

The First Epistle to Timothy

Introduction

The two Epistles to Timothy and the one to Titus are generally called the pastoral Epistles, because they were addressed to these servants of the Lord who had been put in charge of important churches. Timothy ministered in Ephesus (1 Tim. 1:3) and Titus in Crete (Titus 1:5). There never was a doubt expressed in the early Church that these epistles were written by the Apostle Paul. Quotations from them are found in the writings of Clement of Rome (96 A.D.); Polycarp of Smyrna (110 A.D.); Ignatius of Antioch (110 A.D.); Irenaeus (175 A.D.); Theophilus of Antioch (168 A.D.); Justin Martyr and others. The Syriac version, known by the name Peshito, made about 135 A.D., contains these Epistles, as well as other ancient versions. The greatest scholars of the early Church attested them as genuine. Some of the heretics, like the Gnostic Marcion, and Tatian, rejected them, and so do the destructive critics of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It is hardly necessary to say that the style and internal evidences establish fully the Pauline authorship.

The Personal History of Timothy

The name of Timothy is first mentioned in Acts 16:1. His mother's name was Eunice (2 Tim. 1:5); she was a Jewess, but his father was a Gentile (Acts 16:1, 3). Paul called him his son, my own son in the faith (1 Tim. 1:2), from which we conclude that he was converted by the apostle's ministry. His mother and grand mother, Lois (2 Tim. 1:5), were both Christians. They must have been, before their conversion, God-fearing Jewesses. This seems to be implied by 2 Tim. 3:14-15. Young Timothy had an excellent reputation among the brethren in Lystra and Iconium. After having him circumcised "because of the Jews," Paul took him as a fellow-laborer in the gospel (Acts 16:1-3). He must have accompanied the apostle on his journey through Macedonia, for the apostle left him at Berea with Silas (Acts 17:14). He had been in Thessalonica and Paul sent him back to ascertain the state of the Thessalonian church. After that he remained with the apostle in Corinth. He then traveled with Paul from Corinth to Ephesus. From Ephesus he was sent by the apostle with Erastus to Macedonia and Corinth (Acts 19:22; 1 Cor. 4:17). Later we find that he was with Paul, the prisoner, in Rome (Col. 1:1; Phil. 1:1, Philemon, verse 1).

When Was First Timothy Written?

Much has been written on the date of the First Epistle to Timothy. The question of one or two imprisonments of the apostle becomes important in connection with the date of the First Epistle to Timothy and the Epistle to Titus. Paul was no doubt imprisoned twice, and between the two imprisonments, when he was a free man, the First Epistle to Timothy and the Epistle to Titus were written. If only one imprisonment is maintained, the date of the writing of these Epistles is hopelessly obscure, besides other unexplainable difficulties. Paul reached Rome as a prisoner in the year 61 A.D. and remained there for two years (Acts 28:30). During this time he wrote the Epistles to the Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, and to Philemon. In each he speaks of the fact that he was a prisoner. He does not mention himself as a prisoner when he writes the first letter to Timothy. He tells Timothy that he hoped to come unto him shortly. In writing Titus he speaks of spending the winter in Nicopolis (Tit. 3:12). This is sufficient evidence that he was no longer a prisoner. His trusting confidence to be released had been realized (Phil. 1:25; 2:24; Philemon, verse 22). The prayers in his behalf had been answered. For several years he was again at liberty, and Eusebius, a reliable source, states that it was known that Paul went forth preaching again.

Another ancient source (the Muratori fragment, 170 A.D.) gives the information that Paul after leaving Rome went to Spain. The interval between the first and second imprisonment explains fully the statement in 2 Tim. 4:20, "Trophimus have I left at Miletus sick." When Paul was at Miletus

before he came to Rome (Acts 20:17), he did not leave him there sick, but Trophimus accompanied him (Acts 21:29). Therefore Paul visited Miletus and Ephesus again; this must have been between his first and final imprisonment. Nor could the statement in 1 Tim. 1:3 be explained if Paul had written this Epistle before his arrest in Jerusalem. He wrote Timothy that he had besought him to abide still at Ephesus.

The book of Acts records two visits of Paul to Ephesus. In Acts 18:19-22 we read of his brief visit, and in Acts 20:31 we have the record of his longer stay which lasted three years. At this time he did not request Timothy to stay in Ephesus, but he sent him into Macedonia (Acts 20:29, 30) he predicted the coming danger for that church, grievous wolves coming from the outside and false teachers from the inside. Some eight years later this prediction came true. He visited Ephesus again, and left Timothy there facing the different heresies which had sprung up, and bearing witness against them. A short time after he wrote this first Epistle to his beloved Timothy, beseeching him to abide still in Ephesus. The second Epistle was written from Rome after he had been thrown into prison the second time, and immediately before he suffered the martyr's death.

The Purpose of the Epistle

It is a confidential communication which Paul sent to Timothy concerning the church as the house of God. In chapter 3:14, 15 we find the words which state clearly the purpose of this Epistle, "These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly; but if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of truth." The epistle therefore contains practical and important instructions on the order which is to be maintained in the church, as the house of God. The suitable conduct befitting to the house of God is given by the apostle. Pure doctrine, pure worship and a faithful ministry are the leading thoughts of this pastoral letter, but he also enters into the godly conduct of the individuals which are in the church of the living God. Blessed instructions! There is failure on all sides, showing, that departure from the faith, when men no longer endure sound doctrine, is upon us, according to the warning given in both Epistles. Yet individuals can always walk and live in the truth, for there is grace sufficient to lead and to maintain the members of the body of Christ in the divinely marked out path, even in the last days, the perilous times.

The Division of First Timothy

In the beginning of this Epistle unsound doctrine and all that is connected with it is rebuked, and the apostle puts a strong emphasis on true doctrine, without which no godliness is possible. This true doctrine is the gospel of grace of which Paul testifies, when he writes, "according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust" (1:11). Of this grace he was himself a witness. Prayer is the leading topic of the second chapter. In the third chapter the house of God and the holiness which becomes that house is the theme, what manner of persons overseers and deacons must be. Then in the fourth chapter we find a warning of the departure from the faith in the latter times. The last two chapters give different instructions and exhortations concerning the elder and younger women, widows, the support of elders, or overseers, as well as personal instructions to Timothy. This gives us a fivefold division.

I. CONCERNING SOUND DOCTRINE (1)

II. CONCERNING PRAYER (2)

III. CONCERNING THE HOUSE OF GOD (3)

IV. CONCERNING THE LATTER-DAY APOSTASY (4)

V. INSTRUCTIONS AND EXHORTATIONS (5-6)

Analysis and Annotations

I. CONCERNING DOCTRINE

CHAPTER 1

1. The salutation (1:1-2)
2. The charge concerning false doctrine (1:3-4)
3. The law, its use, and in contrast with grace (1:5-11)
4. Exceeding abundant grace (1:12-17)
5. The charge to Timothy, and the danger of shipwreck (1:18-20)

Verses 1-2

Paul writes as an apostle and mentions the fact that it is "by the commandment of God our Saviour." Necessity was laid upon him to act and write as an apostle through the energy of the Spirit of God, and therefore all he writes is of great importance, for it is not merely loving advice to his son Timothy, but by commandment of God. The expression "God our Saviour" is peculiar to the First Epistle to Timothy and to the Epistle addressed to Titus. (See 2:3; 4:10; Tit. 1:3; 2:10; 3:4.) It shows that God's character towards the world is that of a Saviour through the work of His Son. His grace, bringing salvation, has appeared unto all men, a different thing from what was under the law-dispensation. All men are now the objects of God's dealing in grace, and therefore we read in the second chapter that supplications, prayers and intercessions be made for all men (not believers only), "for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." We learn from this the meaning of "God our Saviour"; it expresses His love towards the world.

This sovereign mercy of God was the true starting point of all the apostle had to declare. He then salutes his child Timothy, "grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord." Here we find another interesting distinction in the use of the word "mercy." When greetings are sent by the Holy Spirit to churches, He never mentions mercy, but only "grace and peace," but when an individual is addressed "mercy" is added. It supposes the need, the constant wants, the difficulties, the trials and the dangers of individual believers. Timothy, in Ephesus, when the grievous wolves came from the outside, and false teachers from the inside, needed mercy, so that he would be kept. As the days grow darker, the departure from the faith becomes more pronounced, individual believers need mercy upon mercy to stand and to withstand. ("Mercy unto you, and peace, and love, be multiplied" is written in the beginning of the Epistle of Jude. This Epistle pictures the darkest days of departure from the faith with the church still on earth.)

Verses 3-4

The apostle had besought Timothy to abide still in Ephesus when he left that city and went to Macedonia. He was to remain behind to charge some that they teach no other doctrine. When Paul had met the elders of Ephesus at Miletus he had made this prediction, "For I know this, that after my departure shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:29-30). Then he went to Jerusalem, where he was taken prisoner and sent to Rome. After his release he must have visited Ephesus once more and found the very things in the assembly of Ephesus against which the Holy Spirit had sounded the warning. Timothy was with him at that visit between his first and second imprisonment. He left him behind to deal with false teachers and false doctrines. (The word "doctrine" (teaching) is used eight times in this Epistle.) The better rendering

of verse 4 is, "neither turn their minds to fables and interminable genealogies, which bring questionings rather than God's dispensation which is in faith."

The special warning is against fables and interminable genealogies. From the Greek word "muthos," translated fables, we have our English word "myths." The warning is undoubtedly aimed at the Gnostic emanations, the invention of "aeons" and the list of their successions. Like the church in Colosse, the church of Ephesus was also invaded by the false teachers of Gnosticism. It was not yet fully developed. That came during the post-apostolic days in the second century. These speculations were not according to sound doctrine and the truth of God. Neither are the present-day myths of evolution, the derivation of one thing from another in an interminable chain, the myths of destructive criticism, of spiritism, theosophy, Christian Science, and other vagaries. Jewish teachings on the perpetual obligation of the Mosaic law, genealogies, and other matters, are likewise included in this warning. They all lead not upon the sure foundation of the dispensation of God, (the dispensation of the grace of God (Eph. 3:21) which is in faith, but to questionings in which there is no profit, but which open the way to a complete rejection of God's truth and God's grace made known in the gospel.

Verses 5-11

When the apostle used the word "commandment" he does not mean the Ten Commandments. It is the charge the apostle is putting upon his son and fellow-laborer Timothy. What he enjoins is, love out of a pure heart, and a good conscience, and unfeigned faith. And this is produced not by the law, nor by human imaginations and questionings, but solely by the gospel of grace. Speculative questions or anything else do not act upon the conscience nor bring into the presence of God. An unfeigned faith in Christ clears the conscience from guilt and produces love out of a pure heart. Some had swerved from this, by turning aside from the dispensation of the grace of God unto the vain talk about the law, fables and genealogies. They gave heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men (Tit. 1:14) and were consequently turned from the truth of the gospel. They aimed at being law-teachers, but they did not understand what they said and what they so strenuously affirmed. They were evidently the same Judaizers, ever insisting upon law-keeping and its ordinances, the false teachers who perverted the gospel, who continually dogged the steps of the apostle and tried to injure the work he was doing.

Then follows a parenthetical statement on the use and purpose of the law. The law is good (Rom. 7:12) if a man uses it lawfully. Its lawful application is to the lawless and disobedient, to the ungodly and sinners, who are condemned by the law. It has no application to a righteous person. A believer with unfeigned faith and love out of a pure heart and a good conscience is righteous, and has nothing to do with the law. In possession of the righteousness which is apart from the law, having the righteousness of God in Christ, the law has no power over the believer. He is dead to the law; the law can have no possible meaning or use for him. The law was never designed to be the rule for the life of the Christian. He is saved by grace, and that alone can produce godliness. It is grace which teaches to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present age, and also gives the power for it.

To use the law is for the believer a denial of grace. He continues: "And if any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine, according to the gospel of the glory of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust." Here we see the contrast between law and gospel. The law is for condemnation, but the gospel proclaims the glory of the blessed God; and this gospel, committed to the apostle, unfolding God's counsels of glory for us in Christ, tolerates no evil. Sound doctrine is therefore not only a correct belief in the gospel of the glory of the blessed God, what is accomplished in that gospel to the glory of God, and the glory it puts on our side; but sound doctrine means also practical godliness. (See 1 Tim. 6:3, "The doctrine which is according to godliness.") A holy life is produced by sound doctrine, and sound doctrine must lead to a holy life. Unsound doctrines, profane and vain babblings, all the unscriptural teachings, the destructive

criticism, and the cults "will increase unto more ungodliness" (2 Tim. 2:17) and eat like a canker.

Verses 12-17

And now he speaks of himself, thanking Christ Jesus, Who gave him power and counted him faithful, appointing him to the ministry. And who was he? A blasphemer and persecutor, and injurious. "But I obtained mercy, because I did it in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." The grace which he preached, which he defended against the attacks of Judaizing teachers, was preeminently witnessed to by his own case. The grace of the Lord was towards him exceeding abundant, or more literally rendered, "the grace of our Lord surpassingly overabounded." He had the most marvellous experience of this grace which saves so freely and fully. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." He knows what he says and of what he speaks.

No fables, imaginations, vain speculations, or questionings here, but the fullest assurance, that Christ Jesus the Son of God came into the world to save sinners. And He had saved him, the chief of sinners, so that no man need to consider himself too great a sinner for this grace. He obtained mercy so that he might be a pattern of the grace that Christ would display towards all "who should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting." In a special manner this is applicable to the nation to which Paul belonged; the Jews hereafter, at the time of our Lord's second coming, will obtain mercy. Paul in his experience is the pattern of the sovereignty of grace which in due time will save "all Israel ." The chief, the most active, the most inveterate of enemies, was the best and most powerful of all witnesses that the grace of God abounded over sin, and that the work of Christ was perfect to put it away. It was the best refutation of the "other doctrines" against which Paul warns in these epistles to Timothy. He then gives utterance to the praise which filled his heart. Such praise the law could never teach the human heart. It knows no song of joy and blessing; its melody is the curse.

"Such was the foundation of Paul's ministry in contrast with the law. It was founded on the revelation of grace; but it was a revelation connected with the experience of its application to his own case. Peter, guilty of denying a living Saviour, could speak to the Jews of grace that met their case, which was his own; Paul, formerly the enemy of a glorified Saviour and the resister of the Holy Ghost, could proclaim grace that rose above even that state of sinfulness, above all that could flow from human nature--grace that opened the door to the Gentiles according to God's own counsels, when the Jews had rejected everything, substituting the heavenly assembly for them--grace that sufficed for the future admission of that guilty nation to better privileges than those which they had forfeited" (Synopsis of the Bible).

Verses 18-20

He then commits a very solemn charge to Timothy. The charge is "holding faith, and a good conscience." Some put it away, that is the good conscience, and then concerning faith make shipwreck. The faith is sound doctrine, the gospel of grace, the truth of Christianity. A good conscience must be maintained in order to hold that faith in sincerity and truth. Daily self-judgment, even as to the smallest things, is absolutely necessary to keep the believer from the dangerous rocks on which his faith may be wrecked. It may be a very little sin that is allowed and not confessed and put away; but this unjudged sin becomes the starting point of something worse and may lead to terrible results. If a good conscience is put away the believer begins to drift.

"To be in communion with God, the conscience must be good, must be pure; and if we are not in communion with God, we cannot have the strength that would maintain us in the faith, that would enable us to persevere in the profession of the truth, as God gives it to us. Satan has then a hold upon us, and if the intellect of one in this state is active, he falls into heresy. The loss of a good conscience opens the door to Satan, because it deprives us of communion with God; and the active mind, under Satan's influence, invents ideas instead of confessing the truth of God. The apostle

treats the fruit of this state as "blasphemies" ; the will of man is at work, and the higher the subject, the more an unbridled will, possessed by the enemy, goes astray, and exalts itself against God, and against the subjection of the whole mind to the obedience of Christ, to the authority of the revelation of God" (J.N. Darby).

We have here an explanation why men who used to hold the faith delivered unto the saints have given up that faith. Error does not begin with the head but with the heart. Some sin was cherished; some secret sin had control. Self judgment was not exercised; no confession made. Having no good conscience, there was no longer real communion with God and the shipwreck of faith followed in due time. Hymenaeus and Alexander, who denied resurrection, were examples of this fatal road. He delivered them over to Satan, not to be lost, but for discipline. They were to find out by sad and sorrowful experience what Satan's power is, so that broken and humbled they might be brought back. "Better surely not to need such discipline; but if we do need it, how precious to know that God turns it into account in His grace, that we might be thoroughly dealt with and exercised in the conscience" (Wm. Kelly).

II. CONCERNING PRAYER

CHAPTER 2

1. Prayer for all men and for those in authority (2:1-7)
2. The place for the man and the woman (2:8-15)

Verses 1-7

Instructions are now given by the apostle. The first concerns prayer. "I exhort, therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty (literally, gravity). For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth." The God who is our Father is also the Saviour-God, who acts in the gospel of His grace with love and compassion towards all men. As such He manifests a gracious willingness to have all men come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved. We must, therefore, knowing Him and the exceeding abundant grace towards us, act in love towards those who are without. God acts in grace and the household of faith must do likewise.

As the gospel of grace goeth forth to all men, and God wants all men to be saved, so are we to pray for all men. Especially are kings and all who are in authority to be mentioned in the prayers of intercession. This is the true grace-spirit; the Jewish law-spirit knew nothing of love towards all men. Gentiles and Gentile kings were looked upon as outside, and not considered to be the objects of divine love. The dispensation of the grace of God having come, salvation by grace is offered to the whole world. And how this exhortation has been neglected! How little true prayer for the salvation of all men is made! (Verse 4 disposes completely of the unscriptural idea that God has predestined a part of the human race to be lost.) We must also remember that cruel Nero was on the throne of the Roman Empire when this exhortation was written.

The house of God is to be a house of prayer for all nations, and to exercise the priestly function of intercession. Well has it been said, "Nothing but the strong sense of the infinite blessing of the place that grace has given us could lead to, or keep up, such prayer." But often we are apt to settle down in the enjoyment of grace, without reflecting on our responsibility towards those who are unreached by that grace, which is also at their disposal. Through preoccupation within, how often we forget those without! How needful today when thrones totter, when democracies arise, when all forms of government break down and the shadow of the coming lawless one lengthens, to be obedient to this divinely given instruction, so that even in these days of confusion God's people may

lead "a quiet and peaceable life"!

"For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave Himself a ransom for all, the testimony to be rendered in due time." Judaism was the revelation and testimony of the one God. Christianity reveals also the true God, but brings forth the equally great truth that there is but one mediator, as there is but one God. And this one mediator is the Man Christ Jesus, who came into the world and who gave Himself a ransom for all.

"Precious truth! We are in weakness, we are guilty, we could not bring ourselves near to God. We needed a mediator, who, while maintaining the glory of God, should put us into such a position that He could present us to God in righteousness according to that glory. Christ gave Himself as a ransom. But He must be a man in order to suffer for men, and to represent men. And this He was. But this is not all. We are weak--here, where we are to receive the revelation of God; and weak, with regard to the use of our resources in God and our communion with Him--even when our guilt is blotted out. And, in our weakness to receive the revelation of God, Christ has revealed God, and all that He is in His own person, in all the circumstances written wherein man could have need either in body or in soul. He came down into the lowest depths in order that there should be none, even of the most wretched, who could not feel that God in His goodness was near him and was entirely accessible to him--come down to Him--His love finding its occasion in misery; and that there was no need to which He was not present, which He could not meet.

"He came down, took part in all the sorrows of humanity, and entered into all the circumstances in which the human heart could be, and was wounded, oppressed, and discouraged, bowing down under the evil. No tenderness, no power, no sympathy, no humanity, like His; no human heart that can so understand, so feel with us, whatever the burden may be that oppresses the heart of man. It is the Man, the Christ Jesus, who is our mediator; none so near, none who has come down so low, and entered with divine power into the need, and all the need, of man. The conscience is purified by His work, the heart relieved by that which He was, and which He is for ever.

"There is but One: to think of another would be to snatch from Him His glory, and from us our perfect consolation. His coming from on high, His divine nature, His death, His life as man in heaven, all point Him out as the one and only mediator" (Synopsis of the Bible).

"A ransom for all, the testimony to be rendered in due time." This statement has been perverted by some, who handle the Word of God deceitfully, to mean that the whole human race will ultimately be saved including all the wicked dead. And more than that, some of these teachers have made the astonishing statement that the testimony of their unscriptural invention was to be reserved for a certain time, and that "due time" came when they preached their "larger hope" and universal salvation. He has given Himself a ransom for all, which means that provision is made by His propitiatory sacrifice for the salvation of the whole race, but faith is necessary for the appropriation of this salvation.

All who do not accept Christ by personal faith are not covered by His substitutionary sacrifice. If they die in their sins the great ransom cannot deliver them (Job 36:18). The due time, or, its own time, when that testimony of all this was to be rendered came when the work was finished on the cross. Ever since the one mediator between God and man gave Himself a ransom for all, the message of God's love and grace has been preached. And Paul to whom the gospel of the glory of the blessed God was specially committed could therefore say, "Whereunto I was appointed a preacher (literally "herald"; also used in 2 Tim. 1:11; and of Noah in 2 Peter 2:5) and an apostle (I speak the truth, I lie not) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth."

Verses 8-15

"I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting." This refers to praying in public. Audible prayer in the congregation is to be made by men, and not by women. This is apostolic teaching. (There are sects in existence today which claim to have returned

to apostolic doctrines and practices, yet they ignore the apostolic commandment as to the place of women in the church. In fact in many of these sects women are the leaders.) The hands which are lifted up in public prayer must be holy hands (James 4:8). True piety and a separated walk are to characterize the man who lifts up his hands in public prayer. And it must be "without wrath," angry feeling against a brother, and without disputing or "reasoning." To harbor an ill feeling against another while praying or to introduce a dispute, a reasoning argument (as done quite often) makes prayer noneffective.

And now in regard to women he gives the charge that they "adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety, not with braided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array." She is to give her testimony in this way and show that she is not following the world, but is above these things. Immodest dress, bordering on indecency, to gratify the lust of the flesh and of the eyes, is a noticeable thing among the women of the world.

The Christian woman must bear a testimony in an outward manner that she is separated from these things. Then he gives the charge about the teaching authority of women. "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence." This is and belongs to the wholesome, sound doctrine. Woman has her sphere of service, of laboring in the gospel and also teaching the truth, among her own sex and children. But the place of authority does not belong to her; she is not to usurp authority, nor to exercise it. This is the divine order, that the authority to teach is vested in the man. (See 1 Corinthians 11 and 14). "For Adam was first formed, then Eve." This is creation's order, which must be maintained on the ground of redemption.

And the fall teaches another lesson. "And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression." The able expositor Bengel wrote on this: "More easily deceived, she more easily deceives." When she leaves the place given her according to this apostolic charge, she is easily deceived, and then in turn easily deceives others. The second epistle speaks of "silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts." Women rejecting sound doctrine, usurping authority, have become instruments of the enemy, by inventing Satanic doctrines and perverting the truth of God.

(Seventh Day Adventism had Mrs. White as prophetess; Theosophy--Mrs. Blavatsky and Annie Besant; Spiritism--the Fox sisters and the thousands of wicked and often immoral women-mediums; Christian Science--Mrs. Mary Baker Eddy and the thousands of women healers; the Irvingite movement--demon-possessed prophetess, who spoke in strange tongues; New Thoughtism has its women leaders, etc. How this bears out the divine truth stated here.)

Verse 15 refers to Genesis 3:16. She shall be preserved in child-bearing, delivered in the hour of trial and labor, if they continue in faith and love. and holiness with sobriety.

III. CONCERNING THE HOUSE OF GOD

CHAPTER 3

1. The overseer (3:1-7)
2. The deacon (3:8-13)
3. The house of God and the mystery of Godliness (3:14-16)

Verses 1-7

As stated before, the Church is viewed in these pastoral Epistles as the house of God. The holiness which becomes this house is to be maintained and expressed in a practical way. The different directions given as to overseers and deacons demonstrate what God esteems highly, and what He

expects of those who are saved by grace, and who constitute His House. Paul wrote these instructions to his son Timothy, so that he might know how to behave himself in the house of God (verses 14-15).

Bishops (overseers) are identical with elders (presbyters). For conclusive proof see Acts 20:17 and 28; Titus 1:5 and 7. In both passages the same persons are called both bishops and elders. It is nowhere taught in the Word of God that a bishop has a place of superior authority in the body of Christ, as head of a diocese, etc. These things as practised in the Romish, Episcopal and other ritualistic churches are according to human ordinances.

The work of the overseer is learned from Paul's statement in Acts 20:28: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood." The Holy Spirit called them into this work, for He is the great administrator in the church. Each local church had not one overseer or bishop, but a number of them, showing that the authority was not vested in one person only (Phil. 1:1). If anyone desired the office of an overseer, he desired a good work. It is a good work to exercise loving and patient care over souls which are beloved of God, and so dear to Him, who purchased them by His own blood. Such a desire would be the result of the Spirit of God, who laid the work of an overseer upon the heart. Paul then gives Timothy the qualities which a bishop or overseer must have. He must be blameless, that is as to his moral character irreproachable, with nothing whatever against him. "He must be the husband of one wife." This has been explained as excluding all who had been married twice. This is incorrect. It may refer to those who were as pagans married to more than one woman, for polygamy was practiced among the heathen in that day, as it is still. Converted to Christianity these pagans were in an unhappy condition, and on account of it could not exercise oversight in a local church.

On the other hand this inspired qualification of an overseer or bishop is a complete and crushing refutation of the celibacy of the Romish priesthood. He also must be vigilant, sober, of a good behavior (modest), given to hospitality and apt to teach (2 Tim. 2:24). ("Apt to teach" has also been translated "ready to learn.") Among the other qualifications we point out especially the one "not greedy of filthy lucre," that is, he must not be a lover of money. This is mentioned several times in the epistles to Timothy and to Titus. And Peter in exhorting the elders also writes, "Feed the flock of God, which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly, not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind" (1 Peter 5:2). The Holy Spirit anticipated the corruption of church office and ministry through the love of money. He is also to rule well his own house and have his children in subjection, "For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the Church of God?"

We see all these are moral qualifications. They are to be men of mature age, who had shown in the government of their own household their fitness for the more blessed work of having oversight in a local assembly. A new convert may begin to give a testimony for the gospel as soon as he has believed, but fitness for oversight, to be an elder, required time and a practical walk in the truth. Therefore Paul writes, "not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into condemnation of the devil." How often this has been true, that in some assembly a young convert with natural gifts was made much of, and then became lifted up and aspired, like Diotrephes (3 John) to have the preeminence.

Verses 8-13

"Deacon" means "a servant," one who ministers. The seven chosen in Acts 6 to serve tables were deacons. They were to be occupied with the external affairs of a local church, to serve the bodily need. Without entering into the different qualifications, which need hardly any further comment, we point out only one. "Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers--sober, faithful in all things." As the deacons had their work in external things, in connection with the family and family life of a local church, there was danger of their wives making mischief and becoming busybodies and tale-

bearers; hence the instruction to the wives of the deacons. Nothing was said to the wives of the overseers; theirs was a different sphere.

Verses 14-16

Paul expected to come shortly to be with Timothy, from which we gather that he was not then a prisoner. In the words which follow we have a threefold mention of the church on earth.

1. It is the Home of God. God dwells in it on earth. Its leading characteristic on earth must be holiness. "Holiness becometh Thine house, O Lord, forever" (Ps. 93:5). All Paul had written, his solemn charge concerning sound doctrine, a good conscience, prayer for all men, about overseers and deacons, was to teach Timothy and to teach us also, how to behave in the house of God, as on earth. God dwells in the church on earth. And He who dwelt among Israel and said, "I am holy, be ye also holy," makes the same demand of the house in which He dwells now.

2. The second name is the Church of the living God. The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of the living God, dwells in the church. She is the habitation of God by the Spirit (Eph. 2:22). She is therefore set apart for Himself, not of the world, as He, who is the blessed Head of the body, is not of the world.

3. The pillar and support of the truth. While our Lord was on earth He said, "I am the truth." He is so still; and His Word is the truth. The church is here to maintain this truth on earth, to contend earnestly for the faith delivered unto the saints. She is the witness for Christ on earth, Christ who is hidden now with God. Therefore the true Church is the pillar of the truth, in proclaiming it. Woe! to the men who meddle with the truth of God, and by their wicked criticism try to undermine the support of the pillar and the house of God. God shall destroy them for their evil work (1 Cor. 3:17). When the Church leaves the earth, then the truth will be abandoned, and complete apostasy has come. As long as the true Church (though it only may be a feeble remnant) the pillar and support of the truth, is on the earth, the complete apostasy cannot come (2 Thess. 2). From all this we learn that the presence of the living God and the maintenance of the truth are the foremost characteristics of the house of God.

Verse 16 brings before us the mystery of godliness (piety). It is that which the church on earth is to witness to. This mystery is the Lord Jesus Christ (Col. 2). The first fact of the mystery is, "God was manifested in the flesh." (The Revised Version on account of textual criticism changed this to "He who hath been manifested in the flesh." Some would therefore rule out this text as one which speaks of the deity of our Lord. But even if it were positive that the correct reading is "He" instead of "God," it does not affect the argument. The "He" could not be any one else but the Son of God.) It is the incarnation. God Himself has been manifested in the form of man. The Creator God came to be the Saviour God. He appeared on earth as man. "Justified in the Spirit." Upon Him, the second Man, the Spirit of God descended. He lived the holy life on earth. The power of the Holy Spirit was manifested throughout His life on earth. And having offered Himself by the eternal Spirit without spot to God, the power of the Holy Spirit marked Him out as Son of God in resurrection. "Declared the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1:4). His resurrection, by God the Father and through the operation of His Spirit (Rom. 8:11) justified Him as Son of God.

"Seen of angels." Not only did man see Him as John testifies, "that which was from the beginning which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and our hands have handled, of the Word of Life"--but angels saw Him. The host of angels witnessed His entrance into the world, surrounded Him and were present with Him in His life on earth. He was seen of angels in His resurrection, and seen of angels when He ascended on high to take His place at the right hand of God, far above all principalities and powers, becoming the head over all things, the head of the Church. And to these heavenly principalities and powers there is now made known by the church the manifold wisdom of God (Eph. 3:10). "Preached unto the Gentiles." The good news is preached in the whole world. Jews and Gentiles hear the message, and especially is He preached to the Gentiles. "Believed on in the world." As a result of the preaching, the hearing of the

Word of God, He is believed on, and those who believe on Him constitute the house, the Church of the living God. "Received up in glory." He ascended to the glory from which he had descended. He glorified God on earth, and now, as the Risen One, God has glorified Him in heaven. And some day all who believed on Him in the world will also be received up in glory, to be with Him where He is. And all this is the truth which is to be maintained and preached in the house of God.

IV. CONCERNING THE LATTER-DAY APOSTASY

CHAPTER 4

1. What the Spirit has predicted (4:1-5)

2. The remedies against apostasy (4:6-16)

Verses 1-5

The mystery of godliness having been mentioned, the apostle speaks of Satan's power in opposition to the faith and truth of God (the mystery of godliness here, and the mystery of iniquity in 2 Thessalonians). "But the Spirit speaketh expressly that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons." It is a prophetic warning. Paul had given a similar warning to the Ephesian elders gathered at Miletus a number of years before, and elsewhere in the New Testament the Holy Spirit gives the same warning concerning an apostasy in the future days. Inasmuch as the faith is the foundation upon which everything rests, Satan aims to destroy this first, knowing if faith is given up and the truth of God denied, that he, the master-mind, can easily introduce his seducing spirits and substitute for the faith, demon doctrines.

All this is fully evidenced in our days, the latter times which are the perilous times (2 Tim. 3:1). The mystery of godliness, the doctrine of Christ, is being increasingly denied and rejected by seducing spirits, active in systems like the destructive criticism, Unitarianism, the New Theology and others. And in "Christian Science," Spiritism, Mormonism and other "cults" we find the very doctrines of demons. Anyone who rejects the mystery of godliness, no matter what else he may put in its place, has departed from the faith and becomes the prey of seducing spirits who lead him on to destruction and eternal ruin. And these seducers and seducing spirits, Satan's ministers, appear as ministers of righteousness (2 Cor. 11:15). They feign sanctity, "speaking lies in hypocrisy." They teach the most deadly error under the cloak of piety, devotion and of deeper religious knowledge. Evil and error put on the form of truth and godliness. All this fits the different systems which claim to be "Christian," but which are "anti-Christian." They have seared, that is branded, consciences; claiming to lead others into righteousness and holiness while their consciences are defiled.

Two things are especially mentioned, "forbidding to marry" and "commanding to abstain from meats." (The Roman Catholic Church forbids her priests to marry, and also commands her members to abstain from certain meats on certain days.) This austere asceticism was a pretension to superior piety. Men began to teach these heresies even in apostolic days. They developed later into systems like Gnosticism; and today we see the same principles advocated in theosophical and other occult movements. They forbid what God has established in creation, for marriage is an institution which God has sanctified, and to use that which God has created to be received with thanksgiving by them which believe and know the truth. They claimed that their superior holy character would not be consistent with marriage and eating meats.

"Forsaking the real and practical holiness of communion with God, and of His commandments by Christ, they created a false sanctity for themselves, which denied that which God had ordained from the beginning, and thus exalted themselves against the authority of Him who had ordained it, as though He was an imperfect or perhaps evil being" (Synopsis of the Bible).

The Spirit of God through Paul assures us that any creature of God is good, and nothing to be

rejected, if it be received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the Word of God and prayer. If that which God has made for the creature for its use is refused and rejected, it is sin. But all that the Creator has provided must be received from Him with thanksgiving, and the acknowledgment of a dependence upon Him. Prayer is needed for that, to sanctify to our use what He has so graciously given.

Verses 6-13

The rest of the chapter consists of exhortations in view of the threatening apostasy, how these evils may be combated and remedied. If Timothy put the saints of God in remembrance of these things, he would be a good minister (deacon) of Jesus Christ, and be continually nourished up in the words of faith and good doctrine. To remember the apostolic instructions and to maintain by them faith and good doctrine effectually counteracts error and the doctrines of demons. Then profane and old wives' fables must be avoided and refused, We have an all-sufficient revelation of God; speculative things of the human mind intruding into things unseen (Col. 2:18), following the theories, imaginations and traditions of men, only lead away from godliness, and lead from foolish questionings into that which is profane. (A believer has no business to investigate Spiritism, Theosophy, or occupy his mind with things not made known in the Word of God. We must avoid these things, refuse to have anything to do with them, else we step upon the territory of the enemy, and lay ourselves open to his attacks.)

The true exercise must be unto godliness, pious, consecrated living; and the true exercise is self-judgment, maintaining a good conscience and communion with God. Bodily exercise by erratic living, abstaining from meats and other things, profits but little. It is far different with true godliness. It is profitable for everything, both in this life and that to come. This is another faithful word and worthy of all acceptance (1:15). And for this doctrine the apostle labored and suffered reproach; but he had faith in the living God, who as Saviour-God, by His power and providence, sustains all men. He is the preserver of all men, but especially of those who believe. As Creator He is the preserver and benefactor of all men; but for those who believe He is much more than that. In this God as Creator and Saviour, preserver and keeper, the believer trusts. "These things command and teach." It is another remedy against the seducing spirits and doctrines of demons. None should despise his youth. Timothy was very young when he joined Paul (Acts 16:1-3), and now after some eleven years he was still youthful, especially in comparison with Paul the aged. He urges him to be in his life and walk a model of the believers--in word, in conduct, in faith and in purity.

These are the evidences of true piety and holding sound doctrine. Then as to himself and his service, till Paul came, he was to give himself to reading, which of course must mean the Holy Scriptures, to exhortation and to teaching. He was not to neglect the gift that had been bestowed upon him. In his case this gift was a direct bestowal of prophecy, the voice of the Spirit making it known (as in Acts 13:1). The laying on of hands by the elders had not communicated the gift. It was the outward expression of fellowship with the gift imparted unto Timothy. This gift had to be used and developed like every other gift of the Spirit. A gift may be idle and neglected, but if rightly used it will grow and be used in blessing. To do all this and meditate in these things, be whole-hearted in them, progressing constantly in godliness, is a safeguard against all error. "Take heed to thyself and the doctrine; continue in them; for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee." Some have perverted this instruction as if it meant the salvation of the soul, for eternal salvation. It has nothing to do with eternal life and salvation. This the believer has in Christ through grace. "Save" has here the same meaning as in Philipppians, a present salvation from the dangers in the way, being saved from error.

V. INSTRUCTIONS AND EXHORTATIONS

CHAPTER 5

1. Concerning widows (5:1-16)
2. Concerning elders (5:17-21)
3. Responsibility and personal instructions (5:22-25)

Verses 1-16

It is not necessary to follow all these instructions in detail and explain their meaning. An elder was not to be rebuked sharply, but to be entreated as a father, and younger men as brethren. Then he speaks of widows. Those who are widows indeed are to be held in honor. Piety was to be shown at home, if they had children. "She that is a widow indeed, and desolate (left alone) trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers day and night." Happy privilege of such, with special claims upon the Saviour-God. Thus exercising trust in God and in His promises, her special ministry is the ministry of prayer and intercession (Luke 2:36-37). God hath chosen that which is weak, widows, those who are on sick-beds, "Shut-ins," to use especially in the ministry of intercession.

The Day of Christ will reveal the great things which were accomplished in secret prayer. But if other widows lived in pleasure, in self-indulgence then she is dead while she liveth, that is, dead to the spiritual things. For such there could be no honor, but dishonor. And if anyone did not provide for his own house, he denied the faith and was worse than an infidel, for an unbeliever generally recognizes this duty. Then we have divinely given regulations as to those who should be given relief by the church, and those who should be refused. Practical godliness is thus to be maintained in the house of God, and manifested in every way so as "to give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully."

Verses 17-21

Elders that ruled well were counted worthy of double honor, and especially those who had the gift of expounding the word of God, and teaching the truth, "who labor in the Word and teaching." And as elsewhere in his former epistles, the apostle here once more states the responsibility that "the laborer is worthy of his hire." The ox that treadeth out the corn is not to be muzzled. The Creator-God careth for the oxen, and made a merciful provision for them in His law. How much more then should those be ministered to in temporal things that labored in the Word, and with much self sacrifice taught the truth. But the laborer must remain in dependence on the Saviour-God, for he is God's laborer. (The almost universal custom of promising a laborer in the Word, an evangelist, pastor and teacher a salary, and the laborer depending on his bargain, is nowhere sanctioned by the Word of God. It is contrary to faith which should mark the path of the servant of Christ.) Instruction is given how an elder is to be treated if charged with wrong. Before God, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels (from which we learn that angels are silent onlookers in all these things-1 Cor. 11:10), Paul charges Timothy to observe these things, to be firm in them, without showing partiality.

Verses 22-25

He was not to lay on hands hastily on any man, the outward sign of fellowship, to acknowledge them as co-laborers and become identified with them. It might result in becoming partakers of other men's sins. How little conscience there is today in this matter! How often believers are in fellowship with those who are not teaching the truth. "Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities." A small matter, yet not too small for the Holy Spirit. No doubt Timothy had a very scrupulous conscience, but the apostle in this God-inspired letter, sets aside his scruples and tells him to use a little wine. Much criticism has been made of this divinely given instruction. Extreme faith-healers, who reject all means in a way that is not faith, but presumption, and on the other hand extreme prohibitionists, have made the astounding statement that Paul made a mistake when he wrote these words. But if Paul made a mistake here who can convince us that he did not make a mistake when he wrote the eighth chapter of Romans? Others

state that it was not wine, but "grape juice." We give the helpful comment of another:

"Timothy's habitual temperance is here seen: weak in body, the apostle recommends him to use his liberty by taking a little wine--a pleasing instance of grace. We have here a proof of the habits of this faithful servant. The Spirit shows us how carefully he kept himself from exciting or satisfying his passions in the least thing (at the same time that there is perfect liberty to use everything that is good when there is a true reason for it), and also the apostle's tender interest in his fellow-laborer in the gospel. It is a little parenthesis attached to the expression, 'be not a partaker of other men's sins,' but it has great beauty. This affectionate watchfulness became the apostle; he desired holiness in his representative, but he well knew how to respect Timothy, and to maintain the decorum which he had enjoined, and to exhibit his heartfelt tenderness" (Synopsis of the Bible).

"Some men's sins," the apostle continues, "are open beforehand, going before to judgment"--they are manifested in the present life. "And some men they follow after"--unknown now, hidden away, but to be made manifest at the judgment seat of Christ.

CHAPTER 6

1. Concerning servants (6:1-2)
2. Concerning those who oppose (6:3-5)
3. Concerning contentment and temptation (6:6-10)
4. The final exhortations (6:11-21)

Verses 1-2

Servants (slaves) who had pagan masters were to count them worthy of all honor, and thus bear a good testimony for the truth, that the Name of God and the teaching be not blasphemed. Theirs was a blessed opportunity to show forth the excellencies of Him whom they served, and who once served in obedience and submission on earth. If their masters were believers, and master and slave worshipped together, there was danger that a slave might forget his place and become insolent. The apostolic exhortation guards against this.

Verses 3-5

These things Timothy was to teach and exhort. If anyone opposed these instructions, if he did not give his consent to wholesome words, the words of the Lord Jesus Christ and to the teaching which is according to godliness, he showed thereby that he knew not the real power of godliness. He gives evidence of pride of heart, that he is destitute of the truth, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strife of words. And from such a state of soul cometh as a result envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of depraved minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness. This is a good description of a good portion of professing Christendom.

Verses 6-10

While the class of people who have the form of godliness and deny its power, make piety a means of gain in earthly things, which is condemned, the apostle speaks of true piety, or as it is called in the Authorized Version, godliness, with contentment as a great gain. True piety, in walking with God, having a good conscience, gives contentment, no matter what earthly circumstances are. A believer who seeks the things above should no longer cling to earthly things, knowing that we brought nothing into the world nor carry anything out. If the eternal things, that promised glory, are ever real before the soul, then each will be content with having the necessary things, food and raiment. And how very true are the words which follow, as not a few have found out. "But they that desire to be rich fall into a temptation and a snare, and many foolish and hurtful lusts, which plunge men into destruction and ruin. For the love of money is the root of every evil; which, while some

coveted after, they have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows." Money itself is not evil, but the love of it is the fearful thing. No further comment is needed on these words. Examples of this evil are all about us in the professing church, and "lovers of money" and "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God" are constantly increasing. Surely they heap treasure together for the last days. Weeping and wailing will follow (James 5:3).

Verses 11-21

The man of God is to flee these things. If he does not it will rob him of his good conscience, his true piety and contentment. The thing to be coveted for the child of God, who belongs to the house of God, is not money, but righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. To covet this is to be the daily business of a Christian. While the believer has to turn his back upon the world and its filthy lucre, he is also to fight the good fight of the faith, and to lay hold on eternal life. This life is, as we have seen from the Gospel of John, a personal possession. It does therefore not mean the obtaining of eternal life; that is the gift of God. It must be laid hold on in faith, entered into and enjoyed. Many possess eternal life, but a practical laying hold on all that it implies and that is connected with it, is what they need. Timothy, in this respect, had confessed a good confession before many witnesses. Once more the charge before God, the Creator-God, who preserveth all things, and before Christ Jesus, the great and faithful Witness, to keep all spotless and irreproachable until His appearing.

The Lord Jesus is coming again. Note what is said of that coming, "which (His appearing) in its own time the blessed and only Ruler shall show, the King of those that reign, and Lord of those that exercise lordship; who only has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light; whom no man has seen, nor is able to see; to whom be honor and eternal might. Amen" (J.N. Darby's translation). Those who deny the immortality of the human soul and who teach that man has no longer endless being, but dies like the beast, use the words that God "only has immortality" as their star-text, to affirm their error. God only hath immortality in Himself; it is His essential possession. He is the Source of it. The statement does not teach that man has not immortality, but that God only hath immortality in His Being; man has received it from Him.

We but quote the final exhortations. "Charge those that are rich in this present age not to be high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God (the Creator and Preserver of all) who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life." And then another warning against the errors: "O Timothy, keep that which is committed unto thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and opposition of science falsely so-called, which some professing have erred concerning the faith" (Gnosticism - and its Satanic offspring, "Christian Science" so-called).