

What Are We Doing Here?

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by William E. Johnson

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This series of sermons was first preached at the Friendship Bible Church in 2008 during the morning worship services.

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Chapter 1. What are we Doing Here?

READ - 1 Timothy 1:1-17

TEXT - 1 Timothy 1:1-2

THEME - In 1 Timothy we learn how to "do church."

Introduction

JOKE - Three pastors got together for coffee one day and found all their churches had bat-infestation problems.

"I got so mad," said one, "I took a shotgun and fired at them. It made holes in the ceiling, but did nothing to the bats."

"I tried trapping them alive," said the second. "Then I drove 50 miles before releasing them, but they beat me back to the church."

"I haven't had any more problems," said the third.

"What did you do?" asked the others, amazed.

"I simply baptized and confirmed them," he replied. "I haven't seen them since. (Reader's Digest, July, 1994, p. 64)

JOKE - I was a supply preacher for a small town Texas Church, coming in early Sunday, preaching a sermon to the congregation, and then leaving after lunch. Arriving early one Sunday I sat down at a local donut shop, opened my Bible and went over my sermon notes.

A man was sitting down the counter from me and he said, "You a preacher or something?"

I replied, "Yes I preach at the Christian Church here in town."

He got excited and said, "Hey, I'm a member of that church."

The church was small and I knew all the regulars so I said, "I've been preaching there for about three months and I've never seen you there."

He looked at me kinda strange and said, "I said I was a member of that church. I never said that I was fanatical about it!"

Do a quick Google search and you'll find thousands of jokes about the church. But today, let's get serious about it for a minute... What is church? What are we doing here? Why do we come to church? Does it matter if we do? How are we supposed to DO CHURCH? Does the Bible tell us anything about these things?

The fact is, church is important. Since it was founded on the day of Pentecost (*Acts 2*), there have been those who demeaned it and gave it little emphasis, both saved and unsaved. But Jesus loves the church (*Ephesians 5:25*), died for the church (*Acts 20:28*), builds the church (*Matthew 16:18*), and soon will take the church to be with Him forever in the rapture as His bride (*Revelation 19:7*).

Church is important, and therefore God did not leave us without instruction about it. Paul wrote this letter, and the other 2 pastoral epistles, to teach us how to "DO CHURCH".

Let's notice three things today, as we familiarize ourselves with this book - The purpose, the author, and the recipient.

The Purpose - (1 Timothy 3:14-15)

KEY VERSE for the book - here is why Paul wrote.

The Bible tells us how to live. It is not only a theological book. It also provides practical instruction in how to live. Consider:

- It is a manual for families.

Train up a child... (Proverbs 22:6)

Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it. (Ephesians 5:22,25)

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. (Ephesians 6:1)

- It is the greatest leadership book ever written.

ILLUS - I recently posted an entry to our church website mentioning Nehemiah. And I suggest that the truths taught in the book of Nehemiah are better than anything you will find in the leadership manuals of today's bookstores.

ILLUS - Solomon was the wisest man who ever lived - and nowhere do we learn greater leadership skills than by reading his proverbs.

- It contains the greatest truth ever written concerning money matters - it is a financial guidebook.

ILLUS - I have a friend who put a vanity plate on his car. That plate simply reads "TITHING." I asked him once about it and he responded that he had decided to put God to the test about money matters. One of those things that God challenges us to do is to tithe (10% of our income to the Lord). He said the blessings of God on his life were so substantial that he had to tell the world about it - hence the vanity plate.

ILLUS - I told you last week of a pastor friend who challenged his church on the matter of tithing, going so far as to promise them their money back in full if they didn't experience the blessings of God in tithing. Nobody has ever taken him up on that guarantee.

Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that [there shall] not be room enough to receive it. (Malachi 3:10)

But you say, "Preacher, I just can't afford to give God 10%. I'd never be able to pay my bills." ACTUALLY, YOU CAN'T AFFORD NOT TO. If you'll just start doing it... when you get that paycheck write God a check for 10%, right off the top... you'll find that you live better on the 90% than you ever did on the 100%. It's not your money, anyway, it's God's. And tithing is just an exercise in faith. And God will always bless you when you walk in faith.

The NIV says it like this "*Test me in this!*"

And the Bible doesn't stop with giving - practical instruction about how to handle our money - savings, loans, financial planning, etc - all mentioned and taught in scripture.

- And it teaches us how to run a church.

Paul states that this is his design - his purpose in writing - SO WE CAN KNOW HOW TO BEHAVE IN CHURCH - HOW TO "DO CHURCH".

And so, as we study this book over the next few weeks, remember that it has a purpose - to teach us how to run a church.

- We all have opinions about what we like in a church.

- Denominations have developed methods and mechanisms over the years, and many consider them inviolate when it comes to running a church.
- Individual churches come up with constitutions and boards and systems which become sacred cows. "How we've always done it" becomes as important (or more so) than how the Bible teaches we should do it.

But in the 3 pastoral epistles we have the Word of God on the matter. And that should render all other arguments obsolete.

May I challenge you this morning, church? Will you all determine to consider the message of Paul to Timothy? Will you give it a good hearing? Will you commit to comparing it to what we do here and deciding whether we are in conformity to the Word of God? Will you be willing to change where we are not?

The Author - (1 Timothy 1:1)

1. Paul - his name means "little or small" and may indicate that he was unimpressive in appearance and stature.

QUOTE (MacArthur New Testament Commentary) "He was not a man of striking stature or marked appearance. A second-century writer described him as 'a man small of stature, with a bald head and crooked legs, in a good state of body, with eyebrows meeting and nose somewhat hooked, full of friendliness; for now he appeared like a man, and now he had the face of an angel.'"

For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible. (2 Corinthians 10:10)

In short, there was nothing about his physical attributes or personality that rendered him impressive. He was just a plain man, like you and me.

2. An apostle of Jesus Christ

But this "plain man" had been hand-picked by Jesus Christ Himself.

APOSTOLOS - one who is equipped and sent with a commission.

There were 13 who were equipped and sent directly by Jesus Christ. The 11 + Matthias + Paul. They were unique in history, and they were the ones Jesus specifically chose and authorized and equipped.

Paul's salvation experience and his commissioning as an apostle all took place at the same time - cf. *Acts 9*.

Some say they only believe what Jesus taught... all else is suspect. Yet the early church did not believe that.

And they continued in the APOSTLES' DOCTRINE... (Acts 2:42)

Throughout the New Testament we see that the teaching of the apostles was "scripture." It was the word of God. It was inspired by God.

ILLUS - The apostles were the E.F. Hutton's of the early church. When they spoke, people listened! And their letters and writings which are a major portion of the New Testament carry the same authority today.

3. By the commandment of God.

Paul was not an apostle because he had sought the office - God commanded it.

Paul did not do what he did because he personally chose it - God commanded it.

Paul did not write what he wrote because he wanted to share his personal biases - God commanded it.

It's interesting, isn't it, that Paul would list these powerful credentials in a personal letter to his friend Timothy? Normally, you would expect a personal letter to simply begin, "My dear Timothy." But this was a personal letter, AND an official declaration of church policy. This, like all Paul's epistles in scripture are the WORD OF GOD. And so Paul stated his credentials right up front to ensure any reading would accept it as such... to ensure that Timothy could fall back on that authority when anybody questioned his teaching.

The Recipient - (1 Timothy 1:2)

1. Timothy - his name means "one who honors God." His mother and grandmother are mentioned in 2 Timothy 1:5. His father was a Greek, and may have been dead by this time. He was probably from Lystra.

Timothy was probably saved during Paul's first missionary journey when he visited Lystra (cf. Acts 14) It was on this occasion that Paul was stoned to death and raised from the dead. Such would have made quite an impression on young Timothy.

On Paul's second visit to Lystra (cf. Acts 16), he chose Timothy to accompany him, and from then on Timothy was a companion and protege of the Apostle Paul.

At the time he received this letter, he was serving as pastor in the church at Ephesus, and was personally selected for that task by Paul.

Note: The church at Ephesus was an important church, located in what is today modern Turkey. It was founded by Paul. When Paul had prayed with the Ephesian elders when he left them for the last time, he had warned them that they needed to watch out for false teachers and teaching. READ - Acts 20:17, 28-31. This had apparently now come true, and Timothy faced many issues in this church. Later, in Revelation, Jesus would dictate a letter to this church and warn them about certain aspects of their service that needed attention (READ - Revelation 2:2-4).

2. My son in the faith

This seems to indicate that Paul had won him to Christ.

More specifically, though, it indicates the genuine nature of Timothy's faith. Literally, the phrase means "a genuine child of faith" or "a genuine child of the faith."

In other words, Timothy was a real born-again believer. There was nothing fake about his walk with God.

What a testimony! There weren't many, even in Paul's day, to which he would apply such a label. The same is true today.

ILLUS - We are in the midst of a presidential election year. Religion has been raised as an issue, as we have one who calls himself a mormon, one who calls himself an evangelical Christian, and one who calls himself a muslim - all running for president. Many have worried that their faith may influence their presidency. Indeed... if it is a true faith, it cannot help but influence. When one really believes something, it affects everything about them. Paul said that the Christian who is truly saved is not even the same person he / she was before they were saved. (Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. Old things are passed away, behold all things become new. (2 Corinthians 5:17) BUT, most people are not a "genuine child of the faith." They call themselves something, but it has no influence in their lives.

Is that true of you? Would you be called "a true child of the faith?" Does it change you? Does it permeate everything about you? Is it the thing that identifies you?

- If a complete stranger were to observe 2 hours of your life at random, would they conclude that you are a Christian?
- If you were placed on trial for your faith, would there be enough evidence to convict you?

Timothy was the real deal - a GENUINE BORN-AGAIN BELIEVER.

May we be such. May God make us Timothy's!

Conclusion:

This will be a challenging and fun study for us.

- MAY I CHALLENGE YOU TO TUNE IN AND REALLY LISTEN?
- WILL YOU PARTICIPATE FAITHFULLY?
- WILL YOU DECIDE AND COMMIT NOW TO ANALYZE WHAT GOD SAYS IN THIS LITTLE BOOK AND APPLY IT TO OUR LITTLE CHURCH?

We may have to change some things if we're going to "do church" the way the Word of God teaches that we should. Are you willing to make such change? IT'S A TALL ORDER, I know. It was a tall order for Timothy, as well, and so Paul prayed for him - prayed for 3 things that he knew Timothy would need in order to succeed in the work - 3 things that you and I will need as we consider these things:

1. He prayed for the grace of God.

Grace is the unmerited favor, the undeserved blessing and help of God in our lives. Timothy would need it.

And oh how we need it! All who would serve God need His grace! We can do nothing without it. We can do ANYTHING with it!

2. He prayed for the mercy of God

Mercy is God's NOT giving us what we deserve. It's the opposite of grace, which is God freely pouring out upon us what we do NOT deserve. Timothy would need mercy in his life. He was imperfect, like all of us, and would always be a debtor to the mercy of God.

As your pastor, I am imperfect and in need of God's mercy every single day.

As a church, we stumble and fail often, and will continue to do so. We need God's mercy!

3. He prayed for the peace of God in Timothy's life.

Peace is the result of grace and mercy in our lives. We can have peace no other way.

And Timothy would need that as he struggled through the difficulties of serving in this church.

He was to face down error. That meant struggle and conflict. He was to champion change. That meant hard decisions and hurt feelings.

PEACE would be needed. PEACE as only God can give.

As we go through this study, may our little church have PEACE.

Yes - this will be a different kind of study.

Chapter 1. What are we Doing Here?

- It will make some of you mad, if you let Satan so influence you.
- It will definitely make us all examine our behavior in the house of God.

Because, CHURCH IS IMPORTANT. The church has a job to do. Like a mighty army, we are supposed to be marching as to war, with the cross of Jesus going on before. That old hymn "Onward Christian Soldiers" should be the battle cry of the church. Too often it's not, though, because we've forgotten what the church is supposed to be. We've forgotten how to DO CHURCH. And that wonderful old hymn could be rewritten in some of our churches today:

Backward Christian Soldiers

1. Backward Christian soldiers,
Fleeing from the fight,
With the cross of Jesus,
Nearly out of sight.

Christ our rightful master
Stands against the foe
Onward into battle, we
seem afraid to go.

Chorus: Backward Christian soldiers,
Fleeing from the fight,
With the cross of Jesus,
Nearly out of sight.

2. Like a might tortoise
Moves the church of God.
Brothers we are treading,
Where we've often trod.

We are much divided,
Many bodies we,
Having different doctrines, but
Not much charity.

3. Crowns and thrones may perish,
Kingdoms rise and wane,
But the cross of Jesus
Hidden does remain.

Gates of hell should never
'gainst the Church prevail,
We have Christ's own promise, but
we think it might fail.

4. Sit here then ye people,
Join our sleeping throng.
Blend with ours, your voices
in a feeble song.

Blessings, ease and comfort
Ask from Christ the King,
But with our modern thinking,
We won't do a thing.

Source unknown

Let's learn to do church the way God wants us to do church.

Chapter 2. No Other Doctrine

READ - 1 Timothy 1:3-20

TEXT -As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine, (1 Timothy 1:3)

THEME - The servant of God must stand against any teaching that is contrary to the Bible.

Introduction

May I share several quotes with you this morning?

QUOTE (Unknown) Most people believe that it does not matter what god you pray to because every deity is ultimately the same deity, shrouded in different names and attributes by humankind.

QUOTE (Unknown) Nearly two out of three adults contend that the choice of one religious faith over another is irrelevant because all faiths teach the same basic lessons about life.

We live in a day marked by RELATIVISM and SUBJECTIVISM. (Definitions - Relativism: what is right/wrong, true/false is determined by some group. Subjectivism: what is right/wrong, true/false is determined by each individual.)

ILLUS - A few years ago on the Dick Cavett Show, the Archbishop of Canterbury was speaking with actress Jane Fonda. The Archbishop said, "Jesus is the Son of God, you know." Fonda replied, "Maybe he is for you, but he's not for me." To which the Archbishop profoundly answered, "Well either he is or he isn't."

All these statements lead us to a primary truth we find in 1 Timothy - doctrine is important.

The charge (vss. 3-4, 18-20)

Paul urged Timothy to do 2 primary things - STAY and FIGHT.

1. Stay (vs. 3)

Some background:

- a. Timothy had been left in Ephesus, either when Paul left there in *Acts 20*, or during the period of time between his first and second imprisonments. (EXPLAIN)
- b. Paul had feared false doctrine creeping into this church... he had feared people (elders) with agendas trying to undo what God had done there. (READ - *Acts 20:28-38*)

Timothy was to keep things straight - stand for the truth - fight against error and false teaching. And in order to do that he needed to STAY.

A couple of reasons why Timothy may have needed some encouragement:

- a. Timothy may have been of a mild / timid nature. cf. 2 Timothy 1:7, 1 Timothy 4:12; 5:23 He may have been thinking of throwing in the towel here, and so Paul urged him to stay.
- b. The enemies of the work at Ephesus were probably elders. There are various reasons to believe this. Timothy would have to face down people who were leaders in the church - people who should have been working WITH him, rather than AGAINST him. This is not easy for a mild-mannered person, as he seems to have been. Again, Paul urged him to not give up - STAY.

QUOTE (J.K. Rowling, in Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone) "It takes a great deal of bravery to stand up to our enemies, but just as much to stand up to our friends."

One of the hardest things to do is to face up to a fight - to stay and stand when others won't. And yet the Bible is filled with examples of that being the right thing to do.

ILLUS - Nehemiah - "Shall such a man as I flee?"

ILLUS - Elijah - "I only am left..."

ILLUS - Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego - "God may deliver us, and he may not, but we will stand for him regardless, O king."

ILLUS - David - "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?" (nobody else had the guts to stand)

ILLUS - The record for the shortest major league baseball career probably belongs to a member of the old Brooklyn Dodgers, a pitcher named Harry Hartman. He was a gifted young ballplayer whose day of glory arrived in 1918 when he was called up from the minors to pitch against the Pittsburgh Pirates. This was the moment he'd dreamed about, the beginning of a great career, but his dreams began to fade when his first pitch was hit for a single. The next batter tripled. Rattled, he walked the hit for a single. The next batter tripled. Rattled, he walked the next batter on four straight pitches, and when he did throw a strike to the next hitter, it went for a single. At that point, Hartman had had enough. He headed for the showers, dressed, and walked out of the stadium to a naval recruiting office, where he enlisted. The next day, he was in a military uniform, never to be heard from in professional baseball again. (Gary Inrig, *A Call to Excellence*, (Victor Books, a division of SP Publ., Wheaton, Ill; 1985), p. 62)

(NOTE - Contrast this guy with Hideki Okajima All Star pitcher for the 2007 Boston Red Sox - Jason Buck knocked his first ML pitch out of the park for a home run. Hideki probably felt like quitting! But he didn't quit.)

Paul urged Timothy to STAY, for he knew that was necessary for success.

2. Fight (*vss. 3,18*)

In addition to STAYING, Timothy needed to take a stand for, defend, and fight for the truth.

Paul was basically saying, "I charge YOU, Timothy (*vs. 18*) to charge THEM to teach no other doctrine (*vs. 3*).

Two aspects to this "charge":

- a. AUTHORITY - DEFINITION - "charge" = PARANGELEIS - a military term meaning 'to give strict orders' and emphasizes that the commanding was to be done authoritatively." (Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament)

QUOTE (Homer A. Kent) "These men were to be given orders to desist immediately from their foolish interpretations."

Note: Timothy's role in Ephesus was 2-fold, and both aspects of that role lent him authority:

- i. Paul's representative - vested with authority by Paul himself. I can imagine when Paul left he told the church, "As you obey me, obey Timothy. He speaks for me."
- ii. Elder / Pastor / Overseer - authority based on scripture, just as it is today.

- b. REPETITION / PATIENCE / LONGSUFFERING - The word implies more than a one-time exhortation, but rather "continuous instruction."

Timothy was to speak with AUTHORITY, and Timothy was to speak REPEATEDLY.

- a. False teaching is a HUGE problem in the church.

- Jesus warned about it.

Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. (Matthew 7:15)

And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. (Matthew 24:11,24)

- The New Testament authors warned about it.

But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. (2 Peter 2:1-2)

- It is a dangerous problem because it is so deceptive.

SATAN, the author of it all, can make himself look righteous!

SO it is no surprise that his agents can do the same - *For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works. (2 Corinthians 11:13-15)*

Note: One of the ways Satan does this is to mix just enough falsehood with truth to make it sound like truth. Consider how many false teachings of today have truth and error mixed.

ILLUS - Mormonism is a cult - a false teaching. But they call themselves the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. They claim to be a Christian organization. But would Paul call them a Christian organization?

ILLUS - Jehovah's Witnesses talk about Jesus Christ (truth), but err in calling him "A" son of God, and rejecting the truth that He is THE Son of God. Would Paul call them a Christian organization?

Some of you today are probably saying, "What's the big deal?" See how easy it is to be deceived? If Jesus said it is a big deal, and the apostles said it is a big deal, IT IS A BIG DEAL!!!!!!

- b. Timothy was to FIGHT AGAINST IT!

Notice the EXACT WORDING here - ...*"that they teach NO OTHER DOCTRINE."*

Paul didn't say to stop just things that are apparently and obviously FALSE. He said to stop the teaching of anything that was DIFFERENT from the faith once and for all delivered - anything DIFFERENT from what Paul had already taught.

Mark it down, church - we dare not add anything to this Book. We dare not change it, we dare not take away from it. We are to teach ONLY what is in this Book, and teach ALL that is in this Book. (If we spent every minute of our lives doing this we would not run out of material, anyway!)

ILLUS - Paul warned there would come a time when people seek preachers to say what they want to hear - READ - 2 Timothy 4:1-4 But Paul told Timothy to preach the TRUTH, stand for the TRUTH, even if it meant a fight.

Timothy was to STAY and FIGHT for the truth.

ILLUS - Paul told Titus the same thing - *They must be silenced, because they are ruining whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach...* (Titus 1:11 NIV)

ILLUS - Jude, brother of the Lord, taught the same thing - *Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints. For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.* (Jude 3-4 NIV)

Note: The specific error that concerned Paul at this time is described in vss. 6-17, and we won't go into detail about it today.

Basically, it had to do with legalistic Jews teaching that a person needed to obey all aspects of the Jewish law in order to be saved. Paul's gospel teaches that we cannot obey the law, for it is impossible to live up to (cf. *Romans 3:23*), and that the purpose of the law is to convince us of that helplessness and point us to Christ, Who alone can save (cf. *Romans 6:23*).

So what was Timothy's charge? STAY and FIGHT against ANY OTHER DOCTRINE.

The goal (vs. 5)

Here is a vitally important verse, one which you should underline in your Bible. It answers the question - "Why is it so important to fight against different doctrine?"

Notice this verse from the NASB, which is arguably the most accurate English translation available - *But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.*

- The goal of all this is that we might LOVE - God and love each other.

Did you catch that? Paul was saying that to be INTOLERANT of OTHER DOCTRINE is to LOVE! How opposite the dogma we hear from so many pulpits today!

Various terms are used to describe the mindset that many subscribe to today - "open minded", "accepting", "tolerant", etc.

- When applied to PEOPLE, they may make sense.

e.g. I should tolerate various personalities, even though some may drive me crazy.

ILLUS - The guy whose answer to every statement is, "Well, it might be or it might not be." "Well, maybe... maybe not." COMPLETE RELATIVITY IN EVERYTHING!

ILLUS - The guy who one-ups everything you say - no matter what you've done, he's done it one better.

I should be tolerant to people, open minded and accepting to people. Jesus loved and accepted ALL PEOPLE alike. "Whosoever will may come." "Why does your master eat with sinners?"

- BUT, when applied to TRUTH, those terms are ERRONEOUS.

e.g. All belief systems are NOT equal.

e.g. All doctrines are NOT correct.

I CHALLENGE YOU - find a single time when Jesus was tolerant of a false belief system. When the apostles were?

ILLUS - Apollos - Aquilla and Priscilla accepted and loved him as a person, but corrected his false understanding of doctrine.

- Why do we preach the Bible every Sunday morning? The goal of our instruction is love.
- Why is Bible reading so stressed here as a personal and daily discipline? The goal of our instruction is love.
- Why must we reject anything that is contrary to what the Bible teaches? The goal of our instruction is love!

The Bible teaches here that the only source of love is the truth, demonstrated in saved souls (PURE HEARTS), clean lives (CLEAR CONSCIENCES) and real Christianity (FAITH UNFEIGNED / UNHYPROCRITICAL). Timothy would demonstrate love only when he stood up to error. He would help others to experience love for each other and for God, only by exposing them to the truth and protecting them from error!

Some say today, "Why can't we just all get along? Why can't we love one another?" And Paul's answer would be, "If I love you, I will tell you the truth and protect you from error. And if you love God... if you love one another, you will do the same."

Conclusion:

DOCTRINE IS IMPORTANT!

WHAT WE BELIEVE IS IMPORTANT!

Important enough that Paul told Timothy to STAY AND FIGHT FOR IT.

Important enough that in *vss. 18-20*, Paul mentioned two such false teachers whom he had "delivered unto Satan." (Basically, that means he had put them out of the church, "churched" them, excommunicated them.)

Note: Such a practice is seldom heard of today, but it should be. Membership is not a right, but a privilege - a COVENANT. Members have as much duty to the church as the church has to them, and when people refuse to do right and insist on preaching error, Paul's example was to remove them from the church membership. Hard? You bet. It goes to show just how serious this was. It was also, believe it or not, a demonstration of Paul's love for them, for the purpose was to draw them back to God. We don't have time to prove it this morning, but may I just point out that that is always the goal of church discipline - to bring the erring one, the straying sheep, back into the fold.

What does this mean to you and I at Randolph Christian Church?

- To me, as your pastor, it means I must faithfully preach and stand for the truth of the Bible. I have no freedom in this matter. I cannot teach what I want. I must teach the Word of God. It is the only message I have. It is the only authority I have.
- To you, as church members, it means you must HOLD ME TO THAT. There are plenty of preachers who will tickle your ears. Don't let me be one of them. Demand that I teach you only God's Word, and call me on it when I don't.

And you, as church members, must demand the same fealty to scripture in every leader - every elder, every deacon, every Sunday School teacher, every missionary we support and send, every musician who stands on this platform or plays an instrument, every outreach program in which we engage, every publication or curriculum to which we subscribe - EVERYTHING!

I opened with several quotes. May I close with one last one?

QUOTE - Little by little Christians these days are being brainwashed. One evidence is that increasing numbers of them are becoming ashamed to be found unequivocally on the side of truth. They say they believe, but their beliefs have been so diluted as to be impossible of clear definition. Moral power has always accompanied definite beliefs. Great saints have always been dogmatic. We need a return to a gentle dogmatism that smiles while it stands stubborn and firm on the Word of God that lives and abides forever. (A. W. Tozer)

May God help us to heed the solemn instruction to Timothy - *charge some that they teach no other doctrine!*

Chapter 3. For All Men

READ - 1 Timothy 2:1-15

TEXT - *I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; (1 Timothy 2:1)*

THEME - In every worship service, this local church should pray for the salvation of all.

Introduction

JOKE - A country preacher decided to skip services one Sunday and head to the hills to do some bear hunting. As he rounded the corner on a perilous twist in the trail, he and a bear collided, sending him and his rifle tumbling down the mountainside.

Before he knew it, his rifle went one way and he went the other, landing on a rock and breaking both legs. That was the good news. The bad news was the ferocious bear charging at him from a distance, and he couldn't move.

"Oh Lord," the preacher prayed, "I'm so sorry for skipping services today to come out here and hunt. Please forgive me and grant me just one wish... please make a Christian out of that bear that's coming at me. Please, Lord!"

That very instant, the bear skidded to a halt, fell to its knees, clasped its paws together and began to pray aloud right at the preacher's feet.

"Dear Lord, bless this food I am about to receive... in Jesus' name... Amen."

Let's talk about prayer, today.

REVIEW - Paul wrote the book of *1 Timothy* with a very specific purpose in mind - cf. *1 Timothy 3:14-15*. He is providing specific instruction about right behavior in the local church.

REVIEW - Timothy is in Ephesus, having been charged by the Apostle Paul with restoring order there. His charge is that he deal with the problem of "other doctrine."

Having given Timothy this solemn charge, Paul begins in *chapter 2* to give some specifics. "If you're going to accomplish this charge, Timothy, here are some specific steps I want you to take - some specific behaviors to encourage in the local church."

"And Timothy, everything begins with prayer." - *I exhort therefore that FIRST OF ALL...* (vs. 1)

Pray for everybody.

(cf. vss. 1-2)

"first of all" - of primary importance.

We say often here that THE GOAL IS THE SOUL. Paul is saying the same thing - of primary importance is prayer for the lost - prayer that they be saved.

Note: Salvation / evangelism is the primary theme of the prayer encouraged here. cf. vss. 4,6.

He uses 4 words to describe this prayer. They are for the most part synonymous, but each casts a slightly different light on praying:

1. Supplications

From Greek DEESIS - "a seeking, asking, entreating". Of primary interest here is that this word deals with NEED. It is a reminder to us of the deep need people have for salvation.

QUOTE (MacArthur) "Knowing what is lacking, we plead with God to supply it. As we look out on the masses of lost humanity, the enormity of the need should drive us to our knees."

ILLUS - Many years ago I heard of a church that had the phrase "93 a minute" posted somewhere in their building. It was to indicate that 93 souls per minute plunged into hell. I'm sure if we did the math today, when there are more people living and dying than then, the number would be higher.

ILLUS - Jonathan Edwards preached his famous sermon "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" and people were screaming in terror because of the clarity with which he depicted their lostness - their need. Oh that we could see how much people need the Lord today!

2. Prayers

From Greek PROSEUCHE - "a prayer addressed to God." A general term for prayer, which primarily stresses the fact that prayer is directed to GOD. The emphasis seems to be on the person we pray TO, and the fact that in doing so, we worship and revere HIM.

Have you considered that in praying, we honor God? In praying we worship God? In praying, we revere God?

3. Intercessions

From Greek ENTEUXIS - "a falling in with, meeting with, an interview, a conference or conversation, a petition or supplication." This word seems to stress the INTERCESSORY aspect of praying for another - the privilege we have of seeking God's help on behalf of somebody else.

ILLUS - The cover of today's bulletin depicts this type of prayer - holding others up to God.

How precious is such a prayer.

ILLUS - I had a pastor once with whom I shared a particular need. I later learned from his wife that he had stayed up an entire night praying specifically for me and that need. I've never forgotten that, and often wondered what impact that night of intercessory prayer had in my life.

How precious that we can do this on behalf of the lost.

4. Giving of thanks

From Greek EUCHARISTIA - "thankfulness, giving of thanks"

Have you considered that this type of prayer is the only type of prayer that will continue on into heaven? We will ALWAYS and FOREVER give thanks.

We know that the Bible teaches the importance of thanksgiving for the blessings of God in our lives and the lives of others.

In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God... (1 Thessalonians 5:18)

ILLUS - Sadly, we are sometimes jealous, rather than thankful, of God's blessings on others. We look down on those who are wealthier than us, or healthier than us, or smarter than us, or better looking than us. SUCH IS SIN!

We are to give thanks to God for His blessings in the lives of others.

AND ESPECIALLY, we are to give thanks for the salvation of others.

Who are we to pray for?

1. ALL MEN.

Note: Two words for MEN in the Greek - ANER, used in vs. 8 referring to the male gender and ANTHROPOS, used in vs. 1, which refers to mankind, a human being without respect to gender.

We are to pray for all mankind - regardless of gender, regardless of status, regardless of nationality, regardless of religion, regardless of ANYTHING. ALL MANKIND.

No class warfare or envy - all alike are to be prayed for equally.

Pray for the salvation of ALL. That means we are to pray for:

Black people.

White people.

The co-worker who stabbed you in the back.

Those old classmates who ignored you in school.

Members of the other political party.

The guy who cut you off in traffic.

Those who are obscenely rich.

Those who are desperately poor.

Those who treat you as an enemy.

Those who treat you as a friend.

Bill Belichick (even if you're a Giants fan on Superbowl Sunday)

Some of those seem silly, but if we get serious, WHO CAN WE LEAVE OUT?

We are to pray for ALL MEN.

QUOTE "All means all and that's all all means."

2. For kings, and those in authority.

Interesting that this class of people is specifically called out as worthy of our public prayer. Studying it has reminded me of how remiss we often are in our services, for we seldom pray here for:

Our president

Our governor

Our congress

Our supreme court

Our leaders at the local level

But we should, and we must. It is a timely reminder during this presidential election cycle.

ILLUS - I spoke with somebody once about the president (I won't say which president, for it doesn't matter). This person, who had always seemed like a godly Christian to me said of the president, "I hate him." When I pressed for why, the person responded, "I just hate his face."

But such is sin and always will be. Paul said, *Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people.* (Acts 23:5) But I have been guilty of it, and so perhaps have you. We put politics ahead of our Christianity, and God help us when we do.

America won't always be here. John Newton, in his wonderful hymn entitled "Amazing Grace" included this verse that we seldom sing:

The earth shall soon dissolve like snow,
The sun forbear to shine;
But God, who called me here below,
Will be forever mine.

We are Christians first and always, and our Christianity means we PRAY FOR OUR LEADERS, whether we agree with them or not.

QUOTE - (MacArthur) "Paul does not command us to pray for the removal from office of evil rulers, or those with whom we disagree politically. Believers are to be loyal and submissive to their government (cf. *Romans 13:1-5 (Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers...)*; *1 Peter 2:17 (Honour the king)*). If the church today took the time and energy it spends on political maneuvering and poured them into intercessory prayer, we might see a profound impact on our nation. We have all too often forgotten that *"the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses (2 Corinthians 10:4)*. The key to changing a nation is the salvation of sinners, and that calls for faithful prayer."

AND SO, we are to pray for our leaders.

ILLUS - BTW - the Roman emperor at the time Paul wrote this letter was Nero. Roman historian Tacitus in his book "Annals" described Nero's treatment of Christians. "In their very deaths they were made the subjects of sport: for they were covered with the hides of wild beasts, and worried to death by dogs, or nailed to crosses, or set fire to, and when the day waned, burned to serve for the evening lights."

If ever anybody was worthy of the hatred of Christians, it was him. Paul said to PRAY FOR NERO.

Pray because of what God wants.

(vss. 3-4)

Paul says praying for all men is IS GOOD AND ACCEPTABLE. Do we need any other reason to pray?

But God WANTS PEOPLE SAVED - an even greater reason to pray for them.

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. (2 Peter 3:9)

QUOTE (Franklin J. Shannon, in a recent prayer letter) "The question is often asked, 'why pray for missions?' Many answers are given and rightly so. There are so many reasons to pray for missions. But have you thought of praying for missions because it helps to ease the pain of God? In *2 Peter 3:9* we read that God is not willing that any should perish. It must pain Him when He looks at mankind and He sees millions are perishing who have never heard the good news of the gospel. Can you imagine how you would feel if you had done all that is necessary for a person to succeed in life and you told a trusted friend to tell the person; but your trusted friend could not be bothered. I'm sure God is very hurt when we do not pray for missions. This is the least we could do. But we do not take time to do it."

We pray for all to be saved, for such is the heart of God. He wants every single person to be saved, regardless of whether we do or not!

ILLUS - Jonah pictures many today, who only want certain people saved... who would rather see others die and go to hell. He fled to Tarshish not because he was afraid of the task God called him to, but because He was afraid God might actually save his enemies! He hated them and didn't want them saved! (cf. *Jonah 1:2; 4:1-2*)

But God wants EVERYBODY saved. Even Jonah's horrible Ninevites. Even the wicked Islamic terrorist who kills innocent women and children by the thousands. Even that one that you have trouble loving, that in a dark part of your heart you, like Jonah, almost wish they would never be saved. Hard as it is to believe, God loves them and wants them saved. We must, therefore, pray for them!

QUOTE (MacArthur) "Although we may hate the evil world system that is the enemy of God, we are not to see those in it as our personal enemies. They are captives of the real enemy. They are not our enemies, they are our mission field."

Pray because of what Christ did.

(cf. vss. 5-6)

ILLUS - In the oldest book in the Bible, Job lamented the fact that he had no "daysman" or go-between, to plead his case before God. (cf. Job 9:32-33)

Here we see that Christ, in His death and resurrection, has become that daysman, that mediator, that go-between - FOR EVERYBODY.

He died for ALL. Not just for you... but for ALL. Not just for me... but for ALL. Not just for Americans... but for ALL.

There is only ONE GOD, and only ONE MEDIATOR.

I am the way, the truth, and the life... (John 14:6)

Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name... (Acts 5:12)

If they don't come through Christ, they don't come. Their gods won't get them there. SO WE MUST PRAY FOR THEM TO BE SAVED!

ILLUS - We often note that if you or I were the only one needing salvation, Christ would have died on the cross, just for us. But if Saddam Hussein had been the only one, Jesus would have come justd for him. If Adolph Hitler had been the only one... if the worst child molester, or the worst mass murderer, or the worst rapist, or the worst WHATEVER had been the only one, Jesus would have died for them.

He died for all. His death was sufficient to save all, and therefore we should pray for them to take advantage of the payment Christ made.

Conclusion:

This book is meant to teach right behavior and order in the local church. A right church; a good church, is first and foremost a praying church, praying especially for the salvation of the lost.

I ask you, church, how are we doing in this area? Do we need to do better?

I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; (1 Timothy 2:1)

The greatest example is our Savior, who while dying on the cross prayed, "Father, forgive them." In spite of all they were doing to Him, He prayed for their souls.

Do we pray for the lost like that?

Of those around us, can we say, as Paul did, *Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. (Romans 9:2-4, 10:1)*

Do we pray for the lost like that?

Do we pray like John Knox, who prayed, "Give me Scotland, or I die!"

Do we pray for the lost like that?

Do we pray like George Whitefield, who prayed, "Lord, give me souls or take my soul."

TEXT -*I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; (1 Timothy 2:1)*

Chapter 3. For All Men

Chapter 4. Gender Wars

READ - 1 Timothy 2:1-15

TEXT -Selected

THEME - Men and women are equal in worth, but distinct in roles.

Introduction

JOKE A man asked his wife what she'd like for her birthday. "I'd love to be six again," she replied. On the morning of her birthday, he got her up bright and early and off they went to a local theme park. What a day! He put her on every ride in the park: the Death Slide, the Screaming Loop, the Wall of Fear--everything there was! Wow! Five hours later she staggered out of the theme park, her head reeling and her stomach upside down. Right to McDonald's they went, where her husband ordered her a Big Mac along with extra fries and a refreshing chocolate shake. Then it was off to a movie - the latest Star Wars epic, and hot dogs, popcorn, Pepsi Cola, and Milk Duds. What a fabulous adventure! Finally she wobbled home with her husband and collapsed into bed. He leaned over and lovingly asked, "Well, dear, what was it like being six again?" One eye opened. The wife said, "You idiot, I meant my dress size!" The moral of this story is: If a woman speaks and a man is actually listening, he will still get it wrong.

Note: That one was clearly written by a woman!

JOKE Male and Female Views of Creation: Woman's view: God made man and said, "I can do better than that," and made the woman. Man's view: God made beast and man, then rested. Then He made woman, and no one has ever rested since, beast, man, or God.

Note: That one was clearly written by a man!

JOKE An English professor wrote the words, "A woman without her man is nothing" on the blackboard and directed the students to divide into two groups, the men vs. the women, and punctuate it correctly. The men wrote: "A woman, without her man, is nothing." The women wrote: "A woman: without her, man is nothing."

The battle of the sexes is probably the subject of more jokes than any other topic.

But the battle of the sexes is also very real, and has a very real implications to us as believers. Our text today deals with this battle. It is certainly one of the more hotly contested passages of scripture in our American culture today.

Paul teaches here that there are distinct roles for men and women in the church. The language of the passage is clearly speaking in terms of gender roles.

- *I will therefore that men pray every where... (vs. 8)* - MEN = Greek ANER, which refers specifically to the male gender, as opposed to another Greek word ANTHROPOS (used in *vs. 1*) which refers to human beings irrespective of gender - mankind.
- *In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel... (vs. 9)* - WOMEN = Greek GUNE, which refers to a female, either married or unmarried.

And so the purpose of Paul's words in the second half of this chapter are to describe different responsibilities of men and women IN THE LOCAL CHURCH. That context is important, and we need to remind ourselves of the overall purpose of Paul's letter to Timothy, seen in 1 Timothy 3:14-15. Everything in this book is primarily about how we behave in the local church.

Now Paul explained why the role of men and women is different in the church (cf. *vss. 13-14*), and in doing so he goes all the way back to creation. The truths about gender are not based on any one culture, religion or creed. Paul is saying "This is the way God ordained things to operate from the very beginning."

So, before we look at Paul's specific teaching about the roles of men and women in the church, let's back up and make some general observations.

God made men and women different.

People who reject this argument are fond of pointing to *Galatians 3:28* - *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.*

And political correctness, psychological thought and other scientific mindsets all conspire to disagree. But the fact is men and women are different.

Science is coming around to the Biblical truth. (If it is true science, it will eventually do just that.) More and more studies have come out in recent years describing differences in the female and male brains. Women process information differently - they are wired differently... one study I noticed pointed out that women actually use more of their brain than men. The ladies usually don't argue about that difference.

JOKE - A family waited nervously in the surgical waiting room until the doctor finally appeared. With a grim face he broke the news to them that grandpa was in serious shape, and only a brain transplant would save him. They were shocked about this, having no knowledge that such a procedure was even possible. "Yes," the doctor replied, "it's a fairly new procedure, but being done more and more. We would have to charge you for the brain, of course, and you would need to decide on either a female or a male brain. Male brains are \$20,000 and female brains are \$10,000." A pregnant silence descended on the room as both men and women tried to process this statement. Men smirked, women looked pained, but nobody dared ask the question on everybody's mind until the little granddaughter piped up, "How come the women's brain costs less?" "It's standard pricing policy," replied the doc. "We mark them down to half price because they're used."

Note: (Another joke obviously written by a woman!)

We don't base our theology on science, but the fact is study after study have come out in recent years citing differences in the way men and women think... physical differences in the brain and the mental wiring.

And any man who has tried to understand a woman's thinking will testify to this truth, as will any woman who tries to get inside a man's head. DIFFERENT

QUOTE (My mom, in one of many wise things she said to me while I was growing up) "Men think, women feel."

Men and women are different mentally.

And do we need to discuss physical differences? Do any of you here today need me to explain that men and women are different physically?

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God create he him; male and female created he them. (Genesis 1:27)

But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. (Mark 10:6)

But what about *Galatians 3:28*?

Men and women are different in many ways, but they are NOT different in VALUE. This verse speaks of their EQUAL WORTH and their EQUAL OPPORTUNITY FOR

SALVATION. Salvation is available to ALL, regardless of economic status, race, creed, or gender.

But the Bible is clear that God ordained different ROLES for men and women, especially in two institutions - the home, and the local church.

QUOTE (Michael Easley, Moody Bible Institute president) "Men and women are equal in value, but distinct in roles."

I'm not going to spend a bunch of time defending this this morning, but let me just state in broad strokes what the Bible says about this.

- Men and women are different with respect to their roles in the home

READ - *Ephesians 5:22-25*

- Men and women are different with respect to their roles in the church

We see some examples here in our text, which we'll elaborate on in future sermons:

Men... pray... (1 Timothy 2:8)... and model holiness.

Women... learn in quietness... and model modesty and godliness. (1 Timothy 2:9f)

We'll spend more time on this over the next few weeks. For now, will you accept the teaching of scripture that God made men and women different - equal in value, but distinct in roles?

Rejection of Biblical gender distinctions is a result of the fall.

As Julie Andrews sang in "The Sound of Music," Let's start at the very beginning. It's a very good place to start.

REVIEW - The creation story - God created Adam and Eve. She was perfect for him, and he was perfect for her. She was all he needed, and he was all she needed. (Good thing - there was nobody else to choose from!) But then the fall messed it all up. She was deceived and sinned. He saw what she did and followed her lead, and sinned. And all that was good and perfect in creation was marred, corrupted, and ruined. And that INCLUDES THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE MAN AND THE WOMAN.

I will not belabor the point, but I want you to see WHY the war between the sexes exist... WHY there is such chafing (primarily by women, let's face it) against this concept of different roles in the home and the church. It's a result of the fall.

READ - *Genesis 3:16-17, esp. vs. 16 "thy desire shall be to thine husband, and he shall rule over thee."*

READ - *Genesis 4:6-7, esp. vs. 7 "unto thee shall be his desire"*

The struggle against the roles that men and women are assigned in the home and in the church are the result of sin, as Paul clearly states in *1 Timothy 2:13-15*

Because of the fall, Woman has a natural tendency to chafe against the leadership of the man. Let's have a show of hands, ladies, how many of you WANT to submit to somebody else?

JOKE In heaven there were two lines. A sign over one read, "Men who were bossed by their wives," and over the other the sign read, "Men who weren't bossed by their wives". There was a big line for the first one, but then the man who was checking peoples name in the book of life saw one man in the other line. So he told the guys to wait. He asked the man why he was in that line. The man replied, "My wife told me to."

We'll continue to explore God's teaching on this in future sermons, but for now may I challenge you to accept the fact that rejection of Biblical gender distinctions is a result of the fall.

Possibility of misuse is not an excuse to ignore God's Word.

There are a couple of "logical" arguments often put forth by those who reject the Bible's teaching on gender distinction. One is the fact that people in authority can abuse that authority. Therefore we must come up with a better system that won't be so abused.

- We see women apply this argument because men sometimes "lord it over" their wives.
- We see men apply this argument because women sometimes become "unlovable" once they've hooked the man into marriage.

But the possibility of abuse is no surprise to God. We must remember that He is in control. He is the one who ordained these things, and He is a bit smarter than we are. How can we think that we can come up with a better method than God? Who wants to worship a God that is that frail? My God knows what He is doing. Let's trust Him.

Cultural thought is not a reason to ignore God's Word.

This is a second argument often put forth. The Bible is outdated. "Get with it preacher! This is the 21st century. We moved past those outdated concepts years ago."

The argument, then, is that culture trumps God's Word.

ILLUS - Friends (TV show) had a long run and was viewed by millions. It taught us over and over that sex outside marriage is fun, acceptable, and (here's the worst part) NORMAL. This cultural NORM is sadly the norm even in Christianity today. How many "Christians" are living in a sinful relationship with a member of the opposite sex and think it perfectly normal?

Culture ALWAYS goes against God's Word, for the world is lost. We are not to conform to culture, but to God's Word. Without exception.

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind (Romans 12:2) (I like how the NLT puts that verse - Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think.

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. (1 John 2:15)

Culture must not change us. We must change it. This is true in all areas, and it true in the matter of male and female roles in the church and in the home.

The ultimate issue is submission to God's Word.

When a man assumes his role of leadership in the home and in the church, he is, in reality, submitting to God's will for His life, as revealed in God's word.

When a woman assumes her role of quiet submission in the home and church, she is, in reality, submitting to God.

God said it - that should be the end of the argument!

ILLUS - I have a preacher friend who is kind of hung up on the idea of authority. He has been known to blame every evil that occurs in a church on people's unwillingness to submit to authority. But I, frankly, have never met somebody unwilling to submit to authority. It's just that most people only accept themselves as the authority! My way or the highway! It is all about SELF. Should this surprise us? It is the very essence of the fall, and the sin nature.

But crucial to our happiness and peace in the faith is submission to God's word. If we would be do things God's way in the home, how much happier our homes would be!

If we would model everything in our churches according to God's way, how much better our churches would run!

ILLUS - When Moses was superintending the building of the tabernacle, he stressed over and over that it needed to be built "according to the pattern God showed me on the mountain."

Let's build our homes according to God's pattern!

Let's build our church according to God's pattern!

"Why call ye me lord, lord..."

Conclusion

In our next study we will get more specific about the roles men and women play in the local church. But in preparation for that, I challenge you to consider these truths we have seen today.

Paul said to the Corinthians "I speak to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say." (1 Corinthians 10:15 NIV)

And I say the same to you. You are sensible, thinking, intelligent people. Are the things I have showed you today from God's Word or not? Do I make them up? Do I share opinion, or have you seen these truths from the very pages of God's Word?

And as sensible people, what do you propose we should do about these things? Are we, as a church, going to be in submission to God's Word or not?

Chapter 5. Holy Hands

READ - 1 Timothy 2:1-15

TEXT - *I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting. (1 Timothy 2:8)*

THEME - Men are to be the spiritual leaders in the local church, both in word and in example.

Introduction

Two weeks ago we provided some introductory material about the roles of men and women - in the home and in the church and in the world. (REVIEW OUTLINE)

In today's text (vs. 8) we turn our attention now specifically to the important role of men in the local church.

Men Pray

1. Meaning?

MEN = "ANDROS" from "ANER" - MALE

EVERYWHERE = "TOPOS", a term used by Paul only to describe the meeting of the local church.

Does this prohibit women from praying in the local church assembly? It seems not, for Paul regulated women praying in church in *1 Corinthians 11:5*.

The meaning seems to be that men are to TAKE THE LEAD in praying - they are to do it when possible. And by implication, men are to be the spiritual leaders in the local church. We will see further instruction on this as we continue into the next chapter.

2. Implications?

May I suggest 2 that come to mind?

a. Implication # 1 - We need MEN in the local church!

The male element is vital to the life of the church, and yet it is often very difficult to interest men in the church.

ILLUS - I read a book entitled "Why Men Hate Church" which likened most men's perception of church to going to the lingerie department with their wives - simply something a man doesn't want to do.

We make a couple of mistakes as a result of this:

- i. When there are no men, the women step into the roles the Bible says men should fill.

God bless them for their faithfulness, but rather than changing God's order in the church, shouldn't we rather figure out how to reach the missing men? It becomes a vicious circle. The men don't come, in part because the church seems too feminine to them, and so the women take it over, making it even more feminine...

- ii. Pastors tend to rely (out of necessity) on those who are willing to serve. This means pastors usually have to rely on the women, since the men don't come. As the pastor caters more and more to the female members of the congregation, the church becomes more and more feminine... and therefore less and less attractive to the males. VICIOUS CIRCLE.

But shouldn't we rather figure out why the men don't come?
Shouldn't we rather throw our efforts into reaching men?

Men ARE interested in spiritual things. They are just not interested in church.

ILLUS - Men's meeting a few weeks ago at the Chapel - PACKED - hundreds of men came.

ILLUS - Promise Keepers a few years back - filled entire football stadiums with men across the USA.

ILLUS - The Man Church - a ministry of a church in NY (I think) which I recently read about - draws a huge crowd of men because it is tailored to them. Uses innovative things like a "fight song."

Consider some practical advantages to our church if we reach the men of our community:

i. Reach men and you will reach women!

ii. Reach men and you will reach families!

ILLUS - A study once disclosed that:

- * If both Mom and Dad attend church regularly, 72% of their children remain faithful.
- * If only Dad, 55% remain faithful.
- * If only Mom, 15%.
- * If neither attended regularly, only 6% remain faithful.

(Warren Mueller in *Homemade*, May, 1990)

POEM -

'Twas a sheep, not a lamb,
that strayed away in the parable Jesus told.
A grown-up sheep that had gone astray
from the ninety and nine in the fold.

Out on the hillside, out in the cold,
'twas a sheep the Good Shepherd sought;
And back to the flock, safe into the fold,
'twas a sheep the Good Shepherd brought.

And why for the sheep should we earnestly long
and as earnestly hope and pray?
Because there is danger, if they go wrong,
they will lead the lambs astray.

For the lambs will follow the sheep, you know,
wherever the sheep may stray;
When the sheep go wrong, it will not be long
till the lambs are as wrong as they.

And so with the sheep we earnestly plead,
for the sake of the lambs today;
If the sheep are lost, what terrible cost
some of the lambs will have to pay!

Source unknown

May God help us to reach MEN here. Consider this a challenge, church.
In our planning and in our praying.

b. Implication # 2 - Men need to step up!

Men are supposed to take the lead in the spiritual life of the church. And so let me speak candidly to the few men we have here (and hope I don't run you off in doing so!)

ILLUS - Uncle Sam wants you - WW II slogan.

Our church, needs men to take the lead. Is the Lord leading you in these areas? Have you considered that the Lord has gifted you in ways that are vitally needed here? Will you make it a matter of prayer to exercise your spiritual gifts here, in this local church, and for the benefit of your brothers and sisters here?

Holy Hands

Men - here is where it gets really convicting. The Lord convicted me about the meaning of this phrase as I studied it.

1. Meaning

Does it refer to a posture in prayer? (as depicted on the cover of today's bulletin?)

Possibly. Certainly this posture was common.

ILLUS - Solomon at the dedication of the temple - *And Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven. 1 Kings 8:32*

Thus will I bless thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in thy name. (Psalm 63:4)

And there is no doubt that the posture has validity. It indicates humility, honor, acknowledgement of God and all that He is.

ILLUS - It's a similar posture to that which we see in small children lifting up their hands to adults. "Up, Mommy!"

But I think this is a secondary meaning here, at best. The primary meaning is that men should lead not only by praying in public, but by doing so while LIVING HOLY LIVES.

Holy = "HOSIOS" - unpolluted. "The word describes the pious, pure, and clean action which is in accordance with God's command. The hands are holy which have not been given over to deeds of wicked lust." (Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament)

Note: To pray with polluted hands is an exercise in futility, for God does not hear such prayer.

If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me. (Psalm 66:18)

Holy hands is an expression that indicates holy lifestyles - holy living. And MEN ARE TO TAKE THE LEAD IN THIS IN OUR CHURCHES!

2. Implication

If men are to lead in WORSHIP, they must start by leading in WALK. They must be examples of godly men.

There is SO MUCH POWER in an example!

ILLUS - One Sunday morning in 1865, a black man entered a fashionable church in Richmond, Virginia. When Communion was served, he walked down the aisle and knelt at the altar. A rustle of resentment swept the congregation. How dare he! After all, believers in that church used the common cup. Suddenly a distinguished layman stood up, stepped forward to the altar, and knelt beside the black man. With Robert E. Lee setting the example, the rest of the con-

gregation soon followed his lead. (Moody Bible Institute's Today in the Word, September, 1991, p. 15)

QUOTE - A holy life will make the deepest impression. Lighthouses blow no horns, they just shine. - D. L. Moody

ILLUS - Paul told Timothy to make his life an example - cf. *1 Timothy 4:12*

ILLUS - Paul told the same thing to Titus - cf. *Titus 2:7*

QUOTE A man's life is always more forcible than his speech. When men take stock of him they reckon his deeds as dollars and his words as pennies. If his life and doctrine disagree the mass of onlookers accept his practice and reject his preaching. (C.H. Spurgeon)

ILLUS - James said to consider the examples of the prophets - cf. *James 5:10*

ILLUS - Paul, over and over, "Be followers of me!"

ILLUS - A brief, simple, but expressive eulogy was pronounced by Martin Luther upon a pastor at Zwickau in 1522 named Nicholas Haussmann. "What we preach, he lived," said the great reformer. (Could anyone ask for a better epitaph?)

3. A word of encouragement

HOLY HANDS is not possible in our own power. We need God's help. Remember the 3 tenses of salvation we mentioned earlier? Well, we're going to struggle with the power of sin until we get to heaven. So don't get discouraged by it. The very fact that you are still fighting and kicking against it is a good thing!

ILLUS - Paul stood before the high priest and testified of his innocence. READ - *Acts 23:1f*. He got a fat lip for his troubles, and seemingly lost his temper in response - called the priest a "whited wall". Even Paul, one of the greatest Christians of all time, struggled with sin. The best of men are men at best. In *Romans 7* Paul lamented over the fact that he struggled with sin in his life. And then in *Romans 8* he exulted in the fact that God helps us to do what we cannot do on our own.

Men, don't get discouraged by this seemingly impossible instruction that we are to live HOLY LIVES. What we cannot do in our own power, we can do with God's help.

I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. (Philippians 4:13)

BY THE WAY, THIS IS ONE OF THE REASONS WE DO CHURCH - TO HELP EACH OTHER IN THIS JOURNEY OF HOLINESS.

Without Wrath or Doubting

Men and women are different. Hence, God stresses different things for each. Here are 2 injunctions specific to MEN, because MEN struggle with these things more than women.

1. WRATH

Men are made to fight and protect. We are filled with testosterone which fuels aggression and competitiveness. But when our sin nature is allowed free reign, these tendencies that God meant for good can lead to ANGER... WRATH...

... the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God. (James 1:20 NASB)

2. DOUBTING

This word can mean doubting, or more probably it means dissension and disputes.

When we pray men, we must not doubt - we are to be examples of praying in faith.

When we pray, we are not to do so alongside a spirit of contention or dispute. Conflict in churches is all too common, but we must resist it.

Conclusion

A church is only as healthy as its men.

This verse provides a couple of challenges to our church:

- We must reach men.
- We must get to a level of maturity as a church where men are leading.

May God help us men to *pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.*

Chapter 6. On Women and the Church

READ - 1 Timothy 2:9-15

THEME - In the church, women are to be beautiful both inside and out, and they are to model discipleship.

Introduction

REVIEW - We are looking at the first of the pastoral epistles, *1 Timothy*. It is a book that answers the question, "What are We Doing Here?" Why do we do church? What is the church, and how should it function? Paul clearly stated this as his purpose for writing to the young pastor Timothy in *1 Timothy 3:14-15*.

We've seen some interesting things so far. Paul started in *chapter 1* with a general thought - NO OTHER DOCTRINE (*vs. 3*). Moving into *chapter 2* he provided another general concept - PRAYER FOR ALL (*vs. 2:1*). And so in asking our selves "What are we Doing Here" we learn that there are 2 foundational truths that must be in place for a church - BIBLICAL AUTHORITY, and PRAYER.

In *chapter 2* Paul began talking about structure - God-ordained roles and responsibilities in the church. We learned in *vs. 8* that God wants MEN TO LEAD.

We move on, now, to the Bible's teaching on women. If they are not to be the leaders in the local church, as we have seen, what are they to be doing?

Notice two very specific instructions given here for you ladies:

1. Concerning women's ADORNMENT, or dress.
2. Concerning women's LEARNING, or discipleship.

Adorned

cf. *vss. 9-10*

Three thoughts come to mind from these verses:

1. A Christian woman's adornment should not be defined by the worldly culture in which she lives.

Some BACKGROUND ON EPHESUS may help us to understand Paul's teaching here. Remember that Timothy was in Ephesus, serving as pastor / bishop when Paul wrote him this letter. cf. (*vs. 3*).

Ephesus was:

- A center of trade and culture - a very opulent and cosmopolitan place.

It was an "in" place to be - not unlike our New York, or our Hollywood, today. Not unlike London, to the British, or Paris to the French. It defined much of the culture of the day.

- A center of "Diana worship".

This Diana was different from the Roman Diana (Artemis to the Greeks). She was an Asiatic deity, and is referred to as "Diana of the Ephesians." She was a goddess of fertility, and the mother who supposedly nourished the world. Images found through archaeology depicted her as a woman adorned with gold and braided hair - her body ringed with many breasts. She was in some way related to the Palestinian / Canaanite deity Ashtoreth, described in the Old Testament.

The temple of Diana was amazing - one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. So important was it to the people of Ephesus that when it was destroyed by fire in 356 BC, they immediately rebuilt it. Though gone today, the Church of St. Sophia in Istanbul claims to be built from some of its ruins, including eight of the magnificent red columns from the temple.

In short, Ephesus, and the Ephesian people, were synonymous with worship of Diana. cf. *And when the townclerk had appeased the people, he said, Ye men of Ephesus, what man is there that knoweth not how that the city of the Ephesians is a worshipper of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Jupiter? (Acts 19:35)*

Paul's discouragement of braided hair, gold, pearls, or costly array may have related to these truths.

He was saying that Christian women should not look like pagans.

He was saying that there should be a distinction between those who worship the Lord Jesus Christ and those who worship other gods.

He was saying that Christian women should want to align themselves with the Lord Jesus Christ rather than with the world.

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. (Romans 12:2)

We accept this as a general principle of scripture. Paul here applies this general principle in a specific way to the way a Christian woman should dress.

2. A Christian woman's adornment should not tempt people into sin.

Consider the words Paul used here - *adorn themselves with modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety.*

- a. MODEST = Greek KOSMIOS - "well-arranged, well-ordered, moderate, modest."

This word does not prohibit a woman looking nice, but rather encourages it. Dress beautifully, ladies, but modestly. Paul is not just PROHIBITING a certain mode of dress (i.e. immodest), but he is ENCOURAGING a certain mode of dress (i.e. looking your best).

ILLUS - Ladies, remember the first time you were asked out on a date? How much time did you spend working on your appearance? You wanted to look your best, right?

ILLUS - In the work world, we understand the importance of dressing for success. If we want the job, we show up for the interview dressed nicely - KOSMIOS - well-ordered and well-arranged.

Is it not just as important that we "put our best foot forward" when we come into the house of God and worship the King of Kings and Lord of Lords?

And so, look your best, but be MODEST.

It comes down to why we are here - to worship the Lord. Everything we do in the local church is about Christ - not about us.

- b. SHAMEFACEDNESS = Greek HAIDOS (used only here in the New Testament).

QUOTE - The word connotes feminine reserve in matters of sex. In the word is involved an innate moral repugnance to the doing of the dishonorable. It is "shamefacedness" which shrinks from overpassing the limits of womanly reserve and modesty, as well as from dishonor which would justly attach thereto." (Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament, p. 620)

This word teaches that women must be careful not to tempt others with their mode of dress.

QUOTE - Godly women hate sin and control their passions so as not to lead another into sin." (MacArthur Study Bible)

ILLUS - I was watching an episode of Seventh Heaven, and in this episode one of the younger daughters experienced a man's inappropriate advances (a behavior for which there is no excuse, men). Among some very good advice given to her by her mother after this event, came this not-so-good piece of worldly wisdom - "It's your body, and you can do anything you like with it. Don't let anybody tell you otherwise."

Ladies, that is a lie of the devil. It is not your body. My body is not mine. Your body is not yours.

On one level, your body belongs to your spouse (if you are married). cf. *1 Corinthians 7:1-5*

On a more general level, ALL our bodies belong to God!

What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's. (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. (1 Corinthians 10:31)

Just as in last week's study we saw certain things men need to concentrate on avoiding - wrath and doubting (*vs. 8*), so we see here an issue particularly true of women. Men don't have so much concern over tempting women with how they dress - it is primarily a female issue - based in the way God made men and women - men are primarily attracted to women VISUALLY while women are primarily attracted to men VERBALLY.

ILLUS - My wife gave me a Valentine's Gift. A little plaque entitled "Mr. Wonderful." It has a little button on the side, pressing of which produces various thoughtful phrases from Mr. Wonderful such as: "Anytime you need me, just call. You know I'm ALWAYS ready to listen." "I wish I was there with you right now. I bet you could use a shoulder rub." "Of course I want to spend more quality time with you. I'll just cancel that big night out I had planned with the boys." "Let's go dancing tonight." "Do you want to go see that movie you were talking about? There's nothing on TV but ball games." "I'm sorry we argued. I knew you were right all along. I just couldn't admit it." "I found this great cozy hideaway - with no TVs! Let's make plans to go." "Why don't we have lunch together more often - I miss you so much during the day." "Enough about me. I want to know how your day's going."

We laugh at things like that, but the fact is women and men are attracted to each other in different ways - and men are attracted VISUALLY, so women have to be cognizant of that fact. I doubt there was a similar plaque entitled "Mrs. Wonderful" on the shelf. Such verbal croonings don't attract men. An understanding of this truth is what brings millions into Sports Illustrated via its Swimsuit Edition, and millions into Victoria's Secret.

ILLUS - Romance novels are marketed to WOMEN. Pornography is marketed to MEN.

I'm not saying these realities are good or right - quite the contrary. But they are REALITIES, none-the-less.

Why is the world smart enough to understand these things, but we in the church are so blind to it?

God made Eve to be attractive to Adam. In the fall this attraction is corrupted - men are attracted to all women, and women flaunt their attraction to all men. What was meant for one man / one woman in marriage, was corrupted by the fall.

And so God says that a Christian woman's adornment should not tempt others into sin.

3. A Christian woman's adornment should be on the inside as well as the outside.

Last week we learned that men are to lead in the local church, but they are to do so from within the context of HOLY LIVES. It is not just a matter of LIPS, but of LIFESTYLE - not just WORDS, but WALK.

Paul says the same thing here, ladies, for your benefit. How you dress and present yourself should be subordinate to how you live - a life of GOOD WORKS.

For both men and women, the vital truth of these verses is in how we live. It needs to be consistent with how we present ourselves - whether in word (men) or in appearance (women).

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)

Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us. (1 Peter 2:12 NIV)

Learning

I won't spend much time on this point, as we touched on it last week.

Stated simply: Men are to be the spiritual leaders in the local church, with the role of teacher (pastor, elder, bishop, overseer) reserved to them by God. But does that mean women are in some way left out? Absolutely not!

Consider just a few thoughts here:

1. *Let the woman learn...*

This is a POSITIVE COMMAND. Christianity was never meant to put down women, but has always lifted them up. Jewish women were not allowed to learn the Bible. Other cultures of the day had similar restrictions.

Paul was saying "INCLUDE THE WOMEN" - they get every opportunity to learn the word of God that men get. This was revolutionary thought.

2. *... in silence with all subjection*

Some take this to its furthest extreme and say that women are to be absolutely silent in church. We don't do that here.

Some take the opposite extreme and say that this passage can simply be dismissed and ignored. We don't do that, either.

So what does this mean?

Taken together with *But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence* we learn:

The woman is not to occupy the role of TEACHER. ("to teach" is literally "to be a teacher" in the Greek)

- This does not mean women cannot teach.

And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly. (Acts 18:26)

The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; (Titus 2:3)

- It DOES mean that women cannot occupy the office of TEACHER, which was a specific office in the New Testament church. (cf. *Acts 13:1; 1 Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 4:11*)

- This does NOT MEAN that women cannot have the gift of teaching.

ILLUS - We have some wonderfully gifted teachers amongst our women here. (Name a few)

- But it DOES have something to say about where and when she exercises that gift.

ILLUS - Some of the best preachers I've heard were women... it's not a matter of their ability, or giftedness - it's a matter of God's order in the local church.

The woman is to learn in a spirit of quiet submission. ("silence" = "quietness" in the Greek.) This verse does not prohibit a woman speaking, but rather describes the attitude of learning which respects the role of the teacher and does not attempt to militate against it.

3. For Adam was first formed...

Some argue that Paul's instructions here were only for that culture, and therefore irrelevant to us today. And some argue that he was speaking about a specific issue in the Ephesian church which has no relevance today.

But, Paul's argument about male leadership and female submission goes to the order of creation. In other words, Paul is saying "God created men and women this way." The submission of women is not a result of the fall, but predates that. She was created to be a helper to Adam. The fall actually illustrates the problem - when Eve stepped out from her protected role, she messed up. And when Adam abdicated his role as spiritual leader, and followed Eve, he plunged all humanity into sin. (He gets the blame - cf. *Romans 5:12-21; 1 Corinthians 15:21-22*)

4. Saved in childbearing...

What in the world does this mean???

Every commentary I picked up in my study had this caveat - "This is one of the most difficult passages to interpret in the Bible." Amen.

Here are the various interpretations usually put forth:

- a. She will be brought safely through childbirth.

This is impossible to accept simply because we know it is not always true. And the Bible clearly teaches that the means of salvation for all (both men and women) is by grace through faith in Christ.

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ... (Acts 16:31)

For by grace are ye saved, through faith... (Ephesians 2:8-9)

Whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life... (John 3:16)

And so this cannot be the correct interpretation.

- b. Saved through the birth of the Savior.

cf. *And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. (Genesis 3:15)*

- c. Saved from the stigma of the fall by fulfilling her role in bringing up godly offspring.

I confess that I don't know which is the right interpretation. I lean toward the second of the three. Many very learned men lean toward the third, though.

When I get to heaven I plan on looking up Paul and asking him about what he was talking about here!

Conclusion

I tried, as I always do, to summarize this text into a single sentence - a theme. For this passage, the best I could come up with was "In the church, women are to be beautiful both inside and out, and they are to model discipleship."

Last week I challenged the men to rise up and fulfill the role God has called them to in this local church. May I issue the same challenge, this morning, to the ladies?

Chapter 7. Upholding the Truth

READ - 1 Timothy 3

TEXT - *But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. (1 Timothy 3:15)*

THEME - The church, properly organized, and focused on preaching Christ, is God's means of reaching the world.

Introduction

ILLUS - In the Greek Islands, one can seek out the home of Hippocrates, the father of modern medicine. In the area, one can also find an olive tree, supposedly dating from his time. If this is so, this tree would then be some 2400 years old. The trunk of this tree is very large but completely hollow. The tree is little more than thick bark. There are a few long, straggling branches, but they are supported by sturdy wooden poles every few feet. It has an occasional leaf here and there and might produce a few olives each year. In the fields around, however, are olive groves in many directions. The strong, healthy, young trees with narrow trunks are covered with a thick canopy of leaves, under which masses of olives can be found each year. The tree of Hippocrates can still be called an olive by nature, in that it still shows the essential unique characteristics, but it has long since ceased to fulfill an olive's function. Tourists file up to inspect this ancient relic, having some link to a dim history, but the job of the olive tree passed long ago to many successions of replanted trees.

Jesus loves the church. He died for the church. He is building the church. And one day soon He will return for the church. It is vitally important to Him.

And yet, the church has in many places become like the Olive tree of Hippocrates - an empty shell that is big and impressive looking, but accomplishing nothing.

Our text teaches us that the local church, properly organized, and focused on preaching Christ, is God's means of reaching the world. It is IMPORTANT. And so let's consider it this morning:

The Ministers of the Church

cf. vss. 1-13

1. What are the officers of the church?

Churches have developed all sorts of governments - congregational, pastoral, elder, deacon, anarchy. Some denominations exert rule over individual churches, and some don't. In many churches, regardless of the formal method of government chosen, the church is actually ruled by a member or members who has just taken it over. But, DOES THE BIBLE TEACH US HOW IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE? YES!

There are 2 church offices mentioned in the Bible - ELDERS and DEACONS.

a. ELDERS

In your Bible reading, when you see the New Testament terms "bishop," "overseer," "elder," "pastor", and sometimes "teacher" they are all referring to the same office - that which we usually call "pastor" today.

Let me prove that to you:

And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the ELDERS of the church. Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost

hath made you OVERSEERS, to FEED (i.e. SHEPHERD / PASTOR) the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. (Acts 20:17,28)

For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldst set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain ELDERS in every city, as I had appointed thee: If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. For a BISHOP must be blameless (Titus 1:5-7)

The ELDERS which are among you I exhort, who am also an ELDER, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: FEED THE FLOCK (i.e. SHEPHERD / PASTOR) of God which is among you, TAKING THE OVERSIGHT thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. (1 Peter 5:1-3)

The primary duties of this office are OVERSIGHT and TEACHING. Other duties include (but are not limited to) visiting those in need (cf. *James 1:27*), being an example to the flock (cf. *1 Peter 5:3*), and protecting the flock from danger (cf. *Acts 20:29-31*).

b. DEACON

Greek = servant, literally a "table waiter."

Office arose out of necessity - (HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT - READ - *Acts 6:1f* - most believe this was the formation of the office.)

No other officers are mentioned in the New Testament for the church. It is God's plan that a church be ordered with an elder or elders ruling and teaching God's Word, and with deacons helping and serving.

2. Who can be an officer of the church?

Note: It is important to realize that with only 2 exceptions, every qualification given here for church officers is a qualification that should be present in the life of every believer. We are all supposed to be striving to be like Christ - striving toward holy living.

a. QUALIFICATIONS OF ELDERS:

Note the importance - *He... MUST*. We dare not ignore these qualifications - they are not optional. They are not suggestions. They are requirements.

- Blameless = over-arching qualification. The remainder of the list consists of more specific examples of what it means to be blameless. The word means above reproach - it does NOT mean sinless, else none would qualify. (Me least of all!)
- Husband of one wife

Controversy rages over this phrase. Some think it means a man cannot be divorced, or divorced and remarried. But the Holy Spirit did not say "cannot be divorced." He said "one woman man" - a much broader and vaguer term. Some think it means a man must be married - but Paul was not, so that cannot be.

Literally the phrase means a "one woman man" - a man who is devoted to his wife and not engaged in moral sin.

- Vigilant and sober - both terms refer to a general quality of being "sound minded" and of "sound judgement."
- Of good behavior

Same word (KOSMION) that was used in chapter 2 to describe how a woman should dress - ORDERLY, in a WELL ORDERED FASHION.

In other words, the elder's life should not be a chaotic mess!

- Given to hospitality - likes people - likes being around people - likes having people in his home.

ILLUS - A preacher friend shared his thoughts in a preachers' meeting once - "The ministry would be great if it weren't for the stinkin' lousy people!" Of course, he was kidding, for if a preacher doesn't love people, and like being around them, he is disqualified from the office.

- Apt to teach.

Able and willing and equipped to do so. Implied in this qualification is that he is gifted to do so.

Note: This and oversight are the only two qualifications that need not be present in every believer. These 2 qualifications are also the only distinctions between the office of elder and that of deacon.

- Not given to wine

Simplest way to ensure he is not in violation here is to just avoid alcohol altogether.

Subject of another sermon, but consider that drunkenness is always condemned in scripture. And doing things that might cause weaker brothers and sisters to stumble in their faith is always condemned. Wine is one of the those "questionable things" in the life of the believer. While I cannot in good conscience tell you that you must never take a drink, I can tell you based on scripture that it is a "questionable thing" for the believer.

And it is, therefore, something to be avoided, or at least done in extreme moderation, by elders.

- No striker - not a bully.
- Not greedy of filthy lucre - not somebody who is controlled or swayed by a love of money.
- Patient - gentle.
- Not a brawler - not contentious. Not somebody who picks fights, or enjoys a fight.

ILLUS - I knew a dear old lady who liked to argue. She said to me once (tongue in cheek, I hope) that if I wasn't willing to fight with her she didn't want me around. This is not the quality of an elder.

- Not covetous - another reminder that the minister should be free from the love of money.
- One that ruleth well his own household...
Recognizing that children are children, he has them under control.
- Not a novice...

Not a new Christian - new Christians need to sit and learn and be proven...

- Good report of them who are without...

He has a good reputation even in the lost world, outside of the church. He is not one thing in church and another in the world!

Whew! That's quite a list. And to be honest most people don't feel qualified when they read this list. I know I want to resign the ministry every-time I read it. None of us can be truly blameless, but we strive to live up to it. And we remember the promise that *I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. (Philippians 4:13)*, for only He can help us with these things.

b. QUALIFICATIONS OF DEACONS

- Several of these qualifications are the same as for elders, so no further discussion is needed - Not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre (money), grave (sober), proved (not a novice), blameless, husbands of one wife, ruling their children well...

But two qualifications stand out as needing mention:

- Not doubletongued - two-faced - men who say one thing and do another. Men who say one thing to your face and another behind your back.
- Holding the mystery of the faith...

Understands the deep truths of the scriptures. While the office of deacon is not a teaching office, the deacon is still to be a student - taught in the word and one who knows his Bible.

c. QUALIFICATIONS OF DEACONESSES

The term "wives" in the KJV almost certainly does not refer to the wives of deacons, but rather to female deacons. It is the generic term WOMAN and most Bible interpreters do not accept that it refers to WIVES.

While there are NO examples of female elders in the Bible, there are examples of female deacons.

I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant (i.e. a DIAKONOS - a deacon) of the church which is at Cenchrea: (Romans 16:1)

We have deaconesses here, and are perfectly scriptural in doing so. But note that they are to have the same qualifications as their male counterparts. One different qualification is mentioned:

- Not slanderers - refers to her manner of speech - it should not accuse or slander others. Gossip should be avoided at all costs.

Greek = ME DIABOLOUS. This is a name applied to Satan - HO DIABOLOS, meaning that he is the chief slanderer of the people of God.

QUOTE (Kent) "The deaconess must not partake of this characteristic of Satan. She must not be a 'she-devil.' She must avoid improper speech."

And so, the Bible clearly tells us HOW the church should be structured - with elders ruling and teaching, and with deacons (and deaconesses) helping and serving. Is this how our church is organized? If not, let's make it so. As we approach our annual election of officers here, we must consider these qualifications. Current officers need to examine their lives - do you measure up? If not - do so. Those who might be considered prospects for elders or deacons MUST be evaluated in light of these qualifications.

On a personal note, I ask that you hold me to my responsibilities as defined here in scripture. Should you ever determine that I am not qualified according to this list, then I charge you as a church to remove me from the office of pastor, and replace me with somebody who is qualified.

The Mission of the Church

cf. vs. 15

We have previously noted that this is the key verse - Paul's purpose in writing to Timothy.

Several truths in this verse:

1. The church is the house of God.

This is not your church, nor is it my church.

ILLUS - Former chairman of the board here, who so influenced my young Christian walk when he so loudly proclaimed in a board meeting, "This is my church!" and proceeded to demand things be done his way.

ILLUS - Former pastor I knew who, when asked to explain something in a deacon's meeting, slammed his fist on the table and said, "I don't have to explain anything to you."

IT IS GOD'S CHURCH, not yours, and not mine. ("house OF God" means that it "belongs to" Him) Look around you this morning - what do you see that does not belong to God? What part of the building and grounds is not His? More importantly, what person here does not belong to Him?

Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. (Acts 20:28)

The word "house" might be more properly understand as "household." It refers not to a building (such didn't even exist at the time), but to a family. My household consists of myself, my wife, my two children, and maybe even my Bassett Hound. The church is PEOPLE not things - not the building.

And that HOUSEHOLD belongs to God!

2. The church is the pillar and ground of the truth.

QUOTE (John MacArthur, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary on 1 Timothy) "The imagery of these terms for the church would not have been lost on the Ephesians. The impressive temple of the goddess Diana (Artemis), one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, was located in the city. William Barclay gives the following description of it: 'One of its features was its pillars. It contained 127 pillars, every one of them the gift of a king. All were made of marble, and some were studded with jewels and overlaid with gold.' Each pillar acted as a tribute to the king who donated it. The honorary significance of the pillars, however, was secondary to their function of holding up the immense structure of the roof. HEDRAIOMA (support) appears only here in the New Testament and refers to the foundation on which a structure rests. Thus in Paul's metaphor the church is the foundation and pillar that holds up the truth. As the foundation and pillars of the Temple of Diana were a testimony to the error of pagan false religion, so the church is to be a testimony to God's truth. THAT IS IT'S MISSION IN THE WORLD - IT'S REASON FOR EXISTING HERE.

QUOTE (Homer Kent) "The church upholds in the world the truth that God has revealed to men."

In our day, too many other things have supplanted the church.

- Para-church organizations are rampant today. Nothing wrong with them if they supplement and help the church, but they must not take the place of the church.
- Television ministries, internet resources - all fine and good if they support the local church, but if they become a substitute then there is a problem.

- It is popular in our day for people to say they are "Christian" but not church-goers. "You don't need to go to church to be a good Christian." RIDICULOUS. According to the Bible, you can't be a good Christian if you don't! (with the exclusion, of course, of those God Himself hinders.)

And so, the church is important - it is God's! The church is important - it has a mission! And that mission is to uphold in the world the truth that God has revealed to men.

The Message of the Church

cf. *vs. 16*

At no time in history has it been more important that we understand our message. For Satan has succeeded in derailing much of the American church by getting it off topic.

ILLUS - Message I heard recently by a liberal "pastor" who spoke on the occupation of Iraq and Palestine and how these lands needed to be liberated from the oppressive occupiers. His message was a shill for a particular party message in American politics and had not a word of scriptural truth in it. The fact that Jesus died for you and I was not even considered in this "Good Friday" message!

ILLUS - Rev. Jeremiah Wright has cast a horrific pall across the pulpits of the land with his garbage theology. Have you noticed how his behavior has diverted the attention of the country (in a bad way) to what churches are preaching? Oh how Satan loves it when churches get off message.

The church has ONE MESSAGE, and Paul shared it in *vs. 16* - Jesus Christ and Him crucified! (Note that verse 16 was probably a hymn or creed in the early church.)

And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ. (Acts 5:42)

But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; (1 Corinthians 1:23)

For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord (2 Corinthians 4:5a)

Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ. (Ephesians 3:8)

... Christ in you, the hope of glory: Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus (Colossians 1:27b-28)

ILLUS - Franklin Graham interview when he was asked why his father had been so successful. Franklin replied, "Because he stayed on message."

ILLUS - There once was an old church in England. A sign on the front of the building read, "We preach Christ crucified." After a time, ivy grew up and obscured the last word. The motto now read, "We preach Christ." The ivy grew some more, and the motto read, "We preach." Finally, ivy covered the entire sign, and the church died.

Such is the fate of any church that fails to carry out its mission by preaching its message to the world.

Conclusion

Remember the Olive tree of Hippocrates? Is our church like that? Old, fruitless, looking like an olive tree, but not really doing what olive trees are supposed to do?

I challenge you this morning, church. Let us together determine to be Biblical in our ministers, our mission, and our message - to be a young vibrant olive tree that is producing fruit for the savior.

Chapter 8. True and False

READ - 1 Timothy 4:1-5

TEXT -... *some shall depart from the faith, speaking lies...* (1 Timothy 4:1,2)

THEME - False teachers are a reality that the church must be prepared to defend against.

Introduction

Who are these False Teachers?

cf. vs. 1-5

Paul says that the Holy Spirit is clear on this - there will be false teachers in the latter days. (Latter days refers to all of the church age, not just the end times.) (MacArthur has good stuff on this)

- They often come from within.

... some shall depart from the faith..."

Now we know that this does not refer to people who have lost their salvation - for the Bible teaches such is not possible. Once you are saved, you can never be lost. Oh how we ought to rejoice in that glorious truth!

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any [man] pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no [man] is able to pluck [them] out of my Father's hand. (John 10:27-29)

Once you're in Christ's hand, you're forever safe!

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. (John 5:24)

ILLUS - My testimony of not understanding eternal security - the fear and pain it caused for so many years, and the peace that came when I finally realized I was safe! Jesus saved me, and Jesus keeps me!

I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day. (2 Timothy 1:12)

SO... it doesn't refer to people who are saved, and then lose their salvation.

Rather, this refers to people who have been exposed to the faith, but never taken their own step into it. These are religious people, but not saved people. These are the ones Jesus talked about in His parable of the sower and the soils:

But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended. (Matthew 13:21-22)

These are people who know all the right words, can act and talk like a Christian, but are not really Christians. Jesus said our churches would be full of them.

ILLUS - Read the parable of the tares in *Matthew 13*

So false teachers will arise from within the ranks of the church - they *shall depart from the faith!* This was not Paul's first time warning about this. cf. *Acts 20:28-30*

- They are influenced by Satan.

... seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils...

There are only 2 sides in the battle that rages around us and in us - God's side, and Satan's side.

When it comes to false vs. true doctrine, the issues are not issues of the mind - we are not simply differing in opinion - it is not simply a battle of ideas - it is a spiritual issue.

Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high [places]. (Ephesians 6:11-12)

ILLUS - The first example of false teaching was when the serpent taught Eve. It was a spiritual battle, with Satan trying to influence her against God. It was a battle that involved false teaching - that is teaching different from what God said. "*Yea... hath God said?*"

Often, it is tempting to think that it's just not that big of a deal if somebody teaches a little heresy now and then. Until we realize that such are under the influence of Satan. It is a big deal. These are those who *give heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils*.

- They are liars and hypocrites who have destroyed their conscience.

Pretty strong descriptions!

They are LIARS. Would it offend you if I were to say to you that some people who stand in pulpits this morning are liars? It's true. They *speak lies in hypocrisy!*

Anybody who teaches you something opposite of what the Word of God teaches is teaching you a lie.

ILLUS - It is popular in pulpits today to teach that there are many ways to heaven - we're all one big happy family - but Jesus said, "no man cometh..." To teach the opposite of what Jesus taught is to teach a lie.

ILLUS - Many today believe modern scientific thought, rather than Biblical truth. Some teachers go so far as to try and fit the theory of evolution into Genesis account, saying God used evolution to create. But that's not what it says, is it? The Bible says God created the world in 6 literal days. To teach something that is different from that is to teach a lie.

They are HYPOCRITES. i.e. somebody who does differently than they say. Jesus gave an excellent word picture of hypocrisy when He described the Pharisees, *they say and do not...* (LOOK UP)

Now no teacher is perfect. Last week's discussion of the qualifications for elders made it painfully clear the high standard to which God holds them. And even the most Godly of people will trip from time to time.

But why do so many listen to those whose lives and teaching do not agree?

They have NUMBED THEIR CONSCIENCE. The word "seared" in the KJV is the word from which we get the medical term "cauterized."

These are people who no longer feel the pang of conscience when they lie... don't feel the twinge of conscience when they act hypocritically. They are beyond that.

What a warning is here for us, brothers and sisters. When the Lord uses our conscience, we must listen - not ignore it. Everytime we ignore it, we numb it a bit more.

What do they Teach?

It's interesting the examples of false teaching Paul provided. They hardly seem to be fundamentals of the faith - "You shouldn't get married" and "you shouldn't eat meat."

The thought may be that any lie, even a seemingly small one, is to be avoided. No misuse of scripture is minor or excusable. A person who will twist even a small part of the Bible is not to be trusted, is dangerous, and is an enemy of the work of God.

Consider these two false teachings:

- *Forbidding to marry (vs. 3)*

God ordained marriage and declared it to be good.

READ - *Genesis 2:18, 21-24*

Jesus said it was the way God designed things:

The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. (Matthew 19:3-6)

Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge. (Hebrews 13:4)

Do you see the point? If God teaches one thing (marriage is a gift of God, created by God, and for the good of mankind), then how can we tolerate liars who would teach the opposite?

In the 21st century church we do have some who still teach this. But we have other false teachings related to marriage that are far more common today, and equally dangerous - same sex marriage, polygamy, and cohabitation to name but a few. Each has its share of false teachers standing in "christian" pulpits and espousing the validity of the beliefs. But such are all lies.

- *Commanding to abstain from meats (vs. 3)*

Probably, this call to abstinence was for religious purposes. e.g. meats offered to idols. Perhaps it was related to the Jewish dietary laws which some could not get away from, even though God had revoked them in His vision to Peter.

Both of these issues seem almost trivial, don't they? They are hardly fundamentals of the faith. And yet Paul lists them as examples of what lying, demon-inspired, hypocritical false teachers teach!

When I think about this, some thoughts come to mind:

1. No false teaching is small enough to be unimportant. It is vital that everything we teach is true according to Scripture.
2. We need to know the Bible in order to determine what is true and false. How do you know if I'm telling you the truth, if you don't read your Bible and check up on me?

Conclusion

Next week we'll see the other side of this coin. Paul doesn't leave Timothy hanging with just a bunch of dire warnings about false teachers. He goes on in the second half of the chapter to describe how a true teacher should be. And we'll learn some things about the methodology of the true teacher that will help us all.

But I want to try and leave you with something really really practical this morning. For in Paul's answer to the two false teachings (marriage / meats), he gives us some wonderful guidance concerning how to deal with issues in our lives - specifically issues that are physical in nature.

Chapter 8. True and False

There have always been those in religious circles who believe that physical enjoyment, physical pleasures, physical sensations, and physical activities are wrong, questionable, or sinful for the Christian. But Paul is talking about physical things here (marriage / meat), and notice what he teaches:

God created them for His children. (vs. 3)

Marriage / sex was created by God before the fall. Since the fall, we have messed it all up, but it was meant for our good - our pleasure - our happiness.

Food - same thing - meant for our enjoyment! Our nourishment and health!

But clearly these things can be, and are, abused in our fallen world. Even by us. How can we determine what is right and wrong with respect to such physical things? Paul gives three guidelines:

1. Can we do it in a spirit of thanksgiving to God? (vs. 4)
2. Is it in harmony with what we know is taught in the Word of God? (vs. 5)
3. Have we prayed about it? Can we pray and honestly talk to God about it? (vs. 5)

The next time you are confronted with something you think might be questionable for a believer to practice - try this simple 3 step approach. And if that activity or behavior passes all 3 - enjoy the things God has created for you to enjoy!

Chapter 9. True and False (part 2)

READ - 1 Timothy 4:6-16

TEXT - *If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ... (1 Timothy 4:6a)*

THEME - A good minister constantly reminds others of the truth.

Introduction

In *vss. 1-5*, Paul issued some stern remarks about false teachers.

In *vss. 6-15*, he turned his attention to true teachers, and provided Timothy with some direction in how to be such a true teacher.

Timothy was to refute false teachers. But more importantly, he was to be a true teacher.

Now, a key to understanding this section is *vs. 6*, *If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ*.

Paul made 3 statements to Timothy around which we can structure the lesson. Each statement involved the phrase "these things." "These things" must have referred to the sum of what Paul was teaching, and not just the previous discussion on false teachers. And so, Paul told Timothy that a good minister:

1. Reminds people of these things - *vs. 6*
2. Commands people in these things - *vs. 11*
3. Immerses himself in these things - *vs. 15*

We will only look at the first one today, saving the last two for next week.

The Good Minister Reminds

vss. 6-8

The phrase "put the brethren in remembrance" means to "suggest" or to "remind" or possibly to "warn." It includes the idea of constancy. It also includes the idea of "gentleness" or "gentle persuasion."

ILLUS - Paul's own example gives a good picture of this - *Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. (Acts 20:31)*

Learning spiritual truth is a constant exercise, and teaching spiritual truth is a constant exercise, because our enemy works constantly to keep us from learning it!

When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. (Matthew 13:19)

QUOTE (The Puritan John Flavel) "It is not with us (preachers), as with other labourers: they find their work as they leave it, so do not we. Sin and Satan unravel almost all we do, the impressions we make on our people's souls in one sermon, vanish before the next."

ILLUS - You've no doubt seen this - you teach somebody something and a short time later they act as if they never heard of it!

ILLUS - I see it in myself! After hours of study for a sermon, I find that my understanding fades after a short time and I need to study it again.

And so, Paul told Timothy to CONSTANTLY REMIND people of the truth - *to reprove, rebuke, and exhort with ALL LONGSUFFERING and doctrine. (2 Timothy 4:2)*.

And DO IT GENTLY, PATIENTLY. (READ - 2 Thessalonians 2:3-7)

Paul made some practical observations that would help Timothy (and you and I) in this form of teaching:

1. Teaching requires learning.

nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine... (vs. 1b)

You cannot teach what you do not know. The teacher must first and foremost be a student. Now Paul did not mean one must be an expert in order to teach, else none would qualify. (Many consider themselves unfit to tell others about Christ, because they don't think they know enough. But none are experts!)

Timothy needed to be constantly feeding on the word if he was to effectively teach it.

ILLUS - Physical nourishment is a great picture of this. No matter how much food you eat today, you'll get hungry if you don't eat tomorrow. It is a NEVER ENDING requirement for our physical bodies. The same is true of spiritual nourishment.

No Christian ever learns it all. We are to be *growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18)* until He calls us home.

ILLUS - I've been thinking lately of pursuing my masters degree in theology - going back to seminary. In reviewing requirements for various degree programs, I was struck by a term that is used - "terminal degree." Now I know that that term simply refers to the highest degree attainable in a field of study, but I am bothered by the term, nonetheless. For no matter how much education we have, we are to never stop learning!

ILLUS - We are to be like Paul, who, while entombed in the Mamertine Prison in Rome, knowing his execution was imminent (cf. *2 Timothy 4:6, "I am now ready to be offered..."*), wrote to Timothy saying, *The cloke that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments. (2 Timothy 4:13)*

ILLUS - William Tyndale, the sixteenth century English reformer and Bible translator, was an example of a man with a burning desire to study and understand God's Word. In prison shortly before he was martyred, he wrote a letter to the governor-in-chief asking for "a warmer cap, a candle, a piece of cloth to patch my leggings.... But above all, I beseech and entreat your clemency to be urgent with the Procureur that he may kindly permit me to have my Hebrew Bible, Hebrew Grammar and Hebrew Dictionary, that I may spend time with that in study." (cited by John MacArthur, *New Testament Commentary, 1 Timothy*, p. 161)

2. Teaching requires discipline. cf. *vss. 7-9*

Some things are simply not worth our time. "Old wives' fables" is a euphemism for stupid nonsense. There are many things that are just too stupid and too non-sensical to spend even a moment on.

REFUSE THEM - don't give them the time of day.

ILLUS - I went to the doctor recently, and he told me, to no one's surprise, that I need to lose weight. (I actually paid him for that kind piece of advice!) In his instructions concerning how I need to moderate my intake of foods, it became clear that a key to controlling my physical health is controlling what I allow into my body.

And a key to your spiritual health is controlling what you allow into your heart and mind. REFUSE nonsense that is not Biblical. Don't give it the time of day!

Note: This goes against the "open-mindedness" of our day. But if you believe the Bible is the inspired, inerrant, infallible, Word of God, you need not listen to opposing theories. Such are wastes of time, and nonsense.

Paul warned that emphasis on nonsense would be a problem in the last days (in which we live), *For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.* (2 Timothy 4:3-4)

AND SO, discipline yourself by controlling your intake - watch your spiritual diet!

AND ALSO, by means of exercising. Exercise (cf. vs. 8-9) is good in the physical realm, but even more so in the spiritual. What weightlifting or cardio training is to the body, Bible reading and prayer and faithful church attendance are to the soul. And, as Paul says, everything we do to build our bodies is of only temporary benefit, while what we do to exercise our spiritual muscles is eternal.

ILLUS - I used to ride a bicycle - 100 miles at a time. My legs were like rocks. Now I can't make it to the end of my driveway, because I no longer exercise.

3. Teaching requires labor.

... therefore we both labour, and suffer reproach... (vs. 10)

Two words - KOPIAO - "work to the point of exhaustion", and AGONIZOMAI - "agonize, engage in a struggle."

ILLUS - My mom used to say to me, "Nothing worth doing is going to be easy."

If you want to be a "good minister," it's going to make you tired.

Too many things in the Lord's work go undone because we are "tired." And yet, that is really no excuse at all.

QUOTE (Bill Clinton) "The world is run by tired people."

And Paul would add, "God's work is done by tired people." The "good minister" is not stopped by being tired.

4. Teaching requires hope.

... because we trust in the living God... (vs. 10)

The "good minister" keeps on keeping on because He believes God is in it. That hope sustains him.

The "good minister" trusts that God uses His Word to change lives, that it is the only change agent that can meet the needs of all, that it is the only hope for this lost world.

ILLUS - Recently I have had to sit at the bedside of several believers who were on the last leg of the journey. At such times I am acutely aware of the fact I have nothing to say... no comfort to offer... no wisdom or guidance fit for such a somber and critical moment. BUT GOD DOES, and GOD'S WORD DOES. And it is that "trust in the living God" and in His word, that helps us keep on going.

And so the good minister constantly reminds, gently suggests over and over and over again... never gives up teaching the Word of God on which he himself is continuously nourished, trusting in the fact that God uses such to help and save the hearer.

The Good Minister Commands

vs. 11-14

(Save for part 3)

The Good Minister Immerses Himself

vss. 15-16

(Save for part 3)

Conclusion

You might be tempted to conclude this passage is only relevant to pastors / elders / teachers. But it's important to remember that there is a sense in which we are all teachers. All of us have teachers and students. Parents are teachers to their children. Children are teachers to their friends (and sometimes to their parents!) All of us have friends and acquaintances who teach us, and whom we teach. The principles, then, in this passage apply to all of us, even though the passage is primarily directed at the pastor.

Let me conclude with 3 statements of application that will help us all:

1. A key to success in winning your friends and loved ones to Christ is NEVER QUITTING - CONSTANCY and PATIENCE.

Who is it that you've witnessed to and prayed for and tried to live your faith before - and there is no evidence of result?

DON'T QUIT. Keep on patiently reminding them.

ILLUS - My greatest sorrow here at RCC, and the thing Satan beats me with the most, is the lack of salvations. Paul would say to me - DON'T QUIT.

2. A key to success... is GENTLE persuasion.

It is way too easy for our impatience for results to escalate into something other than this.

But as Mom used to say, "You catch more flies with honey, than with vinegar."

3. A key to success is SPIRITUAL EXERCISE.

How spiritually fit are you? Are you reading your Bible? Praying? Faithfully participating in your local church?

It is popular today for people to hire personal trainers. These trainers help them to turn off the TV, get off the couch, and get busy exercising their bodies.

Listen to Paul - your personal spiritual trainer, today. We all need to turn off our TV sets, get off the couch, and get spiritually fit.

To do these things, Paul told Timothy, is key to being a "good minister." It is my prayer that I would be such. Is it your prayer that you would be a good minister?

Chapter 10. True and False (part 3)

READ - 1 Timothy 4:11-16

TEXT - *These things command and teach. Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them. (1 Timothy 4:11,15)*

THEME - The good minister speaks with authority, and lives what he teaches.

Introduction

Last week we mentioned that Paul makes 3 statements about good ministers, or true teachers:

1. The Good Minister Reminds people of these things - vs. 6
2. The Good Minister Commands people in these things - vs. 11
3. The Good Minister Immerses himself in these things - vs. 15

Having covered the first last week, let's finish up with the 2nd and 3rd today.

Now DON'T sit back and listen to this message today as if it has no application to you. Although it's primary interpretation relates to the pastor, it is applicable to all of us, for all of us are, in some way, a minister and a teacher. These things s/b true in all of our lives.

The Good Minister Commands These Things

vss. 11-14

Whereas we learned last week that the good minister constantly and patiently reminds and warns people of the truth, this passage says that the good minister teaches with AUTHORITY. He not only warns, but he also COMMANDS.

QUOTE - "Paul's command to Timothy contrasts sharply with much contemporary preaching. Preaching in our day is often intriguing, but seldom commanding; often entertaining, but seldom convicting; often popular, but seldom powerful; often interesting, but less often transforming. Paul does not ask Timothy to share or make suggestions to his congregation. Rather, he is to PRESCRIBE the truth to them. PARANGELIO (prescribe) means 'to command,' or 'to order' as in a mandate - a call to obedience by one in authority." (MacArthur New Testament Commentary - 1 Timothy, p 170)

We've already seen that the pastor / elder / bishop / overseer is the ruling office in the local church. This is clearly taught in the New Testament. Here, Paul reminds Timothy that he has such authority and that the tone of such authority s/b in his preaching and teaching.

Offensive to some, I know. "Such authority is liable for misuse and abuse," you say, to which I say, "Amen." But possibility of abuse is a fact of life in any authority structure. And possibility of abuse is no excuse for disobeying God's teaching, or for setting aside His methods and substituting our own.

Now let's be clear. Nowhere does the Bible teach that the pastor has the authority to impose his will on anybody. His will is irrelevant - God's will is all that matters. Nowhere does the Bible teach that the pastor has absolute authority. He is answerable to God, and to a certain extent, to the local church. The pastor is the overseer... the ruler... the leader of a local assembly, but only within the context described in scripture.

ILLUS -

* Rule #1: The Boss is always right.

* Rule #2: When the Boss is wrong, refer to rule #1.

Not true of pastor! Bible is always right! Pastor is just a man. "Best of men are men at best." When a leader, whether an elder, or anybody else, takes the "My way or the highway" approach to leadership, you can rest assured he / she is outside the bounds of Biblical authority.

Paul gives 3 thoughts that help us understand this authority, as well as its limits:

1. The pastor's authority is based on the Word of God.

THESE THINGS command and teach. (vs. 11)

Oh how many problems would be solved if we would just stick with THESE THINGS.

The Bible is not just a book - it is the inspired, inerrant, infallible, holy, perfect WORD OF GOD. We err greatly when we think of it on the same level as other books.

ILLUS - Peter, James and John accompanied Jesus to the mount, where He was transfigured before them. They saw Him in His glorified state, speaking with Moses and Elijah. (BTW - Have you ever wondered how they knew who Moses and Elijah were? Wonderful picture of how things will be in heaven.) Peter suggested that they build 3 tabernacles to honor the occasion - one for Jesus, one for Moses, and one for Elijah. God's response pointed out that Peter was in error, because he didn't recognize that Jesus was on a whole different level than these other 2 men. Jesus was and is the Son of God. SO WITH THE BIBLE - IT IS ON A WHOLE 'NUTHER LEVEL when compared to other books.

Thus, when holding forth from the Word of God (i.e. "these things," vs. 11), the pastor speaks with authority - not his personal authority, but the authority of the word of God. "Thus saith the Lord" always carries the weight of authority.

ILLUS - There is a tale told of that great English actor Macready. An eminent preacher once said to him: "I wish you would explain to me something."

"Well, what is it? I don't know that I can explain anything to a preacher."

"What is the reason for the difference between you and me? You are appearing before crowds night after night with fiction, and the crowds come wherever you go. I am preaching the essential and unchangeable truth, and I am not getting any crowd at all."

Macready's answer was this: "This is quite simple. I can tell you the difference between us. I present my fiction as though it were truth; you present your truth as though it were fiction."

(G. Campbell Morgan, *Preaching*, p. 36)

2. The pastor's authority is based on the credibility of His life. (cf. vs. 12)

FACT - Timothy was probably about 40 years old now (at least 16 when he joined Paul on 2nd missionary journey, and that was probably at least 15 years earlier). Greek culture considered < 40 to be young, especially for a position of authority such as Timothy as in.

And so Paul listed some areas where Timothy's life-example could overcome those suspicious of his "youth" and help bolster his credibility - word (i.e. his manner of speech), conversation (i.e. his manner of living), spirit, faith (i.e. faithfulness), purity (i.e. morality).

If Timothy's life matched up to his teaching, people would have no trouble with his authority.

3. The pastor's authority is seen in his attention to the job. (cf. vs. 13)

Three things that Paul said should mark Timothy's public ministry (his job description) -

a. Reading

Note that this is FIRST - before exhorting, before teaching. READING - Letting the Word of God have its primary place. READING - just putting it out there and letting it speak. READING - recognizing that nothing is more important and more powerful than the Word of God.

For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12)

So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. (Isaiah 55:11)

I sometimes wonder if we do enough READING... just letting the scripture speak.

b. Exhortation

i.e. encouraging the hearer to obedience and conformity.

This is the "coaching" part of the job - the motivational part of preaching.

c. Doctrine

i.e. teaching the truths of scripture so they are clear, accurate, and practical.

This is the intellectual part of the job - the part that requires study, and discipline, and learning what God has said so it can be taught to others.

Stay focused on the JOB, Timothy!

4. The pastor's authority is based on recognition of his spiritual gift(s). (cf. vs. 14)

We won't delve too deeply into this topic this morning, for we've just spent several weeks learning about the reality of spiritual gifts in our adult Sunday School class.

But if spiritual gifts are real... and if spiritual gifts are based on the will of the Holy Spirit (as we learned)... and if spiritual gifts are given in order to profit the local church (as we learned), then the presence of a gift is no small thing. Timothy was gifted, and that gift was a reason for others to consider what he had to say.

SO... the good minister speaks and serves with authority. He commands and teaches - constantly.

Consider how this frees you and I, brothers and sisters! Even in the midst of all the conflicting voices we find ourselves surrounded by, we have the Word of God as our guide, and with that the authority that comes with it! When I preach, I don't have to worry whether you like it or not! As long as I stick to "these things," I can rest in the fact I'm simply giving you what God has already given in His word. I can speak with authority.

When you witness or speak of spiritual truths to another - you can rest in this same wonderful truth. When you speak of "these things" you speak with the authority of the Word of God!

He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me. (Luke 10:16)

The Good Minister Immerses Himself in These Things

vss. 15-16

Now this is absolutely vital. If you are bored and falling asleep, wake up, for this is the most important part of it all.

We cannot warn others unless we, ourselves have been warned!

We cannot command others unless we are clear in our hearts and minds of the commanded message.

Therefore, the good minister will:

- MEDITATE ON THESE THINGS- fill your mind with it.
- GIVE THYSELF WHOLLY TO THESE THINGS- fill your time with it.

Paul told Timothy to throw himself into his walk with God mind, heart, soul, and body. It is the thing that should be most important to you.

QUOTE (Robertson) Be "up to your ears in these things."

IMMERSE YOURSELF IN IT TIMOTHY!

Oh how our church would change if this were true in all of us.

As pastor, it must be true of me. Church and all it entails cannot be a secondary concern. It must be all-consuming. Even though I am only a "part-time" minister, I must not think of the ministry in those terms. PRAY FOR ME THAT IT MIGHT BE SO WITH ME!

ILLUS - Friend who recently asked me to join the Lion's Club and who momentarily ridiculed my comment that I was "too busy." Until I pointed out that I work 2 full time jobs.

And this definitely applies to all of us - not just the pastor.

- Serving God is not a hobby. We need to be "up to our ears" in it.
- Church is not something we do when there's nothing better to do with our time. The things of God should consume us.
- All of us should be meditating on these things, GIVING OURSELVES WHOLLY to them.

Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? (Matthew 16:24-26)

In other words - IMMERSE YOURSELF in the things of Christ, for they are the things that matter.

Conclusion

QUOTE - The world has yet to see what God can do with and for and through and in and by the man who is fully and wholly consecrated to Him. I will try my utmost to be that man. -D.L. Moody

Will you be that man / woman? The labor is intense; the required level of dedication is total; the sacrifice is real and felt - but there is nothing that will give you a greater reward than so serving the Savior! (*that thy PROFITING may appear to all*) (*thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee. (vs. 16)*)

How we need consecrated, dedicated believers. We've been praying lately that the Lord of the harvest would send forth laborers. Will you be that man or that woman - that "good minister of Jesus Christ?"

These words challenge me. Pray for me that I would be a "good minister of Jesus Christ."

May these words also challenge you. May we ALL be good ministers of Jesus Christ! So let us pray. So let us labor.

Chapter 11. Family Matters

READ - 1 Timothy 5:1-16

TEXT - *Rebuke not an elder, but intreat him as a father; and the younger men as brethren; The elder women as mothers; the younger as sisters, with all purity. (1 Timothy 5:1-2)*

THEME -

Introduction

Four groups of people - old men (the word "elder" is used here in the generic sense - "older person" rather than in the specific sense of the church office), old women, young men, young women.

All ages and genders are included in these four groups. Paul teaches Timothy that the church has a responsibility to all age groups, all genders. He also gives instruction on how to behave toward each.

From the day of Pentecost until now, the church has wrestled with the issue of meeting the needs of various groups of people.

How do you minister to young and old alike - the young who know everything and desire things to be different from that of their parents - the old who have always done things a certain way and as they age become less and less open to change.

How do you minister to male and female - two groups of people so different that one person wrote a book on the subject entitled "Men are from Mars and Women are from Venus." Until Jesus comes back, men will not totally understand the way women think - nor women understand men. Men and women are wired differently and it takes a lifetime of living and interacting with each other to come close to figuring it out.

And yet the church is called to minister to all. How do we do it? How does a minister, like Timothy serve men and women, young and old? How does a church develop a healthy ministry that reaches and helps all? How does a church truly become a family?

Three thoughts come to mind from our text:

In Families, There Is Discipline

There are only two verbs in these two verses, and they apply to all four groups of people:

1. REBUKE NOT - Gr. EPIPLASEIS - to strike upon, to strike at, to rebuke sharply. The word contains a note of severity, and may be paraphrased "to censure severely."
2. INTREAT - Gr. PARAKELEI - to encourage, to exhort. This is the same word from which we get one of my favorite descriptions of the Holy Spirit - the PARAKLETE - the One who is called alongside to help.

In these 2 words we see the immediate context, and the immediate interpretation of the passage - discipline. These verbs describe a situation where correction is needed - discipline is needed.

May I make two observations from this?

1. No family can function without discipline.
The Bible teaches many things about family life.
 - a. Parents are to TEACH their children the things of God.

And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. (Deuteronomy 6:7)

b. Parents are to PROVIDE FOR their children.

... I seek not yours, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children. (2 Corinthians 12:14)

c. Parents are to CONTROL their children.

One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (1 Timothy 3:4)

d. Parents are to LOVE their children.

That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, (Titus 2:4)

e. And PARENTS ARE TO TRAIN (i.e. DISCIPLINE) their children in the things of God.

Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it. (Proverbs 22:6)

Sometimes, the training has to temporarily hurt, if it is to ultimately help.

QUOTE (Tom Landry) - The job of a football coach is to make men do what they don't want to do, in order to achieve what they've always wanted to be.

Families... homes... cannot function without discipline.

One need only visit the grocery store... or a restaurant on Sunday after church... to see the result of families not disciplining their children.

2. The church, just like any other family, needs discipline.

This is probably a foreign concept to most here today. The Bible teaches that churches are to maintain the purity of the family of God through discipline.

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT - READ - *Matthew 18:15-17; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13*

Just as in any family, the right purpose for discipline is never to HURT, but to HELP... never to CRUSH, but to CORRECT... never to SPLIT the family, but to STRENGTHEN the family...

Paul described the process to the Thessalonians - *And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother. (2 Thessalonians 3:14-15)*

Consider what happens when churches do not maintain the purity of their membership through discipline:

- The church becomes more and more like its weakest members.

ILLUS - One need only consider that divorce rates in evangelical churches are as high (or higher) than those of the world; or that church members choose immoral lifestyles at a rate nearly equal to that of the world!

- The administration of the church is influenced by the sinning members.

Especially true in congregationally run churches, where people who are blatantly living in sin are allowed to vote and even hold office!

ILLUS - Would something as wicked and ungodly as G.L.A.D. have ever become part of the Disciples any other way?

- The church, which should be BUILDING up its members in Christ, and HELPING them to grow spiritually, instead enables their sin and helps them become more and more enslaved to it!

- The world is confirmed in their view that the church is a joke, and completely irrelevant.

Consider once again those two verbs Paul used, for they give us great clarity on HOW we are to exercise discipline in the local church - not HARSHLY or UNKINDLY or ROUGHLY... but always lovingly, with a desire to ENCOURAGE and EXHORT one another in our Christian walk.

We are not to beat each other up, but we are to encourage each other in right living

Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. (Hebrews 10:25)

Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. (Galatians 6:1)

I wonder, brothers and sisters, when was the last time you lovingly took an erring brother or sister aside and told them you loved them, and that you are concerned about the direction of their life? When was the last time you had the courage to "come alongside" a family member who is disgracing and hurting the family, and offered a word of exhortation that they correct that area of their walk?

Note: This is NOT LICENSE to become judgmental with one another. Do that, and somebody will need to come alongside you! Remembering Jesus' teaching on "removing the beam from your own eye before dealing with the spec in your brother's eye" will help keep us straight on these things.

If we, the church, don't exhort and encourage one another to live for Christ, who will?

ILLUS - CBS News anchor Dan Rather admits he was always fascinated by the sport of boxing, even though he was never good at it. "In boxing you're on your own; there's no place to hide," he says. "At the end of the match only one boxer has his hand up. That's it. He has no one to credit or to blame except himself."

Rather, who boxed in high school, says his coach's greatest goal was to teach his boxers that they absolutely, positively, without question, had to be "get up" fighters. "If you're in a ring just once in your life - completely on your own - and you get knocked down but you get back up again, it's an never-to-be-forgotten experience. Your sense of achievement is distinct and unique. And sometimes the only thing making you get up is someone in your corner yelling."

(Reader's Digest, December, 1990)

THERE'S THE PICTURE! We all need our brothers and sisters in our corner, yelling for us to get up when we are knocked down.

Let us learn to exhort one another, daily. Let us encourage one another, and if need be even DISCIPLINE one another, so that we will grow in our walk with God.

Such is the context of these verses - and notice that no age group and neither gender is immune to the need. We need to help each other walk with God!

In Families, There Is Respect

Respecting each other is vital. We cannot "encourage" or "exhort" one another; we cannot "come alongside" one another to help, if we do not first respect each other.

Here is a lost art among Americans. Kids are not only not taught to respect others, but they are even taught NOT to respect others. I've lost count of the number of kids I've heard say to an authority figure, "My mom says I don't have to listen to you, you're not my mom or dad."

And of course the result is we have a whole generation (a couple now, perhaps), which not only question authority (which can be a healthy thing at times), but they completely disdain authority.

ILLUS - 3rd grade class that recently plotted to kill their school teacher.

But NOBODY should be more respectful of others than a Christian. Respect is based in an awareness of the worth of others - the value of others. And the Christian, who knows that every soul he/she comes in contact with is a soul for whom Christ died... a soul that Christ loves supremely, MUST RESPECT THAT SOUL.

Again, Paul applies it to the 4 groups:

Men need to respect women; women need to respect men; age needs to respect youth; and youth needs to respect age.

1. Let me speak to the young folks for a few minutes.

The Bible says that when you see a gray head, you should honor it... respect it. Age is to be treated with respect.

Rise in the presence of the aged, show respect for the elderly and revere your God. I am the Lord. (Leviticus 19:32 NIV)

That doesn't mean old people are always right. Actually, the very fact that they are included in this list indicates they sometimes need correction, too!

QUOTE (Unknown) "An old man cannot do anything he wants just because he is old."

ILLUS - When we are children, we long for the day when we turn 16 and can drive. When we reach 16 we long for the day we are out on our own and can make our own money and live our own lives. Soon after we reach that stage, we begin longing for retirement! In America retirement is thought of as play time - rest time - the time we can do whatever we want. But Christians don't stop serving God at a certain age. Retirement is an opportunity to serve Him MORE not LESS! Our rest is yet future. *There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. (Hebrews 4:9)*. That rest is not retirement - it's heaven.

That's why Paul told Timothy he might have to exhort even his elders from time to time.

But, in general, young people should respect old people. LEARN FROM THEM, for they have lived what you have not. Every generation thinks they are the only generation - the first generation. Yet Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, said:

The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun. Is there any thing whereof it may be said, See, this is new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us. (Ecclesiastes 1:9-10)

There is very little that a young person will go through in life, that the former generation has not already experienced and learned from. Therefore, show them the respect God says they deserve.

2. And now let me talk with those more advanced in years:

(And I include myself in that group). We have just as much responsibility to respect the younger generation as they do to respect us.

Young men are to be treated as brothers. Young women as sisters, with all purity of heart and mind.

In our families, we love our brothers and sisters... we protect them... we cheer them on... and we help them when they need it. WE ARE THERE FOR THEM WHEN NOBODY ELSE IS. We respect them.

They are going to look different, dress different, and talk different than we do. So? We did the same to our parents, remember?

ILLUS - In my generation it was long hair, peace symbols, tie died shirts, jean jackets covered with patches, and klunky high-heeled clod-hopper shoes. We listened to rock and roll as loudly as we could just to drive our parents nuts. Today it's tattoos and pants worn around your knees. It's hip-hop music that rattles my brain, but which they can't get enough of. And in 30 years, that hip-hop generation is going to be the old ones shaking their head at the antics of their offspring.

WE MUST RESPECT EACH OTHER. We oldies must reach out to and respect the young ones. Jesus taught that *"every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old."* (Matthew 13:52)

And that leads me to my final point.

In Families, All Play A Part

Paul's teaching here must be understood in his larger context, which is *"that you may know how you ought to behave in the church."* Although these two verses give us wonderful insight into our relationships with one another in general, they are primarily meant to guide us in how to have a healthy church.

Let's go back to the question we asked in the introduction:

How does the church fulfill its responsibility to minister to all? How do we serve men and women, young and old? How do we develop a healthy ministry that reaches and helps all? How do we truly become a family?

I believe BALANCE is the key.

ILLUS - Of Jesus, we are told that He ... *increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.* (Luke 2:52) He was healthy in all four areas of life - MENTALLY, PHYSICALLY, SPIRITUALLY, and SOCIALLY. Had He been deficient in any of those areas, He would have been out of balance. You and I are the same way - WE NEED THE SAME BALANCE!

And a similar balance is taught here regarding our church. We need young and old. We need men and women. All building one another up in the faith. All respecting and loving one another. All learning from one another. Men are not complete without women. Women are not complete without men. Age needs the vitality and inspiration of the young. Youth needs the wisdom and temperance of age.

ILLUS - In the movie Amadeus, there is a scene at the end where Mozart is dying, and on his death bed he is dictating his Requiem Mass to his arch-rival Salieri, who is writing it down. Mozart dictates each musical part individually, and as the movie orchestra plays each part individually in the background it sounds odd. But when all parts come together and the magnificent Requiem Mass bursts from the orchestra it is beautiful.

Conclusion

In families, there is discipline. In families, there is respect. In families, all play a part. Are you willing to do your part?

Chapter 11. Family Matters

When you see a brother or sister in need of help, even when that help sometimes hurts a bit - will you help them? Will you encourage them? Will you admonish them if need be?

Will you respect your brothers and sisters here in this church - regardless of age differences and regardless of gender?

Will you see the value in each age group, each gender - will you recognize that we are not healthy or whole as a body of Christ if we neglect any of these groups?

If you answered "yes" to those questions, then realize it's not always going to be easy.

It means that you're going to hear things you don't always want to hear, but which you need to hear. If you are making choices that are dangerous and sinful, your brothers and sisters are going to help you with that. They are going to warn you. And you are going to feel the hurt of that, and hopefully benefit from it rather than turn away. And you are going to do the same for them when they need it.

It means you are going to have to be flexible. It means you are going to have to listen to music you don't like sometimes (old folks will have to put up with the music of youth, and young folks will have to listen to that of the old). It means that old folks are going to have to let the young ones try new things, take our church down paths we may not have trod before (Star Trek!). It means that young folks will sometimes feel we are stuck in the past, moving too slow, fixed in our ways - and you'll have to respect and learn from that.

Are you willing to do your part?????

Rebuke not an elder, but intreat him as a father; and the younger men as brethren; The elder women as mothers; the younger as sisters, with all purity. (1 Timothy 5:1-2)

Chapter 12. Of Widows and Mothers

READ - 1 Timothy 5:3-16

TEXT -Honour widows that are widows indeed. (1 Timothy 5:3)

THEME - We owe honor and support to our parents, and especially to widows.

Introduction

Happy Mother's Day, ladies. May I share a very familiar poem with you this morning?

"M" is for the million things she gave me,
"O" means only that she's growing old,
"T" is for the tears she shed to save me,
"H" is for her heart of purest gold;
"E" is for her eyes, with love-light shining,
"R" means right, and right she'll always be,
Put them all together, they spell "MOTHER,"
A word that means the world to me.
--Howard Johnson (c. 1915)

You've heard that one before, I'm sure. But here's a more up to date version that perhaps you haven't heard:

"M" is for the mink coat you want, dear,
"O" is for the opal ring you crave,
"T" is for the tiny car you'd love, sweet,
"H" is for the hat that makes you rave,
"E" is for the earrings you'd admire, love,
"R" is for the rug on which you'd tread;
Put them all together, they spell bankrupt,
So I'm giving you this handkerchief instead.
-- Our Daily Bread, May 11

We have been studying 1 Timothy on Sunday mornings, and I considered breaking away from that study for Mother's Day, until I realized that today's text is really quite appropriate for the day - instructions about caring for our family - specifically those who are in need - widows.

We cannot read the Bible without noticing that God has a particular concern for widows:

Ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child. If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry; And my wrath shall wax hot (Exodus 22:22-24a)

Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. (Isaiah 1:17)

Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world. (James 1:27)

Widows were a very important issue in the early church. When one considers that there was no government welfare system, and that women were not able to earn a living on their own in that culture, the reality of a truly destitute widow becomes apparent. Without the family that was designed to provide for her, she could truly find herself with nothing and no means of bettering her case.

Paul said that the church must step in in such cases. And the early church did just that. Ministry to widows was a definite part of the outreach of the early church.

READ - Acts 6:1-4 - usually we refer to this passage as the first mention of the appointment of Deacons, but it is also the first mention of the ministry to widows, which was the reason deacons were first needed.

An important rule in Bible study is to always learn the interpretation before attempting to make application. In other words, before we can say "How can I apply this passage to my life" we have to say "what does God mean in this passage?" I'd like to follow that outline this morning. First, what does God mean. Second, how does it apply to us at RCC?

After all, one of the founding principles of RCC is that we will be Biblical in everything - and so the treatment of widows is an area we need to examine this morning.

Intpretation

We can make three statements this morning to summarize what is taught in this passage - 1.) Widows are to be honored. 2.) Widows who qualify are to be supported. 3.) Widows who qualify should serve the church.

1. Widows Are To Be Honored. - cf. vs. 3

In the previous 2 verses we learned the importance of honoring and respecting men and women, young and old. If there is one place left on earth where respect is practiced, it out to be the church! Men must respect women. Women must respect men. Youth must respect age, and the elderly must respect the young. Consider what a blessed place the church would be if we practiced this simple art of respect.

Paul goes from the general to the specific in vs. 3 and calls out one particular example - widows. They are to be especially respected and honored.

2. Widows Who Qualify Are To Be Supported.

The word honor means more than just respect.

"Honor" - GR. TIMAO, refers to respect, reverence, honor - also conveys idea of financial and material support. cf. 1 Timothy 5:17-18 where the idea clearly includes monetary support.

What we do with our money shows what we believe.

- True in our giving. If we love and honor God, it is demonstrated in our unselfish giving.

Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine. (Proverbs 3:10-11)

Often we use that passage to remind each other that we cannot out give God, and that when we give He gives back... but that's not the driving force we should give, according to that passage. We should give in order to demonstrate HONOR and love to our Lord.

- True in how we treat others. If we respect and love them, it is shown in more than just words.

If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? (James 2:16-17)

And so, if we stopped there, we would have a responsibility as a church to honor widows, with our hearts and with our wallets.

HOWEVER, it doesn't stop there. Paul limits the responsibility to those widows who meet certain criteria:

- a. She must be a "widow indeed." In other words one truly bereft of any other means of support.

In America, we find few who meet this requirement, for the government provides support to those in need. To the Ephesians, the number who met this criteria was probably extensive. To us today, it is much less so. But in those few cases where a widow is truly destitute, we must help!

Apart from government help, Paul also is clear that widows who have children must expect help from them. Children are to "requite their parents" (i.e. PAY THEM BACK). (

- b. She must be one who "trusteth in God." In other words, the responsibility Paul is outlining here is limited to Christians.
- c. She must be one who "continues in prayers." i.e. she is not only a Christian in name only, but actually lives her faith. She is a godly woman - a role model of Christian womanhood - a spiritual person.

So, if the church has widows, who are qualified for support, the church should support them.

3. Widows Who Qualify Should Serve the Church.

Verses 3-8 refer to the church's responsibility to support widows.

Verses 9-15 refer to the widows' responsibility to serve the church - a point often lost in this passage.

There was a LIST of widows in the early church. This list was NOT a list of those eligible for support, for Paul has already spent time teaching that if a widow is truly in need of support, we must provide it. Rather, this list documented a group of widows who served in a particular capacity. These widows were SERVANTS OF THE CHURCH.

We won't spend time on these things today, but notice briefly that to be on the list - to be qualified for this role of service in the church, the widow needed to be:

- a. At least 60 years old.
- b. Having been a "one man woman" - same qualification as for deacons and elders in chapter 3.
- c. Well reported of for good works - somebody who is proven already in this matter - same qualification as for deacons in chapter 3 - not a novice in the matter of serving Christ - one known for it.

We cannot speak particularly about the duties of those on this "widows list" in the early church, but it certainly fulfilled an important role, and would today if we had such a list. Perhaps we should. Those who meet such qualifications are particularly suited to helping others in the local church. Unfortunately, in America today, when people reach the age of 60, they too often believe it's time for others to serve them, rather than recognizing they are peculiarly qualified now to help others.

Application

SO, the church has a responsibility to honor and provide for godly widows, and godly widows have a responsibility to serve the church.

As I pondered these truths this past week, two main applications came to mind:

1. The church has a responsibility to care for those in need, but must temper that with its responsibility as stewards of God's resources.

You can't be involved in church work long before you become aware of a certain element in our society that preys on churches - people who believe the church owes them money which they are unwilling to work for themselves - people who believe the church is a bottomless pit of handouts.

We could park on this thought this morning, and it is a place we need to park. Too many people forget that welfare is not a Bible concept - work is.

Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us. For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you: Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us. For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread. (2 Thessalonians 3:6-12)

That's the Bible concept. And it's a difficult position to take in America today, where people believe they are entitled to handouts. Now, some people do truly have needs. WE MUST HELP THEM. But some people are just lazy. Paul said they shouldn't even be given food!

We are to truly minister to those in need, and we are also to avoid using God's money for those simply in greed.

But I'll let you study this out further on your own (and I hope you will), so that we can concentrate on an application of this passage that is more appropriate to Mother's Day, which we celebrate this morning.

2. Children have first responsibility in caring for their parents. (cf. *vss.* 8,16)

Parents are to love and care for their children. But we often forget that the opposite is just as true. Children are to honor and care for their parents!

So we are taught in the 10 commandments - (# 5) - *Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee. (Exodus 20:12)*

Jesus reinforced this truth - *And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death: But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; he shall be free. And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother; Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye. (Mark 7:9-13)*

Paul reminded us again, in Ephesians 6:1-2, *Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother...*

Now two reasons were given for honoring widows, and they also apply to the general thought that children should care for their parents. Let's notice them in the opposite order they appear in our text:

- a. First, a negative reason - To NOT do so goes against everything about Christianity, and makes the professing believer worse than the unbelieving world. cf. *vs.* 8

(For even THEY take care of their widows and parents.)

In other words, Christian, how can you call yourself a believer if by dising your parents you act worse than the lost?

- b. Second, a positive reason - we OWE our parents. cf. *vs.* 4

On this Mothers' Day, may I challenge you to consider just all your mother did for you?

1. She lugged you around for 9 months.
2. She gave birth to you.
3. She nursed you.
4. She bathed you.
5. She cleaned your stinky butt.
6. She clothed you and fed you, ALWAYS.
7. She loved you even when you were rotten.
8. She went to bat for you, ALWAYS.
9. She gave up her best years for you.
10. She prayed for you (and still does).
11. When you began to wander, she worried (and still does.)
12. She will only stop loving you when she dies.

We could go on and on with that list, but the fact is, there is nothing like a mother's love. AND WE SHOULD HONOR HER FOR THAT.

"You don't love me!" How many times have your kids laid that one on you? Someday when my children are old enough to understand the logic motivation a mother, I'll tell them:

- * I loved you enough to bug you about where you were going and what time you would get home.
- * I loved you enough to let you discover your friend was a creep.
- * I loved you enough to stand over you for two hours while you cleaned your bedroom, a job that would have taken me 15 minutes.
- * I loved you enough to ignore what every other mother did or said.
- * I loved you enough to let you stumble, fall, hurt and fail.
- * I loved you enough to accept you for what you are, not what I wanted you to be.
- * Most of all, I loved you enough to say no when you hated me for it.

Some mothers don't know when their job is finished. They figure the longer the kids hang around, the better parents they are.

I see children as kites. You spend a lifetime trying to get them off the ground. You run with them until you're both breathless...they crash...you add a longer tail. You patch and comfort, adjust and teach-and assure them that someday they will fly.

Finally they are airborne, but they need more string, and you keep letting it out. With each twist of the ball of twine, the kite becomes more distant. You know it won't be long before that beautiful creature will snap the lifeline that bound you together and soar - free and alone. Only then do you know you did your job.

(Erma Bombeck, from "Forever, Erma," quoted in Reader's Digest, March 1997, p. 148)

We are to honor our parents - honor our MOTHERS, simply because they are our mothers. No other reason is needed.

Conclusion

Jesus is always our greatest example. May I ask you to turn to one last passage this morning?

READ - *John 19:25-27*

Jesus paid specific attention to two people while He was dying on the cross for your sins and mine - while He bore the sins of the entire world:

1. A dying sinner (the thief).
2. A destitute widow (His mother).

May we learn from His example to be that concerned for the lost, and that determined to honor our widows... our parents... our mothers.

Chapter 13. Concerning Elders

READ - 1 Timothy 5:17-25

TEXT - *Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. (1 Timothy 5:17)*

THEME - Various thoughts on the office of elder in the local church.

Introduction

We are drawing toward the end of our study in *1 Timothy* - a study we called "What Are We Doing Here" because it deals with how we do church. Remember this was Paul's purpose in writing to Timothy - *These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. (1 Timothy 3:14-15)*

I hope that throughout our studies in *1 Timothy*, you have been convinced of the importance of the church. The church is vital, and must not be relegated to a low place in our lives.

One of Satan's greatest weapons in America today is minimizing the importance of the local church. "You can be a good Christian without going to church," is one of his mottos for the 21st century. It is, of course, a false statement. You can be a Christian, true - for faith in Christ is the only prerequisite for Christianity. But church attendance is a matter of obedience, service, and worship - and one is hardly a "good Christian" who puts other things ahead of obedience, service and worship!

Yes - a theme of *1 Timothy* is that church is important, and Paul has given many key truths that help us as we try to have a church that is pleasing to God, and used by God.

In today's text, we turn our attention once again to the office of elder. Throughout his letter to Timothy, Paul has stressed the importance of right leadership in the local church. No church rises higher than its level of leadership. Hosea said, *'Like priests, like people'-since the priests are wicked, the people are wicked, too. (Hosea 4:9 NLT)*

Now I have struggled for 3 weeks on his message - this topic, for my preaching from this text could be viewed as self-serving. (You'll see why as we get further into it.) But *All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)* For me to avoid preaching any part of the Word of God would be a dereliction of my duty to you. Including this part.

This is, perhaps, a timely message for us at RCC. Annual nominations for church officers are being taken. Perhaps Paul's teaching here will apply. And, of course, maybe you're sick of me and thinking of a new pastor! (I hope not!!) But if and when that day should ever come, Paul's teaching will definitely be important.

Allow me to explain what Paul teaches here about elders, and then bear with me as I make a few applications.

Right understanding of the office.

cf. vs. 17

1. The office involves leadership.

The New Testament speaks of no other person or group as RULING. Elders are the governing / administrative role in the local church.

And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves. (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13)

Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation. (Hebrews 13:7)

Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you. (Hebrews 13:17)

Men have developed all sorts of mechanisms for administering the local church - presbyteries, papacy, deacon boards, congregational boards... all seem to have some merit, and were no doubt developed with good motives - but NONE of them are the Bible pattern. The Bible pattern is ELDERS (one or more) working as a team to administer the local church.

ILLUS - As a train was about to leave a large railroad station, the conductor began to take tickets. Looking at the ticket of the first passenger he remarked, "Friend, I think you're on the wrong train!" "But," replied the man, "the ticket agent told me this was my train." After a little discussion, the conductor decided to check with the ticket agent. Before long, it became clear that the conductor was on the wrong train! When the leader is lost, how can the followers be going on the right track? (Source unknown)

The elder(s) are to lead. And unless the church believes they are on the wrong train, the church is to follow!

2. The office involves teaching and preaching.

Review - 2 offices in the church - elder, deacon. Key difference between these 2 offices is TEACHING - a primary responsibility of the elder - a requirement of the office, cf. *1 Timothy 3:2, Acts 6:1f*.

3. The office should be compensated. cf. *vss. 17-18*

"Double honor" - debated through church history.

Clearest and most likely interpretation - financial compensation. *Verse 18* gives an Old Testament and a New Testament reference, both which indicate the "honor" is financial.

- Normal case.

Scripture teaches that, normally, pastor's (elders) s/b full time, making their living from that vocation.

In such cases, the church is responsible to care for their needs financially, to give "double honor."

That does NOT mean the church should enrich him. Nor does it mean the church may keep him impoverished. Both are abuses of the the church's responsibility to its pastor. I always think Proverbs gives a good measuring stick for things like this:

Two things have I required of thee; deny me them not before I die: Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain. (Proverbs 30:7-9)

- RCC case.

Someday, if God chooses to bless this church, you will have a full time pastor, and the principles taught here will be more applicable.

Today, I am a part time pastor making my living via a secular job, and requiring no money from the church. I give back more than the church pays right now, and am happy to do so, for God has blessed me and I have all that I need.

In some cases (such as ours), it is right for a pastor (elder) to receive no pay.
BIBLE STUDY - 1 Corinthians 9 - Paul defended both his right to receive compensation for his ministry, and his choice in refusing it.

Right protection (purity) of the office.

cf. vss. 19-21

1. Elders need protection from false accusation. (cf. vs. 19)

There are always people eager to falsely accuse a man of God. They may do so because they resent his calling, reject his teaching, resist biblical authority, resent virtue, or are jealous of the Lord's blessing on his life. Ultimately, however, they demonstrate by making such accusations that they have become messengers of Satan. Such false accusations are one of his most dangerous weapons. Joseph, Moses, David, Jeremiah, Nehemiah, and our Lord Jesus Christ all suffered from false accusations. So did Paul, and he particularly addressed that issue in his second letter to the Corinthians. (MacArthur, Commentary on 1 Timothy, pg. 221)

An accusation does not have to be true to do damage. Many a ministry has been torn down because of the taint of an accusation, even though the facts exonerate!

ILLUS - Aunt B and I - hotel - I can't go in there with you.

ILLUS - Pastor friend who stood at a restaurant when woman sat down... I can't be seen sitting here with you.

Paul makes it clear that false accusations against elders are to be REJECTED OUT OF HAND.

2. BUT, elders should not be allowed to remain in a sinful state.

QUOTE - "Elders are to be protected from false accusations, but are not to receive immunity from true ones." (MacArthur, Commentary on 1 Timothy, p. 222)

Timothy was to PUBLICLY deal with such issues. (vs. 20).

Timothy was to show NO FAVORITISM in dealing with such issues. (i.e. NOBODY was above this requirement). (vs. 21).

ILLUS - Mark Twain was generally hostile to the Bible and the Christian faith. It is said that his view of church leaders were largely to blame for this hostility. As he grew up, he knew elders and deacons who owned slaves and abused them. He heard men using foul language and saw them practice dishonesty during the week after speaking piously in church on Sunday. He listened to ministers use the Bible to justify slavery. Although he saw genuine love for the Lord Jesus in some people, including his mother and his wife, he was so disturbed by the bad teaching and poor example of church leaders that he became bitter toward the things of God. (Source unknown)

There is an important principle here - one that applies not just to elders, but to all of us. The PURITY OF THE CHURCH is important - MORE IMPORTANT than our partiality toward any individuals. Churches are a laughing stock today because of the fact that wicked leaders are winked at and continue in a position of authority. But leaders aren't the only ones - wicked church members do just as much damage. It is just as important that YOU maintain a holy lifestyle and help keep the church pure.

QUOTE - "There are too many hypocrites in church" is often stated by the lost as a reason for avoiding Christianity. Are they talking only about the pulpit? Or are they also talking about us all?

Right selection of officers

cf. *vss.* 22-25

1. It should not be done in haste. "Let them first be proved." - (*vs.* 22*a*)

Note that *vss.* 24-25 make the point that character comes out over time. What we are cannot be hidden forever, and so if sufficient time is allowed to pass, what a man really is will become apparent.

2. One who is struggling with known sin should be rejected - (*vs.* 22*b*)

Note that Timothy would share in a measure of guilt for ignoring this!

PARENTHETICAL - Paul's teaching about wine here is that it has medicinal value. He probably digressed into this thought based on his previous comment that Timothy should "keep himself pure." This verse does not teach or advocate social drinking.

Conclusion

There are all kinds of applications we could make. We can apply this passage to how we run our church, how we select officers - both of which are relevant topics to RCC at this transitional period.

But let me close today by making some applications related to the thought of honoring the pastor. May I be selfish with you a bit, and make some suggestions how you might do that? (None of them will have to do with money.)

- LISTEN

ILLUS - General John Galvin, Supreme Allied Commander in Europe and Commander-in-Chief of U.S. European Command, was asked what was it like to be in charge of so many and various forces. His reply: "I often feel like the director of a cemetery. I have a lot of people under me, but nobody listens." (Source unknown)

- CARRY YOUR BIBLES

Your pastor needs to know that you are here for the Word of God... not for his words.

- READ YOUR BIBLES

Your pastor needs to know that the Word of God is part of your LIFE... not just for an hour on Sunday, but everyday... it is CHANGING YOU everyday.

- Put God First!

Regardless of how many nice things people say as they shake the preacher's hand after the service, the real way any pastor measures the effectiveness (success, if you will) of his teaching, is whether people are changing... growing... becoming more like Christ.

But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. (1 Timothy 1:5)

ILLUS - Many a pastor has stayed in a church and worked himself to exhaustion (literally the meaning of "labor" in *vs.* 17) because people were responding and growing - even though he was poorly paid!

ILLUS - Likewise, many a well-paid and well-honored pastor has moved on because the one thing he needed to see to validate his ministry... the growth and sincere faith of the people, was missing.

QUESTION - How do we do that, preacher?

ANSWER - I submit that if you have a real and vibrant relationship with Jesus Christ, you won't have any trouble putting Him first in your life. If you really understand Who Jesus Christ is, and how much He loves you, and just what He paid to save you... you will find it ridiculous to put your job, or your recreation, or your family, or your friends, or your hobbies, or ANYTHING ELSE ahead of Him! He will be first!

ILLUS - Bro. Greg Bryan gave me a sermon by Timothy Keller, pastor of the Redeemer Presbyterian Church in NY. The sermon was based on Jacob's wrestling with an angel (you can read about it in *Genesis 32*). Bro. Keller's first point was that until you meet God ALONE, you will never truly meet God. *Jacob was left ALONE... (Genesis 32:24)*

Do you have trouble putting Christ first in your life? (And that's really easy to analyze... just start listing the things that take precedence... the things that keep you from Him... the things that keep you from His church... put them all down on paper in a list, and then at the end of that list put Jesus Christ. Is He first? second? twenty-second? Where does He fall on your list?)

I ask again - do you have trouble putting Christ first in your life? If so... maybe the problem is you've never really met Him ALONE... maybe this matter of Christianity has never become personal for you. Maybe you come to church because your family does... or you were raised that way... or you like the people there... or you (fill in the blank here). The only valid reason for coming to church, though, is because the love of Christ constrains you... you do it out of love and devotion to your Savior. And if you've met Him, personally, ALONE... you'll have no problem with that.

Do you want to honor the pastor? PUT GOD FIRST!

Are you growing in grace, Christian? Is it important to you? Is your walk with God a priority with you? More so than your job... your friends... your hobbies... your favorite TV shows... even your family? Is He first?

Do you know Him? Are you even a believer? Have you ever met Him alone and entered into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ? How can I know that, preacher? By believing in the Lord Jesus Christ... by calling upon the name of the Lord... by trusting in Him and His finished work on the cross ALONE.

When you meet Christ alone... when you truly come to know Him as your Savior... He will be first in your life. And nothing is more important than that.

Chapter 13. Concerning Elders

Chapter 14. Working Christians

READ - *1 Timothy 6*

THEME - Christians should believe the right things, and live the right way, in the workplace, as well as everywhere.

Introduction

We come today to the end of our study in *1 Timothy*. In this last chapter, Paul hammers home two themes that he has emphasized throughout the letter, and he tosses in a few remarks about other things, as well.

Two truths are reiterated:

1. The importance of Timothy teaching true doctrine, and rejecting false doctrine.

vss. 3-5; vss. 20-21

This has been a major theme of the book, and I hope one which we are convinced of in terms of importance. What we teach and preach from this pulpit is IMPORTANT. Right doctrine is a key to having a right church... a healthy church. It was the very first thing Paul stressed in *chapter 1*, and the very last thing he stressed in *chapter 6*!

READ - *1 Timothy 1:3-4; 4:16; 5:17*

2. The importance of Timothy living a holy life, leading by practice rather than just precept.

vss. 11-16

This has been a second, parallel theme running through this book.

READ - *1 Timothy 1:19; 3:1-7; 4:12-16*

If we conclude this study with those two thoughts burned into our minds, we will have accomplished much. Paul's teaching is especially relevant to Timothy - to elders / bishops / pastors / overseers. But the letter is not just for him/them, but for all believers.

All of us need to know what we believe. The fact that God invested so much effort into producing our Bible should give some indication of its importance. (EXPAND THIS - 1500 years... etc.) Right doctrine is vital.

And all of us need to live what we believe! The Christian faith consists of both believing the right thing and living the right way. Both are important... indispensable. Our walk must line up with our words. What people see of our lives must match what they hear from our lips. We must practice what we preach.

And so, as we conclude this series on *1 Timothy*, it is my prayer that these two parallel truths (the need for right doctrine, and the need for right living) will lodge in our hearts and minds as primary results of the study.

Also in this last chapter, Paul mentions a few other interesting and practical truths here that we should mention before we put *1 Timothy* aside for a while.

He talks about how Christians should behave in the work world, and a couple of related issues - the right attitude toward money, and the right use of money if you have it.

How to treat your boss - cf. (vss. 1-2)

Paul is talking about slavery, as it existed in the first century. We will apply it to our employer/employee relationships, for that is how it is relevant to us. But first consider some thoughts about what slavery was.

Slavery was a reality in Timothy's day.

"Slavery was an integral social component of the Greco-Roman world in the first century. Slaves were the employees who did the work for their wealthy masters. It was a widespread scheme of employment. In fact, the entire economic structure of the Roman Empire depended on it. To understand slavery, believers today must strip away their preconceived notions of it. Those notions are drawn largely from the racial slavery of the pre-Civil War American South, which bears only some resemblance to slavery in the first-century Roman Empire. (MacArthur, Commentary on 1 Timothy, p. 229)

Slavery was not forbidden in either the Old or New Testaments, but rather regulated. Some things to note:

- Slaves could not be held for more than six years (*Exodus 21:2*), unless they desired to remain (*Exodus 21:5-6*).
- Those who came into slavery with a family could take their family with them when they left slavery.
- Slaves who were abused by their masters were to be freed. (*Exodus 21:26-27*)
- Religious rights, such as worshipping on the Sabbath day, were protected (*Exodus 20:10*)
- Slaves had civil rights and economic rights.
- Jewish slaves were to be treated as equal to the eldest son in the family.
- Gentile slaves did not have the same status as Jewish slaves, but still had their food, clothing, and housing provided, as well as a small wage and security.

Note: (Above points taken from MacArthur's commentary on *1 Timothy*.)

The point to recognize is that it was simply a system of employment. As we attempt to apply it to our lives, we must not get bogged down in our preconceived notions that might color our interpretation of what Paul is teaching here. Put simply, "a slave was one required to perform duties assigned to him by another who was over him in authority." (MacArthur, p. 231)

And so, the application to us concerns our system of employment - boss / employee relationships. Specifically, how does the employee treat his / her boss.

1. The Christian is to treat an unsaved boss with respect. (*vs. 1*)

Respect is due the position, regardless of who occupies it, and regardless of whether the person personally earns respect.

QUOTE - "Respect has to be earned." Should NOT BE TRUE for the Christian. We are taught to respect various POSITIONS:

- Governmental authority - "*Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king.*" (*1 Peter 2:17*; also *Romans 13:1-7*)
- Parental authority - *Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.* (*Ephesians 6:1-2*)
- Church authority - *1 Timothy 5:17*

When a believer demonstrates respect for those God has placed in authority, he honors God. And when he demonstrates a lack of such respect, he blasphemes God (... *that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed.* - vs. 1).

ILLUS - "Is that what your Christian God teaches you?" Such a sneer is often the result of a non-Christian seeing a Christian behaving in a way that they think is inconsistent with Christianity. Although the believer is the target of the sneer, God and Christ and Christianity are also defamed.

And so Paul is clear - even if you work for an unsaved boss, you should honor and respect their position.

2. The Christian is to treat a saved boss with respect AND LOVE. (vs. 2)

ILLUS - Job interview where potential boss told me the purpose of the company was to glorify Jesus Christ. What would it have been like to work for such a man?

The temptation when one works for a Christian may be to think they can get away with more. Their boss will be more understanding... more lenient... more willing to overlook things, because he is a believer.

Paul says we fight against this tendency by working even harder and more diligently if we are fortunate enough to work not only for a boss, but for a brother in the Lord.

Some practical thoughts, then. When it comes to work, Christians should:

- Do it - Christians are to be working people, not lazy people. The first step in honoring our employer is to have one! And then to GO TO WORK regularly.
- Give an honest days work for an honest days pay. When you are at work, work.

ILLUS - Man I knew who sat at his empty desk all day and seemingly did nothing. Rumor was he was trading stocks all day on his computer, which was strategically placed so you couldn't see his screen.

JOKE - Dilbert Comic strip - "Sittin' in a box, checkin my stocks."

- When your boss asks you to do something, do it without grumbling or complaining. Never forget, he is the boss, and you are the servant.

ILLUS - Of servanthood in general (and our service to Christ in particular), Jesus once said, *So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.* (Luke 17:11)

- Remember the order of things - GOD IS STILL FIRST.

QUESTION - "What if my employer asks me to do something that violates the Word of God, Preacher?"

ANSWER - Don't do it. The Bible is clear that our allegiance is first to God, and then to men. *Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.* (Acts 5:30)

ILLUS - This was true even if a person was truly a "slave" in the Bible - e.g. Joseph was a slave to Potiphar, and yet when Potiphar's wife demanded he sleep with her, Joseph refused - putting God first.

QUESTION - "But what if my employer asks me to do something that is questionable, but not really wrong... something that is not an overt sin, but which I know harms my walk with God. What if, for example, he makes me work on Sundays so I can't worship with God's people?"

ANSWER - Two things you can do about such a situation. 1.) Talk to him about it and ask (respectfully) that he work with you on this. (Personal illustration - I've had to do this many times with employers regarding working on Sunday mornings.) 2.) Find another job. Unlike the Roman Empire, you are free to use the clas-

sified ads. A job that doesn't allow you to do what God says you are supposed to do, is not a job you should have. Find another one.

Right attitude toward money - cf. (vss. 6-10)

This is related to the first point. Many of the problems we have with work are because we have a wrong attitude toward money.

Paul makes some interesting statements which I'll just mention, for they need little explanation:

1. You can't take it with you. (vs. 7) Accepting this truth really helps in the temptation to spend our time seeking wealth. It is transitory. It is an illusion. It is not eternal. Christians have the opportunity to spend their time storing up treasures for eternity.

Jesus said, *Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. (Matthew 6:20-22)*

2. Contentment is a key to success in the Christian life. (vss. 6,8)
3. Lack of contentment, or the continuous seeking of more and more wealth, leads to a variety of problems and sin. (vss. 9-10)

How to use money if you have it - cf. (vss. 17-19)

Again, just a few thoughts:

1. Don't trust it. Riches are uncertain. God is certain. Trust in God who alone is the source of any wealth we may enjoy! (vs. 17)
2. Use wealth to serve God. Do good works with it. Share it! (vs. 18)
3. Invest it wisely. Not in earthly things, but in eternal. (vs. 19)
cf. *Matthew 6:20-22*, quoted earlier

Conclusion

And so we come to the end of our study.

Do you wonder why Paul would close his letter this way? After all his hammering of important truths like KNOW WHAT YOU BELIEVE (a major theme of the book), and LIVE WHAT YOU BELIEVE (a second major theme of the book), isn't it interesting that he closes it all out with some seemingly random comments about our work ethic and our handling of money?

I suggest that it is not random.

Money, and our attitude toward money, is a major indicator of our walk with God. Jesus said, *where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. (Matthew 6:22)*

And we live most of our lives in the workplace - spending more quality time there than in nearly any other part of our lives. How we live THERE is a major indicator of our character. Does Christ shine forth through your life in the workplace, Christian? If you have gotten the jist of *1 Timothy*... if you understand the importance of believing right and living right, then you also need to understand it is not just about doing that in church (something we've said was the theme of this book), but it is about

carrying that same lifestyle forth from the church into the work world. BELIEVE IT AT WORK... LIVE IT AT WORK... and everyplace else you might go.

Verse 1 - Out where the reapers are toiling
Out where they earnestly call,
Let us away in the morning,
There is a work for us all;
Lifting the vines that are drooping,
Trying their bloom to renew,
Bathing their leaves in a fountain
Purer and sweeter than dew.

Refrain - Out where the reapers are toiling,
Out where they earnestly call,
Let us away, away in the morning,
There is a work for us all.

Verse 2 - Out where the gleaners are toiling,
Patiently, cheerfully still,
If we are willing to labor,
Here is a place we can fill;
Speaking a word to the weary,
Helping the weak ones along,
Shedding bright sunshine around them,
Cheering their hearts with a song.

Refrain

Verse 3 - Out where the sheaves they are binding,
Sheaves for the garner above,
Go in the Name of the Master,
Go in the spirit of love;
Hark! He is tenderly saying,
"Work in My vineyard today";
Haste, for the summer is waning,
Harvest is passing away.

Refrain
(by Fanny Crosby)

