

# **The Books of 1 and 2 Timothy**

by  
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## **Preface**

Leadership in the Christian church during the late 20th century has had some notable lapses. Priests molesting boys, Christian television talk show hosts swindling contributors, evangelists engaged in promiscuous liaisons, Christian college presidents embezzling funds--the repeated downfalls of prominent leaders have been appalling. The fact that Christians now live in a hostile social environment means that the media seizes upon such lapses with alacrity. These factors confirm the adage that power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

Especially because of this malaise, the letters of Paul to Timothy have a marked relevance to the present period of Christian history. Though many centuries old, these letters address the problems of heresy, power-brokering, lapsed moral leadership, the critical nature of integrity among Christian leaders, and the solemn responsibility to pass on the Christian tradition to a responsible new generation. Such concerns are as relevant as yesterday's headlines.

Especially important in these letters is this concern for moral integrity among Christian leaders. In fact, in Paul's description of the qualifications for Christian leadership, moral integrity ranks as the most important factor of all! He would surely rank it higher than the preacher's entertainment quotient, style, education or marketability. The ancient church, as well as the modern church, faced a crisis of leadership. If the church is to be healthy, it must take seriously the mandates and counsels of these two short letters. To this end, these short explorations of 1 and 2 Timothy were written.

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## Letter to a Young Church Leader - Studies In 1 Timothy

The letters 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus were dubbed *The Pastoral Epistles* by a theologian in the early 18th century, and the name stuck.<sup>1</sup> Though adequate, this designation has received some criticism, since the letters are only partially taken up with pastoral duties. Nevertheless, the correspondences are directed to persons with pastoral responsibilities, and in this, the collective title is appropriate. These three letters are similar in style, content and structure. They seem to presuppose the same false teachers, the same theological concepts and the same peculiarities of language and style.<sup>2</sup> In particular, they were written to churches that were under seige from false teachings which threatened to distort the Christian faith (1 Ti. 1:3-11, 19-20; 4:1-7; 6:3-5, 20-21; Tit. 1:10-11, 15-16; 3:9-11; 2 Ti. 2:16-18, 23-26; 3:1-9, 13; 4:3-4). There is some debate about the order in which the letters were written, but this has been largely inconclusive. In may at least be said that Titus is somewhat more rough in style than the others, though in content it is much the same as 1 Timothy.

### Author

In each case, the author directly claims to be Paul, the famous missionary (1 Ti. 1:1; 2 Ti. 1:1; Tit. 1:1). Furthermore, the letters are replete with details which make this claim all the more plausible, such as, the mention of his former life as a blasphemer (1 Ti. 1:12-14) and a host of other personal details about his imprisonment (2 Ti. 1:8; 2:9; 4:6-7, 18), his knowledge of Timothy's family (2 Ti. 1:5; 3:15), his familiarity with various persons in the churches known to Timothy (2 Ti. 1:15-16; 2:17; 4:9-14, 19-24; Tit. 3:12-13), and so forth. Nevertheless, the majority of critical scholars have denied these letters to Paul.<sup>3</sup>

Grounds for this denial are several. They include linguistic and vocabulary differences from the known genuine Pauline letters. Also, it is argued that the churches in the pastoral letters are substantially more organized (and therefore later)

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<sup>1</sup>A. Hunter, *Introducing the New Testament, 3rd rev. ed.* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975) 150.

<sup>2</sup>W. Kummel, *Introduction to the New Testament*, trans. H. Kee (Nashville: Abingdon, 1975) 367.

<sup>3</sup>The Pauline correspondence as it comes to us from the New Testament is as follows:

SECOND TOUR LETTERS: 1 and 2 Thessalonians; THIRD TOUR LETTERS: Galatians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, and Romans; FIRST IMPRISONMENT LETTERS (?): Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians and Philippians; SECOND IMPRISONMENT LETTERS (?): 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus. Of course, the historical-critical assessment of these letters and their claims to Pauline authorship has been severe. Modern critical scholars attribute only seven letters more or less unconditionally to Paul: 1 Thessalonians, Galatians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Romans, Philemon and Philippians. The letters of 2 Thessalonians and Colossians merit a "maybe," Ephesians is doubtful, and 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus are a flat "no."

than the churches in Paul's other letters. Furthermore, inasmuch as there is ambiguity about the final years of Paul's life in the Book of Acts, these letters are hard to locate in the known history of Paul. Since the heresy envisioned in the letters seems to be gnostic in its orientation, and since gnosticism did not reach its fullest development until later than the time of Paul, the letters must also have been written later than Paul. Theologically, the writer speaks of "the faith" in more of a static, doctrinal sense, rather than Paul's active use of "faith" as a dynamic principle, and to the critical scholars, this suggests a development of orthodoxy later than Paul.

How serious are these objections? Serious enough, certainly, to convince the majority of critical scholars to deny Pauline authorship.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, there are answers to be given for each of the objections. One might expect that evangelical scholars would provide such responses, and indeed they do.<sup>5</sup> Still, it should be pointed out that important non-evangelical scholars also argue for the genuineness of the letters.<sup>6</sup> In short, in this study we have no hesitation in affirming the Pauline authorship of these letters. The precise nature of their composition, whether by Paul's own hand or by the use of a secretary, can be left open.

### **The Closing Period of Paul's Life**

If we accept the genuineness of the letters, some information about the closing period of Paul's life should also be given. To be sure, such information is fragmentary. Luke concluded the Book of Acts with Paul under house arrest in Rome for two years while he awaited his hearing before Caesar (Ac. 28:16, 30-31). If we are to take Paul's prison correspondence as having been written during this imprisonment,<sup>7</sup> then some further information is available. For one thing, though he

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<sup>4</sup>Both Roman Catholic and Protestant liberal scholars generally agree in denying to Paul these letters, cf. R. Fuller, *A Critical Introduction to the New Testament* (London: Duckworth, 1971) 133-138; Kummel, 370-384.

<sup>5</sup>Conservative introductions all defend Pauline authorship, either by attributing the letters entirely to Paul or else by suggesting his use of an amanuensis, which in turn might account for some of the vocabulary and stylistic differences, cf. D. Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1970) 584-622; R. Martin, *New Testament Foundations* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978) II.298-307; E. Harrison, *Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971) 351-363; D. Guthrie, *ISBE* (1986) III.679-685; D. Carson, "The Pastoral Epistles," *An Introduction to the New Testament*, D. Moo and L. Morris (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992) 359-371.

<sup>6</sup>See L. Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986) 381-389; G. Denzer, "The Pastoral Letters," *JBC* (1968) II.351-352; J. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* (rpt. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981); Jeremias, *Die Briefe an Timotheus und Titus* (Gottingen, 1963).

<sup>7</sup>While this assumption is the traditional one, and may very well be the correct one, it is by no means certain. We also know that earlier Paul was incarcerated at Caesarea for two years (Ac. 23:23-35; 24:27), and some scholars reckon this as the place where the prison letters were composed and sent out. Furthermore, according to 1 Clement 5, an early 2nd century Christian document, Paul was imprisoned no less than seven times. Some scholars have suggested Ephesus as one of these other imprisonments, see discussion in Kummel, 329-332.

considered his trial to be a matter of life and death (Phil. 1:20; 2:17), he had some hopes of being released (Phil. 1:25; 2:24). Also, we know that when Paul was making his last trip to Jerusalem, even before his arrest, his long range desire was to eventually preach the gospel in Spain (Ro. 15:23-25). It may be that while imprisoned in Rome Paul expected his imperial hearing to result in his release, at which time he could fulfil his desire to go further west (cf. Col. 4:3; Ep. 6:19-20). By the time of Eusebius in the 5th century, Christian tradition held that Paul had indeed been released, but Eusebius, who first records this tradition, introduces it with the less than confident expression, "Report has it..."<sup>8</sup> One early tradition suggests that among Paul's difficulties, he was exiled by the emperor,<sup>9</sup> and if so, his exile may have been to the west and may have given opportunity for further evangelism. The Muratorian fragment, the Latin list of New Testament books drawn up in Rome toward the close of the second century, directly assumes that Paul did, in fact, go to Spain.<sup>10</sup> Another tradition also favors the idea that Paul may have been imprisoned, released, and then incarcerated the second time. The earliest tradition of Paul's martyrdom in Rome associates it with the Neronian persecution of Christians following the great fire in Rome in 64 A.D.<sup>11</sup> If this is true, then Paul was martyred at least two years after the probable date for his imperial hearing anticipated at the end of Acts.

The upshot of all this is that we do not have a clear picture of the closing years of Paul's life. He may have been released after his imperial hearing, he may have gone westward toward Spain, he may have been arrested again after two years, and he may have been martyred in Rome after a second imprisonment. Assuming that 2 Timothy was written during this second imprisonment, Paul may even have implied a second arrest by speaking of his "first defense" (2 Ti. 4:16), though this is by no means clear.<sup>12</sup> In any case, this is the traditional scenario, and if it is correct, Paul may have written the pastoral letters during this second imprisonment. Certainly he was incarcerated and anticipating death when he wrote 2 Timothy (1:8; 2:9; 4:6-7, 18). However, there is none of this sentiment about an impending death in either 1 Timothy or Titus. In fact, in these latter two letters, Paul seems to anticipate a continuing ministry (Tit. 3:12; 1 Ti. 3:14-15), and if so, then they may not have been written at the same time as 2 Timothy. Traditionally, the three letters

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<sup>8</sup>F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977) 444.

<sup>9</sup>1 Clement 5.

<sup>10</sup>Bruce, 449.

<sup>11</sup>Bruce, 441.

<sup>12</sup>See discussion in G. Knight III, *Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles [NIGTC]* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992) 468-470.

have been treated together, and while this has merit, due to their common elements, it is by no means clear that they were written at the same time or under precisely the same circumstances.

### **The Reader**

Paul addresses this letter to "Timothy, my true son in the faith" (1:2). Timothy is first mentioned in Acts 16:1, where he is called a disciple. The notation is also given that he had a Jewish mother and a Greek father. Nothing specific is known of his conversion, though because Paul calls him his "son," it has been inferred that he was converted under Paul's ministry (cf. 1 Co. 4:17). However, this expression may just as well refer to the fact that Timothy became Paul's understudy in missionary work (Phil. 2:22). In any case, Timothy's earliest spiritual heritage dated back to his mother, Eunice, who had become a Christian (Ac. 16:1), and to his grandmother, Lois (2 Ti. 1:5). Under their influence, he had been a student of the Scriptures since childhood (2 Ti. 3:15). Because of his excellent reputation, Paul invited Timothy to join his missionary team (Ac. 16:2-3; cf. Ro. 16:21; 2 Co. 1:19), though he required that Timothy be circumcized because of his Jewish heritage.<sup>13</sup>

It seems that Paul sensed the need for a younger man whom he could train for leadership among the churches he established. This desire was quite possibly his reason for such a firm reaction against John Mark, who left the team in the middle of their work (Ac. 13:5, 13; 15:36-40). Timothy fit Paul's needs admirably. He had been ordained for Christian work at Lystra (1 Ti. 4:14), and his ordination had been accompanied by a prophetic oracle concerning his future (1 Ti. 1:18; 4:14). As Paul's companion, he came to be trusted more and more, first as one who could be left in charge while Paul went to other preaching points (Ac. 17:14-15; cf. 1 Th. 3:1-2, 6), and later as one who could arrange supplemental resources so that Paul could give his full time to preaching (Ac. 18:5). Paul used Timothy as his advance representative, when he was detained (Ac. 19:22; 20:4-6). During his stressful relationship with the Corinthians, Paul used Timothy as a personal emissary (1 Co. 4:17; 16:10-11; cf. Phil. 2:19), and in his Corinthian, Philippian, Colossian and Thessalonian correspondences, he names Timothy as co-sender (2 Co. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:1; Plmn 1:1; 1 Th. 1:1; 2 Th. 1:1), though this does not necessarily include co-authorship. On at least one occasion, Timothy, also, was incarcerated (He. 13:23). To the Philippians, Paul paid Timothy the supreme compliment:

*I have no else like him, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare.  
For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.*

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<sup>13</sup>By way of contrast, Paul adamantly opposed the circumcision of Titus, who was a Greek (Ga. 2:3).



*But you know that Timothy has proved himself...*

*(Phil. 2:20-22).*

## **The Situation**

If Timothy is the recipient of the letter, the situation of which Paul wishes to speak concerns the congregation at Ephesus (1:3). Paul, of course, had written a letter to the Ephesians, but this letter was quite general.<sup>14</sup> In 1 Timothy, however, the challenge to the Christian faith is clearly addressed. In Ephesus, there were teachers who gave priority to myths and genealogies, apparently based upon the law of Moses (1:4, 7). They taught a theology of abstinence, including celibacy and dietary restrictions (4:3), and they believed that they were the possessors of special knowledge (6:20-21). Theological debate and friction was the inevitable result (6:3-5). Actually, Paul had anticipated such problems, and in his last words to the Ephesian elders, he warned them that from among their own ranks would come those who would lead Christians into heresy (Ac. 20:29-31). Two of the ringleaders are mentioned by name, Hymenaeus and Alexander (1:20). Later, in the Apocalypse of John, the heresy in the Ephesian church seems to have included false claims to apostleship as well as the teachings of a group called the Nicolaitans (Rev. 2:2, 6).

It is apparent that there was a Jewish flavor to this heresy, since the false teachers appealed to the law of Moses and advocated an asceticism which might have been reinforced by Old Testament dietary laws. At the same time, it is equally clear that the system which Paul opposes is not simply traditional Judaism. It may have included rabbinical fables and other Jewish legends, but the emphasis on "falsely called knowledge" smacks of gnosticism. To be sure, gnosticism did not reach a fully definable form until the second century, but forms of incipient gnosticism were probably behind the heresies attacked in Colossians and 1 John and perhaps other New Testament documents.<sup>15</sup>

At its heart, gnostic thought was eclectic, and it drew not only from Christianity, but also from Jewish mysticism as well as from the hellenistic mystery religions and pagan mythologies. Passing over the more practical question of what one must do to be saved from sin, it focused upon the speculative questions of the origin of evil and the restoration of the primitive order of the universe. Those who embraced it claimed special intuitive knowledge. They adopted the Greek dualism

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<sup>14</sup>The Ephesian letter may even have been a circular letter, written to several congregations of which Ephesus was only one. The earliest manuscript of Ephesians does not bear the phrase "in Ephesus," and not a few scholars deem this to be indicative of a circular letter as well as a way to account for the less personal character of the letter, see discussion in Guthrie, 510-511; Martin, II.226-227.

<sup>15</sup>A. Renwick, "Gnosticism," *ISBE* (1982) II.487-488.

of spirit and matter, assessing matter to be intrinsically evil. Given the several passages in 1 Timothy concerning women, it is likely that the heretics in Ephesus were quite sympathetic to the Ephesian cult of Artemis, which Paul had so vigorously opposed (cf. Ac. 19:23-41), or at least some sort of matriarchal theology. In any case, Ephesus was widely known for its glorification of the mother goddess figure. In contrast to other parts of the ancient world, the primary deities in Asia Minor were female. In Ephesus, the matriarchal goddess from whom all life originated, reigned supreme.<sup>16</sup>

### Opening Of The Letter (1:1-2)

The opening of the letter, as in most Greco-Roman correspondence, gives the sender, the recipient and a salutation of blessing. As the sender, Paul writes as an apostle, and the word apostle probably does double duty for Paul. In the more general sense, the word *apostolos* (= one who is sent) more or less corresponds to our English word "missionary," at least when used in an evangelistic context. However, it also carries weight as referring to a significant leader in the early Christian church. Of course, Paul is not numbered with the Twelve who were chosen directly by Christ in his earthly life, but he was, in fact, chosen for apostleship by the resurrected Christ (Ga. 1:1). His reference here to his apostleship as something commanded by God lays stress on the divine ordination of his ministry.

Timothy is described as Paul's "true son in the faith," a phrase which probably refers to his loyalty to Paul in his evangelistic mission. Certainly Timothy stood in contrast to various others who had deserted Paul (2 Ti. 1:15; 4:16). The familiar words grace, mercy and peace are a typical Christian blessing.

In this letter, Paul omits his customary thanksgiving and intercession (cf. Ro. 1:8-10; 1 Co. 1:4-9; 2 Co. 1:3-11; Ep. 1:3-14; Phil. 1:3-11; Col. 1:3-14; 1 Th. 1:2-10; 2 Th. 1:3-12; 2 Ti. 1:3-7; Phlm 4-7).<sup>17</sup> Only in Galatians, 1 Timothy and Titus is this thanksgiving and prayer missing. Perhaps, as in the case of Galatians (Ga. 1:6ff.), Paul is so distressed that he immediately wishes to confront the threat of a false gospel. It has been pointed out that in 1:3 he does not give a grammatical end to the sentence,<sup>18</sup> a roughness that is not particularly unusual in Greek but which may suggest some agitation on Paul's part.

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<sup>16</sup>R. and K. Kroeger, *I Suffer Not a Woman* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992) 50-54.

<sup>17</sup>For more information concerning the form and style of Paul's letters and their relationship to Greco-Roman letters, see W. Doty, *Letters in Primitive Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973).

<sup>18</sup>D. Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles [TNTC]* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957) 57.

## **False Gospel Versus True Gospel (1:3-20)**

In the remainder of the first chapter, Paul will do two things. First, he will issue a severe warning against the false teachers whom he perceives to be distorting the true nature of the gospel. In this section, the reader gains some idea as to the nature of this heresy. Second, Paul will describe the true gospel, particularly as it had been born out in his own experience.

### **The False Teachers (1:3-11)**

The nature of the heresy which deeply concerned Paul had several features. It emphasized "myths" and "endless genealogies" (1:4; 4:7). In this emphasis, it stirred up controversy, which in turn diverted energy away from the appropriate Christian endeavors of good works motivated by love (1:4b, 6; 6:4-5). At least a substantial part of this heresy seemed to rely upon theologizing about the law of Moses (1:7). It emphasized legalism and deemphasized faith and the integrity of a pure conscience (1:5, 19-20; 4:2). Later, Paul adds to this picture. Prominent among the false teachers was a virulent strain of aggressive feminism (2:11-12). It may even be that the women who were involved flaunted their assumed superiority by dressing ostentatiously (2:9-10), and it seems clear enough that they were engaging in malicious talk (3:11; 5:13). Some of this talk Paul describes as "old women's tales." Such tales drew from the traditions of "godless chatter" and "so-called knowledge," apparently a kind of secret, intuitive revelation (6:20-21). In antiquity, old women had a reputation for storytelling, particular religious storytelling. From earliest times in the area of Ephesus, female religious officials kept alive the ancient myths. The power of these myths were being pitted against the power of the gospel, and Paul considered this to be a serious threat, tantamount to turning away and following Satan (5:15).<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, some within the group of false teachers were demanding dietary restrictions and advocating that marriage was to be avoided (4:3).<sup>20</sup> Finally, it seems that the false teachers were eager to increase their personal wealth and did not hesitate to use their self-elevated positions to that end (3:3b; 6:5b-10, 17-19).

Given this threat, Paul reminds Timothy that he had already commissioned

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<sup>19</sup>Kroeger, 64. Certain gnostics venerated Satan as a benefactor of the human race, and it may be remembered that in the letters to the seven churches of Asia Minor, of which Ephesus was one, a woman called "Jezebel" taught the "deep things of Satan" (Rv. 2:20, 24).

<sup>20</sup>When Paul says that these teachers forbade marriage, we should not assume too quickly that they forbade sexual activity. Paul's severe warnings about having only one spouse (3:2) and his repeated warning about purity of conscience (1:5, 19; 3:9; 4:2, 14) may suggest that some sort of immorality was being rationalized as acceptable. In any case, Paul is clear that older women are to be respected as mothers and younger women as sisters "with absolute purity" (5:2). Furthermore, he asserts that widows who "live for pleasure" are spiritual dead (5:6).

him to restrict these false teachers and their heresies (1:3-4). What Timothy should promote among the Ephesian Christians were the basic values of Christianity--the values of sincere faith, love, purity of heart and a clear conscience (1:5). Precisely how these false teachers appealed to Mosaic law is not stated, but Paul certainly considers their use of the law to be distorted (1:7). If the problem in Ephesus is at all similar to the problem in Crete, what may be in view here are Jewish legends (Tit. 1:13-14; 3:9). It is not, of course, that Paul rejects the law. The law performs a valuable service, providing that one uses it as an indication of God's righteous demand (1:8-10; cf. Ro. 7:12, 14a). However, as Paul states elsewhere, the purpose of the law was to bring a consciousness of sin to sinful men and women (cf. Ro. 3:19-20, 31; 5:20a; 7:7, 13). It was to demonstrate God's displeasure with acts of lawlessness (1:9-10).<sup>21</sup> To use the law to establish all sorts of taboos and legends was inappropriate. Most important, the law must be used in ways which conformed to the gospel (1:11).

### **The True Gospel (1:12-20)**

The true gospel, to which the law conforms, had been demonstrated in the conversion and life of Paul. Though Paul was a man who had committed some of the sins which the law condemned (1:13a), God's mercy was bestowed upon him, since his crimes arose out of ignorance (1:12-14). The true gospel, then, is not a system of mysticism, secret knowledge or legalism. Rather, it is the gracious action of God to save sinners (1:15), and Paul considered himself to be the worst among them! He never forgot his life as an inquisitor (cf. Ac. 7:58; 8:3; 9:1-2; 22:4-5; 26:9-11; 1 Co. 15:9; Ga. 1:13; Ep. 3:8a). He viewed himself as the supreme example of God's saving grace (1:16), and the God who saved him was worthy of all honor and glory (1:17).<sup>22</sup>

Thus, Timothy must continue to wage war against any who would distort the true gospel (1:18b-19a). Early on, Timothy had been the object of prophetic utterances which had confirmed his future role of leadership (1:18a; cf. 4:14). Now he was to continue his defense of the gospel, being careful to avoid the defection of those who had distorted it (1:19b-20). As to the named heretics, Alexander and Hymenaeus, we know little, though the Alexander mentioned here is possibly the

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<sup>21</sup>Paul's list of lawbreakers, like his other lists (i.e., vice lists, virtue lists, charism lists, etc.), is suggestive, not exhaustive.

<sup>22</sup>In this beautiful doxology, Paul brings together four profound character traits from the Judeo-Christian understanding of God. God is sovereign over the ages rather than time-bound, and the expression *Basilei ton aionon* (= King of the ages), which in the NIV is rendered "eternal," admirably points to his lordship over history. He is also incorruptible (the NIV has "immortal," but the notion behind *aphtharto* is "imperishable.") He is invisible, as is appropriate for one who is by nature a Spirit (cf. 1:15). He is the only true God (cf. 1 Co. 8:5-6).

same as the Ephesian man of that name mentioned elsewhere (Ac. 19:33-34; 2 Ti. 4:14-15). If so, he was a Jewish metalworker and apparently respected as a skilled speaker, since he was put forward to appease an angry mob. He was one who had joined himself to the Christians but had vigorously opposed Paul. That Paul should "hand over to Satan" these two is explained by a similar action in Corinth, where a man was to be "handed over to Satan" for discipline. The point of this judgment was that the person might be saved in the end (1 Co. 5:4-5). It is implied that normally Satan has no power over believers, but by a deliberate act of the church, spiritual protection could be withdrawn for disciplinary reasons, thus opening the individual to the attacks of the enemy through either sickness or death.<sup>23</sup>

### **Order for Christian Life and Worship (2:1-15)**

Paul now shifts his attention to the way Christians ought to express themselves. They are not to give themselves to controversial debates about legends and technicalities of the law. Instead, they are to give themselves to God's work in the interests of faith, love, purity and sincerity. Yet what concrete form should such ideals take?

### **The Importance of Prayer (2:1-7)**

A primary responsibility of the Christian is to pray. Far better is it to pray than to engage in theological debate over obscurities. Prayers should be offered for all people, but particularly for government officials who by their statutes affect the lives of God's people (2:1-2). It is doubtful if one should place too fine a distinction between "requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving." Obviously, all of them have to do with prayer, and while the words have some variation in meaning, in at least three cases they could be rendered by the same English word "prayer." The words have the following meanings:<sup>24</sup>

*deesis* = entreaty, prayer, supplication

*proseuche* = prayer

*enteuxis* = petition, request, prayer, intercession

*eucharistia* = thanksgiving, gratitude

Probably, Paul simply wishes to forcefully point out the need for prayer among Christians.

Christians who pray are pleasing to God, particularly those who pray for

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<sup>23</sup>F. Bruce, *I & II Corinthians [NCBC]* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 54-55.

<sup>24</sup>BAG, loc. cit.

others. God wishes all people to be saved (2:3-4), so it is always appropriate to pray to that end. Christianity is not a private club for the elite, a conclusion toward which most esoteric thought and mysticism eventually leads. The truth of the gospel is for everyone! Furthermore, there is only one way in which women and men can come to God, and that is through the single mediator, Jesus Christ (2:5). Gnostic thought understood mediation between God and humans to be a series of emanations or *aeons*. Whether such thought is behind Paul's statement here, of course, is unknown, but it may well be that the heretics were advocating other mediums of divine revelation apart from Jesus Christ. If they were following "spirits" and "things taught by demons" (4:1), they may well have been claiming some sort of intuitive knowledge by revelation. Such claims were far from the gospel of God's grace. The Christian message focused upon the atoning death of Christ, the ransom for all women and men by which he bought their lives through his own death (2:6). The death of Jesus stood as God's testimony to his eternal plan, a witness that was given at the proper time in history (cf. Ro. 5:6; Ga. 4:4; He. 9:26). Paul had been commissioned as a missionary to spread this true faith among the Gentiles (2:7), and his commission was from no less than God (cf. 1:1).

### **The Order for Men (2:8)**

Since God's purpose is made clear in the ransoming death of Christ, the order for men<sup>25</sup> is that they should pray out of a life of holiness (2:8). Worshipers whose lives were stained with sin and whose consciences were defiled with guilt should seek cleansing before they approached God (cf. 1 Jn. 1:8-9). If they spend their time in argumentation and angry strife, their prayers will be inappropriate and ineffective.

### **The Order for Women (2:9-15)**

The order for women is more lengthy. Traditionally, this order has been read as a universal code for female decorum and applied generally to women of various times and places throughout Christian history. It has been used by some in the American holiness movement to restrict certain types of hair arrangements, jewelry, anything other than plain clothing, and so forth. It also has been used as the

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<sup>25</sup>The previous passages which speak of "men" (2:1; 2:4-5) and later passages which do the same (4:10; 6:5, 9, 11, 16) have the generic *anthropos*, a word that is inclusive of both genders. In fact, in these passages, it would be better to render them in English by the more general "all people" or "men and women" or some such inclusive expression. This is particularly important, since in 4:8 Paul uses a gender specific word *aner* (= a male, man in contrast to woman). The point of Paul's order of behavior in 4:8 and 4:9-15 is gender specific as well. The brevity of his comments about males as opposed to the length of his comments about females suggests that the heresy he combats has a pronounced feminine orientation.

primary passage for restricting women's roles in church life.<sup>26</sup> Such application seems unwarranted, since it misses the local circumstance out of which Paul was writing. To be sure, it is indeed a Christian ideal for women (and men as well) to present themselves in modesty and propriety. The desire to dominate is to be avoided by women (and men, too). Decency and moderation are not only the responsibility of women, nor is the call for servanthood.

The present passage arises out of the context of heretical teaching and false teachers, and as was pointed out earlier, this heresy seems to have significantly involved women and an aggressive feminist perspective. In all likelihood, Paul's comments about women are directed toward the behaviors of certain women who were caught up in this heresy. Their demeanor and dress was brash and ostentatious. Paul orders them to dress themselves with good deeds, not flashy clothes, since they profess to be worshipers of God (2:9-10).

Furthermore, Paul calls for these women to become learners instead of teachers (2:11). They are in no position to teach, since they do not understand the gospel. They are certainly in no position to domineer over men or to defy the creation accounts as recorded in the Old Testament (2:12-13).<sup>27</sup> A popular mythology in the ancient world was that woman was the author of man, rather than vice versa. The society around Ephesus had a definite matriarchal character, and it looked upon the feminine as primal source.<sup>28</sup> Analogous to this view was a gnostic teaching that Eve was the source of divine revelation, particularly in the Garden of Eden. In a region such as Ephesus, where the foremost deities were maternal, it can be well understood how Eve was venerated as the one who first tasted of the tree of knowledge. Thus, it seems likely that Paul was forbidding this sort of matriarchal primacy, and particularly, the view that woman was the author of man, since such a view flatly contradicted the Genesis account (cf. 2:20b-24). He forbids these women to teach; he forbids them to peddle their myths concerning female

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<sup>26</sup>Luther, at least, offered to women the privilege of leadership by way of exception in times of necessity. Calvin and Knox, however, were adamantly against women in any kind of ministerial role. Knox's *First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women* left little doubt about where he stood on the issue. Calvin contends that women are "by nature born to obey men," P. Jewett, *Man as Male and Female* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975) 67-68, 117, 131.

<sup>27</sup>The word *authentēo* (= to have authority, to domineer, to commit murder, to instigate, cf. *LS* (1968) 275; Kroeger, 87-98) has traditionally been taken to mean that women cannot have authority over men, and as a correlary, that they cannot serve as a teacher of men. This interpretation has been used as a general mandate for keeping women out of leadership roles in both churches and societies, refusing to women ordination, and restricting them to subordinate roles in a patriarchal structure. It is unlikely that this is what Paul has in mind. Rather, he addresses a specific, local situation. In the context of first century Asia Minor, the word *authentēo* was used in literary patterns which described sex reversal, female dominance and promiscuity, and creatorship, cf. Kroeger, 94-98.

<sup>28</sup>See extensive discussion in Kroeger, 105-170.

dominance; he bluntly corrects the fallacy that woman was the author man or that she was the brilliant and daring channel of special revelation in Eden (2:11-14).<sup>29</sup>

The final statement concerning child-bearing has been difficult for almost all interpreters (2:15). The hierarchical interpretation is that a woman will achieve salvation and fulfilment when she obeys God's ordinances to stay out of leadership roles in order to stay at home and have children.<sup>30</sup> Alternatively, some have suggested that this passage is an obscure allusion to Mary's motherhood of Jesus, and would render the phrase, "She shall be saved through the Childbearing."<sup>31</sup> Yet another approach is to translate the passage, "She will be brought safely through childbirth," that is, she will survive the experience of childbirth.<sup>32</sup> None of these are very happy interpretations. The first smacks of salvation by works, the second is obscure, to say the least, and the third is contrary to experience, since many Christian women have died in childbirth. Grammatically, the sentence is complex even apart from its theological meaning, for it reads, "*She* shall be saved...if *they* remain in faith..."<sup>33</sup> Who is the "she" and who are the "they," and what does it mean to be saved in childbearing?

In the first place, the clearest antecedent to the pronoun "she" is Eve. If so, then Paul may well be alluding to the protoevangelium of Genesis 3:15, when Yahweh God says to the snake, "I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your seed and hers; he will crush your head and you will strike his heel." Since Paul is already citing the early narratives concerning the creation and fall of humans in Genesis 3, it should not come as any surprise that he alludes to this passage as well. It was through childbearing that the promised deliverer would come, and Eve herself was to be saved in the end, because, in giving birth, she began the chain of procreation which culminated in the birth of Christ. If this line of explanation is correct, then the others refer to Eve's children, those women in the Christian congregation. When "they" remain steadfast in faith, love, holiness and propriety, they testify to the salvation brought about through Eve's childbearing. It is not as though Eve's salvation were contingent upon the faithfulness of Christian

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<sup>29</sup>An alternative translation for 2:12 would be, "I do not permit a woman to teach nor to represent herself as originator of man, but she is to be in conformity [with the Scriptures]. For Adam was created first, then Eve," cf. Kroeger, 103.

<sup>30</sup>W. Hendriksen, *Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus [NTC]* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1955) 111-112.

<sup>31</sup>cf. R. Ward, *Commentary on 1 & 2 Timothy & Titus* (Waco, TX: Word, 1974) 53; W. Barclay, *The Letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975) 68.

<sup>32</sup>*The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha [RSV]*, loc. cit.; cf. *Weymouth, Moffat, NASB*, loc. cit.

<sup>33</sup>Unfortunately, some translators have obscured the fact that the third person singular feminine pronoun is used here. In several translations (NIV, TCNT, Phillips, Moffat, Conybeare, Taylor) the English rendering is given in the plural, i.e., "women will be saved," when the text is clearly singular, i.e., "she will be saved."



women, but rather, that their faithfulness, which is expected, vindicates the promise God made to Eve.<sup>34</sup>

### **Order for Overseers and Deacons (3:1-16)**

One of the distinctive features of 1 Timothy and Titus is the formal attention they devote to ordained offices in the church. The establishment of church leaders began very early in the Pauline churches (Ac. 14:23).<sup>35</sup> The titles *presbyteroi* (= overseers, elders), *episkopoi* (= overseers, bishops) and *poimen* (= shepherds, pastors) seem to be used, more or less, interchangeably (cf. Ac. 20:17, 28). These leaders were responsible for spiritual oversight over the congregations (cf. 1 Th. 5:12; Ro. 12:8). Even within such categories of leadership, there seems to have been specialization or at least special emphases for diverse ministries (Ep. 4:11). Along with these primary leaders, there were also leaders called the *diakonoi* (= deacons, servants, ministers, cf. Phil. 1:1). Such leaders might be either men or women (cf. Ro. 16:1). Since Paul also uses the term *diakonos* to refer to his own ministry as well as the ministry of others (cf. Ro. 13:4; 15:8; 1 Co. 3:5; 2 Co. 3:6; 6:4; 11:15, 23; Ep. 3:7; 6:21; Col. 1:7, 23, 25; 4:7), it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between deacons on the one hand and elders on the other. The reference to elders and deacons in the address of the letter to the Philippians (1:1) may imply a distinction, but it is not until one reads 1 Timothy, with orders for each, that this distinction becomes explicit. Even here, the difference between the two offices is less than precise inasmuch as the descriptions given are largely in terms of character qualifications rather than function. Suffice it to say that most interpreters have understood deacons to have been subordinate to elders, since elders are always mentioned first (cf. Phil. 1:1; 1 Ti. 3:1, 8) and since, in normal non-religious speech, the term *diakonos* referred to a subordinate. By the 2nd century, the office of bishop had been further distinguished from the office of elder, so that there was a single bishop in a given community. Under him were the various elders of the local congregations. Under them were the deacons. That such a hierarchy was present in the time of Paul, however, is to be seriously questioned.

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<sup>34</sup>The conjunction *ean*, when used with the subjunctive, denotes what is expected to occur under certain circumstances or from a given standpoint, cf. BAG (1979) 211.

<sup>35</sup>There is some discussion concerning the verb *cheirotoneo* (= to choose or elect by raising hands), cf. NIVmg. Most scholars agree that installation rather than free election is what is indicated here, cf. E. Harrison, *Acts: The Expanding Church* (Chicago: Moody, 1975) 225, though the former idea cannot be ruled out. Longenecker suggests that the initiative was taken by the apostles, but probably with the concurrence of the congregations, cf. R. Longenecker, "The Acts of the Apostles," EBC (1981) IX.439.

### The Order for Overseers (3:1-7)

Paul begins his order for overseers with the introductory clause he used earlier: "Here is a trustworthy saying..." (cf. 1:15).<sup>36</sup> One who has aspirations for the task of oversight desires a noble thing (3:1). The most important prerequisite is reputable Christian character, and Paul discusses the ideals of this character in a series of short imperatives. Personal integrity is first on the list (3:2). The overseer must also be family oriented. The expression "the husband of but one wife" has occasioned much discussion (3:2). Some have felt that it demands marriage for ministers, others that it means a minister cannot have been remarried after losing a spouse through death or divorce, and still others that this is a prohibition against polygamy. These interpretations are less than satisfactory, however. Paul, of all people, would hardly argue against a minister remaining unmarried, since he was himself unmarried (cf. 1 Co. 7:8; 9:5, 15). Furthermore, Paul offers no restriction on remarriage after losing a spouse (cf. 1 Co. 7:8-9, 27-28, 39), and it seems unlikely that he would require something of ministers that was not required of other Christians. Polygamy or bigamy seems more likely than the other two, since it was commonly practiced in the contemporary pagan world,<sup>37</sup> but such a narrow field of interpretation might prove to be too narrow. It seems most likely that Paul has in mind the broader issue of marital fidelity. An overseer must not succumb to a popular morality which winked at extra-marital affairs as well as bigamy. Rather, he must be a person of unquestioned morality, loving only his wife and no one else.<sup>38</sup>

The other qualifications are quite straightforward. The Greek expressions which are used may have several possible translations, but the overall effect is not in doubt. Furthermore, as is probably true in all Paul's lists, he intends his comments to be suggestive, not exhaustive. Other character traits which follow in kind are no doubt intended.

*nephalios* (= sober, temperate in the use of wine)<sup>39</sup>

*sophron* (= prudent, thoughtful, self-controlled)

*kosmios* (= respectable, honorable)

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<sup>36</sup>This clause, which appears several times in the pastoral letters (cf. 1 Ti. 1:15; 3:1; 4:9; 2 Ti. 2:11; Tit. 3:8), implies quoted or traditional material. Various suggestions have been made, such as, that they are traditions passed down from Jesus or the apostles, perhaps the lyrics to an early Christian hymn, or a widely used confession of faith, cf. A. Hanson, *The Pastoral Letters [CBC]* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University, 1966) 27-28. We can say that at least the passages appear to be known formulas within the early churches.

<sup>37</sup>Guthrie, *Pastoral*, 80. Certain Jews still practiced polygamy at this period, as indicated in Justin Martyr's *Dialogue with Trypho*, 134.

<sup>38</sup>See the discussion in W. Hendriksen, 121-122; Ward, 55.

<sup>39</sup>While the literal meaning of this word refers to limited alcohol consumption, in view of the later reference not to indulge in much wine (3:3), it may be better to take this as a metaphor for being clear-headed and self-possessed.

*philoxinos* (= hospitable)

*didaktikos* (= skilful in teaching)

*me paroinos* (= not drunken, not addicted to wine)

*me plektes* (= not pugnacious, not a bully)

*epieikes* (= gentle, kind, yielding)

*amachos* (= peaceable, not quarrelsome)

*aphilargyros* (= not loving money, not greedy)

In addition to these various short expressions, Paul adds other expectations. An overseer must have a stable family with obedient children who show proper respect. If he is not able to gain respect from within his own family, serious doubts remain concerning his ability to lead the church (3:4-5). A parallelism exists between homelife and churchlife (cf. 3:15), and the overseer should care for his flock as he does his family. He should not be a recent convert, since too rapid a promotion often results in prideful disaster (3:6). The phrase "condemnation of the devil" (KJV) can be translated in two ways. It may mean the condemnation with which the devil was judged because of his rebellion against God (so NIV, Weymouth, Berkeley, Moffat),<sup>40</sup> or it may mean the condemnation which the arch accuser levels against those who fail (so NASB, Goodspeed).<sup>41</sup> Either is grammatically possible, but the latter rendering seems the more likely of the two. Given the tragedy of a novice who fails, one still must question the notion that God would then condemn him in the same way he condemned the devil. Finally, the overseer must be reputable among outsiders. This means, not that he is necessarily popular with outsiders, but that he commands respect from outsiders because of his excellent character. The trap of Satan will snare the one who does not maintain integrity both inside and outside the community of faith (3:7).

### **The Order for Deacons (3:8-13)**

The order for deacons, also, begins with a series of character delineations (3:8).

*semnos* (= dignified, serious, worthy of respect)

*me dilogos* (= not double-tongued or insincere)

*me oino pollo prosechontas* (= not addicted to much wine)<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup>These translators take the phrase as an objective genitive.

<sup>41</sup>These translators take the phrase as a subjective genitive.

<sup>42</sup>Given the instructions for moderation in drinking wine in the orders of both elders and deacons, it seems apparent that in the early church there was no demand for teetotalism. However, there certainly was serious warning about

*me aischrokerdos* (= not having a fondness for dishonest gain)

In addition, there are some extended expressions. Deacons should hold the faith<sup>43</sup> with a clear conscience, that is, they must combine correct doctrine with a pure life (3:9).<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, they must be given careful scrutiny (3:10).<sup>45</sup>

The introductory formula *hosautos* (= even so, in the same way) suggests that a corollary order is in view, and thus the possibility of the translation "deaconesses" for *gynaikas* (= "women," so NIVmg, NASBmg, NEBmg, Montgomery). It is possible to translate this word as "wives," but nothing in the context demands such a rendering; hence, the idea of "women" who were deaconesses is probably intended. Furthermore, there is nothing in the Greek text corresponding to the possessive "their," which appears in many English versions. If wives were intended, one would expect for such a qualifier to be present.<sup>46</sup> To assume such a qualifier when it is not there raises suspicions of tendentiousness. Thus, while there remains some ambiguity in the text, the weight leans toward a rendering of "deaconesses" rather than "wives." Such women should also be persons of impeccable character (3:11). They should be:

*semnos* (= dignified, serious, worthy of respect)

*me diabolos* (= not slanderous)

*nephalios* (= sober, temperate in the use of wine)

*pistos* (= trustworthy, dependable)

Returning now to deacons as a whole, Paul says that a deacon, just as an elder, must be a devoted husband to his wife while maintaining a stable family life (3:12). Those who serve well in their assigned tasks gain excellent standing and added assurance in their faith (3:13). The expression *bathmos* (= step, rank, standing) could mean either promotion, increased respect among the larger body of Christians, or good standing in the eyes of God.<sup>47</sup>

abuse.

<sup>43</sup>The expression "mystery of faith" is particularly Pauline. While there were mystery religions in the Greco-Roman world, Paul's use of this term is distinctly different. He emphasizes the present revelation and manifestation of the gospel. As such, the mystery of the faith is not to be taken as mysteriousness or mysticism. Rather, it is the gospel which once was hidden in past ages but which has now been made known to the saints (cf. Col. 1:26), cf. R. Longenecker, *Paul, Apostle of Liberty* (rpt. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1976) 43-45.

<sup>44</sup>A. Hanson, *The Pastoral Epistles [NCBC]* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982) 80.

<sup>45</sup>The idea here is not so much a probationary period as it is an adequate examination so that the candidate can be proved impeccable, cf. Guthrie, *Pastoral Letters*, 84-85.

<sup>46</sup>G. Denzer, "The Pastoral Letters," *JBC* (1968) II.354.

<sup>47</sup>R. Earle, "1 Timothy," *EBC* (1978) XI.369.

### **Appropriate Conduct in the Household of God (3:14-16)**

The various orders for church leaders which Paul has described are intended to guide Timothy until Paul can visit Ephesus himself (3:14). He anticipates the possibility of delay, and if he was imprisoned at the time of writing, his words refer to the uncertainty of the outcome in his court hearing (3:15a). Paul speaks of the church as the "household of God" (3:15). The expression *oikos* (= home, family, household) certainly views the church as a community of faith whose members are bound together in relationship to each other, not merely the aggregate of solitary Christians in a given town. The church is not a material building; rather, it is a community of living persons who share a common faith. Metaphorically, this household is the "pillar and foundation" of the truth. The church serves as a custodian of the gospel, a gospel which Paul describes in the following hymnic passage concerning the revelation of godliness.

That the poem in 3:16 is an early Christian hymn is the general conclusion of most scholars based on its rhythm and antithetical couplets (i.e., flesh and spirit, angels and nations, the world and glory). It treats two world orders, the divine and the human, and shows how Christ has brought both spheres together by his incarnation and glorification.<sup>48</sup> While the older English versions have the word "God," the earliest manuscripts have the relative pronoun "who."<sup>49</sup> Some have taken this to be a weakening of the doctrine of the deity of Christ, which is so clearly apparent in the passage, but such a conclusion is unnecessary. The very fact that the "mystery of piety" was manifested in the flesh clearly refers to the incarnation of Christ and points toward his deity.

### **Preparing for the Coming Apostasy (4:1-16)**

Paul has now charged Timothy to silence the false teachers in Ephesus (1:3-4; 2:11-12). He has given instructions concerning how Christians ought to behave themselves. They should not be pursuing controversial teachings which stir up strife (1:4b, 6-7), and they should not be careless about the Christian ethic of righteous living (1:18-19). Rather, they should give themselves to God's work (1:4) and to prayer for all people (2:1). Men should offer prayer out of a peaceful and holy life (2:8). Women, also, should live in faith, love, holiness and propriety (2:15b). Leaders must be equally conscientious. Elders must be above reproach (3:2), and Deacons and Deaconesses must be persons worthy of respect (3:8a, 11a). With these admonitions, Paul now turns back to the problem of theological heresy.

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<sup>48</sup>R. Martin, *Worship in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974) 48-49.

<sup>49</sup>B. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (London: United Bible Societies, 1975) 641.

### The Coming Apostasy (4:1-10)

It seems likely that Paul views the problem at Ephesus as the vanguard of the last great apostasy (4:1).<sup>50</sup> He certainly seems to view the coming apostasy (4:1-4) as closely related to the heresy in Ephesus (4:5-8). It is clear from other passages that Paul anticipated a general departure from the Christian faith in the last times (cf. 2 Ti. 3:1-9, 13; 2 Th. 2:3, 10-12). Of course, Paul and the other writers of the New Testament considered themselves to be in the last times already. The advent of Messiah had inaugurated the final period of history (cf. Ro. 13:11-12; 16:20; 1 Co. 7:29, 31b; Phil. 4:5; Ac. 2:16-17; Ja. 5:8-9; 1 Pe. 4:7; 1 Jn. 2:8, 18a). However, inasmuch as the length of the final period of human history was unknown, it was appropriate to speak of this apostasy in futuristic terms, even though the spirit of antichrist was already present in the world (cf. 2 Th. 2:7; cf. 1 Jn. 2:18).

The coming apostasy would be an abandonment of true Christian faith and a defection towards mysticism and spiritualism, what the Apocalypse calls "Satan's so-called deep secrets" (Re. 2:24). Such apostasy may refer to some type of incipient gnostic thought, since we know that among gnostics Satan was sometimes venerated as a benefactor of the human race,<sup>51</sup> or it may broadly refer to teaching which was devilish in its origin. In all likelihood, whatever else it may have been, it was probably esoteric and mystical. The propogators of this teaching were hypocrites and liars (4:2a). Their consciences had been cauterized into moral ambivalence (4:2b). They restricted marriage (but see Footnote #20) and called for abstention from certain foods (4:3a).

If the dietary restrictions are in any way analogous to the problem of eating food consecrated by pagans (cf. 1 Co. 8:1a, 4, 7-8; 10:19-20, 25-26, 30), Paul may well have considered such restrictions to have been a lapse into superstition. It was a popular notion in the ancient world that the air was full of spirits and demons. These creatures were always lurking nearby, hoping to gain entrance into a human, and one of the special ways in which they entered humans was by lighting upon food before it was eaten. This was why food was dedicated to the gods and goddesses. Consecration of food was a protective device against ingesting demons.<sup>52</sup> Thus, if these teachers forbade eating certain foods, they may have done so for superstitious reasons. On the other hand, Jewish food laws were also well-

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<sup>50</sup>Paul's expression, "The Spirit says...", could mean either that his knowledge of the coming apostasy depended upon the sayings of Jesus (cf. Mt. 24:10-13/Mk. 13:22), which were accepted as inspired, or that there had been a prophetic utterance in the early church, similar to the prediction of a famine by Agabus (cf. Ac. 11:28), or even that Paul himself had received a personal revelation about the future (cf. 2 Th. 2:1-12).

<sup>51</sup>Kroeger, 62.

<sup>52</sup>W. Barclay, *The Letters to the Corinthians [DSB]*, rev. ed. (Westminster: Philadelphia: 1975) 72-73.

known, and if the false teachers had a Jewish bent, they may have required abstention from certain foods based upon kosher regulations. We also know that certain Christians were confirmed vegetarians, probably for religious or philosophical reasons (Ro. 14:1-2). In any case, Paul is clear that God created food to be received with thanksgiving (4:3b). Such restrictions encroach upon Christian freedom. All God's creation is good,<sup>53</sup> and if food is consecrated to God, it may certainly be eaten (4:4-5).<sup>54</sup>

Paul wants Timothy to be a "good minister" (4:6).<sup>55</sup> His objective will be accomplished if his younger understudy will follow a course of sound doctrinal teaching. He certainly must avoid becoming embroiled in mythologies and esoteric stories kept alive by old crones (4:7). It is likely that the ascetics were also devaluing athletic training.<sup>56</sup> Against this, Paul says that athletic training does have some value, though of course, godliness has the greatest value for both the present and the future (4:8). Paul rounds off this part of his discussion with another "trustworthy saying" from the tradition of the church (see footnote #36).<sup>57</sup> Finally, he says that the Christian hope is in the living God, who is the Savior of all humans, particularly those who believe.<sup>58</sup>

### **Charge to Timothy Concerning Pastoral Duties (4:11-16)**

Timothy's responsibility was to teach the central truths of the Christian faith, that is, to proclaim the call to a life of godliness and the truth of God's saving power (4:11). While some might denigrate his youthfulness, particularly the false teachers and "old women" (cf. 4:7), Timothy must not be put off by this cynicism. Instead, he must answer it with an exemplary lifestyle (4:12). Until Paul arrived (and he anticipated a trip to Ephesus), Timothy was to conduct regular services with public reading of Scripture,<sup>59</sup> preaching and teaching (4:13). These were the primary

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<sup>53</sup>Elsewhere, Paul says "all food is clean" (Ro. 14:20).

<sup>54</sup>Incidentally, Paul's statements here and in 1 Co. 10:30 may imply that Christians practiced the ritual of saying a prayer of blessing before eating.

<sup>55</sup>Here, the ambiguity of the term *diakonos* (= deacon, minister) is apparent, cf. introductory discussion of 3:1-16.

<sup>56</sup>Knight, 195.

<sup>57</sup>Grammatically, the "trustworthy saying" could refer either to the previous statement (so RSV, JB, NAB, NASB) or the following one (so NIV, NEB). Most scholars believe it refers to the previous one, i.e., "godliness has value for all things..."

<sup>58</sup>Universalists appeal to 4:10 to support the idea of universal salvation, but in light of the rest of Scripture, this concept is doubtful. The traditional understanding is that God is *potentially* the Savior of all people, because of the cross, but *actually* the Savior of those who believe, cf. Earle, 373.

<sup>59</sup>Public reading of Scripture, one passage from Torah and one from the Nebiim, was the heart of the Jewish synagogue service, and Christian public readings, no doubt, were patterned after the Jewish practice, cf. E. Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987) 457-459. In addition, Paul advocated the

duties to which he had been called when he had been ordained by the elders (4:14).<sup>60</sup> At the time of his commissioning, a prophetic oracle had been uttered concerning his future (cf. 1:18). Furthermore, these were the things which would prove his worth to the church (4:15). He must guard his lifestyle and his doctrine, for these would ultimately would prove of enduring value for his own salvation as well as the salvation of others (4:16).

## **Order for Christian Relationships (5:1--6:2)**

Following his charge to Timothy concerning pastoral duties, Paul launches into a lengthy ethical policy for relationships among Christians in the Ephesian community.

### **Respect for Peers and Those Older (5:1-2)**

The first set of instructions addresses interpersonal relationships on the basis of age. An older man should be treated with deference, as if he were one's father.<sup>61</sup> Older men might need to be rebuked at times, but if occasion demanded, Timothy must avoid harshness, due to their age. Younger men should be treated as equals, on the level of brothers. Old women should be treated as mothers and younger women as sisters. Finally, all relationships between persons of the opposite sex must be kept absolutely pure (see Footnote #20).

### **The Problem Concerning Widows (5:3-16)**

Widows were in a particularly vulnerable position in ancient societies, which were often patriarchal. They could not simply enter the work force, except under very restricted conditions. Depending upon their age, they might not be in a position to remarry. In the Old Testament, widows were usually categorized with orphans or other disadvantaged groups, and therefore, were accorded special

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public reading of his own letters (1 Th. 5:27; Col. 4:16), so we may assume that the congregation had at least the Ephesian Letter, if not others. Later in 1 Timothy (5:18), Paul quotes a saying of Jesus which is also recorded in Luke 10:7, and he puts it under the rubric of "scripture". This implies that some of the traditions of Jesus may have been written at this early date and were available for reading (cf. Lk. 1:1).

<sup>60</sup>Whether this may properly be called an ordination, at least in the later ecclesiastical sense, is debated, but it seems at least to have included a general recognition of Timothy's call to ministry by the other elders, who confirmed his calling by the gesture of the imposition of hands. The practice of laying hands upon the head of another person usually indicates the impartation of a blessing or the consecration of that person to a special task (Ge. 48:14; Lv. 27:22-23). Paul may very well have been one of the elders who shared in this commissioning of Timothy (2 Ti. 1:6).

<sup>61</sup>While the Greek word *presbyteros* (= old man, elder) is used in other NT documents to refer to church leaders, particularly in the Book of Acts, it is generally agreed that here, due to contextual reasons, the word refers to older men in the community of faith. Earlier, Paul used the word *episkopos* (3:1) instead of *presbyteros*, and this helped to avoid confusion (but see 5:17).



consideration. They shared in the benefit of tithes (Dt. 14:28-29; 26:12) and were to be protected from exploitation (Ex. 22:22-24; Dt. 24:17). Special provisions were made for them during harvest (Dt. 24:19-21).

In the Greco-Roman world, the lot of widows was equally precarious. In Palestine, the plight of Jewish widows was proverbial, as can be seen in the teachings of Jesus (Lk. 18:1-5; 21:2-4; Mk. 12:40). In the earliest Christian communities, the care of widows was deemed an especially worthy cause (Ac. 6:1-6; 9:39; Ja. 1:27). It is out of this context, then, that the lengthy discussion of widows occurs in 1 Timothy. While the category of widows certainly includes those whose husbands had been deceased, it may have been even more inclusive. Since polygamy was practiced in the ancient world, a man who accepted the Christian faith but who also had more than one wife, might be obliged to choose the wife with whom he would continue to live. Those not chosen would be in a very unfortunate position indeed, and perhaps the order of widows included such persons.<sup>62</sup>

Instructions for the assistance of widows would have been further complicated if, as has been suggested earlier, there was an aggressive strain of matriarchal theology infiltrating the Christian community. The language of 5:9 implies that there was by this time an official order of widows who were supported by the church, and who, in return, were expected to carry out a ministry of hospitality and service to others. However, Paul obviously does not consider it to be the church's responsibility to care for all widows in every case. Certain qualifications must be met, and these seem to be aimed at weeding out support for potential troublemakers and/or those who had other resources.

Thus, Paul's first instruction is that assistance for widows must be restricted to those who are truly deprived (5:3).<sup>63</sup> If a widow has other family resources, such as, living children and/or grandchildren, then they should bear responsibility for her support (5:4;).<sup>64</sup> There is a great contrast between the widow who lives precariously, depending upon God's help, and the widow who wants to be self-indulgent (5:5-6). Timothy was obliged to use discretion in the dispensing of church funds (5:7), and families who were not willing to care for their own were severely castigated (5:8).

Other qualifications follow, and these may well have been designed for the official order of widows who were distinct from the general category of widows.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup>Barclay, 105. The present author knows of similar situations in tribal cultures of Africa, where he has conducted missionary work.

<sup>63</sup>There is a play on words here, since the word *cheras* means both "widow" and "one deprived." Thus, Paul says, 'As to deprived ones, honor those who are really deprived,' cf. Hendriksen, 168.

<sup>64</sup>Paul may well have in mind the fifth of the ten commandments (cf. Ex. 20:12; Dt. 5:16).

<sup>65</sup>Christians, of course, ought to be concerned about all disadvantaged people. However, the creation of an

Widows must be at least in their sixties before they could become dependent upon the church, probably because at that age the likelihood of remarriage was remote (5:9a). Furthermore, a widow must have been faithful to her husband (5:9b).<sup>66</sup> She must already have proven herself to be a person given toward good deeds, a woman with skills in mothering, hospitality, and the spirit of servanthood.

Widows younger than sixty should not be enrolled (5:11a). It has been suggested by several scholars that perhaps enrollment on such a list included a vow of celibacy, and younger widows would be more apt to go back on their vow and seek remarriage (5:11b).<sup>67</sup> If they committed themselves to celibacy in order to be enrolled, and later remarried, they would be unfaithful in their promise before Christ, thus bringing disrepute upon themselves (5:12).<sup>68</sup> In any case, Paul seemed to think that the risk was high that young widows would leave off doing the good deeds of Christian service and give their time to disruptive behaviors (5:13). If the church at Ephesus was already experiencing such behaviors on the part of some women, Paul's concern was certainly justified. Thus, his counsel to younger widows was to seek remarriage and a new family life (5:14).<sup>69</sup> Some younger widows had already turned after Satanic notions, and Paul's statement may very well be descriptive of the Ephesian matriarchal heresy.<sup>70</sup>

Finally, Paul concludes by pointing out that not only the men of the church are responsible for the care of disadvantaged widows. Women, also, must share the responsibility to care for family members in distress (5:16a). Paul closes the section as he began, with the concern that the church not be overtaxed with the care of persons who had other resources (5:16b; cf. 5:3-4).

In all this discussion, there is a constant interplay between binding principles

enrollment for widows who were to receive continuing church support called for special criteria. Otherwise, the resources of the church would be burdened beyond capacity.

<sup>66</sup>Here, as in 3:2, 12, the issue is probably one of faithfulness to a single spouse in an era of pronounced promiscuity. Paul is probably not referring to a woman who had lost her second husband, for why should he discriminate against her, since she might very well be in as deprived a circumstance as anyone else?

<sup>67</sup>Hanson (1966), 59-60; A. Nute, "The Pastoral Letters," *IBC* (1986) 1482; Denzer, II.356.

<sup>68</sup>The notion that the "broken pledge" was a violation of the first marriage covenant is not plausible. Why should a widow who remarries be charged with violating the marriage covenant of her deceased husband, when remarriage was permissible for widows (cf. 1 Co. 7:39; Ro. 7:1-3)?

<sup>69</sup>Elsewhere, Paul addresses three classes of single people, the *cheras* (= widow, one with a deceased spouse), the *parthenos* (= virgin, one not married), and the *agamos* (the unmarried, a general category, but in 1 Corinthians possibly especially referring to divorcees). In all three cases, he permits marriage and/or remarriage, though he warns that the advantages of the single life should be seriously considered as well (1 Co. 7:8-9, 27-28, 39). Still, it was better to marry than to be sexually frustrated (1 Co. 7:8-9), and remarriage was not to be considered a sin (1 Co. 7:27-28, 36, 39).

<sup>70</sup>Kroeger, 62, 127, 163.

and varying local applications. Care for the disadvantaged is a binding principle upon all Christians, taught in the law, the prophets and the gospels. Paul's application of this principle in Ephesus was local and dependent upon a limited cultural context and church situation. Some of his applications might very well need to be changed for other settings, but the mandate for benevolence to those who are disadvantaged holds true in all cases.

### **Treatment of Leaders (5:17-20)**

Paul now turns to the treatment of church leaders. He uses the word *presbyteros* (= elder, old man), not in the earlier sense of older men (cf. 5:1), but in the technical sense of a church leader who helps direct the affairs of the church. Such leaders should be given double honor, particularly those who serve in the tasks of preaching and teaching (5:17). The Greek word *time* (= honor, honorarium) is probably to be taken in the sense of monetary compensation, particularly since Paul quotes Torah and the sayings of Jesus, and both sources speak of compensation (5:18; cf. Dt. 25:4; Lk. 10:7). However, it should be remembered that Paul also has balanced his statement by warning church leaders against greed (3:3b, 8b).

If a church leader is accused of wrongdoing, such accusation must be supported by independent witnesses (5:19). Paul, of course, is here following the command of Torah (Nu. 35:30; Dt. 17:6; 19:15; cf. Jn. 8:17; He. 10:28), and such corroboration was especially important if, as has been suggested, the Ephesian church was beset with a chain of rumor and gossip (cf. 3:11; 5:13). If, after proper examination, a church leader was proven to have done wrong, he should be publicly chastised as a warning to other leaders (5:20). Furthermore, he must not be reinstated too quickly (5:22). All handling of church discipline must be conducted in fairness and without favoritism, for the one who discharges this responsibility does so in the sight of all heaven (5:21).<sup>71</sup> Favoritism, in addition to being unjust, also brings disrepute to the leaders who show it. Hasty appointments (or reinstatements) to leadership is risky at best (5:22a). The novice runs the strong possibility of falling into the sin of conceit (cf. 3:6), and furthermore, those who commission him implicitly vouch for his personal integrity. Fallen leaders, on the other hand, have brought reproach upon the whole church. If a leader falls, those who appointed him or who reinstate him share the taint of his sin (5:22b), so they should be cautious.

Briefly, Paul inserts a personal word for Timothy. He instructs his young colleague to drink wine in moderation (5:23). It may be that Timothy had forgone

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<sup>71</sup>The "elect angels" stand distinct from the angels who fell (cf. 2 Pe. 2:4; Jude 6).

the use of wine altogether in the effort to remain pure or to avoid addiction (cf. 3:3, 8). However, he also was suffering from dyspepsia, and it was commonly believed in the ancient world that wine had medicinal qualities.<sup>72</sup> Thus, Paul urges the use of wine in moderation.<sup>73</sup>

Finally, Paul gives a last comment on the nature of sin and judgment, probably to be taken in the context of commissioning leaders for the church. Some people's sins are obvious, and can be judged immediately, thus removing them from the candidacy of leadership (5:24a). Other people, however, have secret sins which may never be known until the great judgment, when all people shall stand before God (5:24b). Avoiding a hasty ordination, as urged earlier, might have the good result of giving more time for potential leaders to prove themselves (cf. 3:10). Similarly, just as some sins are obvious while others are hidden, so also some good deeds are obvious while others are not well known (5:25; cf. Mt. 6:3-4).

### **Slaves and Masters (6:1-2)**

The last group which Paul addresses are the slaves in the Christian community. Paul urges slaves to give full respect to their masters. His motivation for this command is that the behavior of Christian slaves should not impugn the reputation of the church or its message (6:1). We know that by the second century, Christianity was slandered as a religion which disrupted society by appealing to women, slaves and young people.<sup>74</sup> It is not unlikely that this same sort of slander was being bandied about in the time of Paul. Paul's approach to slavery, of course, creates a theological tension. On the one hand, he can say that in Christ there is neither slave nor free, but that all believers are equal (Ga. 3:28; Col. 3:11). At the same time, he also requires slaves to be respectful and obedient to their masters (Col. 3:22; Ep. 6:5-7). They are to remain content with their station, though if they could gain manumission, they should do so (1 Co. 7:21). What saves Paul from being unprincipled in this theological tension is that his ultimate concern is the gospel. It is not that Paul necessarily approves of slavery, for in his letter to Philemon he implicitly suggests manumission as the Christian response (Phlm 15-16, 21). Still, he is willing to make temporary concessions, when necessary, so that the message of Christ might be unhindered (1 Co. 9:12-23). Thus, slaves are advised not to allow familiarity to breed contempt (6:2). They must consider their

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<sup>72</sup>For instance, the Jewish Talmud stated, "...wine is the greatest of all medicines: where wine is lacking, drugs are necessary," cf. B. Bandstra, "Wine," *ISBE* (1988) IV.1071.

<sup>73</sup>While the English translation might be construed to mean that Timothy was to leave off drinking water altogether, this is probably not what is intended.

<sup>74</sup>E. Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her* (New York: Crossroad, 1983) 263.

station in life to be an act of service in the cause of Christ.

### **Final Warnings Against False Teachers (6:3-10)**

Turning back to the problem of false teachers and apostasy, Paul offers his final warnings to Timothy. The development of Paul's thought throughout the letter is worth summarizing.

- 1) Initial warning and charge to silence the false teachers (1:3-10)
- 2) Order for women, who were propagators of this teaching, to be silent in the church (2:11-14)
- 3) Order for church leaders to be people of reputable, godly character, and the affirmation of the church as the pillar and ground of truth against false teaching (3:14-15)
- 4) Warning against the coming apostasy, of which the present heresy was a prelude (4:1-5)
- 5) Caution that the church must not become the financial supporter of those who propagate destructive teachings (5:13-15)
- 6) Final warning against heresy and the ethical malaise (6:3-10)

### **The Vice of Pride (6:3-5)**

The purveyors of false doctrine were in fundamental disagreement with the teachings of the Lord Jesus as well as with the godly teachers of the church (6:3). In all periods of its history, the church must recognize that the norm for theology is Jesus Christ and his teaching. The teachings of any church leader must always be judged by the criteria of the teachings of Jesus. Paul understood Jesus' words to be authoritative, and he quoted from the dominical sayings of the Lord as such (cf. Ac. 20:35; 1 Co. 7:10; 11:23ff.; 1 Ti. 5:18).

In Ephesus, Timothy confronted a group of instructors who were willing to use the teachings of Jesus only insofar as his words agreed with their own thought forms. Such teachers also felt free to reject whatever sayings of Jesus were inconvenient. Such an approach was not truly Christian, and the false teachers were motivated by pride (6:4a). Those who sponsored them were more interested in debate for debate's sake (6:4b), which leads to all sorts of sinful attitudes and behaviors. Especially reprehensible was the tendency for such people to use the Christian faith<sup>75</sup> as a means for acquiring wealth (6:5).

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<sup>75</sup>The exact term in the Greek text is *eusebia* (= piety, godliness, religion), and it is used several times in 1 Timothy (2:2; 3:16; 4:7-8; 6:3, 5-6, 11). Probably the nuance of religion fits best with Paul's context.

### **The Vice of Greed (6:6-10)**

Having mentioned those who perceive Christianity as the avenue for financial profit, Paul now comments further about the temptation of greed. In the ancient world, teachers and philosophers were customarily paid for their services, and in Corinth, Paul was once accused of being an amateur and not professionally qualified when he refused such patronage (cf. 2 Co. 11:7-12).<sup>76</sup> Given this custom, it is not too surprising that the false teachers in Ephesus expected financial remuneration as well. However, while Paul certainly says, just as did Jesus, that "the worker deserves his wages," he also clearly holds in view the ethic of Jesus that his disciples were to "be on their guard against all kinds of greed" (Lk. 12:15).

As a contrast to those who use religion as a means for getting money, Paul says that religion, along with contentment,<sup>77</sup> is great gain (6:6)! Echoing Job, he states that all humans were born into the world without worldly possessions (cf. Job 1:21; Ecc. 5:15), and when they depart this life, they can certainly take nothing with them (6:7)! The necessities of food and clothing, which God provides for even sparrows and flowers (cf. Mt. 6:25-34), is enough (6:8). Those who wish for riches expose themselves to temptations and destructive behaviors (6:9). While money may not be the root of all evil, the love of money certainly is--and it must be borne in mind that one need not have money to love it (6:10)! Those who have put their strongest efforts toward the goal of money have often injured their faith and experienced tremendous disappointment and duress.

### **Final Pastoral Charge to Timothy (6:11-21)**

Paul now brings his letter to a close with some final advice to his younger colleague. The contrasting goals between the true Christian pastor and the false one could not be clearer. The vices of pride and greed, just described (cf. 6:3-10), are the things from which Timothy must run. The goals of righteousness, piety, faith, love, endurance and meekness are the values which Timothy must pursue (6:11). Given the fact that there will always be people who follow the Christian way with mixed motives, not to mention the coming of a great apostasy, Timothy must continue in the fight for genuine Christian faith and ideals.<sup>78</sup> He must persevere so

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<sup>76</sup>See discussion in M. Thrall, *I and II Corinthians [CBC]* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1965) 172; V. Furnish, *2 Corinthians [AB]* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984) 507-508.

<sup>77</sup>The word *autarkeia* (= contentment, self-sufficiency) does not necessarily mean deprivation. Rather, it means an attitude of acceptance toward God's providential care, regardless of the circumstance in which one finds oneself (cf. Phil. 4:11-13).

<sup>78</sup>That the role of the Christian leader is inevitably a struggle against false teaching is everywhere evident in Paul's letters (cf. Ga. 4:19; Phil. 1:30; Col. 1:29; 2:1; 4:12; 2 Ti. 4:7).

as to lay hold on the prize of eternal life which awaits him (cf. 1 Co. 9:24; Phil. 3:12). It is not, of course, that Timothy's salvation depends upon his good works, but rather, that his faithful perseverance will lead naturally to the final consummation of his faith (6:12a). Timothy's call to eternal life was made when he first responded to Christ, and the affirmation of his faith was witnessed in the presence of the Christian community, probably through baptism (6:12b).<sup>79</sup> Timothy's confession of Jesus as the Messiah in the presence of witnesses was analogous to Jesus' confession of his own messiahship before Pilate (cf. Jn. 18:33-37).

Now Paul reminds Timothy that in his ministry he serves under the scrutiny of God, the giver of all life, and Jesus Christ. He is responsible to faithfully discharge his ministerial duties in a blameless manner until Christ's second advent (6:13-14).<sup>80</sup> This final appearance of Christ will occur in God's own time (cf. Mk. 13:32-37; Ac. 3:21), for God is sovereign over the universe (6:15-16).<sup>81</sup> Similar to the doxology he gave earlier (cf. 1:17), Paul now adds a further word of glorification. God alone is the Lord of history. In his purest essence, he cannot be approached or seen. He alone is ultimately to be honored and accorded dominion.<sup>82</sup> Such a description is in keeping with the Old Testament ideal that the vision of God is not for human eyes, for as God said to Moses, "No one may see me and live," (Ex. 33:20; cf. Ex. 19:10-12, 20-21; 24:9-11; Dt. 4:12, 15-18; Ge. 32:30; Jg. 13:22). Of course, the Christian proclamation is that Jesus Christ, the mystery of godliness, has made God accessible and visible (cf. 3:16). The fact that Paul ends this doxology with the familiar "Amen" may suggest that his words were a familiar benediction, possibly used in worship by the early congregations.

As a final word, possibly also aimed at the false teachers, Paul instructs Timothy to call for an end to the arrogance of self-sufficiency. The longevity of wealth is notoriously uncertain, but the God who rules over all is always faithful and

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<sup>79</sup>Some have supposed that Paul may here be referring to Timothy's ordination, but this idea seems unlikely. Much more likely is that the reference to the "good confession" was Timothy's affirmation of the Christian faith at his baptism. The use of the definite article "the" denotes that Paul has in mind a particular occasion. The western text of Ac. 8:37 is probably typical of the kind of confession which was made, and elsewhere, Paul describes the Christian confession of faith as a verbal proclamation that Jesus was Lord (cf. Ro. 10:9-13).

<sup>80</sup>Paul uses the word *epiphaneia* (= appearing, visible manifestation) to describe Christ's return, that is, the time when Christ shall descend in the clouds to the earth to judge the world (cf. Ac. 1:10-11; Rv. 1:7).

<sup>81</sup>Some interpreters sense a subtle shift in Pauline theology with respect to his anticipation of the second coming of Christ. In his early letters, for instance, he used the first person plural pronoun "we," which in turn suggests that he supposed that he might himself be alive to see this event (cf. 1 Th. 4:13-17; 1 Co. 15:51-52). Here, he seems to view the return of Christ in more distant terms, or at least, in a way that prohibits precisely deciphering the time.

<sup>82</sup>The emperor of Rome was called *Pantokrator* (= the omnipotent). Here, Paul describes God as the one with eternal dominion.

can be depended upon to supply all needs (6:17; cf. Phil. 4:19). Instead of aiming for worldly wealth, they should aim for riches in heaven, which are attainable by good deeds and generosity (6:18-19; cf. Mt. 6:19-21; Lk. 18:22). In so doing, they take hold of the life that is truly life. As Paul says elsewhere, what we see now is temporary, but what we do not yet see is eternal (2 Co. 4:16-18).

Timothy, for his part, must guard the faith, a warning that is repeated in 2 Timothy (cf. 2 Ti. 1:13-14). He must avoid the controversial theologizing of the false teachers, which, while it has the appearance of knowledge, is not true knowledge at all (6:20). Those who follow this *gnosis* wander from the purity of the Christian faith.

Paul closes with the familiar "grace to you." The fact that the pronoun "you" is pluralized suggests that Timothy should read the letter aloud to the whole congregation (cf. 4:13).



## The Final Word

### Studies in 2 Timothy

#### Author and Setting

The same controversy over authorship which surrounds 1 Timothy and Titus also surrounds 2 Timothy.<sup>83</sup> No one doubts that Paul's name is affixed to it (2 Ti. 1:1), but many scholars doubt that this address is historically accurate. There is far more to the issue than simply a tendency on the part of liberal scholars to fling overboard the historicity of the Bible (see the critical introductions and commentaries).<sup>84</sup> However, while the objections are substantial, they are not overwhelming. In fact, as Luke Johnson has pointed out, much of the case against the Pauline authorship of these letters derives from the common practice of treating the three Pastoral Letters in a group so that the evidence builds cumulatively. When they are treated individually, however, the case against them varies. In 2 Timothy, for instance, the argument that the Pastoral Letters contain too elaborate a church structure for the 60s A.D. simply does not hold, since in 2 Timothy there is little if any church structure evident at all. Furthermore, the vocabulary and style of 2 Timothy is remarkably close to that of the undisputed Pauline letters, more so than the vocabulary and style of 1 Timothy and Titus. Furthermore, the critical reconstruction of the Pastoral Letters as compositions by a Pauline disciple has problems of its own,<sup>85</sup> not the least of which is their acceptance as genuine by the ancient church.<sup>86</sup> When everything relating to such a reconstruction has been said, and a great deal has been said, there does not seem to be sufficient reason to overthrow the testimony of the early church that 2 Timothy, along with the other two Pastoral Letters, came from St. Paul.<sup>87</sup> This does not rule out the possibility of

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<sup>83</sup>See the comments in the introduction to 1 Timothy.

<sup>84</sup>For instance, some of the early collections of the Pauline corpus did not include the Pastoral Letters, such as, the Chester Beatty Papyri (c. 200 A.D.) and the Marcionite Canon (mid-2nd century A.D.). On the other hand, the Muratorian Fragment (late 2nd century A.D.) contains them, cf. F. Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1988) 130, 135, 158.

<sup>85</sup>Donald Guthrie has a very insightful discussion concerning the problems with theories of epistolary pseudepigraphy, D. Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1970) 671-684.

<sup>86</sup>By contrast, for instance, the ancient church rejected the pseudepigrapha associated with Paul's name but known to be spurious, such as, *3 Corinthians*, *Letter to the Laodiceans*, *Letters of Paul and Seneca*, and *Acts of Paul and Thecla*.

<sup>87</sup>Those scholars who would deny them to Paul must then address the theological challenges such a conclusion raises concerning the canon of the New Testament as well as the inclusion into the canon of dishonest statements. In 2 Timothy, this latter problem would be especially acute, for the writer not only claims to be Paul (1:1), he claims to

his use of an amanuensis, of course, but the breadth and genius of Paul was such that one should not discount the presence of a wide range of vocabulary and style from a single author.<sup>88</sup>

Even after one reaches a conclusion regarding the authorship of 2 Timothy, still the letter must be fitted into the chronology of the closing events of Paul's life. The letter itself demonstrates that Paul felt himself to be near the end of his life and career (4:6-8). We know from Luke's record in Acts that Paul spent at least four years in incarceration--two years in Caesarea Palestine (Ac. 23:23-24, 31-35; 24:22-27) and two more years under house arrest in Rome following his appeal to Caesar (Ac. 28:16, 30-31). Afterwards, no more biblical information exists. We also know that when Paul wrote the Philippian letter during incarceration,<sup>89</sup> he was hopeful for a release and the opportunity to minister in Macedonia (Phil. 1:26; 2:24). To complicate the picture, however, he also envisioned the possibility of a mission to the west in Spain (Ro. 15:23-24, 28-29).

Three different scenarios have been offered by scholars in the attempt to reconstruct the closing years of Paul's life. The traditional scenario is that Paul was indeed released at the end of his two year house arrest in Rome (62-64 A.D.). He then continued missionary activities in either the east (Macedonia) or the west (Spain), and was arrested a second time (67-68 A.D.). It was during this second arrest that he wrote the Pastoral Letters, including 2 Timothy, and it was during this second arrest that he was martyred under the pogrom of Caesar Nero.<sup>90</sup> An

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have known first-hand Timothy's mother and grandmother (1:5), he claims to have been divinely appointed by God to his Gentile mission (1:11), he claims to have endured persecutions in Asia Minor (3:11), and he claims to have appeared on trial before the Roman government (4:16). All these things would be simply untrue if this letter was a fabrication by a Pauline disciple, however well-intended.

<sup>88</sup>While the various critical introductions, both liberal and conservative, address the conventional arguments pro and con regarding the authorship of the Pastoral Letters, in the opinion of this writer Luke Johnson's discussion has been a breath of fresh air, particularly since it comes from a scholar who has no apparent theological axe to grind, cf. L. Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament: An Introduction* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986) 381-389.

<sup>89</sup>It is debated which incarceration lies behind Philippians, but in general it seems not to have been the same circumstances as the incarceration behind Colossians due to differences in the companions which Paul says are accessible to him (cf. Phil. 2:19-21, 25-30; Col. 4:7, 10-13). Of course, during an incarceration as long as four years, circumstances could easily have shifted.

<sup>90</sup>This scenario was supported by Eusebius and Jerome in the ancient church, cf. R. Martin, *New Testament Foundations* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978) 300. Against this dating, however, is the evidence of 1 Clement 6 (c. 100 A.D.), which describes the great persecutions and martyrdoms in Rome in a way analogous to the Roman historian Tacitus. This persecution would have been in 64-65 A.D. after the great fire in Rome, cf. M. Grant, trans., *Tacitus, the Annals of Imperial Rome* (New York: Penguin, 1971) 365-366. Thus, while retaining the general order of this scenario, the dating has been reconstructed by some scholars as follows, cf. F. Bruce, *Paul, Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977) 475.

A.D. 60 (Paul's arrival in Rome)

A.D. 60-62 (Paul under house arrest)

alternative reconstruction has been offered to accommodate the uniform testimony of later Christian writers that both Paul and Peter perished in Rome in 64 A.D. In this scenario, Paul was not released after his first imprisonment, but he was executed under Caesar Nero.<sup>91</sup> The hope of going to Spain was unfulfilled. Paul may or may not have written the Pastoral Letters. Finally, a third alternative has been suggested that Paul's first appeal to Caesar ended with a sentence of banishment to Spain, a relatively mild punishment which would have enabled him to resume missionary work and satisfy his desire to go further west. However, upon hearing about the persecution of Christians in 64 A.D. following the great fire in Rome, Paul returned to Rome where he was arrested again. This time he was martyred. This third scenario puts the writing of 1 Timothy and Titus between the first and second imprisonments. It accommodates his travel plans (Tit. 3:12), yet allows room for the composition of 2 Timothy at the time of his second arrest in Rome (2 Ti. 1:17; 4:9, 11, 21).

No firm conclusion can be drawn regarding these alternatives, for each is plausible in its own way. The third alternative seems to satisfy both the dating problems as well as the biblical information, but the question of Paul's final years must be left open unless more information is forthcoming.

### **Purpose of the Letter**

Paul's situation in 2 Timothy was precarious. Not only was he incarcerated (1:16; 2:9; 4:16), he had been refused the liberty of house arrest which was afforded him earlier (cf. Ac. 28:16, 30-31). Now, he was "chained like a criminal." Furthermore, he sensed the finality of his circumstance. Far from being hopeful for release, he fully expected his life to end (4:6). Years earlier, to the Corinthians and the Thessalonians, he had included himself among those who personally expected to see the second return of the Lord (cf. 1 Co. 15:51; 1 Th. 4:17). Such a hope was no longer realistic.

Still, as grim as the future might seem, Paul's great concern was for the continuity of his mission. He was grieved by the unfaithfulness of others (1:15; 4:10, 16), and distressed because some of his co-workers were no longer available to help him (4:20). So, he sought to continue his gospel work through delegates (4:10-12), and especially, through Timothy (1:6-8; 4:1-2). Timothy's location at this time

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*A.D. 64 (Great fire in Rome)*

*A.D. 65 (Paul visits Rome)?*

*A.D. 65 (Pastoral Letters and Paul's death)?*

<sup>91</sup>Martin, 300.

is not directly mentioned, but it may well be that he was still in Ephesus as when Paul wrote to him previously (cf. 1:3). The fact that Paul warns Timothy about Alexander the metalworker lends support to this hypothesis (4:14-15; cf. 1 Ti. 1:20), and it is just possible that the conflict between Paul and Alexander went all the way back to the guild riot in Ephesus years earlier (cf. Ac. 19:23-41).<sup>92</sup>

So, Paul "the aged" (Phlmn 9) wrote to Timothy, his youthful understudy (2:22; cf. 1 Ti. 4:12). Not only was Timothy's youth a special factor,<sup>93</sup> he also struggled with poor health (1 Ti. 5:23). There are hints that by temperament Timothy may have been somewhat timid (1:7-8; 2:1-3; 3:12; 4:5; cf. 1 Co. 16:10-11). Without question, he was a sensitive man, for he had wept on the final occasion when Paul had parted from him (1:4).

Above all, Paul was concerned about maintaining the purity of the Christian gospel. For many years, Paul had been the primary defender of the faith in the early church. He had contended with the Judaizers (Acts 15; Galatians), the mystics (Colossians), the enthusiasts (1 Corinthians), and the self-acclaimed super-apostles (2 Corinthians) in order to maintain the purity of the Christian faith. What would happen to the gospel after Paul's death? This question seems to have been in the forefront of Paul's mind as he wrote, for repeatedly, he charged Timothy to "guard" the truth entrusted to him (1:13-14; cf. 2:2, 8-9, 15; 3:14-17; 4:1-2, 5). With his insight into human nature and into what God had shown him regarding the future, Paul knew well the danger of a distorted gospel (2:17-18; 3:6-8, 13; 4:3-4). He also knew how fierce the opposition could become, so he encouraged Timothy to be prepared to suffer for the sake of the Christian message (1:8; 3:12).

Several times in the letter Paul warns against false teachers of which he names four (1:15; 2:17). The profile of their heresy is not easy to piece together, other than that they claimed the resurrection already to have occurred (2:18). Mostly, Paul's advice to Timothy regarding them hints at their methods more than their specific teachings (2:16, 23; 3:6-7). They were apparently pseudo-intellectuals fond of argument. So, in the face of these challenges, Paul encouraged Timothy to faithfully protect and teach the truths about Jesus Christ.

## **The Address (1:1-2)**

In the typical letter form of the times, Paul begins his communication

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<sup>92</sup>The man named Alexander in Ac. 19:33 may or may not have been the same individual. The name Alexander was rather common in the Hellenistic world, but in the Acts account he is at least introduced as if he were a well-known character.

<sup>93</sup>There is no indication as to how old Timothy was, but if he were about twenty years old when he first met Paul (cf. Ac. 16:1-5), at the time of this letter he would have been in his thirties.

with an address which identifies himself as the sender and Timothy as the recipient (1:1-2). It is customary in Paul's letters for him to point out that his apostleship was by God's will (Ro. 1:1; 1 Co. 1:1; 2 Co. 1:1; Ga. 1:1; Ep. 1:1; Col. 1:1; 1 Ti. 1:1). Since he was not one of the original Twelve who were designated apostles during Jesus' earthly ministry (Mk. 3:14), his right to this title needed some explanation. In Luke's history, the title apostle was first used of Paul during his initial missionary journey (Ac. 14:4, 14). It is apparent, however, that Luke maintained a distinction between Paul as an apostle and the Jerusalem apostles who were from among the original Twelve (Ac. 15:2, 4; 16:4). Paul understood his mission to be unique as the "apostle to the Gentiles" (Ro. 1:5; 11:13; Ga. 2:8; 1 Ti. 2:7). His credentials, according to his own testimony, were his visions of the Lord Jesus on the Damascus Road and in the Jerusalem temple (1 Co. 9:1; cf. Ac. 9:1-6; 22:17-21; 26:12-18; Ga. 1:11-17). These visions, during which he was commissioned by Christ to conduct missionary work among the pagans, were his call to apostleship (2 Ti. 1:11). Furthermore, the spiritual gifts of miracles and signs, which characterized the other apostles (cf. Mt. 10:1), were evident in Paul's ministry as well (2 Co. 12:11-12). He explained to the Corinthians that even if he was not an apostle to everyone else, he certainly was an apostle to them due to his missionary work among them (1 Co. 9:2). Because of his former persecution of Christians, Paul was deeply conscious that his apostleship was a calling of grace rather than merit (1 Co. 4:9; 15:9-10). Nevertheless, he did not retreat from his position (1 Co. 9:5; 1 Th. 2:7). He was, indeed, an "apostle by the will of God!" The object of his apostolic mission, of course, was "the promise of life in Christ Jesus."

His greetings to Timothy contain the affectionate and gracious Christian words grace, mercy and peace. As is usual in his letters, he specifically mentions God, the Father, and Jesus, as Messiah and Lord (cf. 1 Co. 8:6).

### **The Thanksgiving (1:3-7)**

Paul was no Marcionite!<sup>94</sup> He held great respect for his Israelite ancestors who served God faithfully. There was no question in his mind but that a continuity of faith existed between those who served God before Christ's coming and those who later served God through the messiahship of Jesus (1:3a). In fact, this same continuity of faith was to be seen in Timothy's own family, whose mother and grandmother were Jews (1:5; cf. Ac. 16:1). Paul's deepest regret was that they of his own race, whose spiritual heritage was so great, were blinded to the messiahship of Jesus (cf. Ro. 9:1-5, 30-33; 10:1-4). He had hoped that his mission

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<sup>94</sup>Marcion, a 2nd century heretic, rejected the Old Testament and issued his own version of the New Testament.

to the pagans might create enough jealousy among his own people to stimulate them to investigate the gospel more closely (cf. Ro. 11:11-14).

In at least some cases, of course, this had happened, and the faith of Timothy was an excellent example. Genuine faith had been passed on from one generation to the next (1:5). Now, Timothy had risen to be a leader in the Christian church in his own right. Paul prayed for him daily (1:3b), remembering Timothy's deep sensitivity when they had last parted (1:4). This letter to Timothy was purposely written in order to stimulate him to fulfill his call to ministry, a call that Paul describes as "the gift of God" (1:6a).<sup>95</sup> If Timothy's emotional disposition was characterized by introversion, as this passage seems to suggest, then Paul encourages him to exhibit the power, love and self-discipline which comes from the Holy Spirit so that he might accomplish the task to which God had called him (1:7).<sup>96</sup>

The occasion of which Paul speaks when he laid hands on Timothy to confirm his calling is unknown (1:6b). In his former letter, Paul reveals that there was a body of elders present on that occasion, and together, they laid hands upon Timothy to commission him (1 Ti. 4:14). Such a practice symbolized recognition, blessing and consecration to a divinely appointed task (cf. Ge. 48:14; Lv. 27:22-23).

### **Grace and Suffering (1:8-14)**

Since Timothy's calling from God was to serve in Christian ministry, it was important for him to recognize that his task involved both grace and suffering. Paul, Timothy's mentor, was now suffering for the Christian message, so Timothy, his understudy, must not be ashamed to identify with Jesus or Paul, however unpopular (1:8). When a well-known figure such as Paul became a target for the Roman government, it was dangerous to be identified with such a person. More than likely, this danger was the primary factor behind those who had disclaimed Paul during his arrest (cf. 1:15; 4:10, 16). Yet even if this calling involved suffering, and from the beginning Paul had been acutely aware that it would (cf. Ac. 9:16), still it was a calling of grace (1:9a). This grace--this undeserved favor from God--had been God's saving purpose since before the creation of the universe (1:9b; cf. Ro. 8:29; Ep. 1:4, 11; 3:11; 2 Th. 2:13).<sup>97</sup> Hidden in the wisdom of God until the

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<sup>95</sup>Elsewhere, of course, Paul describes the various callings into ministry as spiritual gifts (Ro. 12:6-8; 1 Co. 12:28-30; Ep. 4:7-13).

<sup>96</sup>The same translational problem exists here as in Ephesians 1:17 and 5:18. Does the word *pneuma*, without the definite article or the qualifying adjective *hagios* (= holy), refer to a human attitude or to the Holy Spirit? Most translations opt for the former and do not capitalize it (so KJV, RSV, NEB, ASV, NASB, Phillips, Williams, etc.), but several do capitalize it (so NAB, TEV, JB, Weymouth).

<sup>97</sup>Lit., *pro chronon aionion* (= before eternal times)

coming of Jesus, this saving purpose was revealed to the world in the life, death and resurrection of the Lord (1:10a; cf. Ro. 16:25-27; Ep. 3:4-6, 9-11). In these events, Christ defeated death<sup>98</sup> by rising from the dead. Now, life and immortality have been freely offered in the preaching of the good news (1:10b).

Paul's own mission, of course, was inextricably tied to the proclamation of this good news, for God had appointed him as a herald, apostle and teacher (1:11). The three terms he uses, while they overlap, are nevertheless distinct. A *kerux* (= herald, preacher) is one who proclaims the gospel. An *apostolos* (= apostle, ambassador, delegate) is someone who is a chosen representative of Jesus Christ. A *didaskalos* (= teacher) is one who instructs. Paul ministered in all three roles.<sup>99</sup> It was his work in these very areas that brought him into disfavor with Rome (1:12a). Yet, his faith was strong, and Paul declared he was confident that the Lord would "guard my deposit" until the end (1:12b). The language of *paratheke* (= deposit, property entrusted to another) probably refers to the gospel itself, of which Paul was a steward.<sup>100</sup> Though many would not persevere due to the suffering that attended the gospel, still the ultimate success and perpetuity of the gospel was not up to Paul. Paul had done his part and faithfully discharged the ministry which Christ entrusted to him. Now, with his death imminent, Paul knew that the future was up to the Lord, who could be counted on to keep the gospel pure. Timothy had a role to play in that future, however, for he also must guard the deposit, just as did Paul (1:13-14). The passing of the prototype gospel from Christ to Paul to Timothy, along with the graces of faith and love, must not fail. The indwelling Holy Spirit could be counted on to help Timothy perform his charge.

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<sup>98</sup>The aorist participle of *katargeo* (= to make ineffective, powerless; to abolish, set aside, bring to an end) can hardly mean that Christians will not die. Rather, Paul intends that death can have no final victory over them because of resurrection (cf. 1 Co. 15:55).

<sup>99</sup>In 1 Ti. 2:7, Paul describes his ministry as consisting of these same three functions.

<sup>100</sup>The expression *ten paratheken mou* (= my deposit) has been translated in two ways. Some versions take it to refer to what the Lord had deposited with Paul (so RSV, NEB, TEV, NAB, Phillips). This rendering seems the most natural, since Paul's discussion from the beginning of the chapter concerns God's commission to him to be an apostle and preacher. As such, the gospel of grace was the Lord's deposit to Paul. Such a rendering agrees with the usage of *paratheke* in 1:14 and 1 Ti. 6:20, where "the deposit" also seems to refer to the gospel which God has entrusted to his human servants. Others, however, take it to refer to what Paul had deposited with the Lord, and this translation is also grammatically possible (so KJV, TCNT, NIV, JB, ASV, NASB). If one takes it in the sense of what Paul had committed to the Lord, then the deposit may refer not to the gospel, but to Paul's own soul. Such a rendering, however, does not fit the context as well as the former one. Still a third possibility is that it refers to the gospel originally entrusted to Paul and now being returned to the Lord due to Paul's imminent death. As such, Paul was now entrusting back into Christ's hand what was originally entrusted to him, and its safety was guaranteed by the Lord. On the whole, however, the first translation is preferable.

## The Deserters and the Faithful Friend (1:15-18)

Paul's concern for the preservation and continuity of the gospel mission was made doubly acute when those whom he had ministered to and trusted turned away from him. In the Province of Asia, which included Ephesus, the capital, Paul knew that everyone had deserted him, including two former friends, Phygelus and Hermogenes (1:15).<sup>101</sup> Apparently, this abandonment was well known to Timothy, also.

What a contrast their instability was to the faithful friendship of Onesiphorus (1:16).<sup>102</sup> This man, who originally had become Paul's friend in Ephesus, had searched for him among the cells until he found him.<sup>103</sup> Often thereafter, he visited Paul, refreshing the aging apostle's spirit and demonstrating true Christian friendship (1:17). In the end, Onesiphorus may have suffered personally for his loyalty to Paul. It is striking that in his prayer for mercy Paul speaks of the *oikos* (= household) of Onesiphorus rather than of the man himself (1:16). Then, later in the letter where Paul sends greetings to various individuals, he again speaks of the household of Onesiphorus instead of the man himself (4:19). Does this mean that Onesiphorus was now imprisoned or incapacitated by sickness? Worse, could it mean that he had already died?

Many commentators have thought that by the time of this letter, Onesiphorus was deceased, particularly since Paul prays that Onesiphorus might "find mercy" on the day of final judgment (1:18). However, if so, it also means that Paul offered a quasi prayer for the dead. We know that intertestamental Jewish tradition has at least one reference to prayers for the dead (2 Mac. 12:43-45). We also know that prayers for the dead were offered by some Christian groups as early as the end of the second century.<sup>104</sup> The Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church both continue to offer prayers for mercy on behalf of the dead, the Roman Church in connection with the doctrine of purgatory and the Greek Church in connection with its teaching on the intermediate state.<sup>105</sup> Protestants, however, from the time of

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<sup>101</sup>Nothing further is known of the two Christians Paul cites. Also, nothing is known as to why they turned against Paul, whether theological differences, or more likely, fear of being identified with someone under indictment by the Roman government.

<sup>102</sup>The name Onesiphorus means "profitable."

<sup>103</sup>As to why he had to search, we do not know. Perhaps it was due to the confusion following the great fire in Rome. Perhaps it was due to the extreme caution necessary for one trying to make contact with a prisoner held on capital charges during the Neronian pogrom against Christians, cf. W. Hendriksen, *Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus [NTC]* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979) 239.

<sup>104</sup>V. Gordon, *ISBE* (1986) III.605; O. Johnston, *EDT* (1984) 868.

<sup>105</sup>R. McBrien, *Catholicism*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981) 1143-1146; C. Callinicos, *The Greek Orthodox Catechism* (New York: Greek Archdiocese of North and South America, 1960) 48; G. Mastrantonis, *A*



Luther and Calvin, have rejected this practice as inconsistent with the doctrine of salvation by grace and faith alone. In any case, it seems that the reference in 2 Maccabees (which for Protestants is non-canonical) and the possible implication of 2 Timothy 1:18 (which is ambiguous) are rather flimsy foundations for a practice that everyone, from all traditions, concedes as having no direct teaching in the New Testament.

### **Passing on the Tradition (2:1-2)**

In keeping with his earlier charge that Timothy should "keep the pattern of sound teaching" and "guard the good deposit," Paul now counsels him about passing on the apostolic tradition to the next generation. He is to stand firm in the message of God's grace (2:1), taking the well-known public teachings of Paul and entrusting them to others, who in turn, would pass on the tradition.<sup>106</sup> The language Paul uses, *paratithemi* (2:2 = to entrust something to someone), *hypotyposis* (1:13 = a standard) and *paratheke* (1:12, 14 = deposit), is the language of tradition. The chain of transmission moved from Christ to Paul (1:1, 11), from Paul to Timothy (1:6, 13-14), from Timothy to reliable, qualified representatives (2:2),<sup>107</sup> and from these representatives to others (2:2).

### **Diligence in Ministry (2:3-7)**

Now, Paul continues his charge to his younger colleague, this time advising him more directly concerning his need for spiritual discipline. In three striking analogies--soldiers, athletes and farmers--Paul points out the necessary regimen for Timothy's task as a minister. Hardship is to be expected. Good soldiers must have the self-discipline to bear up during difficult circumstances. They must attend to their vocation, remain subordinate to their superiors, and decline civilian life (2:3-4). For athletes, such discipline is equally necessary. Not only is there physical discipline and training, the athlete must conform to the rules of the contest (2:5). Finally, as with the farmer, the servant of the Lord Jesus Christ must work hard before sharing in the bounty. If he does, he will be the first to reap the benefits of his labor (2:6).

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*New-Style Catechism on the Eastern Orthodox Faith for Adults* (St. Louis, MO: Logos Mission, 1977) 157.

<sup>106</sup>Some commentators have struggled with the mention of the "many witnesses," trying to discover who they were or on what occasion they may have witnessed Paul's commission to Timothy, cf. D. Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957) 137-138. This effort seems unnecessary. What Paul has in mind is probably more along the lines of his testimony to the Ephesian elders that he had "taught publicly and from house to house" (cf. Ac. 20:20).

<sup>107</sup>No doubt the qualifications Paul has in mind are those given in 1 Ti. 3:1-13; cf. Tit. 1:6-9.

All three of these metaphors must surely have come from Paul's experience in observing the vocations he describes. As a prisoner under house arrest (Ac. 28:16), sometimes in chains (Ac. 21:33), sometimes in the barracks (Ac. 21:37; 22:24; 23:10), once accompanied by a detachment of 470 soldiers (Ac. 23:23), and incarcerated in various other ways (Ac. 23:35; 24:23, 27), Paul had ample opportunity to become familiar with the life of a soldier. As to athletics, he had probably been in Corinth in 51 A.D. during the biennial Panhellenic festival known as the Isthmian Games, held about ten miles northeast of the city. His analogies to runners and boxers (cf. 1 Co. 9:24-27) and the imagery of the celery wreath of victory may well have come from his knowledge of these events.<sup>108</sup> Agriculture, too, was central to many of the places Paul had visited, not the least of which was Palestine. So, his encouragement to Timothy was that he should reflect on the need for discipline in any worthwhile endeavor, but particularly, for the work of the gospel mission (2:7).

### **Paul's Gospel (2:8-10)**

2 Timothy 2:8 contains one of the shortest descriptions of the Christian message in the New Testament--what Paul calls "his gospel."<sup>109</sup> The message about Jesus of Nazareth revolves around two primary foci, his resurrection from the dead and his claim to messiahship through the family of David. For Paul, these two foci reflected both Jesus' deity and his humanity (cf. Ro. 1:2-4). Because of his commitment to this gospel, Paul had been imprisoned, accused by his own people of violating the temple ordinances (Ac. 21:28) and suspected by the Romans of political agitation because of his loyalty to the Jesus sect (Ac. 24:5-21). Now, he was suffering in chains (2:9a), but with the quick wit that was often evidenced in his writing, he declared that God's Word could not be chained (2:9b)!

All these things Paul endured for the sake of those God had chosen, taking his turn in sharing the sufferings of Christ as part of his call to missionary work (cf. Col. 1:24). Paul's term, *eklektos* (= the elect, chosen), is probably a conventional word for those in the Christian community (cf. Ro. 8:13; Col. 3:12; Tit. 1:1), and it implies their status as a community chosen by God for salvation.<sup>110</sup> Paul does not hesitate to participate in suffering for the Christian message, for it is only by this

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<sup>108</sup>V. Furnish, "Corinth in Paul's Time--What Can Archaeology Tell Us?" *BAR* (May-Jun. 1988) 23-25.

<sup>109</sup>Because of its brevity, many scholars suggest that this may even have been a creedal formula, cf. A. Hanson, *The Pastoral Letters [NCBC]* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982) 130.

<sup>110</sup>As in other places, Paul probably has in mind the corporate body of Christians who together are the elect rather than a divine choice of individuals, cf. W. Klein, *God's Chosen People: A Corporate View of Election* (Grand Rapids: Academie, 1990) 176.

message that salvation and eternal glory are possible (2:10; 2 Co. 4:16-18).

### **An Early Hymn (2:11-13)**

Several translations set off this passage in poetic form, regarding it as an early Christian hymn.<sup>111</sup> Paul quotes it as something familiar to Timothy. Also, it is the fourth of the "faithful sayings" in the Pastoral Letters (cf. 1 Ti. 1:15; 3:1; 4:9; Tit. 3:8). The hymn is constructed around four couplets. The first two speak of positive Christian actions and their rewards. The last two speak of negative actions. In each couplet is expressed a relationship between the present life and the next.

The first couplet is an antinomy: if we have died with Christ, we shall also live with him (2:11). The aorist tense, pointing to a completed concrete action, might suggest Christian baptism (cf. Ro. 6:3-10). The second couplet expresses well Timothy's reward for participating in the suffering of the gospel (2:12a; cf. 1:8). Those who suffer will also reign (cf. Re. 2:26-27; 3:21)! The third couplet is a warning which directly alludes to the words of the Lord Jesus (2:12b; cf. Mt. 10:32-33/Lk. 12:8-9). The fourth couplet is a promise that God's steadfast character is not changed by human deviation (2:13).

The second line of the last couplet embodies both a promise and a warning. On the one hand, in spite of human faithlessness, God's actions can be depended upon to remain consistent with his own loving nature. God's omnipotence is such that he can always do anything he chooses to do so long as such action is consistent with his own divine moral character. (He cannot lie, however.) So, even if humans are fickle, they may still return to the God who always remains faithful in his loving purposes toward them. However, there is something else here that is just as significant as this hopeful promise. Since the fourth couplet matches the third one in addressing those who turn away from God, the primary force is probably that God will faithfully carry out his judgments against those who disown him. He cannot be untrue to himself and allow the guilty to go unpunished, as the Torah also affirms (cf. Ex. 34:6-7). In the history of Israel, the judgments of God fell upon the nation precisely because God was faithful to his word.

### **Confronting Heterodoxy (2:14-26)**

In Paul's charge that Timothy maintain the purity of the gospel, he knew well that the task involved not only Timothy's personal faithfulness to the apostolic tradition, but also, the inevitability that Timothy would encounter

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<sup>111</sup>Hendriksen, 254. For other examples of early Christian hymnody, see R. Martin, *Early Christian Worship* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964) 39-52.

misleading and distorted notions concerning the faith. Timothy's first resource was to be a positive one--to keep the true gospel continually before the people (2:14a). This was more important than hair-splitting theology which deteriorates into quarrels and ends up doing more harm than good (2:14b). Paul's admonition focuses upon the kind of teacher Timothy was to be as opposed to what he should not be.

There were two kinds of teachers. The "approved" teacher is one who reminds his people of the apostolic gospel--one who is not ashamed of that gospel and who correctly handles it (2:15). The verb *orthotomeo* (= to guide along a straight path, to cut straight) means to cut a road straight toward one's destination, or perhaps, to plow straight ahead.<sup>112</sup> The "word of truth" refers to the gospel, the apostolic faith of the church. In Paul's time, of course, this apostolic faith was carried along by oral tradition. It would not be long, however, before the apostolic tradition would become collected as Scripture. For the modern Christian, the apostolic tradition has become the canon of the New Testament.<sup>113</sup> Thus, Timothy was to teach the truth of the apostolic gospel without becoming sidetracked by petty issues.

The other kind of teaching--that which Timothy was to avoid--becomes mired down in word battles and empty talk (2:16a, 14). Such teaching does not lead to maturity, but rather, to spiritual disease. Like gangrene, it will eventually kill the spiritual life of those who indulge in it (2:17a). Two teachers in particular, Hymenaeus and Philetus,<sup>114</sup> had already followed such a devious direction, missing the true way altogether (2:17b).<sup>115</sup> They taught that the resurrection was already completed, either in the sense of some Corinthians who earlier had denied a future resurrection altogether (cf. 1 Co. 15:12) or by spiritualizing the resurrection in some way (2:18).<sup>116</sup> However, regardless of the deviations of the false teachers, God's

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<sup>112</sup> "...driving a straight furrow in your proclamation of the truth" (NEB). Incidentally, the KJV rendering, "...rightly dividing the word of truth," has been seriously misused by some dispensationalists to divide up biblical history into special periods of God's dealing with humans. That notion may or may not be accurate, but 2 Ti. 2:15 certainly says nothing about it.

<sup>113</sup>A significant criterion for the canonization of any New Testament document was apostolicity, that is, was it written by an apostle, or if not, did it have the authority of an apostle behind it, cf. F. Bruce, 256-259.

<sup>114</sup>Hymenaeus is also mentioned in 1 Ti. 1:20 as one who had not only rejected the true faith, but who had also relinquished his "good conscience." Paul had delivered him over to the power of evil in order that he might learn not to blaspheme.

<sup>115</sup>The word *astocheo* (= to miss the target) directly contrasts the previous verb *orthomeo* (= to cut straight). Two other times in his correspondence to Timothy Paul uses the verb *astocheo* to refer to those who miss the target (cf. 1 Ti. 1:6; 6:21).

<sup>116</sup>If the variant reading of Codex Sinaiticus is followed (which omits the definite article before the word "resurrection"), then perhaps the heresy was that since we have already "risen with Christ," there is no further

foundation of truth would remain steadfast. It was inscribed with a twofold seal, one invisible and the other public.<sup>117</sup> The invisible seal was God's knowledge of who were truly Christians. Humans may judge from outward appearances, but God alone knows the heart. The public seal was the righteous lifestyle of those who followed Christ (2:19). Heretics might abandon their clear conscience (cf. 1 Ti. 1:19-20), but the faithful would conscientiously pursue lives of holiness.

Using a metaphor drawn from household utensils, Paul explains why the visible church has within its constituency people with false ideas. The church is like a large household with a variety of utensils (2:20). Some utensils are more valuable than others, just as gold and silver are more valuable than wood and clay. Also, different articles have different uses, some for more honorable purposes, and others for less honorable ones. So, also, the church is made up of people with varying qualities.<sup>118</sup> False teachers, such as Hymenaeus and Philetus, performed a function, even if a disgraceful one. Elsewhere, Paul says that even dissensions are necessary in order to show who among the church have gained God's approval (1 Co. 11:19). So, while theological differences are inevitable, it was important for Timothy to handle such oppositions in the right way. He must not clutter his ministry with dishonorable practices, particularly godless chatter and argumentation (2:21a; cf. 2:14, 16, 23-24). If he avoided such behaviors, he would be used by God for honorable purposes in the church (2:21b).

Enlarging on what is honorable as opposed to dishonorable in discharging his ministry, Paul challenges Timothy to avoid the trap of youthful passions (2:22a).<sup>119</sup> He is to refrain from arguments and fights (2:23-24a). Instead, he must practice the virtues of righteousness, faith, love, peace and a clean heart--those characteristics that ought to be displayed in any Christian life (2:22b). He must demonstrate

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expectation of a bodily resurrection (cf. Ro. 6:4; Ep. 2:4-6), cf. Hanson, 135-136. On the other hand, perhaps they had adopted a gnostic-like notion that through special knowledge the promise of resurrection had already been fulfilled, cf. J. Stott, *Guard the Gospel: the Message of 2 Timothy* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1973) 69.

<sup>117</sup>The word *sphragis* (= seal) was used to describe a mark which proved ownership, a trademark, or what may be more to the point here, an architect's mark, cf. W. Barclay, *The Letters to Timothy, Titus and Philemon*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975) 176.

<sup>118</sup>To the Corinthians, Paul wrote that the leaders of the church are like building materials, but every leader must take care how he builds. Durable materials, symbolized by gold, silver and precious stones, would pass God's judgment and be rewarded. Perishable materials, symbolized by wood, hay and stubble, would not pass God's judgment, though the leader who built with them might very well be saved (1 Co. 3:10-15). On the whole, the analogy here is similar also to Jesus' parable of the wheat and darnel (Mt. 13:29-30) and the parable of the dragnet full of good and bad fish (Mt. 13:47-50).

<sup>119</sup>The NIV renders the expression *veoterikas epithymias* (= youthful cravings) as "evil desires," but the word "evil" is not in the original text. Probably what Paul has in mind are passions such as self-assertion, self-indulgence, ambition, obstinacy, arrogance, sexual passion and the like. Such passions can certainly lead to evil behaviors.

kindness to everyone, even those who oppose him. He should bear with his opponents,<sup>120</sup> while trying to faithfully teach the message of apostolic truth (2:24b). When he is confronted, he must maintain a mild manner in dealing with his antagonists so that the avenue is always open to win them to the truth of the apostolic faith (2:25). The hope is that they will realize the futility and destructiveness of such argumentation and remove themselves from this devilish trap (2:26). Such fighting follows the will of the devil, not the will of God!<sup>121</sup>

### **The Coming Apostasy (3:1-9)**

The heresy of Hymenaeus and Philetus (2:17-18) was symptomatic of a much larger threat to the church. Paul believed that the final days of the age would be marked by great distress and apostasy (3:1).<sup>122</sup> In the apostolic church, this belief was common among the apostles (cf. 2 Pe. 3:2-3; Jude 17-19; Ac. 20:30-31; 2 Th. 2:3, 9-12; 1 Ti. 4:1; 1 Jn. 2:18-19). No doubt it owed a great deal to the teachings of Jesus (cf. Mt. 24:10-13, 24-25//Mk. 13:12-13, 21-23//Lk. 21:8-9, 16-17, 34). The nature of this rebellion Paul describes in a biting series of words and phrases. People would be (3:2-5):<sup>123</sup>

*philautoi* (= self-lovers, selfish)

*philargyroi* (= lovers of money, avaricious)

*alazones* (= boasters)

*hyperephanoi* (= arrogant, haughty, proud)

*blasphemoi* (= blasphemers, slanderers)

*goneusin apeitheis* (= disobedient to parents)

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<sup>120</sup>The NIV has "not resentful." The Greek text has *anexikakos* (= bearing evil without resentment).

<sup>121</sup>There is some ambiguity in the Greek text about the antecedent to the pronoun "his" in "his will." Either they have escaped the trap of the devil, being captured by God (or God's servant) in order to do God's will, or, in their persistent quarreling, they have been captured by the devil to further his infernal purposes. I have followed the latter sense, cf. Hanson, 142-143.

<sup>122</sup>In the eighth century prophets, the expression *be'aher'it hayyamim* (= at the end of days) is used to describe the blessings and judgments of Yahweh upon his people and the world in the eschatological future (cf. Ho. 3:5; Mic. 4:1ff./Is. 2:2ff.). A century and more later, the same vocabulary was continued by other prophets (Je. 23:20; 30:24; 48:47; 49:39; Eze. 38:16; Da. 10:14). In time, the whole messianic ideal was integrally connected in the Jewish mind with the "last days." In the New Testament, the last days have already been inaugurated with the coming of Jesus, the Messiah. However, his coming was a fulfillment without a consummation. While the person and ministry of Jesus was a fulfillment of the Old Testament promises, there remains an eschatological hope for the future. A considerable body of New Testament teaching concerning the apocalyptic coming of the kingdom of God and the return of Christ has not yet been consummated, cf. G. Ladd, *The Presence of the Future* (rpt. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974). Thus, when Paul speaks of the "last days," it is to this consummation that he refers.

<sup>123</sup>The reader will notice a resemblance between this list and Paul's earlier list of pagan vices (cf. Ro. 1:29-31).

*acharistoi* (= ungrateful)

*anosioi* (= unholy, wicked)

*astorgoi* (= unloving, without affection)

*aspondoi* (= irreconcilable, implacable)

*diaboloï* (= slanderers)

*akrateis* (= incontinent, dissolute, without self-control)

*anemeroi* (= untamed, savage, brutal)

*aphilagathoi* (= not lovers of what is good)

*prodotai* (= traitors, betrayers)

*propeteis* (= rash, reckless, thoughtless)

*tetyphomenoi* (= conceited, puffed up)

*philedonoi mallon e philotheioi* (= pleasure-lovers more than God-lovers)

*echontes morphosin eusebeias ten de dynamin autes ernemenoi* (having an outward appearance of piety or religion but denying its power)

Such apostasy must be avoided at all costs (3:5b).

These deviates would manipulate naive women, gaining control over them (3:6a).<sup>124</sup> There is the hint of sexual promiscuity as well as doctrinal error in the phrases "loaded down with sins" and "swayed by all kinds of evil desires" (3:6b). They would expend great effort toward study, but since it would be misdirected, they would not discover in it the orthodox faith of the true gospel (3:7). Like the ancient opposers of Moses (cf. Ex. 7:22; 8:7, 18-19),<sup>125</sup> these heretics, with their corrupt minds and counterfeit faith, also would oppose the truth (3:8). In the end, however, their folly would be plain to all, just as in the case of the Egyptian magicians.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>124</sup>If what is envisioned is the women's quarters of a large household, then the circumstance would be of a well-to-do family, cf. Hanson, 145.

<sup>125</sup>It is to be expected, given his early rabbinic training, that Paul is familiar with the Jewish oral tradition. The names Jannes and Jambres (Grecianized forms of Johana and Mambres) refer to the Egyptian magicians who opposed Moses. The names are not found in the Hebrew Bible, Josephus or the Jewish Pseudepigrapha (though they do appear in a Qumran scroll, *The Damascus Document* (5:17-19), cf. T. Gaster, *The Dead Sea Scriptures* (New York: Doubleday, 1976) 72. However, the names are found in various later documents of Jewish tradition, in some pagan writings, and in the work *Jannes and Jambres*, cf. C. Armerding, *ISBE* (1982) II.966; J. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (New York: Doubleday, 1985) II.427-442.

<sup>126</sup>Paul probably alludes to the fact that while the magicians were able to simulate the first two plagues (blood and frogs), they were unable to reverse them. When the third plague began, their powers of secret magic were exhausted, and they admitted to Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God" (Ex. 8:19).

### Persecution for The Gospel (3:10-13)

In face of the coming time of distress, Paul reminds Timothy of his own pattern of ministry which Timothy knew well (3:10a). Paul had demonstrated integrity through his teaching, lifestyle, and aim in life (3:10b). His personal life had been marked by faith, steadfastness, love, and perseverance (3:10c). He had endured, with the Lord's help, persecution and suffering, especially in the cities of Antioch, Iconium and Lystra (3:11; cf. Ac. 13:14, 50; 14:1, 5-6, 19-20).<sup>127</sup> In Paul's view, such persecution for the Christian faith was inevitable for anyone who wished to embrace the Christian counter-culture of godliness (3:12). This was not a new idea, for in several of his letters Paul had affirmed the same thing (cf. Ac. 14:22; 2 Co. 12:10; Ga. 6:12; Col. 1:24; 1 Th. 3:2-4; 2 Th. 1:4-5; 2 Ti. 1:8, 12; 2:9). Evil teachers and charlatans, on the other hand, would grow steadily worse. Not only would they deceive their listeners by misrepresentation, in the end, they would fool themselves by thinking that they could carry on like this with impunity (3:13).

### Charge to be Faithful to Scripture (3:14-17)

If the future was fraught with theological dangers, Timothy must remain dedicated to the faith which had been passed down to him (3:14). He knew the character of those who had passed the tradition to him, including his mother, grandmother and Paul himself (cf. 1:5, 13). From childhood, Timothy had been schooled in Scripture.<sup>128</sup> Scripture's ultimate purpose was to instruct the reader about salvation, and that salvation came through faith in Jesus the Messiah (3:15).

Scripture was "God-breathed,"<sup>129</sup> that is, it was inspired by God (3:16a). What

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<sup>127</sup>If the so-called "South Galatian Theory" is correct, then these three cities would all have been in the Province of Galatia, the cities to which Paul wrote the Galatian letter, cf. D. Guthrie, *Introduction*, 450-457.

<sup>128</sup>The Scripture to which Paul refers, of course, is the Hebrew Bible. Since Timothy was a native of Lystra (cf. Ac. 16:1-3), in all likelihood it was the Septuagint which was Timothy's constant companion from infancy.

<sup>129</sup>There are translational alternatives as the Greek text stands. It could be rendered, "All Scripture (is) God-breathed..." here assuming the equative verb (so NIV, KJV, RSV, TEV, JB, NAB, NASB, Goodspeed, Phillips), or "Every Scripture (is) inspired by God..." also assuming the equative verb (so TCNT, Rotherham, Weymouth), or yet "Every Scripture inspired by God is also..." here not assuming the equative verb (so NEB, ASV, Williams, New Testament in Basic English). The variation between "all" or "every" arises because of the anarthrous noun modified by *pas* (= all, every). If "all" is chosen, then the point is that the entirety of holy Scripture is inspired. If "every" is chosen, then the point is that each passage of the Scriptures is inspired. Given the context, most translators prefer "all" over "every." The variation over whether or not to assume the equative verb leads in two theological directions. If the equative verb is supplied, then the text affirms the plenary inspiration of the Hebrew Bible. If it is not supplied, however, it leaves the possibility open that there might be some Scripture which is not inspired, i.e., it asserts that only those Scriptures which are inspired are useful for the purposes cited, cf. discussion in E. Blum, "The Apostles' View of Scripture," *Inerrancy*, ed. N. Geisler (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980) 44-48. It seems unlikely, however, that Paul would suggest such a selective view of inspiration without some further comment, so the plenary inspiration of Scripture is best.



does such a statement mean? The Bible's own testimony hardly lends itself to the notion that Scripture was dictated in a mechanical way.<sup>130</sup> Rather, it is probably best to think of inspiration as a divine activity accompanying the preparation and production of the Scriptures so that what was written was both motivated by God and vouched for by God.<sup>131</sup> The verb *theopneustos* (= God-breathed) seems to emphasize divine initiative and impartation rather than human creativity. Were it not for its association with death, the word "expiration" would be more appropriate here than "inspiration."<sup>132</sup>

The inspiration of Scripture is not an end in itself, however. Rather, it serves to authenticate the practical use to which Scripture is put (3:16b-17). Scripture is inspired, not so it can lie on a table and be revered, but so it can be used profitably for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, thus equipping Christians, especially Christian leaders, to do the good works to which they are called.<sup>133</sup> Thus, Paul charges Timothy to be faithful to Holy Scripture.

### **Charge to be Faithful in Ministry (4:1-5)**

Along with the charge for Timothy to be faithful to Holy Scripture, Paul now adds an equally solemn charge for him to be faithful in his calling and ministry. The preface to the charge is especially sober with its reference to the great judgment at the return of Christ and the consummation of the kingdom of God (4:1a; cf. 1 Ti. 5:21).<sup>134</sup> As is apparent from the four gospels and the larger Pauline corpus,

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<sup>130</sup>To be sure, some Christians have accepted a dictation theory. Athenagoras (2nd. century A.D.), for instance, suggested that God used the biblical writers in the same way a musician uses his flute, cf. C. Pinnock, *The Scripture Principle* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984) 63.

<sup>131</sup>Different Christian bodies have expressed this conclusion in various ways, but one good example is from the "Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation," which reads, "...the books of Scripture must be acknowledged as teaching firmly, faithfully, and without error that truth which God wanted put into the sacred writings for the sake of our salvation," W. Abbott, S.J., ed., *The Documents of Vatican II* (New York: Corpus Books, 1966) 119. An evangelical affirmation to the same effect comes from the *Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy* signed by 250 scholars and leaders of the International Council of Biblical Inerrancy in 1978: "WE AFFIRM that inspiration was the work in which God by His Spirit, through human writers, gave us His Word. The origin of Scripture is divine. The mode of divine inspiration remains largely a mystery to us. WE DENY that inspiration can be reduced to human insight, or to heightened states of consciousness of any kind, *Article VII*. WE AFFIRM that God in His Work of inspiration utilized the distinctive personalities and literary styles of the writers whom He had chosen and prepared. WE DENY that God, in causing these writers to use the very words that He chose, overrode their personalities, *Article VIII*."

<sup>132</sup>C. Henry, "The Authority and Inspiration of the Bible," *EBC* (1979) I.13.

<sup>133</sup>While evangelicals may not be able to accept the conclusions of Dr. James Barr regarding inerrancy, cf. J. Barr, *Fundamentalism* (London: SCM, 1981), they must surely concur with him on this point, cf. J. Barr, *Beyond Fundamentalism* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984) 3.

<sup>134</sup>The phrase "who will judge the living and the dead" would later become a fixed line in the Apostles' Creed, but it may have had a creedal quality earlier still.

the kingdom of God has both a present and a future dimension.<sup>135</sup> It is the future consummation which is in view here.

The charge proceeds with five exhortations. The first is to preach, and the ground of that preaching is "the Word" which, in the context of the previous charge, refers to Holy Scripture and the apostolic tradition (4:2a; cf. 3:15-17; 1:13-14). He is to be ready to discharge his duties at a moment's notice (4:2b). His calling is to correct, rebuke and encourage,<sup>136</sup> demonstrating patience while backing up his words with careful teaching (4:2c). In the stressful days ahead (cf. 3:1ff.), sound teaching would be rejected in favor of something more palatable, and challenging teachers would be set aside in preference for those who would simply defend conventional platitudes or unsound novelties (4:3; cf. 1 Kg. 22). Turning from the true gospel, people would become fascinated with counterfeits (4:4).<sup>137</sup> In view of these dangers, Paul urges Timothy to be steady, to endure affliction, to carry on his evangelistic work of preaching the gospel, and to accomplish his duties as a Christian minister (4:5).

### **Paul Anticipates his own Death (4:6-8)**

More than once, Paul faced death squarely. At Lystra, he had been stoned and left for dead (cf. Ac. 14:19), and during the imprisonment when he wrote the Philippian letter, he faced the possibility of execution (cf. Phil. 1:20). While in Asia, he wrote to the Corinthians that he had felt in his heart the "sentence of death" (2 Co. 1:8-10). This time, however, Paul felt sure that the end was near. He compared his anticipated death with a sacrificial drink offering (4:6).<sup>138</sup> Already, he felt that his life was being poured out sacrificially before the Lord (cf. Phil. 2:17).

Comparing his life to an athletic contest,<sup>139</sup> Paul said that his fight was now complete--his marathon ended (4:7a).<sup>140</sup> In all his trials, he had kept the faith (4:7b). To the Corinthians, he had issued the challenge to examine themselves so that they would not fail the test (cf. 2 Co. 13:5-6). Now, he can affirm that he had not failed

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<sup>135</sup>G. Ladd, *Crucial Questions About the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952).

<sup>136</sup>The three imperatives are distinct though close in meaning. *Elencho* means to convince, reprove or set forth. *Epitimao*, which has a more severe connotation than the former word, means to censure or warn. *Parakaleo* means to urge, exhort, implore or comfort.

<sup>137</sup>In light of the warnings in 1 Timothy, mythologies which distorted the true gospel were already becoming a serious danger in Ephesus (cf. 1 Ti. 1:3-4, 7, 19-20; 4:1-3; 6:3-5, 20-21).

<sup>138</sup>The verb *spendo* (= to offer as a libation) recalls the ritual pouring of wine upon certain sacrifices (cf. Ex. 29:40; Nu. 28:7) or the ritual pouring of water on the seven days of the Feast of Booths, cf. *Sukkah IV.1.9*.

<sup>139</sup>For the possibility that Paul had attended the Isthmian Games near Corinth, see comments at 2:5.

<sup>140</sup>Elsewhere, also, Paul shows his familiarity with the Olympic sports of boxing and racing (cf. 1 Co. 9:26).

either. The wreath of victory<sup>141</sup> was in sight which would be awarded to him on "that day," that is, the day of the epiphany of Christ and his judgment of the living and the dead (4:8; cf. 4:1). This triumphant honor would be bestowed upon all the faithful Christians who had longed for Christ to return!

### Remarks Concerning Friends (4:9-13)

Now Paul is ready to conclude with some final comments. First, he requests Timothy to come to him as soon as possible, since this might be the last opportunity for them to meet in the present life (4:9). Others had left Paul, Demas to Thessalonica,<sup>142</sup> Crescens to Galatia,<sup>143</sup> and Titus to Dalmatia (4:10).<sup>144</sup> At the present, only Luke, the "beloved physician," was still with Paul (4:11a). Though at one time he had bristled at working with John Mark, who had failed to stay the course during Paul's first missionary journey (Ac. 13:5, 13; 15:36-41), now he wished for his company and assistance (4:11b). The Asian Tychicus (Ac. 20:4), courier of the Ephesian, Colossian and Philemon letters (Ep. 6:21-22; Col. 4:7-9), Paul had sent back to his native Ephesus (4:12). If Timothy was able to come, Paul urged him to bring his cloak, scrolls and parchments which he had left with his friend Carpus at Troas, the primary seaport of northwest Asia Minor (4:13).<sup>145</sup>

### Remarks Concerning an Enemy (4:14-15)

Besides his remarks concerning friends, Paul felt to warn Timothy about an old enemy, Alexander the metalworker (4:14a). Since Alexander was a rather common name, we do not know whether this person is the same as the Alexander of Ephesus (cf. Ac. 19:33) or the heretic mentioned in 1 Timothy (cf. 1 Ti. 1:20), though it is not unlikely. In any case, Paul knew that the man was

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<sup>141</sup>The *stephanos* (= wreath, crown) was the victor's symbol taking the form of a wreath of flowers, cf. W. Raffety, *ISBE* (1979) I.832.

<sup>142</sup>Much discussion has attended the phrase "having loved the present world." The verb *enkataleipo* (= to leave behind, abandon, desert) is a strong one, and some speculate that Demas defected from the faith. However, this conclusion is not necessary--only that he abandoned Paul. Still, his desertion must have been all the more painful in that he was once a trusted colleague (cf. Phlmn 24; Col. 4:14).

<sup>143</sup>Crescens is mentioned only here in the New Testament. Some manuscripts read "Gaul," though this reading does not have the widest and earliest support.

<sup>144</sup>Titus, of course, was the recipient of another of Paul's pastoral letters. By now he had finished his task in Crete (Tit. 1:5) and was traveling to northern Greece on the Eastern Adriatic Coast.

<sup>145</sup>Considerable speculation has attended the phrase "scrolls and parchments." What were these documents? Suggestions have been offered ranging from Paul's Roman citizenship papers to notes or personal memoranda. However, F. F. Bruce is probably correct in surmising that they were portions of the Hebrew Scriptures, some written on papyrus scrolls and others on parchment made from animal skins, cf. F. Bruce, *The Books and the Parchments* (Old Tappan, NJ: Revell, 1963) 11-12.

dangerous to the Christian work (4:15), and his day of retribution was coming (4:14b)!

### **Progress of Paul's Trial (4:16-18)**

The scenario of the closing events in Paul's life is unclear. Was he imprisoned, released, and imprisoned again? Or, was he executed shortly after the end of the Book of Acts at his appeal to Caesar? We do not propose to solve this problem here, but it should be pointed out that the expression "first defense" figures significantly in the arguments. Either this phrase refers to his first trial (after which he was released, i.e., "delivered from the lion's mouth"), or else, it refers to the preliminary investigation when he first arrived in Rome after which he remained in custody awaiting further proceedings.<sup>146</sup> Why no one stood to support Paul is not stated, though it must have disappointed him deeply (4:16). Nonetheless, the Lord sustained him, and even more important, provided him the opportunity to continue his evangelistic work (4:17). Paul's reference to the "lion" is oblique. Does this refer to the emperor, the prosecutor, Satan, or the general conditions of his trial?<sup>147</sup> Whatever the case, Paul felt that he had been delivered by the Lord and would yet be delivered by him. However, deliverance for Paul was not merely release from prison, but rather, entry into the eschatological kingdom of God (4:18).

### **Final Greetings (4:19-22)**

Paul's final words are greetings to friends. Priscilla and Aquila, a Jewish couple whom Paul first met at Corinth where they moved due to Claudius Caesar's expulsion of the Jews from Rome (cf. Ac. 18:2), had traveled with Paul to Ephesus (Ac. 18:18-19). After the death of Claudius, they apparently returned to Rome (Ro. 16:3).<sup>148</sup> As he had done earlier, Paul mentions only the "household" of Onesiphorus.<sup>149</sup> Two other friends had been separated from Paul as well. One was Erastus, who at one time served as a city official in Corinth (Ro. 16:23b). He, too,

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<sup>146</sup>A number of scholars have attempted to sort through the various possible courses of Paul's trial(s), but without any consensus. On the procedures of a Roman trial for a Roman citizen, see A. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament* (rpt. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1963) 48-119.

<sup>147</sup>It probably does not refer to beasts in the amphitheater, since as a Roman citizen, Paul's execution would be by beheading, not exposure to the lions, cf. R. Ward, *Commentary on 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus* (Waco, TX: Word, 1974) 221.

<sup>148</sup>Priscilla is named first before her husband in the majority of passages, thus indicating her status as a leader in the early church. She and her husband had risked their lives for Paul (Ro. 16:4), and they supervised house churches in Corinth, Rome and Ephesus, cf. E. Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her* (New York: Crossroad, 1984) 178.

<sup>149</sup>See comments at 1:16.

had traveled and served with Paul (Ac. 19:22).<sup>150</sup> The other was Trophimus, the Ephesian Christian (Ac. 20:4) who had accompanied Paul to Jerusalem and whom Paul was accused of bringing into the temple precincts past the barrier (Ac. 21:26-29). This friend had stayed at Miletus due to an illness.

That Paul hoped Timothy would arrive before winter was important on two counts. The Adriatic traffic seasonally closed due to winter storms. Also, if Timothy was to bring Paul's cloak (cf. 4:13), it would be most helpful if he could arrive before the temperature turned colder. The final friends whom Paul names are mentioned only here in the New Testament. Claudia was undoubtedly a woman (the name is a feminine form). An early Christian tradition names her as the mother of Linus and also names Linus as the Bishop of Rome who immediately succeeded Peter and Paul.<sup>151</sup> Paul's last word was his familiar, "Grace to you."

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<sup>150</sup>The NIV rendering of Romans 16:23, "...the city's director of public works," is somewhat ambitious, though it may well be true enough as a statement of fact. The Greek text simply says that Erastus was an *oikonomos* (= steward, manager, treasurer, or administrator) of the city. Of special interest is an inscription uncovered by archaeologists in Corinth in 1929 which lists Erastus by name: *ERASTVS PRO:AED:S:P:STRAVIT* (= 'Erastus, curator of public buildings, laid this pavement at his own expense'), cf. F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960) 95.

<sup>151</sup>G. Bromiley, *ISBE* (1986) III.141.