

Lecture 20

1 Timothy 1:1 – 3:16

I like February not only because the Christmas holiday busyness is behind us and spring is coming, but of course there was Valentine's Day. It's special to have a Valentine birthday because the mailbox finally has something in it besides bills or junk mail. And, again, I thank you for your cards and gifts of love. It's really special to get personal letters, isn't it? Especially letters that are full of love and encouragement.

Well, our study opened this year with Paul writing to the church collectively in Ephesus, in Philippi, in Colosse and in Thessalonica. We've already read his personal letters to Philemon and Titus. And then there was the study in Hebrews that was directed to a group of people living out in the world dealing with all its stress and pressure. And now we'll close out our year with a look at some personal mail from James, Peter and Jude. But first there are two final letters from Paul to Timothy.

These "pastoral" letters, as they are called, have to do with the responsibilities of the church leadership . . . a counsel on how the church should function effectively. 1 Timothy chapters 1-3 deal with the ministry of the church; chapters 4-6 are focused on the minister of the church.

Timothy was a native of Lystra in the province of Galatia, which was a Roman colony. He came from a mixed marriage. His mother, Eunice, was a Jewess and his father was a Greek according to Acts 16:1.

Both Eunice and Timothy's grandmother, Lois, were known for their faith and devotion. It was during Paul's second missionary journey through Lystra that Timothy, young as he was, became Paul's helper and assistant. There was a special bond, a kinship that was so strong Paul was never able to speak of Timothy without the thrill of affection in his voice.

Do you have that special kind of friend in the Lord? When you get together everything centers around what Jesus is doing in each of your lives? Don't your spirits just explode with joy in sharing Scripture, and praising God and feeling the kindred feeling of being "one in the Spirit?" That was Paul and Timothy.

Paul had counted a lot on Timothy . . . he was left behind at Berea with Silas when Paul escaped to Athens and later he joined Paul there. He was sent as Paul's emissary to Macedonia and was with Paul in Corinth when Paul wrote to the Romans. He was sent to Corinth when there was trouble in that unruly church. And it was Timothy that Paul sent to see how things were going in Thessalonica. Timothy was with Paul in prison when Paul wrote to Philippi, Colosse and the personal letter to Philemon regarding the converted runaway slave, Onesimus. When there was a difficult job to do, Paul trusted Timothy to do it. That's why Paul opened his letter of 1 Timothy by calling him "my true son in the faith." Timothy's name means "to honor God."

Timothy was approximately 40 by now and serving as the pastor at the church in Ephesus. During the formative years of the early church, many

congregations had internal problems. There was a mixture of cultures (Jew and Greek), a mixture of classes, and a need to establish order and stability to an infant church. One of the real dangers was a misunderstanding of just what Christian "freedom" meant. People were hungry for truth, and without the canon of Scripture being complete, were susceptible to false teaching. Women had gained an elevated position in Christ and perhaps at times were just a **little bit** pushy . . . and just a little bit abrasive – enough to cause disruption in a worship service. And goodness knows, the church was never meant to be a one man show . . . it needs responsible leadership. So Timothy had some problems and Paul had some advice.

First of all, Paul was concerned about "false doctrines, myths, and endless genealogies which promoted controversies rather than building faith." Has anyone ever tried to engage you in this type of conversation? It can creep in so easily, can't it? Before we know it, we're sidetracked away from the central issues of faith and what we really want and need to talk about. Someone might be concerned over "Where did Melchizedek come from?" when, even having a definitive answer to that question would contribute little to one's spiritual growth or bringing another to salvation. We always need to "keep the main thing the main thing."

So, how could Timothy stem this undercurrent? Paul's instruction was this – "love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith." When we try to speak, teach, counsel, sing, administrate, evangelize, or perform any other ministry task, we'll miss the mark unless it's done in love

that flows from a cleansed heart, and an untainted conscience and an un-hypocritical faith. The target is to 'speak the truth in love.'

The goal is salvation. God wants all men to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth as it says in 2:8. To do that, we must proclaim the gospel. We must be on the front line. C. T. Studd once said,

"Some may want to live within the sound
Of church or chapel bell;
I want to run a rescue shop
Within a yard of hell."

To do that, the gospel must be kept pure, free from heresy and blasphemy.

Again we see in 1:7 that the teachers of the Law are at work.

Warren Wiersbe had a good comment on this passage: "The Law without the Gospel is diagnosis without remedy . . . the Gospel with the Law added is only the Good News of salvation for people who don't believe they need it because they have never heard the bad news of judgment. The Law is not the Gospel and the Gospel is not lawlessness."

There is no greater witness to the gift of grace and salvation than a changed life; it displays the visible handiwork of God. Paul recalled his transformation from persecutor to preacher, from violent aggressor to passionate apostle. Paul was guilty of heinous sin before a just and righteous God. The same holds true for us . . . we are all sinners and deserve the Lord's judgment. But grace (that wonderful, marvelous, free gift) saved Paul and it saves us today. Romans 5:20 "Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more." And Paul says in 1 Timothy 1:15 "It is a

trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the worst." Paul's implication, of course, is that if God could save the worst of sinners, He can save any sinner. When a life destined for everlasting judgment is turned around and freely given everlasting life, it's only natural for that person to turn to God in praise. That's what Paul does in vs. 17, "Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen."

Each local church is in a constant battle against the forces of evil. Satan would deceive the elect and it hurts us to know that often times he's successful. People shipwreck their faith as Hymenaeus and Alexander did in today's lesson. We shipwreck our faith . . .

- 1) When our will, not God's will, becomes dictator of our lives.**
- 2) When we relapse into evil practices without repentance.**
- 3) When we distort and compromise Christian truths into a justification and excuse for wrong.**

The important thing to see here is choice. Salvation does not rob us of our free will and that includes the choice of choosing to sin. Deliberate actions require deliberate measures, and Paul was going "to turn them over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme." While this could refer to excommunication (which we perceive as being thrown out of the church entirely and losing your salvation), it could also refer to the remedial action Paul speaks of in 1 Corinthians 5:5 "hand this man over to Satan so that the sinful nature may

be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord." That means according to 1 Corinthians 5:11 "you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat." He goes on to say, "expel the wicked man from among you." It's a cruel world out there . . . Satan will capitalize on the weakness of those who forsake the church. Being out of fellowship with other believers should make the true Christian want to repent and return. It's the branch being cut off from the vine . . . it will soon wither and die for lack of nourishment. There is not time to go into the subject of eternal security. Personally, I do not believe you can lose your salvation; others would disagree. However, the thrust of this passage is that when you succumb to false teaching, it will shipwreck your faith.

A successful industrialist once told a group, "There are two things most difficult to get people to do . . . first, to think . . . and second, to do things in order of their importance." Well, what are the priorities of ministry that Paul addresses in today's lesson?

Top of the list is prayer.

- ✓ Prayer establishes worship,
- ✓ prayer embraces worship,
- ✓ prayer enlarges worship and
- ✓ prayer enlightens worship.

Remember in Acts 6 when the infant church began delegation? The Apostles needed to devote themselves to "prayer, and to ministry of the Word." In Ephesians 6:18 Paul emphasized ceaseless prayer "And pray in the spirit on all occasions with all kinds of requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints." Unfortunately, many of us do not regard prayer as highly as God does. Let me make a few observations about prayer.

We encourage prayer in our small groups . . . praying aloud takes practice . . . and for many of us we learned to pray by listening to others pray. The key is communicating with God as if you were in your own prayer closet, not to impress those who might also be listening.

Prayer is not limited to a specific time/place . . . Remember 1 Thessalonians 5:17 "pray without ceasing" – with persistency of a hacking cough.

Prayer is not a substitute for action . . . Rather than obey, we'll "pray" about it. When we have clear direction from Scripture on what to do in a given situation, we need to go ahead and do the right thing. We need to obey. Do you need to forgive, need to make that phone call / visit that friend / do what you've been putting off? Prayer is not an excuse for being passive.

Prayer is not a last-resort, emergency measure . . . "When all else fails, pray." Prayer is to be our first priority and our most frequent activity.

Typical of the Lord, when He gives a command, He gives us the necessary details to carry it out. Here we have God's directives regarding prayer:

1. **What are we to do?** Offer entreaties, petitions, thanksgivings.
2. **For whom are we to do it?** All men, those in authority - not limited to just Christians.
3. **Why is it to be done?** In order to lead a tranquil/quiet life in all godliness and dignity. Prayer gives us that peaceful God-centered life. It contributes to salvation for others – God works through the prayers of His people. Many of you are living testimonies of the power a kneeling Christian.
4. **How should we do it?** "Lifting holy hands without anger or disputing." We get rid of the sin in our lives by confessing it and being forgiven according to 1 John 1:9 so that we may be pure vessels of intercession for others.
5. **Why are our prayers effective?** 2:5 "There is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." The very heart of the gospel is that the holy, merciful God has taken the initiative to supply a perfect mediator between Himself and us so that all people might have the opportunity to be saved. We studied all about Christ as Mediator in Hebrews, didn't we?

Well, we're down to the "good stuff," aren't we? **What about women in the church?** Seven little verses that we could spend the whole hour on.

There is no question about the changing roles of women today. In the world we are liberated more and restrained less. Around the home many are assaulted more and supported less. On the job some are respected more and exploited less. In the church, however, generally women are confused more and instructed less about their role in the church.

What's expected? In appearance/clothing – **modesty**, dress discreetly. To paraphrase, "Adorn ourselves with clothing well arranged, becoming and appropriate for the occasion – that is, clothing that does not draw attention to itself but reveals good sense, forethought and self-control in selection." Jewelry and hair styles that represent a vain display of wealth is improper. There's a happy medium between a plain brown wren and a strutting peacock.

Obviously a bikini or micro-mini skirt would be disruptive in a worship service. Everyone would be saying or at least thinking, "Did you see that?" The same would be true of the severe dress of the Amish in our California culture. The whole idea is not to distract from the focus being on the worship of God.

We need to be urged to "be a lady." Somehow we've lost the sense of what that means. Many try to say that all of this was just cultural and perhaps it was. The type of dress Paul describes was common for temple prostitutes. But whatever the culture, good taste should prevail. Make-up? If barn need coat of paint, paint it. Pat Merold once told me regarding

appearance before a group, let them see the best you that you can present. It gives you self-confidence and it gives others confidence in you.

Regarding behavior: remain quiet (vs. 11) – we’re not disrupt or try to take over worship service. Just as orderliness and appropriateness should mark a woman’s clothing, it should also mark her behavior.

We’re to receive instruction with submission – willingness to be taught.

Verse 12 We’re not to exercise authority over men in local church – a Christian woman can minister with and to men, but must do it under permission and authority of the male church leadership. We have our night Bible study composed of both men and women – we all do these exact same lessons. I have led a mixed adult Sunday school in our old facility. Myself, Lin and Dellen lead and teach in these Bible studies under the auspices of Jim Swaney and Gene Appel and the Eastside Church leadership. The leadership of our church has recognized the spiritual gifts of women in numerous areas, and for the good of the body of Christ those gifts are being put to maximum use. We’re not told what to say, but they rest in their God-given discernment that we have knowledge of the truth and are able to impart it to others in a faithful fashion.

The words “silent” and “submission” are almost fighting words. But often it’s because a domineering husband wants to use these Scriptures as a hammer to squelch his wife, and promote his own ego. Submission is not subjugation. It’s something both sexes do for Christ and it’s

recognizing God's order in the home and in the church and joyfully obeying it.

For you ladies, one of the initial things we have to grapple with is the truth that the church is not a democracy – it is a hierarchy. Jesus is calling the shots and He has established the order for His church. We remember that the Creator's design and intention in Genesis affirms both male/female as equal and complementary: "bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh." (Genesis 2:23) A restricted status for women has traditionally been grounded in the account of the Fall (Gen. 3) in both Jewish and Christian thought and practice. A restriction for women, and male-over-female dominance, is not thus divine purpose but an expression of human sin. In 1 Corinthians 14:22-44 where Paul instructs women in the church to be silent, we know that this restriction was not universally applied by Paul or by other early congregations. Women functioned in prominent leadership positions (Phoebe, Lydia, Priscilla), designated as deacons (Romans 16:1) fellow workers (Romans 16:3), co-labors in the gospel (Phil. 4:2-9). The Spirit of God empowered both men/women to proclaim God's redemptive work in Christ in Acts 2:14-18. Women's participation in the edifying presentation of the gospel and vocal prayer in the congregation were a normal part of church life (1 Corinthians 11).

In light of those considerations, the restrictions imposed on women in Timothy's congregation must be looked on in light of the text and the prevailing problem of false teaching.

We don't know the identity of the false teachers, but from the instruction given, we can conclude that the normal, socially prescribed roles and functions were being neglected or rejected. In 1 Timothy 5:13 we'll see the reference to "busybodies." It's possible the women were particularly influenced by the heretical teachers.

2 Peter 3:16 says some of Paul writings are hard to understand.

Now one of the problem verses is 1 Timothy 2:15, "Women will be kept safe through childbirth – some versions say shall be preserved, or shall be saved through bearing of children if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety."

There are three interpretations:

- 1) It can mean physically safe through process of childbirth although we know that some Christian women have died in childbirth.
- 2) It can mean spiritually saved (receive salvation) through the birth of the Christ child, Jesus.
- 3) Or, it can mean preserved from insignificance through fulfilling her role in the family. In other words, woman's greatest sense of significance and achievement will be found in her devotion as wife and mother.

Remember he's just laid down heavy hand of submission to authority, which could leave them feeling pretty insignificant.

One thing we can be sure of and that is motherhood is not a requirement for salvation!

That's what the commentators have to offer and perhaps it isn't much help. It's one of those things we'll have to ask Paul about in heaven. So, what have we learned?

For men . . . There are limitations given on the role of women in church. These are to be respected and not exaggerated, expanded, or exploited.

For women . . . A positive response to instruction will help the church maintain its dedication to truth and ward off heresy.

For both . . . Our guidelines come from the Bible. They are to be obeyed whether they coincide with our current culture's views or not.

Well, Chapter 3 deals with selection of elders and deacons. We **don't elect leaders by one's popularity, past, politics or pocketbook**. The list is not to be altered or adjusted to fit cultural norms. It is a divine standard for church leadership. God never lowers His standard. (We studied a list in Titus and there will be another list of qualifications in 1 Peter 5.)

These qualifications are not vague generalizations, and you will notice that they do not mention any of the spiritual gifts. It deals with a man's character, Christian maturity, wisdom, domestic managerial abilities, etc. "If a man aspires to office of overseer, it's a fine work he desires to do."

Some of the specifics for an elder. . .

In his personal life: above reproach (no one can point a finger), not perfect - he quickly rights wrongs . . . has a good reputation and deservedly so.

The husband of one wife means a "One woman man." There are many interpretations about divorce, widowed, remarried, but the basic sense is – must be married to just one woman (which excludes bigamy, polygamy and homosexuality) and must be devoted to that wife (which excludes promiscuity and an unhealthy marriage.)

Temperate means to have a life characterized by balance.

Prudent means self-controlled, thoughtful, wise.

Respectable means orderliness in one's demeanor, one's inner life, one's thinking.

Hospitable means friendly, approachable with open heart and open home.

Able to teach means to clearly explain God's truth.

Not addicted to wine means addictive behavior of any type is dangerous. The Christian, and especially leaders, are not to allow anything to control him except the Spirit of God (Ephesians 5:18).

Not violent but gentle means the ability to consider the spirit of the law, not just the letter of the law - the whole picture. He can administer justice with calm resolve, wise mind and a healing touch; a spirit of cooperation, ready to listen and considering every believer equal in Christ.

Free from love of money does not mean a vow of poverty. It is an attitude.

Good manager at home - a church is more like a home than a business.

Not a new convert - leadership requires a degree of Christian maturity that only comes with learning the Bible and experience.

Good reputation with unsaved - godly characteristics are recognized outside the church.

So we're asking these questions . . .

Personally - Do his internals square with his externals?

Domestically - Would his family vote for him?

Publicly - Would his community be surprised or confirming?

Deacon means "to serve." It is a God-given title, not a nickname. It's an official leadership position in the church. Many churches today have both deacons and deaconesses.

Again, these are to be men of dignity, not double-tongued (they don't gossip), not addicted to wine, not fond of sordid gain (honest /upright in money matters), possess a clear conscience (not profess one thing and do another in their Christian walk), a one-woman man, morally pure, tested and proven beyond reproach.

Verse 11 'women likewise' ... **who does this refer to?** 1) wives of deacons? 2) all women in the church? 3) or deaconesses? Whoever they are, they're to be dignified (respectable in mind/character), not malicious gossips, temperate, faithful in all things.

Paul loved and hoped to be reunited with Timothy soon. He longed for that sweet companionship. But he knew it would probably be delayed so he encouraged Timothy on how to pastor the church. Paul described the church in 4 ways:

The household of God – His children/heirs

The church of the living God - He is owner, family head, alive, active, not bound in the grave or asleep in heaven.

The pillar of truth - In Ephesus was the temple to the goddess Artemis (Acts 19:26-28) with 127 pillars encrusted with marble, costly jewels, gold to display the greatness of the idol goddess. We are pillars of the greatness of God's mercy and grace in His salvation through Jesus who is Truth. We are pillars of that truth.

The support of truth - We stand firm to support and proclaim the truth of the gospel.

Many consider chapter 3 verse 16 an early church hymn: He appeared in the flesh (incarnation), was vindicated in the spirit (endorsed), beheld by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.

Our lesson stops here, but Paul has more to say next week. This is a letter of encouragement . . . so let me leave you with some encouragement I received in one of my birthday cards . . .

"A Christ-centered life is like a good watch; open face, busy hands, pure gold and full of good works."