

NEW TESTAMENT BIBLICAL LITERACY

Lesson 67

1 Timothy – Part Two

I. BACKGROUND

Last week, we set Paul's first letter to Timothy in its time context, refreshing our knowledge of who Timothy was and why Paul wrote to him. We also discussed why the letter is one of three that scholars term a "Pastoral Epistle."

Acts concluded with Paul under house arrest in Rome around 60 A.D. We cannot put together Paul's itinerary precisely after his release, but through the books of Paul's writings as well as some church history, we can get a fair estimation. Ultimately, Paul died from a second Roman imprisonment somewhere between 65 and 67 A.D. Several years before that death, Paul writes 1 Timothy and Titus while in Greece/Macedonia. The letter to Timothy deals mostly with church structure and issues of Timothy's ministry.

We outlined 1 Timothy as follows:

1. Greeting and Instruction for Timothy's Work (Chapter 1)
2. Instructions on Worship (Chapter 2)
3. Instructions on Overseers and Deacons (Chapter 3)
4. Instructions on Timothy's Role as a Minister (Chapters 4-6)

We covered the Greeting and Instruction section from chapter 1 last week. This week, our goal is the remaining portions of the letter.

II. TEXT

A. Instructions on Worship (Chapter 2)

The Bible never presents a "how to" manual on worship. We do not find in scripture a blueprint for church services. Many churches fall into general patterns of worship which can be written (liturgies and services from books on common prayer, for example) or unwritten. Segments of those services can be found in various parts of the Bible. For example, we read of the early church taking communion, singing songs and psalms, taking collections, giving and listening to

teachings, and praying. Nowhere, however, do we have a pattern of how and when these elements are to come together.

Nevertheless, we have passages like those we see in 1 Timothy where Paul sets forward a number of goals and desires for the church as a body. Paul begins chapter 2 urging the church on the issue of prayer. Paul asks, “requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone...” (2:1). Each of these words is similar in meaning, yet bear distinction. “Requests” are supplications or petitions for very specific needs or situations. “Prayers” is a very general word referencing every form of address to God. It is fair to assume Paul is saying, “pray for specific situations and needs as well as general needs.” “Intercession” means using time with God on behalf of others. And, “thanksgiving” is our return of gratitude for God’s goodness and actions.

These aspects of prayer are for everyone and all aspects of our lives. Paul then specifies that he wants these prayers offered for Kings and those in authority as well. Paul is writing these words at a time when Nero was Emperor of the Roman Empire. Nero was a vane, greedy, and cruel tyrant whom some might say was hardly worthy of prayer. Paul would rejoin, “that’s why we must pray for him!”

Paul wants these prayers with the hope Christians might live peaceful and quiet lives in godliness and holiness. The lifestyle, and the prayers which would lead to it, are pleasing to God. Paul writes that God “wants all men to be saved” (2:4). He wants men everywhere to come to knowledge of the truth. This salvation desire links to Paul’s passage on prayer and peaceful living in two ways. First, it is a worthy object of our prayers. Second, a peaceful life of godliness and holiness itself will draw many to faith. It is what many seek in life.¹

¹ I was recently sent an email with this parable:

A boat docked in a tiny Mexican village. An American tourist complimented the Mexican fisherman on the quality of his fish and asked how long it took him to catch them. "Not very long," answered the Mexican.

"But then, why didn't you stay out longer and catch more?" asked the American.

The Mexican explained that his small catch was sufficient to meet his needs and those of his family.

The American asked, "But what do you do with the rest of your time?"

This truth that God seeks all men to understand is the core of our faith: that there is one God (the *shema* of Israel, the daily chant from Dt 6:4, “Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one.”) and one mediator between God and man – Jesus the Messiah. Jesus gave himself as a ransom for “all men.” This was the reason and force behind Paul’s apostleship.

So with this in mind, Paul finishes his point on prayer. Paul wants everyone to lift up “holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing” (2:8).

Paul moves next to his instructions on women. Paul wants them dressing modestly, “with decency and propriety.” This means not only the obvious, that women are not to wear lewd or suggestive clothing, but more. Paul clarifies that he includes ostentatious and costly dress as well (“braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive

"I sleep late, fish a little, play with my children, and take a siesta with my wife. In the evenings, I go into the village to see my friends, have a few drinks, play the guitar, and sing a few songs. I have a full life."

The American interrupted, "I have an MBA from Harvard and I can help you. You should start by fishing longer every day. You can then sell the extra fish you catch. With the extra revenue, you can buy a bigger boat. With the extra money the larger boat will bring, you can buy a second one and a third one and so on until you have an entire fleet of trawlers. Instead of selling your fish to a middleman, you can negotiate directly with the processing plants and maybe even open your own plant. You can then leave this little village and move to Mexico City, Los Angeles, or even New York City! From there you can direct your huge enterprise."

"How long would that take?" asked the Mexican.

"Twenty, perhaps twenty-five years," replied the American.

"And after that?"

"Afterwards? That's when it gets really interesting," answered the American, laughing. "When your business gets really big, you can start selling stocks and make millions!"

"Millions? Really?" "And after that?"

"After that you'll be able to retire, live in a tiny village near the coast, sleep late, play with your children, catch a few fish, take a siesta with your wife and spend your evenings drinking and enjoying your friends."

clothes” 2:9). Instead, Paul wants women clothed with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God.

While on the subject of women, Paul writes a passage that causes great discussion in churches today:

A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or have authority over a man; she must be silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve ... But women will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety. (2:11-15)

The discussions center on questions like:

1. Does this apply literally today?
2. Was this situation specific instruction for the Ephesian women?
3. Is the passage tied to first century culture?
4. Does the “For Adam was formed first...” portion mean that there is a theological basis for Paul’s instruction rather than a cultural basis?
5. Is there a different basis for salvation for women then men?
6. Does “women will be saved through childbearing” reference the birth of Jesus?

There are many different scholars who offer many different answers to these questions. Our approach to this passage requires us to first understand it in the context that Paul wrote, and then seek an appropriate application to our church life.

Paul was writing in a time frame and culture – that cannot be denied. The timeframe was one where women were untrained and unschooled. The culture was one where women often worked hard to manipulate situations to allow an ascension to power that the culture did not recognize. For example, Nero’s very rise to power as emperor came about through the murderous manipulations of his mother.

Paul does not write this in a vacuum. Paul is writing to Timothy. Timothy was with Paul when Paul wrote 1 Corinthians. In that letter, Paul was clear about instructions for the women in Corinth who were teaching (they were to do so with heads covered).

So, where does that leave us? Let me suggest the following. Paul and the first century church were diverse. There were times and places where Paul had women keep silent in the assembly, seeking answers to questions outside of the church worship. Women were not to take authority or pastoral roles over men. Women are not without salvation. Through their lives of faith, and ultimately through the child birthing promise given to Eve (the “offspring” of woman would bruise the heel of Satan), women find salvation.

B. Instructions on Overseers and Deacons (Chapter 3)

In chapter three, Paul writes about church officers – “Overseers” and “Deacons.” The overseers are also called “Bishops” or “Elders.” The Greek word is *episcopo* (ἐπίσκοπος). It was a church office that roughly relates to church pastors or a board of elders/presbyters. These people are to be “above reproach; the husband of one wife (either one who is not a polygamist, one married only once, or one faithful in his marriage – scholars differ on interpreting this passage); temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not a lover of money” (3:2-3). He is to take care of his family well, have a good reputation outside the church, and not be a recent convert.

A second church office Paul writes of is that of deacons. “Deacons” means literally “serving people” in the Greek. Many requirements of deacons are the same as for Overseers. The point Paul makes is clear. Those in important roles in the church need to be carefully scrubbed for their abilities, both in terms of personal traits and performance in their lives.

C. Instructions on Timothy’s Role as a Minister (Chapters 4-6)

In chapters 4 – 6, Paul gives more specific instructions to Timothy about his ministry. The instructions underscore the importance of Overseers and Deacons being solid in the faith. Paul explains that some are set to abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things Satan’s forces taught. Hypocritical liars without consciences will teach deception rather than truth. The teachings would include asceticism that perverts God’s creation (“Don’t marry,” “Don’t eat certain appropriate foods.”).

Paul wants Timothy to avoid these teachings and insure the church has the benefit of truthful and helpful instruction. Just as physical training improves our physical fitness, so godly training improves our lives. For our hope and lives are not based on myths, but on a real and living God who is our salvation (4:1-10). Paul urges Timothy to see to these things, even though some might want to look down on him because of his youth. Elders had laid hands on Timothy and Timothy was gifted to teach and preach the word. Paul wanted Timothy to do so with confidence in God. In doing so, though, Paul emphasized that Timothy needed to stay pure, in life and doctrine (4:11-16).

Paul begins chapter 5 telling Timothy to gently teach those older, not by rebuking, but by exhorting. Paul wants Timothy to treat older men as fathers, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters.

Widows in need get special help from the church. But, Paul does not let the families escape primary responsibility. Children and even grandchildren are to first and foremost see to the needs of widows. The church, however, is to care for the widows truly left alone. Paul has very harsh words for people who are not providing for and taking care of their relatives.

Even with widows, Paul gets specific on church care in Ephesus. Paul does not want widows on the church list for specific care (almost a church “social security plan”) unless the women are over 60. Paul believes that those widows under 60 will likely remarry, or become idle busybodies. Paul wants church resources spent well (5:1-16).

Paul notes that Pastors are not to be expected to fulfill their role without pay. It is appropriate to feed an ox while it is working!

Paul wants Timothy to make certain that these instructions are applied across the board. No favoritism is appropriate in the house of God.

Paul urges Timothy to take medicine (wine!) for his frequent illnesses and stomach problems.

Slaves and masters have unique relationships in Jesus. Believing slaves with believing masters are to treat their masters even better as believers.

Paul warns against men who teach heresy. Some would teach out of corrupt mindsets. Some would teach godliness as a means to prosperity. Paul is clear – the purpose of godliness is contentment, not money. Seeking money as an end leads to traps and temptations. “The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil” (6:10).

Paul closes his letter with last counsel to Timothy as an encouraging charge: pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. Paul repeats his admonition to fight the fight. Paul wants Timothy to teach the rich not to hope in their wealth or let it cause arrogance, but to hope in God and be generous with their possessions.

Paul also adds a wonderful last doxology that echoes the doxology from chapter 1. “God, the blessed and only ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honor and might forever. Amen” (6:15-16).

III. POINTS FOR HOME

1. Understand roles within the church.
2. Take care of family and those without family.
3. Live right before God and man.