just had with him in this chapter is trustworthy. What has Paul been saying:

1. It was the loving kindness and goodness of Jesus Christ that saved us (verse 4)
2. We were not saved because of any personal righteousness of our own (verse 4)

3. We were regenerated or given new life through the washing of Christ's pardon and the renewing ministry of His Holy Spirit (verse 5)
4. God richly pours out His Holy Spirit on us through the work of Christ giving us new life (verse 6)
5. We are declared right with God (justified) as an act of grace on God's part and not because we merited this standing ourselves (verse 7)
6. We become heirs of eternal life by means of the death of Jesus Christ and the renewal of the Holy Spirit (verse 7)

These sayings are trustworthy and cannot be questioned. Note what Paul tells Titus about these truths.

First, those who believe in these truths would be stimulated to good works. This is not only because they want to

follow their Saviour but also because the work of the Spirit of God in them would motivate them in service.

Second, these truths would be profitable for people. They would be profitable because they were true and glorified the work of Christ and His Spirit. They were profitable because those who understand, accept and experience them are true children of God. They are profitable because they take the focus off human effort and place it on intimacy with God and the work of His Spirit for godliness and service.

Verse 9

The apostle has been speaking to Titus about the gospel of Jesus Christ and how He saved us apart from good works, washed us of our sins, gave us new life, and renewed us by the Holy Spirit. That wonderful message was

trustworthy and profitable for all people. Titus was to preach this message wherever he went. He was, however, to avoid four types of speech that were not profitable to anyone.

First, Titus was to avoid "*foolish controversies*." The word foolish is μωρός (mōrós) from which we get the English word "moron." It refers to something worthless and stupid. The word controversies is ζήτησις (zētēsis) and speaks of a philosophical debate or an argument over something that did not necessarily have a basis in truth or could never be authoritatively proven. Titus had an authoritative guide to truth in the Scriptures. This was to be his focus rather than intellectual debates and opinions on issues that had no value for godliness.

Second, Titus was to avoid genealogies. The word γενεαλογία (genealogía) refers not just to a list of ancestors, but the traditions, teachings, stories and

myths about those ancestors. These stories became more than historical documents but were treated as authoritative guides to life and practice. The temptation for the Jews was to base their lives and practices as much on these traditions and teachings as they did on Scripture. Paul is reminding Titus here that these genealogical traditions, teachings and myths were not Scripture, nor did they carry authority.

Third, Titus was to avoid "*dissensions*." The word ἐρίς (éris) speaks about strife or contention. Some individuals seem to be prone to seeking controversy in the church. Rather than seeking harmony on the essentials of the faith, they tend to divide over the non-essentials.

Fourth, Titus was to avoid "*quarrels about the law*." Remember that in those days many believers had come from a Jewish background. They had, for many

years, lived according to the Law of Moses. Issues such as circumcision, the Sabbath, food laws and special Jewish celebrations were all very much part of their tradition. Then there were the Gentiles who came to the Lord apart from this background. The question of whether these Gentiles needed to follow the Jewish tradition and laws was hotly debated. Titus was not to get involved in these quarrels as they divided the body of Christ. Our salvation is not based on how well we observe the Mosaic Law, nor is our maturity in Christ. There would be believers who observed certain aspects of the Jewish law and others who did not. This was to be expected in the church and believers needed to respect the various positions in these matters.

All of these discussions about human philosophies, genealogies and Jewish law were unprofitable and worthless according to Paul. That is not to say,

they had no ultimate spiritual value nor would they be useful in drawing a person closer to Christ.

Verse 10

The church is not free from problems. As we saw in verse 9, some individuals stirred up division, quarrels and strife over genealogical records, Jewish law, and philosophical ideas. These individuals did not promote harmony in the church but created division and chaos instead. Note what Paul tells Titus to do when he encountered such people in the church.

First, Titus was to warn them about the division they were creating. This warning would likely take the form of a private conversation with the individual concerned to expose what they were doing, and how it was causing division. At that time they would likely be encouraged to stop this divisiveness.

Second, if, after that conversation, the individual continued to stir up controversy and division, Titus was to go a second time and speak to them once again, challenging them to realize what they were doing and encouraging them to stop.

If, after this second admonition, the individual did not listen, Paul tells Titus that he was to "*have nothing more to do with him.*" The apostle does not go into detail about what it meant to have nothing more to do with this individual. Suffice it to say that the person concerned was harming the church and its testimony in the community. The body of Christ needed to distance itself from this individual for its good. That process of distancing may take several forms. What is clear is that the individual had to be removed lest he continue to divide and cause problems for the church as a whole.

Verse 11

Paul says three things about the divisive person here in this verse.

First, such a person is warped. The word ἐκστρέφω (ekstréphō) is derived from "ek," meaning "out," and "stréphō," meaning "to turn." The idea is that the person is twisted out of shape. Such a person diverts from the truth of God's Word and lives contrary to His purpose.

Second, the divisive person is sinful. To sin is to miss the mark. A divisive person is missing God's purpose and intention for his or her life. They are walking contrary to God's purpose. We need to seek God's forgiveness when we cause division in the church.

Finally, a divisive person is *"self-condemned."* Divisive people harm not only the church but themselves. Their divisiveness distances themselves from the other members of the church. They

find no pleasure in the body of Christ and ultimately alienate themselves from the blessings of God.

Verse 12

Note Paul's desire to see Titus personally. He tells him that he was going to send either Artemas or Tychicus to him and when they arrived, Titus was to take the opportunity to visit Paul in Nicopolis. We see here something of Paul's personal side and his love for his coworkers.

We know very little about Artemas in the Bible. This is the only reference to his name. From historical records, he was a bishop in the city of Lystra.

Tychicus, was a travelling companion of Paul (see [Acts 20:4](#)). Paul had enough confidence in him to send him to Ephesus ([2 Timothy 4:21](#)). He described him to the Ephesians as a *"beloved brother and faithful minister*

in the Lord.” We learn from [Colossians 4:7-8](#) that Paul also sent him to Colossae.

The city of Nicopolis was likely located on the western coast of Greece. It was here that Paul determined to spend the winter as travel was more restricted during that season.

Verse 13

The apostle encourages Titus to send Zenas and Apollos on their way.

We know nothing about Zenas apart from the fact that he is described as a lawyer here in verse 13. It is unclear if he continued to practice his profession. He was likely a believer ministering alongside Apollos at this time.

Apollos was a well-known preacher of the gospel and co-worker with Paul. Some believe that they brought this

letter to Titus, but we do not have confirmation of this in the text.

Titus was to send these two men on from Crete. He was to do so, seeing that they lacked nothing for their journey. The implication is that the church would send them off with all they needed for their trip. Paul does not specify where they were going after leaving Crete.

Verse 14

The apostle challenged Titus to teach those under his care to devote themselves to good works, and minister to urgent needs in their community. The church is not only to be a place where the truth is preached but also an instrument of Christ to care for the needy. Truth and "*good works*" must walk side by side and complement each other. Paul wanted to see the church "*devoted*" to good works. These works were to be a priority for them so

that they would not be unfruitful. You cannot keep sound doctrine to yourself. If you know the Lord, and accept the gospel, then it will change your life and you will not be able to hold it in. You will find yourself demonstrating this in how you live your life and what you say.

Verse 15

Paul concludes his letter with a final greeting from all who were with him. He does not list their names. By sending his greetings, he affirms Titus and the believers in Crete and shows them that they are part of a much larger body of brothers and sisters in Christ concerned for each other.

He asks Titus to greet those who loved the body of Christ or "*those who love us in the faith.*" Once again this shows that there is a special relationship between all believers in Jesus Christ.

Paul ends by praying for the grace of God to be with them all. In speaking of grace, Paul reminds the believers that while they were all undeserving, God's unmerited favour was theirs in abundance.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Light To My Path Book Distribution

Light To My Path Book Distribution (LTMP) is a book writing and distribution ministry reaching out to needy Christian workers in Asia, Latin America, and Africa.

Many Christian workers in developing countries do not have the resources necessary to obtain Bible training or purchase Bible study materials for their



ministries and personal encouragement. F. Wayne MacLeod is a member of Action International Ministries and has been writing these books with a goal to distribute them freely or at cost price to needy pastors and Christian workers around the world.

Tens of thousands of these books have been distributed and are being used in preaching, teaching, evangelism and encouragement of local believers in over sixty countries. Books are now being translated into a variety of languages. The goal is to make them available to as many believers as possible.

The ministry of LTMP is a faith-based ministry and we trust the Lord for the resources necessary to distribute the books for the encouragement and strengthening of believers around the world. Would you pray that the Lord would open doors for the translation

and further distribution of these books?

For more information about Light To My
Path visit our website at
www.lighttomypath.ca