

1 TIMOTHY

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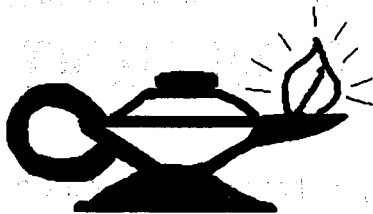
**THEME: “GODLINESS—
WITH CONTENTMENT”**

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Preface

This study has two purposes: (1) to present an exposition of Paul's first letter to Timothy; and (2) to exhort the brethren—by Scriptural command and example—in the proper conduct of God's ecclesia in these last and dangerous days.

Many points mentioned herein will be useful in note-taking and Bible marking. But we should go much farther than this in our consideration of 1 Timothy and the topics which arise out of it. We should reflect prayerfully and carefully upon the exhortations and admonitions to be found in these writings.

We do not wish to claim originality. In preparing these notes we owe much to the works of John Thomas and Robert Roberts, as well as those of other faithful Christadelphians. Their efforts were and are directed (as ours should be) to the preservation of God's Truth in its purity (1:3; 6:20), and to the encouragement of one another to grow in grace through "godly edifying" (1:4).

We should acknowledge especially the help of a lengthy exhortational article by G. V. Growcott, which provided the starting point for this study. In particular verses we have considered the thoughts of many other brethren, as the discerning reader will readily see. This being essentially an exhortational study, no bibliography is attached. Bible quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise stated.

May God Almighty bless us in all our efforts, and may He strengthen our hands and hearts to perform **His** will!

George Booker
Troy Haltom

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THE MAN PAUL

What should be written, in a brief introduction such as this, about a man like Paul? He was, quite simply, the greatest man ever to follow the Lord Jesus Christ—a man whose heart throbbed always with love for God and love for his brethren, despite their failings, despite even their sins against him. He was a man who truly “filled up”, or completed, that which was lacking in the sufferings of Christ (Col. 1:24); for he surely took up the cross and followed his Saviour, even unto death. With no pride or arrogance, but in simple truth, he was able to say of himself that he had been:

“In labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the ecclesias” (2 Cor. 11:23-28).

Paul was “a chosen vessel”, to bear the gospel of Christ before the Gentiles (Acts 9:17). He was learned in all the Law and the prophets, having been taught by the famous Gamaliel (Acts 22:3), who was a member of the Sanhedrin. But more importantly, he was directly instructed by Christ (Gal. 1:12). No man ever carried out a commission better. It goes almost without saying, therefore, that his writings are fully inspired by God (2 Tim. 3:16, 17).

The Pastoral Letters (1 and 2 Timothy and Titus) are the last writings of Paul, of which we have any record. They were written after the first imprisonment at Rome (Acts 28:30). Although some (mostly modern) writers would contend otherwise, the general consensus of expositors and historians (which seems more likely) is that Paul lived and worked some years after the captivity related in the last chapter of Acts. Early Christian testimony informs us that Paul’s appeal to Caesar (Acts 25:11) had a successful conclusion, and that after his first imprisonment he was released in approximately 63 A.D. After this he appears to have spent a couple of years of freedom before he was again arrested and condemned. In these last years he wrote, first of all, 1 Timothy and Titus, which have much in common. (That Paul was at liberty when he wrote to Titus is substantiated by Titus 3:12.) At the very last, Paul wrote 2 Timothy from prison, in his second confinement, fully expecting to die soon afterward (2 Tim. 4:6).

With a very few exceptions, Paul’s letters were written to meet immediate situations. They were not dispassionate treatises written in the peace of a well-stocked study. There was some threatening situation in Corinth, or Galatia, or Thessalonica, and he wrote a letter to meet it. Or there were dearly beloved “sons” in the faith, like Timothy and Titus, whose hands needed strengthening in difficult positions and, again, Paul took time out of an unbelievably busy life to meet the need.

But we must not think that a composition is of no consequence to us because it was written to address an immediate situation which has long since ceased. Indeed, it is just because the frail flesh we all bear **does not change** that God still speaks to us today through the letters of Paul. In these little letters, a great and good and truly humble man still “lives” and pours out his heart and mind in love to us, his beloved children in the Truth.

THE PASTORAL LETTERS

Paul's fourteen letters seem to fall into five groups:

1. The earliest, 1st and 2nd Thessalonians (and possibly Galatians), were written on his second missionary journey when he first went to Europe.
2. Romans and 1st and 2nd Corinthians were written during his third journey, when he spent most of his time in Ephesus. (This was at the time of the troubles in Corinth, when Titus was sent there: 2 Cor. 8:16, 23; 12:18).
3. Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, Philemon, and Hebrews were written near the end of his first imprisonment in Rome (Acts 28:30), when he was expecting soon to be released, as he indicated in several of them.
4. Titus and 1st Timothy were written in the period after his release, when he was back working in the same area of Greece, Asia Minor, and Macedonia again.
5. Finally, 2nd Timothy was written, right at the end of his life, from prison again in Rome.

Paul wrote several different types of letters. Nine were written to seven ecclesias (if the Galatian ecclesia may be reckoned as one)—there being two each to Corinth and Thessalonica. Just as Jesus Christ in the Apocalypse sent messages to seven ecclesias, so did Paul. Seven is the Scriptural number of completion and perfection, suggesting that Paul's ecclesial letters contain the **complete** gospel and **perfect** instruction for **all** ecclesias. Some of the nine ecclesial letters were written to answer special questions (as the two to Corinth); some to oppose special false doctrines (as that to the Galatians); and others to upbuild and strengthen generally.

From a different aspect, these nine ecclesial letters may be divided into three basic groups:

- 4 **doctrinal**: Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, and Galatians.
- 3 **practical**: Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians.
- 2 **concerning Christ's return**: 1 & 2 Thessalonians.

Paul's five other letters were also written for several purposes. They consist of one thoroughly personal letter (Philemon); one general letter, to Hebrew Christians with dangerous leanings toward Judaism (Hebrews); and three letters to individuals (Timothy and Titus) who were leading brethren.

These last three letters naturally belong together in any overall consideration of Paul's writings. They have long borne the designation of "Pastoral Letters"—or letters written to pastors. A pastor was a shepherd (as the word itself implies), almost certainly identical in first-century terminology to a bishop or elder. Paul wrote to Timothy and Titus, for they were themselves pastors, as he was. And he wrote concerning their duties and qualifications, as well as those of all ecclesial "shepherds" (of that day and this).

While these three Pastoral Letters are addressed to individuals, and many of the admonitions are clearly personal, much of the material is nevertheless intended for the flocks over which Timothy and Titus helped preside. So, in a sense they are to be understood as ecclesial letters also—either read directly to the congregations by the recipients, or handed down second-hand in Timothy's and Titus' own words.

The general aim of the three letters is set down by Paul:

"That thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the ecclesia of the living God" (1 Tim. 3:15).

These letters, then, are seen to deal with the care and organization of the flock of God. They tell men how they ought to behave in an assembly which had replaced the Temple in Jerusalem as the true dwelling place of the Almighty upon earth. They give instructions as to what kind of people ecclesial leaders must be, how they must administer ecclesial affairs, and how they should deal with the threats to Christian doctrine and life.

The Pastoral Letters reveal to us intimate glimpses of the struggles of infant ecclesias, veritable islands in a sea of paganism. Many of these believers were only slightly removed from their heathen origins and could easily relapse into the sensual atmosphere of the world around them. In some measure, then, these letters may speak to us in our "missionary" pursuits today—whether in far-off lands, or in the establishment of new light stands and the strengthening of new converts nearer home.

Despite the newness of the Truth revealed to the flocks of Timothy and Titus, they possessed (through Paul's instruction?) a high degree of ecclesial organization. At Ephesus and in Crete there were "bishops" (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:7-16); at Ephesus at least there were also "deacons" (1 Tim. 3:8-13) and an order of "widows indeed" (1 Tim. 5:3-16).

There are even the beginnings of a "creed", or "statement of faith", implicit in what appear to be quotations from recognized documents (1 Tim. 1:17; 2:5, 6; 3:16; 2 Tim. 2:11-13; Tit. 2:11-14; 3:4-7). In the Pastorals, Paul no longer presents new and challenging ideas—as he did in Romans and Hebrews, for example. His great aim is not to introduce new teaching, but instead to persuade his followers to stand by the old, to consolidate and maintain what they had received. This is why he so often refers to "sound teaching" (2 Tim. 1:13; 4:3); "wholesome teaching" (Tit. 1:9); "sound faith" (Tit 1:13), and "sound doctrine" (Tit. 2:1).

One more interesting element in the Pastorals is what might be called "domestic codes"—sections outlining advice on the correct behavior of believers in different social classes and relationships:

1 Tim.	2:9-15	Women
	5:3-16	Widows
	6:1, 2	Slaves
Titus	2:1-3	Elderly people
	4, 5	Young women

6, 7	Young men
9, 10	Slaves

These domestic codes are also found in other letters—especially Colossians, Ephesians, and 1 Peter—and are a reminder of how much the Truth should affect all our activities, especially our family life. In the ancient world, religion was often considered as purely a public affair. (Sadly, that is also very much the case with many churches). But believers in Christ should be members of a close-knit family, the family of God (1 Tim. 3:15). Paul's letters constantly emphasize this.

A reading of the Pastorals leaves the impression that the style is not quite like that of the other letters. It is less fiery, less emphatic, but more exhortational and comforting than Paul's other letters. There are also differences in vocabulary between the Pastorals and the earlier letters (so much so as to lead modernists to postulate some author other than Paul). But it should not be expected that the same author would write in the same manner and use the same words in two letters composed probably fifteen years apart, as were 1 Thessalonians and 2 Timothy. (If this is doubted, let the reader compare his latest composition to his high-school or college term papers!) It is entirely reasonable that Paul's attitudes and characteristic expressions would undergo great changes in the course of a generation. The amazing thing is that God spoke, through both Paul the younger preacher and Paul the older apostle—as He did also through Moses and David and Isaiah and Jesus! And that each revelation, while superficially different, was essentially identical!

THE THEME OF 1 TIMOTHY

Godliness with contentment

There are several themes woven into the fabric of this letter— perhaps one of the most dominant being the “charge” to sound doctrine. We do not, however, feel that this is **the** theme. The strong, emphasized point is that of *eusebia*—godliness, with contentment. Without this sense of godly satisfaction, a charge to sound doctrine would fall on empty ears and hearts.

The word *eusebia* (godliness) appears fifteen times in the New Testament. Ten of these are in Paul’s writings, and only in the Pastoral Letters. The word occurs in 2 Timothy, once in Titus and **eight** times in 1 Timothy—which might almost be called an exhortation to godliness. The theme of our study, then, is this “**Godliness with contentment**” which Paul stresses throughout. Note especially 6:6-10, and the comments on that section.

The Greek word *eusebia* is compounded from two words: *eu* which means ‘well or right’; and the remainder, which signifies worship. True godliness is therefore “right worship”, the practical expression in our daily lives of the worship and honor (1:2) due to God. This is the lesson which Paul emphasizes in the often misused passage, 3:16, concerning the “mystery of **godliness**”. Paul is not saying that it is the “nature of the Godhead” which is a mystery. Rather, the “mystery of godliness” is the development of the perfect and unified body of Christ. It is the awe and wonder we **must** experience as we view the unfathomable depths of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God manifested in His plan through Christ **for our salvation!** The “mystery of godliness” is the compelling influence of the Word of God acting upon impure men and women to develop a godly character. This we do by practical **application** of God’s principles, while we never lose sight of the fact that we are saved by God’s grace alone and not by our own efforts.

All this perhaps seems obvious, but men and women have always been prone to idolatry and mistaking the false for the true. So it has been with godliness. At Ephesus, when Paul wrote this first letter to Timothy, there were those whose lives were taken up in contention and argument, fables and genealogies (1:4), wordy strifes, questions, and surmisings (6:4)—rather than simple godliness which edifies. There were even those who, while maintaining a profession and appearance of godliness, thought that it could be made a way of material gain (6:5). In opposition to such a thought Paul sets the converse, that **godliness with contentment** is the only true gain. The contentment is not of course self-contentment, but the satisfaction which comes to those whose minds are stayed upon God, bringing the peace which surpasses natural man’s understanding. This contentment of mind and heart can be nothing but an incomprehensible mystery to those restless and dissatisfied brethren who always engage in strife and dispute, or who seek false riches and security (6:9). Beware, says Paul of any false idea of *eusebia*, whether it be in contentiousness masquerading as “earnest contending” or in materialism disguised by a thin veneer of religion.

The warning comes to us today with full force. This is a discontented age when it is fashionable to be 'frustrated'. Discontent expresses itself in various ways, most often in grumbling, irritability, strife and wrangling. We are never completely free of such weaknesses, but we must fight against the negative with positive feelings and actions. This weapon is the true contentment which goes hand in hand with true godliness and which springs from a recognition of what God has done for us in Christ. So long as such contentment is lacking in our hearts, its absence will show itself by a proneness to strife and criticism and procrastination and self-justification.

This age is also a materialistic one, which has abandoned faith of every sort and gone in search of false and illusory gain. We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. We all recognize the truth of these words, but the busy and anxious lives we lead often deny their force. In our modern economy, it is difficult not to be caught up in the search for possessions, comfort, and 'security'. We need the constant reminder which Paul gives Timothy regarding that which constitutes true gain, **Godliness with contentment**.

In contrast to material things, true gain is to be found only in worship of God, in *eusebia*. This can only deliver us from the fretful cares and anxieties of life, bringing true contentment. Here then is the antidote for our modern illnesses of frustration and materialism. But it will only grow if it is fed by constant reflection upon the greatness and goodness of God. Paul tells us to exercise ourselves in *eusebia*, not in profane and old wives' fables (4:7, 8). If we are wise, we shall heed the lesson and let the consciousness of God's love and mercy so dwell with us continuously that in the godliness of our lives we may truly worship Him.

THE MAN TIMOTHY

Although we know little of Timothy's personal life, he is nevertheless one of the best known and closest of Paul's fellowlaborers. He was instructed by Paul and is referred to as Paul's "own son in the faith". He joined Paul's company on Paul's second journey, and worked with him thereafter till the end of the apostle's life.

His father was a Gentile (Acts 16:1), and Timothy was not circumcised, although he knew the Holy Scriptures from childhood (2 Tim. 3:15). His mother Eunice and grandmother Lois were faithful believers (2 Tim. 1:5) but his father and grandfather were not so mentioned. It would appear from this that faithfulness was on the female side of the family and probably in the face of difficulties.

Paul's choice of Timothy to accompany him, as well as Timothy's subsequent field of labor, was apparently indicated by the Holy Spirit, for Paul says:

"This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, **according to the prophecies** which went before on thee..." (1 Tim. 1:18).

Paul made three major journeys throughout the Roman Empire preaching the Truth and establishing ecclesias. Timothy lived at Lystra (Acts 16:2) in East Asia Minor. When Paul arrived there on his second journey, Timothy joined him and travelled eastward with him through Asia Minor to Troas, Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea.

When Paul was driven out of Berea, Timothy and Silas stayed to continue the work. Paul called them to him at Athens, then sent them back to Thessalonica where the persecution was severe on the brethren. He later wrote to the ecclesia there:

"To establish you and comfort you concerning your faith that no man should be moved by these afflictions" (1 Thess. 3:2, 3).

Persecution and afflictions were the usual lot of the early believers when they joined the "sect everywhere spoken against". And the youthful Timothy, soon after his call to the work, is sent back to the scene of danger to be a source of courage and strength to the new believers.

Some have assumed, from Paul's exhortations to him to "endure hardness as a good soldier of Christ" and to "let no man despise" his youth, that Timothy was timid and lacking in missionary fervor for the work of the Truth. But surely the picture we get of him in this his earliest appearance in the work, shows him to be exceptionally faithful, courageous, and devoted.

The most we can fairly infer from Paul's exhortation to him is that he may have been too reluctant to stand as an equal to older brethren, and that he, like all—like even Paul himself—felt the need for encouragement to press forward in a difficult and often lonely path.

A brother—especially a young brother—who is strongly motivated by love of the brethren and who recognizes his own human weakness may be too cautious about taking firm action when it is called for.

From Thessalonica, Timothy rejoined Paul at Corinth and stayed with him for the rest of the second journey. He accompanied Paul on his third journey (which ended with Paul's arrest and transportation to Rome), three years of which was spent in Ephesus. He was with Paul on the return trip to Jerusalem, at the end of which a riot occurred in Jerusalem and Paul was imprisoned.

We have no record of Timothy while Paul was imprisoned in Caesarea, nor on the journey to Rome. He appears again with Paul in Rome—part of the time, at least, a prisoner himself—for Heb. 13:23 records that Timothy had been "set at liberty", as Paul himself was then expecting to be.

In this first letter we read that Paul had left Timothy at Ephesus to set in order ecclesial affairs there. This letter appears to fit best into the period between Paul's two imprisonments.

The second letter to Timothy was clearly Paul's last, for he is once again imprisoned in Rome, this time on the verge of execution, and he urgently calls Timothy to him. Whether Timothy reached him in time we do not know, for this second letter is the last we hear of either Paul or Timothy. There the record ends.

Of Timothy's value to Paul and of the difficult conditions under which Paul worked, we learn in Phil. 2:19-21—

"I trust to send Timothy shortly unto you...I **have no man like-minded**, who will naturally care for your state, for all seek their own, not the things which are of Jesus Christ's".

Would he have the same to say of us? Do we leave the labor to others, while we pursue our own comfort and material advantage? Let each of us ask honestly and frankly—and **demand** answers.

Or would he find us walking in true wisdom, realizing the vanity and brevity of present possessions and interests? Would he find us dedicated to His work, laying hold on that **eternal** treasure that does not fade away?

Throughout this first letter Paul is continually impressing upon Timothy the great responsibility of his calling. And he is indirectly speaking to us in the same way:

"This charge I commit unto thee...that thou...mightest war a good warfare..." (1:18).

"These things write I unto thee...that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God..." (3:14, 15).

"Put the brethren in remembrance of these things...Be thou an **example** to the believers...Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them..." (4:6, 12, 16).

"I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things..." (5:21).

"Keep that which is committed unto thy trust..." (6:20).

The matter of sound doctrine, coupled with a godly life, is the duty and the privilege to which Timothy had been called. These matters receive continual attention, and we should reflect carefully upon them: See 1:3-6; 3:14-16; 4:6-5:2; and all of chapter 6.

True knowledge and a careful obedience to God's commands are the twin antidotes to the creeping sickness of apostasy—to which Paul makes several references in 1 Timothy.

1. In ch. 1 he warns of falling away into a dead formalism, with the genealogical disputes, and the rabbinical questions of the Mosaic Law in its corrupted form.
2. In ch. 4 he prophesies of a great system of religious deception in the latter days.
3. And in 6:20, 21 he mentions the apostasy to "science falsely so called", a trust in modern "enlightenment" and "scholarship", which is really nothing but the "wisdom of this world".

The letter is sent to Ephesus, where Paul had left Timothy, after the effective labors in that city ten years before. Those labors had so widely affected the community as to stop a trade in silver shrines, which had previously flourished, thus causing a great stir among the trades people. This led to a public uproar in which several of the brethren suffered violence. At about the same time, many believed and confessed bringing their books to be burned.

We find "certain of the chief of Asia", described as Paul's friends, during the uproar just referred to (Acts 19:31). The testimony for the Truth had affected the higher circles of society, the educated and devout-minded among Jews and Gentiles. The consequence was the formation of a large ecclesia in Ephesus composed of "the better sort".

This influx of the well-to-do and the better-educated citizens would naturally lead, in time, to the problems we find mentioned in 1 Timothy. These are in some ways the same problems that confront the Christadelphian body today, with the conversion of more wealthy and learned brethren, and with the tendency for the Truth to become 'respectable'. (We speak, of course, of general tendencies, not of particular individuals. It is certainly a part of our problem today that we are **nearly all** too well-to-do for our own good, and more relaxed, leisure-prone, and worldly-wise than our forefathers!)

The problems Paul enumerates are as follows:

- 1:4 Unprofitable questions
- 1:7 Desire for pre-eminence
- 4:1-5 "Giving heed to new doctrines"
- 5:13 "Idleness"

The last three tendencies that Paul alludes to were above all others in the harm they might cause, and they were very common in Timothy's day (and prevalent in our times as well):

6:4 "Strifes of words"

6:9 Seeking to be rich

6:20 Reverence for false science and knowledge

I. PURITY OF DOCTRINE (1:1-20)

After an introduction (vv 1, 2), Paul in the remainder of chapter 1 appeals to Timothy to combat the growing apostasy to the Judaizers. These dangerous theories were developing within the very ecclesia. Error mixed with truth is often the most dangerous. Timothy's duty was to fight an untiring war against this error, even going so far as to follow Paul's example of separating from the offenders (v. 20).

A. 1:1, 2: INTRODUCTION

Paul's first letter to Timothy deals with the younger's work in the ecclesia at Ephesus. It is Paul's 'Ecclesial Guide'. He opens with a prayer for Timothy's spiritual well-being: "Grace, mercy and peace" are real things, more real than anything to do with our perishing, day-to-day existence.

These are perhaps the most vital two verses in the whole letter. All the rest is of course important instruction and exhortation. But **this** is the actual key to life or death. If we have grace, mercy, and peace from God, we have everything: nothing else really matters. If we do not have them, then no other possession in the world, or the world itself, would be of any value to us.

A few among mankind have this supreme blessing; the vast majority do not. Should we not be exceedingly thankful to God for His unspeakable gifts?

1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Saviour, and the Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope.

An *apostle* is 'one sent forth', with some special message or commission—an ambassador, representing the coming Kingdom. *By* is the Greek word *kata* which means 'according to' implying a strong link with the one who commanded. *Commandment* is from *epitage* which is used in the Greek to denote a royal command! Paul was on the "**King's** business"!

He was an apostle by the commandment of *God our Saviour and the Lord Jesus Christ*. Paul's conversion and special selection as an apostle were confirmed by the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:17; 13:2, 9), which filled him and which gave him the power to confirm the Truth he preached by the working of miracles.

The expression *God our Saviour* is not a very common one, but it does state an important truth. God offers salvation to "all men" (2:4) through His bountiful love, shown in offering His only-begotten son (John 3:16; Rom. 5:5, 6; 8:32). Yahweh is called "Saviour", for example in Jude 25 and in Mary's song of Luke 1:47. *Saviour* was one of the titles appropriated by the Emperor Nero at this time. In this introduction, then, Paul is taking the misappropriated Imperial title and giving it to the Only Being to Whom it truly belongs.

The word *Saviour* is used ten times in the Pastorals—six times for God (1 Tim. 1:1; 2:3; Tit. 1:3; 2:10, 13; 3:4) and four for Christ (1 Tim. 4:10; 2 Tim. 1:10; Tit. 1:4; 3:6). In all Paul's other letters it occurs only two more times, referring in both cases to Christ (Eph. 5:23; Phil. 3:20).

The equivalent of this Greek word *soter* appears throughout the Old Testament, as a golden thread by which we may trace the prophetic references to Jesus. In Gen. 49:18, Jacob after speaking of the last days says: "I have waited for *Thy salvation*, O Yahweh". And in Psa. 65:5, "By terrible things in righteousness, wilt thou answer us, O God of our *salvation*". And Jeremiah, in the midst of bitter sufferings, can say, "It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the *salvation* of the LORD" (Lam. 3:26). Jesus' name in the Hebrew means "Yah saves" or "the Salvation of Yah". So we see that Yahweh, "He Who shall save", may manifest His offer of salvation only through His Son Jesus. "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself" (2 Cor. 5:19; Rom. 8:3; Gal. 4:4).

The original text omits the words *which is* from the phrase *which is our hope*. The word *hope* is *elpis*, as in *Elpis Israel*—the "*hope* of Israel" for which Paul was bound with chains (Acts 28:20).

Christ is "our hope". We read that the Gentiles, without Christ, have no hope (Eph. 2:12). The word of the gospel and the spirit and fulness of God, dwelling in Paul allowed him to speak triumphantly of "Christ in us, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27). And this animating hope buoyed up his spirits to withstand his tribulations, in expectation of that revelation or manifestation of "Christ our hope":

"When Christ, *who is* our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory" (Col. 3:4).

Paul speaks of this same hope in another of his pastoral letters:

"Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of...our Saviour Jesus Christ..." (Tit. 2:13).

2 Unto Timothy, my own son in the faith: Grace, mercy and peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.

The name *Timothy* (*Timotheos*) signifies "honor to God"—just as in the two sections of this epistle to Timothy. In 1:16, "Unto the King eternal...be honor (*timee*)..." And in 6:16, (God) "To whom be honor (*timee*)..." "Timothy was a servant of God (and an example for us—4:12) who faithfully kept the purity of the Truth and who lived his life with this one aim, to *honor* and glorify our Father in heaven.

The phrase *my own son* is translated by the RV and NIV as "my true son", while the Diaglott has "my genuine son". Paul addresses Titus by the same phrase in Titus 1:4. He was his close protege and his dearly beloved friend. Similarly, he speaks of "my son Philemon" (Phm 10). It was inevitable that Paul (who had no children of his own) would have a paternal feeling toward these young men and

would hope they would carry forward the burden he was soon to lay down. It was Paul who ordained Timothy for his work with the “laying on of his hands” (2 Tim. 1:6) and it was Paul who often gave Timothy his instructions. Thus, Timothy would be recognized as an accredited, and therefore true representative of his spiritual father.

In Paul’s letters, the three-part salutation *grace, mercy, and peace* is peculiar to the Pastorals. All other letters have the phrase “grace and peace”. John also uses it once (2 John 3).

The Greek word for *grace* is *charis*—a gift or favor—any and all of God’s blessings and gifts to men. “Grace” in some contexts refers to the gifts of the Holy Spirit, but the word means much more than that.

Grace is the favorable attention, care, and comfort from God toward us. To know grace is to come within the scope of His glorious light—to be accepted as part of His chosen family, constantly overshadowed by His angelic protection.

This grace is extended without partiality to all who, in truth, yield themselves entirely to Him—this means placing ourselves in His hands, allowing His word to work in us. We must allow the Truth to overshadow and dominate everything in our lives—endeavoring to give our all to Him, holding nothing back, in hope of the day when we will be “filled with the fullness of God”. Just holding certain beliefs, attending the meetings of believers and being technically ‘in the Truth’ is not enough to guarantee God’s grace. We must be receptive to Him and be moved to activity. Then and only then may we enter into the glory of the grace of God. The word *mercy* is not found in Paul’s earlier greetings. They are restricted to “grace and peace”. Mercy is the overlooking, in loving understanding, of all our shortcomings and failures if we, like Paul, agonize to repudiate them and to be free of them.

To obtain the mercy of God we must fully recognize our absolute need for mercy—our utter helplessness without it. God is the essence of all holiness, purity and perfection. We are weak, ignorant, unclean mortal creatures seeking His exalted fellowship.

And related to this, the more we recognize our own need for mercy the more merciful we should be toward the faults and weaknesses of others. “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy” (Matt. 5:7).

Peace is the basic blessing we all need most. It only comes through the grace and mercy of God. Peace is an impervious mental shield against all fear and disquiet. Peace is perfect, relaxed harmony and tranquility of mind. Peace is primarily “peace with God”—“We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:1).

To have peace with God makes all other conflict harmless and unimportant. It can only come with complete, undivided dedication to one supreme object of life, for peace is essentially oneness. It is not freedom from external conflict; that is not important. It is freedom from *internal* conflict. Jesus said, just before the terrible suffering of his crucifixion:

"Peace I leave with you: my peace I give unto you...In the world ye shall have tribulation; but in me ye shall have peace...Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27).

And Paul, chained and in prison for the sake of the glorious gospel tells the Philippian brethren to take everything to God in prayer, and he assures them that in so doing—

"The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ" (Phil. 4:7).

The last part of verse two—*from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord*—shows the true order from which all blessings flow. All gifts come from God. But the greatest gift of God to man is the hope of eternal life which was first revealed in Christ—"the firstfruits..." (1 Cor. 15:23)—and then offered to us as well, through Christ, our Saviour, mediator, and Lord.

B. 1:3-11: APOSTASY TO THE JUDAIZERS

Timothy's first and principal duty at Ephesus was the preservation of sound doctrine in the ecclesia. Paul was always deeply and actively concerned with the preservation of the Truth and the suppression of error in the One Body. The error here referred to is Judaizing, the undue reliance upon the old law as the way of life. Its traditions and rituals and technicalities were elevated by certain brethren to positions of 'life-and-death' importance, in effect denying the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice and God's mercy.

Paul fully realized that pure doctrine was the foundation upon which all else must be built. Pure actions can arise only from pure teachings; they do not come of themselves.

3 As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine.

Timothy had been Paul's companion in his travels and he was left at Ephesus while Paul journeyed on. (See the introduction). Paul's language in the first half of this verse, especially the word *still*, and subsequent events indicate only a temporary mission for Timothy.

Besought is a very mild word—not a harsh command, but a gentle pleading or entreaty. It is from the Greek *paraklesa* often rendered "exhort".

The reason Timothy was to abide at Ephesus is now given—that *thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine*. That is the purpose of Timothy's mission in Ephesus and to this end Paul strengthens and encourages him (cf. 6:3; 2 Cor. 11:4). Gal.1:8 was written in combatting the same type of apostasy:

"But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed".

The word **charge** is a military term which means literally to pass commands from one to another. Timothy was a man **of** authority, because he was a man **under** authority.

Note the indefiniteness of **some** and compare also v. 6; 4:1; 5:15; and 6:21. The errorists' names are not often mentioned—perhaps because, if they so continue, their names will be omitted from the book of life (Rev. 3:5; Phil. 4:3; Luke 10:20), or perhaps because the hope is that they will heed the warning and turn from their ways. This is a good course of action for us—never name 'names' to others while admonition is possible.

Timothy was to "contend earnestly for the faith" (Jude 3). If some continued in error, they should be disfellowshipped and treated as "Gentiles and publicans" (although effort must still be given to bring them back).

4 Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do.

Fables is from the Greek *muthos* (compare the English word myth), and is used only five times in the whole New Testament. Four of these occurrences are in the Pastorals: here; 4:7; 2 Tim. 4:4; and Tit. 1:14 (where they are called **Jewish** fables. Generally these fables were Jewish in character, based upon Rabbinical traditions—as the context here indicates. The word is also translated—in other versions—as myth, legend, or story.

Notice that the New Testament writers knew well enough what "myths" were. Yet according to some of the more liberal critics, these very writers were busy creating their own myths!

It was said in the old Jewish schools that an oral Law had been given on Sinai, and that this Law had been handed down by a succession of teachers. This Law was, of course, further illustrated and enlarged by each new generation of rabbis. By the time of Jesus, it constituted a recognized supplementary code to the Law of Moses. It contained many wild and improbable legendary histories, and foolish speculations upon the commandments of Moses. This strange collection was formally written down in the second century A.D. under the name of Mishna. More discussions of these "fables" were compounded into the Gemara, and these works came in much later times to be referred to as the Talmud—which still exercises a great influence upon Jewish thought today.

As the elaborate system evolved, some great rabbinical teachers became mystics of the most hair-splitting variety. They were much given to the study of mysterious magical properties of numbers, complicated systems of forces and counter-forces, and trans-migration of 'souls'. The seeds that were to produce these fantastic pseudo-sciences and technical mystery cults had already been sown among the Jewish elite of the first century.

Endless genealogies has reference to the endless study and bickering about genealogies. **Endless** could be 'without end'—that is 'without object, pointless' or, alternatively 'tiresome'. This word only appears twice, the other time being in Titus 3:9. The questions of genealogies arose in the Jewish insistence on proper

ancestry of priests (Neh. 7:63-65; Ezra 2:62). Indeed, care in this regard was commanded, but only to illustrate the point—that Christ as a priest was far superior to the Aaronic priests, who were forced to prove their ancestry before they could even serve. The study of such matters as genealogies should not be carried to an extreme, for very little can be gained. But the study of genealogies came to be a great concern for some men—rather than “godly edifying”. These men put stress upon fleshly relationship, rather than spiritual relationship. To this Christ said:

“Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother” (Matt. 12:48-50).

This study of genealogies did nothing but *minister questions*. The NIV has “these promote controversies”. The various Scriptures in which this word *question* is used may serve to illustrate the types of questions intended. In fact, each occurrence of the word is connected with the Jews: questions of law (Acts 25:20, “of purifying” (John 3:25), of “fables” (here), of “words” (1 Tim. 6:4), and “foolish and unlearned questions” (2 Tim. 2:33; Tit. 3:9). But foolish questions are not confined to Jews—as we see among us: in endless and laborious debate, controversy, agitations, and friction over non-essentials.

They should have been concerned rather with *godly edifying* or “upbuilding” as of a house (or edifice). We are the house of God (3:15; Heb. 3:6). We must strengthen and build up ourselves and our brethren in godliness. Knowledge by itself puffeth up, but love “edifieth” (1 Cor. 8:1—the same word). The contrast is that of a bubble to a rock—similar in size and shape, but one hollow and the other substantial.

Many questions which are very difficult if not impossible to answer, arise among believers. They often lead the simple believers into an inescapable labyrinth! And most of the questions give no practical benefit even if they are answered correctly. In this category we must place the “fables” and “genealogies” of this verse. Robert Roberts lists other such Bible questions as these, which are profitless to discuss at any great length: the fates of Enoch and Elijah, the exact meaning of remote types of the law, the quality of the wine and bread at the Memorial supper, the relation of God’s foreknowledge to man’s free agency, and so forth.

In our day we could add to this list: the exact time that Christ became a high priest, and minor details of procedure at our meetings, for example. Any experienced brother or sister can compile his or her own list.

We come together as a group to study God’s Word and to grow thereby, into the perfect man in Christ Jesus. Doubtful questions do not contribute to this end. Neither does the forcing of our private views upon others under the guise of commandments. Neither does the putting forward of minor points as being of great doctrinal importance. All these things fall under the category of casting stumbling blocks before our brethren.

Therefore, when we meet together in formal classes (or at any time), we must study the Bible in a broad and balanced way, to gain practical lessons, to strengthen

ourselves and exhort others in the most holy words of Truth. Paul tells us what is the true benefit of Bible study:

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:16, 17).

Let us listen for just a moment to Robert Roberts as he speaks of this matter:

"There are 'questions' whose agitation is hurtful, because they are doubtful in themselves and unimportant in their bearings when solved, while the agitation of them interferes with the spiritual result called 'godly edifying'. The attainment and preservation of 'godly edifying' is the great object of the Truth, and will be the cue of every true brother's policy. What is this? It is building up in godliness—a strengthening of the mind in the things pertaining to God. What are these? The hope He has given us, the obedience He requires of us in the many things commanded; the faith He would have us repose in Him; the love He seeks at our hands towards Himself and our 'neighbors'; and the intercourse He desires us to hold with Him in prayer. These, of course, are founded on knowledge of who He is, what He has promised, and what He has done and is and the commandments He has given by His servants the prophets and the apostles, and of His Son Jesus Christ...The crowning glories of the truth shine with the brilliance of the mid-day sun; and it indicates a strange obfuscation of mind when men neglect its noonday brightness, to burrow in the caverns of doubtful questions with the dark lanterns of speculation. It looks like a case of loving darkness rather than light" (*Seasons of Comfort*, pp. 93, 94).

5 Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience and of faith unfeigned.

The end of the commandment—that is, "The purpose (object, goal, aim) of all commands and revelations of God is..." The genealogies of v.4 have no purpose nor end; but the "commandment" (same as "charge" in v.3) has both.

Knowledge is the basis of conduct. The purpose of God's Word is to develop us—personally and individually—in these characteristics of v. 5. And the "end" or conclusion is eternal life. To get side-tracked or, as Paul says in v. 6, to "swerve" from this is "vain jangling"—noise and effort without purpose.

Charity is from the Greek word *agape*. It is translated love in the RV and other modern versions. This is a self-sacrificing love, developed only through God's love for us. "We love him because he first loved us". This love for God grows into a love for all men—even our enemies. It is gloriously explained in 1 Cor. 13—"The greatest of all these things is *love (agape)*".

The word *agape* finds its profoundest expression in the New Testament; the pagan Greek writers could have had no conception of true spiritual *agape*. The Spirit created the word and gave it the deepest and most beautiful meaning of any word—the personal relation between God and man, through Jesus Christ.

Our minds and hearts, like our bodies, are “earthen vessels” in God’s sight, polluted and evil. Only God’s Word can give us a *pure heart*; only His “treasure” can make our earthen vessels of any value to Him (2 Cor. 4:6, 7). The word *katharos* (pure, or clean) originally simply meant the opposite of soiled or dirty. Later, however, it came to have some rather more interesting meanings, scripturally speaking: It was used of grain that had been winnowed from the chaff, of an army cleansed of all cowardly and undisciplined soldiers, and of any substance free of corruption or pollution.

A pure heart is guileless, open, sincere, full of light and truth, free from remorse and misgivings. It is serene, confident, innocent, heedless to the scorn of others. All this arises from love, manifested in an earnest and prayerful reading of, and joyful obedience to God’s Word (Matt. 5:8).

This “pure heart” gives us “peace” in a world without peace (cf. notes, v.2). And it promises peace in the world to come:

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Matt. 5:8).

“Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? and who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a *pure heart*...” (Psa.24:3, 4).

“The wisdom that is from above is first *pure*, then peaceable...” (James 3:17).

A *good conscience* is an assurance of justification; confidence through the Truth believed and obeyed. Paul tells Felix of a conscience void of offence toward God or man (Acts 24:16; compare Phil. 1:9, 10). A good conscience must be regulated by knowledge. We must know we are right in the way of life. By a good conscience we do the right things even in very small, insignificant matters—which God alone will ever notice. This serves to build up our true character (1 Pet. 3:16). By way of contrast Paul speaks of a defiled and unbelieving conscience in Titus 1:15.

Faith unfeigned is faith that is real, sincere, genuine, actual. It comes from a Greek word *anupokrito* which means without hypocrisy. It is a trust (confidence, conviction) in God for **all** well-being, and not seeking any treasures in this life of uncertainty. Each day make decisions, not by fleshly criteria, but according to an unshakeable faith in God’s care. “The just shall live by faith” (Hab. 2:4; Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38).

6 From which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling.

In the only other places where the word here translated *swerved* appears, it is translated “erred” (6:21; 2 Tim. 2:18).

The phrase *have turned aside* (Gk. *ektrepo*) means to twist away or aside, and is used in relation to creating difficulties for the lame in Heb. 12:13—a painful wrenching.

In Titus 1:5 Paul tells Titus to “set in order the things that are wanting” The word here is *epidiorthroo*, which is the opposite of *ektrepo* and means to reset a limb after a dislocation or fracture.

Vain jangling literally means ‘empty talking’. Idle, senseless, profitless. Similarly, Paul uses the words “vain” (Tit. 3:9) and “vain talkers” (Tit. 1:10). These

are “without love”—as the sounding brass and tinkling cymbal (1 Cor. 13:1). Such are some of the “janglings” that may pass for exhortation and discourse amongst us—if we lose sight of the purpose of Bible study.

The main idea is of a so-called ‘religious’ life which produces no good works. These men could talk glibly for hours about the things of God, but their talk was worse than useless in bringing them one step closer to true godliness. All knowledge that is not ultimately profitable for developing character is vain. The teacher who provides his students no more than pleasant intellectual exercises is teaching for naught.

7 Desiring to be teachers of the Law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm.

They *desire* to be teachers, that is they are ambitious for they seek the office and prominence as such. Perhaps at first these misguided men taught the types and lessons of the law. But the learning of these things came to be an end in itself, and a source of pride in achievement, and a self-glorification reminiscent of the rabbis, “the doctors of the law” (Luke 5:17; Acts 5:34), who walked about pompously in their long robes of authority. There is an important lesson here for self-examination. The flesh likes the limelight and is self-deceptive as to motives.

Such attention to detail without any practical value led at last to a reversion to the form and bondage of the Law, and a delight in fables and genealogies. This opened the way for the infiltration of more Judaizers, which in turn laid the basis of the Catholic apostasy (4:1-5). The lessons for us are to avoid the spirit of formalism, to guard against mere lip-service, and to incite one another always to active love and holiness.

These teachers *understand neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm*. In other words they do not have an understanding first of all what they speak outright nor the underlying principles of God which their words violate.

It is often the case that those who know the least or who support a questionable position speak the loudest and longest, with more arrogance than true spiritual confidence. This verse brings to mind the modern detractors to the sound expositions of Brother Thomas.

8 But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully.

This is an echo of Romans 7:12, 16: “The law is holy, and just, and good”. That is, the law is good, if a man use it according to the gospel” (See v. 11; vv. 9, 10 are parenthetical). When we study the law we must remember never to give it first place—but always to give precedence to the gospel. We must remember to study the law with a view to practical, personal holiness—not supposition and controversy, not as a cold, dead ‘student’ but as a living and loving disciple. If we study the law, giving heed first to the gospel, we will glean the following things from the law: the lessons of holiness and purity which the rituals teach; the lessons of man’s innate uncleanness; the defiling properties of sin; and aspects of the sacrifice of Christ—portrayed in shadow. Also the love, and beauty, and wisdom of God and His care for man.

At the very foundation of the law was the animating principle of all God's dealings with man—love. Love was the basis of the law: God's love in redemption, our love manifested in obedience and the love of one another. Any one who can study the law, and yet remain in the dark concerning this "weighty matter" is indeed in gross darkness.

Briefly let us examine the principle of love in the law. The flesh was inevitably condemned by the law. Man was basically wicked and prone to sin. And just as man was firmly and inextricably in his course of sin, so the law was set in its policy of punishment. Man who lived by the law was trying to move a mountain by attacking it head-on. His plight was hopeless. The law was uncompromising legislation which promised death for the least offense. If man only took the law to be judicial enactments, applicable without reference to God's love, he would of necessity neglect the weightier matters of mercy and truth. This was the course pursued by the scribes (doctors of the law) and Pharisaic priests. In an effort to handle every eventuality they legislated even heavier burdens and more grievous to be borne. Thus Israel as a nation pursued the "law of righteousness", but it could never attain perfection through the Law of Moses (Rom. 9:31; Heb. 7:19)—because of its rigidity and their own short-comings.

Christ discounted a mere strict observance of ritual without love. He astonished the Pharisees by his new and divine interpretation of the law. He resurrected the greatest commandment—the **central** command, the meaning of it all—long buried under rabbinical speculations, and presented it afresh to the wondering eyes of the people:

"Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matt. 22:37-40).

"For he taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes" (Matt. 7:29).

To go even further, love was the complete fulfillment of the law. What a marvelous vista Christ's statement had opened up!

God's law was seasoned throughout with love. Our love for one another is bound up in our mutual love for God, and our mutual desire to please Him by obedience and faith. Christ, by a perfect life and a sacrificial life, gave us an example to follow:

"Sacrifice and offering Thou didst not desire... I delight to do Thy will, O my God: yea, Thy law is within my heart" (Psa. 40:6-8; Heb. 10:5-9).

Christ brought justification by obedience to the law, and by trust that God would raise him up from the dead to sit at His right hand. From there, as a mediator, Christ is the channel by which we obtain love and forgiveness of sins apart from the law; through faith. The great mountain of the law, which man could not move by his own strength, was moved instead by Christ's faith:

"Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not...ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and it shall be done" (Matt. 21:21).

"He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea" (Mic. 7:19).

The law of Moses was also important for moral behavior. These codes of behavior are reproduced today in most civilized systems of government. God's laws of morality without doubt were in existence from the beginning. Whatever we may read of enlightened judicial systems, even prior to the time of Moses (such as the code of Hammurabi), we know that it was due to the unconscious effect of God's laws, to a great extent. And when the Mosaic law was handed down and put into use, it became the medium for God's moral laws to reach most of the world.

Also, the law prescribed other rules of behavior and activity which, while not specifically commanded by the law of Christ, are nevertheless generally good policy. The law was for the organization of the Body of Moses on an orderly national basis, and its consideration may therefore help us today in organizing the Body of Christ on an orderly ecclesial basis.

9 Knowing this, that the law is not made for the righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for man-slayers.

"The law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did" (Heb. 7:19). Christ is the better hope to supersede the law (v. 2). The law could only convict a man of his own sinfulness (Rom. 7:9, 10) and force him to turn to God. Man cannot stand on his own righteousness or works. Man's weaknesses, his natural tendencies, separate him from the law of God. Through the mediatorial office of Christ, our efforts are accepted. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them" (2 Cor. 5:19). If man after this still clung to the law, he was refusing to leave what Paul called "weak and beggarly elements" and he was remaining in bondage to a system by which no man could be justified (Gal. 4:9; 2:16).

The law might be studied with some profit as the writings of various Christadelphians have demonstrated. But when it is studied as an end in itself, the man who does so is only returning to the bondage from which Christ has freed him.

The word *lawless* means 'without law, contemptuous of law, not recognizing its authority'. *Disobedient* on the other hand means 'undisciplined, unruly, refusing to submit, even when the power of the law is recognized'. *Ungodly* are the irreverent. It is a word which describes positive and active opposition to religion. *Sinners* are active sinners, who 'miss the mark' (the actual significance of the Greek). The *unholy* are the impious, irreligious, godless. In the Greek, it is a word which signifies the ultimate indecencies. The word *profane* refers to the unclean or polluted, with an implication of ceremonial and legal defilement.

The six characteristics above may be considered together. They all describe the same type of person. Six is the number of the flesh. And these six words well de-

scribe the mind of the flesh, completely contrary to the mind of the Spirit in the first four of the Ten commandments (Exod. 20), concerning the one God, His worship alone, and the observance of His sabbath.

The next phrase *murderers of fathers and murders of mothers* refers to those who disobey the fifth commandment, "Honor thy father and thy mother".

Man-slayers are those who disobey the sixth commandment concerning murder.

10 For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine.

Whoremongers and those who defile themselves with mankind comprehends the breaking of the seventh commandment, against adultery; and goes beyond that—to even more detestable practices—all the abominations of 1 Cor. 6:9. The RSV has "immoral persons, Sodomites".

Menstealers is used only here in the NT. Literally it means 'he who brings men to their feet'; a slave-dealer. He commits the worst form of theft possible, contrary to the eighth commandment.

Liars and perjured persons are those who swear to lies; those who break the ninth commandment.

If there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine is a summary phrase which includes all not referred to previously. *Sound* (that is, wholesome or healthful) doctrine is discussed throughout the letter (6:3 notes). The "unsound" teaching and agitation of crotchets and peculiar interpretations point to people who are seeking undeserved and unearned eminence and authority. This is an illustration of an offense against the tenth commandment, against covetousness and envy.

Thus in these two verses, Paul has included all points of the Ten Commandments. This is the type of man with which the law of Moses was concerned, sinners in every respect. "And such were some of you, but ye are washed...sanctified...justified..." (1 Cor. 6:11). Christ is concerned with saints, not "wretched sinners". Christ calls us to holiness and life, not the inevitable sin and death of the Old Covenant.

11 According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.

The glorious gospel includes in its first principles a call to repentance from the dead works of the law of Moses (Heb. 6:1).

This phrase might be best translated "the gospel of the glory"—in which case it refers to Christ, who is called the glory of God: "We beheld his glory" (John 1:14). This reminds us of Paul in 2 Corinthians where he draws a striking contrast between the law of Moses and the gospel of Christ: The law, which he calls "the ministration of death", was **glorious**—up to a point. But this **glory** (which shone on Moses' face) was to be done away. And Paul recalls the incident in which

Moses covers his face, “that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished”. Or in other words, so that they could not see the **fading** glory of the law (2 Cor. 3). In the next chapter, Paul shows the **permanent and transcendent** glory of Christ—the everlasting **glory** to take the place of the temporary glory of the law. This he calls “the **glorious** gospel of Christ” (2 Cor. 4:4). In comparison with the gospel the law was darkness, but:

“God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the **glory** of God in the face of **Jesus Christ**” (2 Cor. 4:6).

How Paul must have rejoiced when he was called from his ignorance to the Truth, to a system whose glory fadeth not away!

This gospel he says *was committed to my trust*. Certainly, a great deal of the responsibility for the preaching of the gospel in the first century fell upon Paul (cp. 1 Cor. 9:17; Gal. 2:7). But we must think of ourselves in the same manner. That which was entrusted to Paul and the apostles was passed on to the likes of Timothy (6:20) and, through the pages of Scripture, to us. God has committed His greatest gift to us: the knowledge of “the gospel of his glory”. This is one of the “talents” of Christ’s parables, which we have received. We must be able to show an increase in that which God has committed to our trust when Christ returns to assemble his servants and to judge them according to their works (Luke 19:15, 22, 23).

C. 1:12-16: PAUL’S OWN CALLING AWAY FROM THE LAW

The previous verse led Paul to a consideration of his own deliverance from the same erroneous devotion to the Mosaic Law which had caused him to reject and oppose Christ’s followers.

But in God’s mercy, because he was sincere, he was shown the right way, and was given mercy and forgiveness as an example of Christ’s goodness and kindness.

12 And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry;

Christ Jesus is the regular title of the Lord in this letter and in 2 Timothy takes this form rather than the more common “Jesus Christ”. This would be in keeping with Paul’s stress of **God** as Saviour (1:1). God was the first cause behind man’s salvation; He was the One who *anointed* (the significance of “Christ”) this man Jesus as our priest and sacrifice and mediator.

The phrase *who hath enabled me* is better translated “who hath given me strength within” or as the NEB “who hath made me equal to the task”. Paul himself was weak and he recognized this (2 Cor. 3:5, 6); but God’s strength could be revealed best through Paul’s weakness (2 Cor. 12:9, 10). What an inspiring theme! This is the way that God works, seeking as His chosen vessels the poor and humble of the world, so that no flesh may glory in His presence. Thus, like Paul, we may say: “I can do all things (through myself? No...) through Christ who

strengtheneth me" (Phil 4:13). Can we ever exhaust the wonderful thoughts that arise from this matter?

The next phrase *He counted me faithful* is very interesting, for according to this, Christ reckoned Paul to be faithful while Paul was yet a blasphemer and a persecutor of the Christians. Certainly this shows that Christ can see the hearts of men and that God has perfect foreknowledge.

Still, however, He gives to each of us a choice. If we choose to align ourselves with God, then His grace will be "exceedingly abundant" toward us.

Paul was *put into the ministry* by conversion on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:15) and by a special calling (Acts 13:2). Compare notes on v. 1, and Paul's commission in 2 Cor. 5:18, 19. Paul was shown to be faithful by his calling to be an apostle.

The word *ministry* is a much too 'churchy' word to suit our tastes. We would do well to remind ourselves that the "ministry" (*diaknoia*) is a *service*, not an office. [This word is in the Greek related to "deacon"—see notes on the introduction to 3:8-13]. The tendency in our ecclesias may be just the reverse—as we move further from our beginning, privilege and tradition consolidates hierarchies in our midst. The antidote is a careful consideration of the requisites of arranging brethren in ch. 3.

13 Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.

Paul *was before a blasphemer* because being deluded by his great but wrongly directed zeal, he had fought for a time against God's clear revelation through Christ. He had been in the class which he describes in Rom. 10:2:

"For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge".

The word *persecutor* appears only this once in the New Testament. But the thought may be illustrated by the following:

"And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women" (Acts 22:4).

"Beyond measure I persecuted the ecclesia of God, and wasted it" (Gal. 1:13).

"As for Saul, he made havock of the ecclesia, entering into every house, and haling (carrying, hauling) men and women committed them to prison" (Acts 8:3).

An *injurious* person is one whose insolence and contempt of others breaks forth into wanton and outrageous acts. This is expressed in Acts 9:1—"breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord".

But Paul *obtained mercy because* [he] *did it ignorantly in unbelief*. This verse illustrates the Divine principle of responsibility. We become accountable to God's judgement by enlightenment in the living way. Those ignorant of God's way will remain in the congregation of the dead (Prov. 21:16; Psa. 49:20;

Isa. 26:14; Jer. 51:39, 57). But ignorance is the **only** barrier to responsibility to God. Knowledge brings accountability.

"To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (James 4:17).

But if men come to a knowledge of the Truth (as Paul did), they may obtain mercy for their past sins of ignorance—just as Paul did—by obedience in baptism.

Saul did not recognize Jesus as the fulfillment of the Law. His persecution of the saints was pursued in ignorance. No man felt the weight of his own sin as did Paul in this recollection—but all men can feel the merciful removal of the weight of sin, as did Paul.

"Come unto me, all ye that are heavy laden, and I will give you rest".

14 And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.

For *grace* see notes on verse 2. Paul can never write long without bringing in the concept of *grace*. For him it was no mere abstract concept, but an operative force dominating all thoughts and actions. By the grace of Christ, and only by that grace, he was what he was.

The expression *exceedingly abundant* is a superlative one used only here in the New Testament. Paul had been exceedingly sinful; therefore God's grace and mercy was exceedingly abundant for him. Paul's case demonstrates the principle of Rom. 5:20:

"But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound".

Let us bear in mind, however, that all men as sinners are not entitled to any mercy whatsoever, apart from identification with Christ's sacrifice (Rom. 3:8; 6:1). For in this perfect gift of Christ we become objects of God's grace—eternal life.

Paul learned the true *faith* (belief) *and* a *love* for all men—which he lacked while he was zealous only for the law. Those who have experienced mercy can best show it to others. Paul realized what his own condition had been before he had learned the Truth: and he felt keenly his obligation to preach to others (Rom. 1:14; 1 Cor. 9:16).

15 This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.

In the Pastoral Letters there are five *faithful sayings*. The expression seems to indicate that they are sayings that had become proverbial among the ecclesias at the time of the Pastorals (between 60 and 65 A.D.); and that they are either statements of doctrine concisely expressed or else exhortations to Christian conduct.

It is likely that *faithful saying* is an echo of the prayer which traditionally followed the recital of the words, "Hear O Israel: the LORD our God, the LORD is One" (Deut. 6:4):

"True and firm, established and enduring, right and faithful, beloved and precious, desirable and pleasant, good and beautiful is this Thy word unto us forever."

Just as God was a God of Truth, so the sayings of the Apostle Paul bore the stamp of God, the stamp of faithfulness and authenticity (2 Cor. 1:18, 20). As we consider each of the "faithful sayings" of the Pastorals separately we shall see their force and beauty. And we shall see the characteristic way in which Paul uses them to express the teaching of him who said to another Apostle,

"Write, for these sayings are true and *faithful*" (Rev. 22:6).

Let us note the progression of the five faithful sayings, of which this is the first: Five sayings, all in the Pastoral letters, which outline the process of salvation from Paul's viewpoint:

(1) the **beginning** of our probation, with Christ's sacrifice for us, effective through faith and baptism:

"This is a faithful saying...that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief."

(2) The **continuation** of our good beginning, by working in the Truth.

"...if they continue in faith and love and holiness" (2:15).

(3) **Growing** in the grace and mercy and peace of Christ:

"Godliness is profitable unto all things" (4:8).

(4) Gradually striving and growing yet further, **becoming dead** to the world and alive in Christ:

"...If we be dead with him, we shall live with him" (2 Tim. 2:11)

(5) And the **conclusion** of God's work of salvation in us—life eternal:

"...We should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Tit. 3:7, 8).

Other possible "faithful sayings" (although the same words do not occur in the text) may be found in 1 Tim. 2:3, 4; 2:5, 6; 3:16; 6:15, 16; 2 Tim. 1:9, 10, 13; 2:8; 3:16, 17 and Tit. 2:11-14.

The phrase *worthy of all acceptance* is used only here and in 4:9 and means 'worthy of complete, uncompromising reception'—as the reception of those who repented at Peter's pentecostal sermon (Acts 2:41).

The words *Christ Jesus came into the world* are used mostly in John's gospel, but has of course nothing to do with a pre-existent Jesus descending from heaven to assume the charade of an earthly body. It is used rather in a symbolic sense: of Christ as the "light of the world" arising upon, or coming to, the world (*kosmos*) of Israel. See John 1:9 (in which the phrase "that cometh into the world" modifies "light"); 3:19 and 12:46. We understand by Scripture that this "coming" of Christ was at his manifestation, at the age of 30, to the Jewish "world" (John 1:31). "He came to his own, and his own received him not" (John 1:11). And afterward, through his apostles, he also *came* to the Gentiles of the Roman world. (We certainly cannot overlook the fact that Jesus preached much of the time in Galilee of the Gentiles). In no way, therefore, does Paul's phrase under consideration here support the doctrines of a pre-existent Christ or the Trinity.

Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. Although it was not readily apparent on the surface Christ came to save both Jew and Gentile. Paul so often shows this in his writings (for example, Rom. 15:8-12). Christ came to call sinners to repentance (Matt. 9:11-13; John 10:9) and Paul shows that all men (both Jew and Gentile) have sinned and come far short of God's high calling (Rom. 3:9,23).

We are reminded of Christ's abounding love for all men and his concern that all might come to him and be saved by the incident of the Syrophenician woman. When Jesus departed from Jerusalem into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon he was met by a Gentile woman who sought his mercy. At first we are somewhat puzzled by Jesus' seemingly cold attitude to her plea: "He answered her not a word" (Matt. 15:23). And again, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (v.24). But he wanted to bring to light what he already had perceived—that this woman truly had faith. And he wished to emphasize and keep clear the essential principle that "Salvation is of the Jews" (John 4:22). Despite the apparent rebuff she continued to beseech him and he answered, "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it to the dogs".

To this appraisal of the relative position of Jew and Gentile, the Canaanite woman readily and humbly assented. And she only asked to eat the *crumbs* which the children overlooked. At last Jesus opened his arms to her: "O woman, great is thy faith" (Matt. 15:24-28). And he restored a sinner, who needed only to come to him in understanding and humility.

We can learn an important truth from this. There are no limits to the mercy of God, if a sinner is repentant. *We* would have written Paul off as one beyond redemption but God was able to save him. *We* would not have thought Matthew the publican a worthy candidate for the Kingdom; nor the woman of Samaria; nor countless others, yet the Lord chose them.

It is an easy human tendency to write people off. Indeed, we can mentally reject whole sections of society—not unlike what the Pharisees did—and avoid them in our preaching. But Paul preached to everybody.

Earlier, Paul had spoken of himself as "the **least** of the apostles" (1 Cor. 15:9) and "less than the **least** of all saints" (Eph. 3:8). Now at last, he goes even further and says *I am* [the] **chief**—or foremost sinner. He says "I am" not "I was", the "chief" of sinners! As the years passed, and he grew nearer and nearer to Christ, so his self-esteem declined. Paul's remembrance of his persecuting of God's saints was a constant reminder of his failures and shortcomings, and a lesson in humility and trust in God, and an exhortation as well to go on to better things.

He did not rehearse these things to glory in his past but to glory in the hope of a future that would not be his, except by the grace of God. Paul was not still the chief sinner—but he was the foremost living example of God's forgiving nature.

16 Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.

This form of the word rendered *pattern* (*hupotuposis*) occurs only here and in 2 Tim. 1:13. It signifies an “example to follow”, an outline, sketch, or form to be filled in, “the first draft or sketch to serve as an outline for all future times”. Other Jews who “rested in the law” might note the example of Paul, who was once zealous for the law, but was shown a better way and embraced it joyfully. And they might be compelled also to come “outside the camp” to Christ (Heb. 13:13). Paul was only the first of many apparently hopeless cases who would find rehabilitation in Christ. In the great change he underwent, he was a model to demonstrate God’s work with man (Acts 20:35; 1 Cor. 11:1).

D.1:17: GLORY TO GOD

This is one of the two interjections of praise to God in this letter. The other, longer than this one, is in 6:15, 16. For other examples of these prayerful outbursts, see Gal. 1:5; Rom. 11:36; 16:27; Phil. 4:20; Eph. 3:21.

17 Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

God is the ruler over every era of the world’s history, so He is the *King eternal* or the “King of ages” (RSV), or “*the ages*”. “The Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men” (Dan. 4:17, 25). This also refers to His timelessness.

The word *immortal* means ‘incorruptible’, enduring forever, or incapable of corruption. “The uncorruptible God” (Rom. 1:23).

The word *invisible* signifies “unseen”—Compare Col. 1:15 and Heb. 11:27. John Thomas has this to say: “‘He is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto: whom no man hath seen, nor can see’ (1 Tim. 6:15)...The Incorruptible Spirit Dwelling in Light is the Scriptural revelation of the indefinable essence of the self-existent Eternal One, who is from everlasting to everlasting, God. What His *essence* consists in, He has not revealed: He has made known to us His name, or character which is enough for man to know; but to say that, because He is a spirit, He is therefore ‘*immaterial*’, is to speak errant nonsense: for immateriality is nothingness; a quality, if we may so speak, alien to the universe of God”.

“‘No man,’ says Jesus, ‘hath seen God at any time’; but Adam, Abraham, Jacob and Moses saw the Elohim and their Lord; therefore Elohim does not necessarily mean the Everlasting Father Himself. Elohim is a name bestowed upon angels.” (*Elpis Israel*, p. 182, 183).

The word “wise” in the phrase *only wise God* is omitted by most texts. (It was apparently ‘borrowed’ by some copyists from Rom. 16:27). God is one—God is alone in His existence as the Uncreated One—“there is none beside Him”.

Amen means ‘so be it’ or ‘faithful’. Paul thoughtfully, reverently, joyously agrees to this obvious fact of God’s supreme glory.

It may be asked, why does Paul pause in this particular place to interject words of praise to the supremely mighty and glorious God? Why not somewhere else?

The answer seems to be found in a comparison of other similar phrases of Paul (as 6:15, 16; Rom. 8:33-39; 11:33-36). In these places Paul's consideration of God's merciful gift of salvation at last sweeps him off his feet. No longer is it sufficient to reason calmly and confidently—in a point-by-point manner. All that men can do at such times is to bow abjectly before the spectacle of such power and love united in a single Being. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God...For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen" (Rom. 11:33, 36). If we are not 'carried away' by a consideration of these things, we do not truly possess the Truth. "At midnight I will rise to give thanks to Thee..." "Did not our hearts **burn** within us?"

E. 1:18-20: SEPARATION

Paul concludes chapter one by emphasizing Timothy's responsibility to fight a good fight and to defend the true Faith, even going so far as to counsel the ecclesia to separate from anyone teaching otherwise.

18 This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare.

The word *charge* is the same word as "commandment" of v. 5 and very similar to "charge" of v. 3. The word has a ring of military sternness and severity—an order. Paul has given Timothy the one gospel (v. 11), and the command that no other be taught (v. 3).

The next phrase *according to the prophecies that went before on thee* is probably better translated "in keeping with the inspired words which pointed to you". The word of God's Spirit, coming to Paul by special revelation (compare 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6). In like manner Paul himself had been once designated by the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:2).

This may also refer to the teachings that Paul had earlier given to Timothy—teachings that would lead Timothy to the Kingdom, if followed.

Paul wanted Timothy to *war a good warfare*. It was not a single battle, but a ceaseless and lifelong campaign against oneself (6:11-14; 2 Tim. 4:7), "Abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" (1 Pet. 2:11). Paul says elsewhere that there is a constant battle between the Spirit and the law of sin which dwells in our members (Rom. 6:13; 7:18, 19). This struggle against our own lusts is the true 'holy war'.

This warfare is also a constant struggle against the teaching of wrong doctrine, a "contending earnestly for the Faith" (Jude 3). The essential armaments of a soldier of God are found in Eph. 6:11-17. Note that nearly all of these are defensive tools—to **defend** against error and sin and the flesh. It is not just the war against theological error—not just against the words of error. Erroneous teaching generally leads to erroneous practice. We are more vulnerable to a false manner of living than we are susceptible to accepting false principles.

"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh; (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal; but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds); casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God" (2 Cor. 10:3-5).

19 Holding faith, and a good conscience, which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck.

The phrase *holding faith, and a good conscience* has a similar idea to that of "holding fast" in 2 Tim. 1:13. See v.5, where these attributes of faith and conscience are explained. Paul fought *the good fight* of faith (6:12).

The phrase *having put away* in our version is not strong enough. It is better translated "having cast away". Here are not "honest doubters" of those "weak in the faith". These men *wilfully thrust* these things from themselves.

Concerning faith is literally "the faith" (as v.2). It is not an abstract principle of belief or trust, but the whole body of doctrine.

Paul himself knew the utter devastation of a literal *shipwreck* (2 Cor. 11:25; Acts 27:41). In Heb. 6:18, 19 Paul speaks of the "strong consolation" of our hope, "which...we have as an anchor". The faith and good conscience of the believer act as an anchor for his ship, the "ship" of his life. If he casts these things away, he has lost the mainstay which holds him fast to the Truth (Heb.2:1). He will then be tossed about by every disruptive "wind" of false doctrine (Eph.4:14; Jude 12), and what faith he has left will at last be shattered on the hidden rocks of the "enemy".

20 Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme.

The name *Hymenaeus* is that of a pagan and his actions indicate that he did not leave his origins far enough behind. Although a nominal Christian, this man was a continuing enemy of Paul and the gospel, teaching that the resurrection was past already. Paul refers to him in 2 Tim.2:17,18: "His word doth eat as a canker (or gangrene)". His words enter into the sound and healthy body of the Truth (6:3), and grow and expand, corrupting everything they touch.

The name *Alexander* signifies a 'defender of men'. Alexander was a defender of men and their 'rights' to teach whatsoever error they chose, instead of being a defender of God and the purity of His Truth. Perhaps he defended man's right to "give in and be men". 'After all', he might have said, 'there is only one Christ. We cannot all be like him. God will overlook our nature; after all. HE made us. HE knows what we're like'. Perhaps, he is "Alexander the coppersmith"—who "did me (Paul) much evil" (2 Tim.4:14). Perhaps also, the Alexander mentioned in Acts 19:33. But we cannot be certain.

Whom I have delivered unto Satan means simply that Paul (acting in conjunction with the ecclesia directly involved) has placed the two men out of "fellowship", confirming their previous action in putting away the true faith (v.19). Compare Matt. 18:17:

"Let him be unto thee as an heathen man" (or a Gentile).

This delivery to Satan ["Satan" is the "adversary"] is explained by a comparison of verses in 1 Cor.5: "To deliver such an one to Satan". V. 5 is explained in v. 7, "Purge out the old leaven; and v. 11, "I have written unto you not to keep company"; and v. 13, "Put away from among yourselves that wicked person".

Hymenaeus and Alexander became in Paul's eyes as "heathen". They were delivered back to the pagans of the Roman Empire, called collectively (because of their beliefs) "Satan", or the "adversary" of Paul and the true Christians (1 Pet.5:8; Compare Rev. 2:9, 13, 24).

Something else may be implied here. A person who by wrong-doing (or more precisely, wrong **teaching**) puts himself out of fellowship with the Father (as did Hymenaeus and Alexander) has removed himself from Divine care. No longer does the overruling hand of Providence bear him up. No longer does his guardian angel protect him from danger. No longer do all things work together for his benefit. Such a person "delivered to Satan" (if he remains in that state) has lost not only eternal life, but also present comfort and well-being. He is travelling the natural unguided course of the flesh with its purposeless sorrows and ills.

That they may learn not to blaspheme means "in order that", or in the hope they will be moved to realize their loss. The word for "learn" comes from the word "discipline". Blasphemy here may refer to teaching false doctrines—or "science" or "fables"—subversive of the "godly edifying" (v.4). This reminds us of the "profane and vain babblings" of Hymenaeus and Philetus (2 Tim. 2:16, 17), words which violate principles of the Truth, while pleasing the ear of vanity. To blaspheme is to revile, to speak contemptuously of God and God's things. Hymenaeus had begun to speak falsely concerning the resurrection—the hope of the true believer. Idolatry and its immoral practices may also have been indicated.

Such people will be punished, if not directly in this time, yet in a time when even sorer judgement comes. This time of judicial punishment will be for the unjust; that is the blasphemers and corrupters of the Truth. Perhaps by withdrawal the individual may be made to realize the seriousness of his position—the desire and need for fellowship with God, Christ, and the brethren. Perhaps he will then seek to return to fellowship with a humble spirit, eager to mend his ways and to do God's will.

Blasphemy may be hypocrisy—as indicated in Rev. 2:9:

"I know the **blasphemy** of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are of the synagogue of Satan".

Any teaching or act of a believer which is contrary to a faithful walk in the Truth is 'hypocrisy' and, by this definition, blasphemy as well. Blasphemy is the denial of God or the denial of His power. Paul speaks of this blasphemy in a warning of apostasy in the last days, which may apply to the ecclesia.

"Having a form of godliness, but **denying the power thereof**, from such turn away... Ever learning and never able to come to a knowledge of the truth" (2 Tim. 3:5,7).

We may seem to acknowledge God's power by an outward adherence to 'the Truth' so-called, but we deny His power whenever we knowingly and continuously walk contrary to His commands. We deny His power to judge and punish wrong-doers. And we deny His living and ever-present power to save, uplift, and guide us into the right ways.

II PRAYERS FOR ALL MEN (2:1-8)

These verses deal with the great efficacy of God's grace, and its availability to all men. In view of this, Paul stresses the importance of prayer on behalf of all men.

This matter of prayer is something very real and very important. Prayer is perhaps the strangest and most marvelous of all God's provisions. It is a way whereby a man may extend his influence for good far beyond his natural powers—without limit—into eternal things. A man who cannot appreciate the **real power** of prayer, in his life and the lives of others, is a man with little of the true faith.

We are constantly told in the Scriptures of the power and importance of prayer. Might we not pray much more than we do, that others may learn the Truth and obey God in baptism? God has given us a tremendous instrument for good—for the good of man. Are we using it to the fullest?

Let us follow Paul's example, in praying not just for ourselves in the ecclesia, but for others, that they might turn to God. This was Paul's "heart's desire and prayer to God" (Rom. 10:1; 9:2, 3). This is true prayer—filled with the love for others which God desires us to show. "Pray without ceasing"; the heart-felt supplication for the pitiful, purposeless miseries of blind mankind, vainly seeking a self-made peace and an impossible happiness, tragically destroying themselves with their own 'wisdom'.

2:1-8 PRAYERS FOR ALL MEN

1 I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men.

Is that our attitude toward the world?—true concern for them, and constant prayer that they may be helped out of the morass. There is a danger that we tend to be too self-centered and narrow in our interests and affections, ignoring other people's needs and sorrows, wrapped up in our "specially-chosen" selves and writing off the world as hopeless. This was Paul's first request—therefore of prime importance. ("First of all" does not simply mean first in order of time, but rather foremost in order of importance.) "Exhort" carries the significance of calling attention to something not being done to the fullest.

Supplications is from a root word meaning 'to bind oneself' (to another)—that is, to make earnest, continual, untiring petition and may fittingly be addressed on occasion to men also. In relation to the particular object for which supplication is made—that is, all men—let us compare Paul's supplication in Rom. 10:1, where the same word is used:

"Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved".

The word translated *prayers* is the most common and therefore the most general word for prayer in the New Testament. It includes the idea of public prayer. This word gives prominence to personal **devotion** to God.

Intercessions actually means a conference with someone, an interview, a speaking to and with God. This word gives prominence to a personal confiding with God. We must be the intercessors for the world., as Christ is the intercessor on our behalf (Heb. 7:25; Rom. 8:27, 34). In this sense we are now a kingdom of priests (1 Pet. 2:9), having been "taken from among men" (Heb. 5:1). That is, we are the only contact that aliens have with the true God. We are God's representatives to them, and quite possibly, the only means (in this age) by which others may learn the Truth. Today, especially, Jesus' words ring true: "The harvest is plenteous, but the laborers are few" (Matt. 9:37, 38). Our overriding concern must be that through us God's mercy through the gospel may be shown more widely.

It is our responsibility to work toward this goal; and it is also our responsibility to pray that this work may prosper.

Paul exhorts that the *giving of thanks be for all men*. And why is this? What does this mean? What is there to be thankful about, in relation to "all men"? It means we must, like the prophets of old, and above all, like Jesus himself, identify ourselves with the sorrows and burdens of mankind.

2 For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.

Our prayers to God in relation to the world should also take this form: We must pray that God will be with the leaders He has set up, so that society may maintain at least a semblance and framework of Christian law. We are told that even the King's heart is in the hand of God, so that He may turn it whithersoever He will (Prov. 20:1; compare Ezra 6:22). This is with the purpose that the true believers may have the opportunity to lead peaceable lives, with as little interference as possible from the ruling authorities. In this era of the world's history this has been the case, for which we should be very thankful. Likewise, Jeremiah was inspired to exhort the captive Jews of his day to pray for the peace of the cities in which they sojourned, "for in the peace thereof ye shall have peace" (Jer. 29:7). It is well to remember, of course, that such peace as we now enjoy is a great privilege, not to be taken for granted.

Concerning governments, this is the teaching of all the New Testament. Paul, in Rom. 13:1-7, tells us:

"Let every soul be subject to the higher powers..."

And in Titus 3:1, 2:

"Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, and to be ready to every good work to speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men".

Also see 1 Peter 2:13-15.

This counsel was certainly appropriate, for there were many Jews in the congregations to which Paul ministered and their nation bitterly hated the Romans. And

the same feeling could naturally be present among Jewish Christians. But Paul's (and Christ's) command is simple and all-embracing:

"Do good unto all them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Matt. 5:44).

The Jewish nation was to be overturned in a few years from the time of this writing. The times even then were difficult for all Jews in the Roman Empire and they were not going to get any better. But the Jewish Christians could not allow themselves to become partisans against the government in any way. They could not be implicated with their brethren after the flesh. The course of the true believer has always been meekness and subservience to the powers that exist, seeking at all times to live peaceably with all men.

Another point to consider is that God calls all men to repentance, including the leaders. There were examples of those in authority who were touched by Jesus and the apostles and their doctrine. Might we not pray for the opportunity of conversion of those in authority? Is anything impossible with God?

That we may lead is better translated "that we may have..."

The two Greek words translated *quiet and peaceable* denote, first quiet arising from the absence of **outward** disturbance and, second, an absence of **internal** strife. A true believer must not seek trouble with outsiders (even to the point of fleeing to avoid persecution—Matt. 24:16-20); nor with his brethren, although trouble may come regardless of his efforts to avoid it. His wholesome behavior must be directed toward the keeping of peace. But even if the conditions under which he must live resemble those described by Jeremiah ("Fear on every side"—Jer. 20:10) or Paul himself ("Without were fightings, within were fears"—2 Cor. 7:5), still the disciple of Christ may have peace. He may be blessed with the "peace of God that surpasses understanding (1:2, notes; Phil. 4:7). This reflects a mental condition not cluttered with empty anguish and frustration, but a condition of quiet peace which enables the individual to face turmoils otherwise impenetrable. However, the desire is to live a life of physical, political, ecclesial, marital, and mental quiet, that we may work unhindered in God's vineyard.

Godliness is reverence for God. This is the familiar word *eusebia*—noted in the Introduction as characteristic of the Pastoral Letters.

Honesty or "gravity" (RV) or "seriousness" (Diag.) is a characteristic which exhibits a dignity arising from moral elevation.

3 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour.

Acceptable means more than just acceptable and includes the ideas of welcome and pleasing. It is used only twice in the N.T., the other instance being 5:4. For an explanation of *God our Saviour* see note on 1:1.

4 Who will have all men to be saved, and come unto the knowledge of the truth.

If God is concerned with the sparrows that fall and the young ravens that cry (Matt. 10:29; Luke 12:24; Job 38:41; Psa. 147:9), certainly He is concerned with **people**.

This must be **our** concern too, if we are His children. It is so easy to selfrighteously attend our own comfortable meetings and then spend the rest of our time on our own selfish, temporal interests and welfare. We must get out of ourselves and keep before our minds the broad world picture: God is **concerned** with the world, and is working with the world. We help Him toward this end by going forth to preach the gospel to all men (Matt. 29:19; Mark 16:15), following the example of the apostles (Col. 1:23).

God *desires* (Diag.) *all men to be saved*. God is "not willing that any should perish" (2 Pet. 3:9). He "has no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live..." (Ezek. 33:11; 18:23, 32).

If God "wills" the salvation of all men, why do so many perish without hope? We must view the "will of God" in two senses: His general plan and purpose, which cannot fail (His 'active' will) and, secondly, His offer of the means of salvation to individuals which depends for its success upon their choices (His 'passive' will). In this second sense, God's 'will' can be thwarted, and He plaintively sighs: "Why will ye die, O house of Israel?" (Ezek. 33:11; 18:31).

The *all men* refers to all classes of men, Jews and Gentiles. All are placed on the same basis with respect to God's grace. The great light that shined forth upon Israel (Isa. 9:2; 60:1,2) also shined forth upon the Gentiles (Isa. 42:6; 49:6; 60:3)! All classes of men have sinned and fallen short of God's glory; all classes of men may be justified through God's grace in Christ (Rom. 3:9, 23, 24, 29).

The word *knowledge* in the phrase *the knowledge of the truth* is *epignosis* meaning exact knowledge. This is called an "active knowledge" in the Diaglott. This is more than just a basic theoretical understanding of the first principles, more than that which we require for baptism. It is moreover a practical knowledge, a growing always in grace and knowledge. It signifies 'increasing to perceive and recognize and discern and know precisely and correctly the (Divine) truth'. There are many who are nominally "in the Truth"—who miss the main point that our initial knowledge must work effectually to change our lives. Some do not appreciate the sanctifying, cleansing influence of the Truth received in its fullness (John 17:3, 17; Eph. 5:26). Paul describes this class as "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof...ever learning, but never able to come to the (exact) knowledge of the Truth (2 Tim. 3:5, 7).

5 For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

If *there is only one God* and one Creator of all men, He must certainly have a deep concern for **all men**. Yahweh is not a tribal deity of the Jews. Paul argues in this way in the presence of the Athenian philosophers (Act 17:26-28):

"(God) hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined that they should seek the Lord, if haply they

might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us: For in Him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are His offspring".

If each nation had its own mediator, then we with the "hope of Israel" would need have no concern for other peoples. But there is only *one mediator between God and men*—Christ Jesus.

There is only one mediator or intercessor for all men—one mediator in contrast to the many mediatorial 'saints' and angels and spirits of the Catholic superstition, which was developing even in Paul's time, and to which he referred:

"a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels" (Col. 2:18).

Paul foresaw the time when:

"Some shall depart from the faith, giving heed...to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils" (demons, demigods, departed spirits) (1 Tim. 4:1—see notes).

Christ is the one mediator (Heb. 8:6; 9:15; 12:24). Christ confirmed the new covenant by his death as the covenant-victim:

"For where a covenant is, there must also of necessity be the death of the covenant-victim" (Heb. 9:16-18).

He told his disciples at the Last Supper:

"This cup is the new testament (covenant) in my blood" (Luke 22:20).

The blood of Christ, in a figurative sense, came to represent the "new and living way" which he had opened, and which is still open to all men (Heb. 10:20-22).

Christ Jesus was "himself man" (RV)—See Heb. 2:14 and Rom. 8:3—the perfect man, the representative of all men before God. The Jewishness of Jesus is one aspect of truth, but his similarities with all men, including Gentiles, far outweigh his differences.

6 Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.

Jesus *gave himself* or laid down his own life, deliberately, willingly (John 10:11, 15, 18; 1 Pet. 2:23). Sin did not snatch him away without consent.

In the phrase *a ransom for all* 'ransom' is from the Greek *anti-lutron* where *anti* means 'equivalent to...', and *lutron* is 'the price paid to set a person free' (as in Lev. 25:48). Christ *bought* us out of our bondage to "Sin";

"But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness" (Rom. 6:17, 18).

In this place, Paul uses 'sin' in a personal sense, as the designation of a great ruler to whom all the world gives allegiance. This is the ruling power from which Christ has ransomed us.

Christ was a "ransom for all" (here), or "for many" (Mark 10:45). This is to say, he was a ransom for "all that believe in him" (Rom. 3:21-31). He is the ransom and the mediator only for 'us' the 'saints' (Rom. 8:34, 27), who have "come unto

God" (Heb. 7:25). But the 'ransom' price was paid for "all men"; unfortunately, most men prefer the captivity of sin.

The concept of ransom is only one view of the sacrifice of Christ. If taken alone, it tends towards the idea of substitution whereby Christ would have died in our place. But then we would not have to die ourselves, which we all too evidently do.

However, Paul is referring to a ransom from the bondage of sin which results in eternal death—"the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ, who is our Lord". Adam, the man, is the federal head of all natural mankind, including Jesus—"in Adam all die". Jesus, the Christ, is the federal head, the first born, of mankind after the spirit "in Christ will all be made alive". If Jesus is our Lord, and not human nature, and if the law of Christ overcomes the law of sin in each of us, we shall be ransomed from the wages of sin which is not simply death, the death due to all of Adam's heritage—but death in the final sense—and we shall receive eternal life, the gift given to those who are truly, federally in Christ. The ransom paid was 'death' to sin—to sin's flesh—to human nature. This is accomplished in us through the forgiveness of our sins through the sacrifice of Christ. Just as by one man's sin, we all became sinners, by one man's righteousness can we all be made righteous. Our minds, hearts and lives must revolve around Christ, His Word, and His Father. Originally we have little choice in the inclination of our natures—we inherit the tendencies of sin and human nature's consequence. Now, as men and women, we have a choice and we have a way of escape from the finality of death, through the 'ransom' of Christ. A ransom, something of equally-appraised value, was given—Adam lived, failed and died; Christ died, succeeded and lived—lives. Truly we may say we have been purchased by precious blood. Truly we can appreciate more than any others the sacrifice of Christ since we know him to have been one of us, yet without sin.

We must recognize the necessity on our part of a holy life and of an admittance and disavowal of our sins. And we must understand that God, by the death of His son, has shown His personal displeasure with sin, and the punishment due for it—which should rightly fall without mercy upon each of us. We must see that we are saved, not by a bargain between Jesus and God, but only by God's mercy and forgiveness. All this, and more, is encompassed in the concept of Christ as a "ransom for all".

The last part of verse 6—*to be testified in due time*—is better translated "which was announced at the proper time". Compare the phrase of Gal. 4:4: "When the fullness of time was come..." Christ's sacrificial death occurred at precisely the time which God had appointed long before (see the prophecy of Dan. 9:24-27).

7 Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not;) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity.

The word *whereunto* means "for which" (testimony): Paul was ordained in order to preach to all men, that Christ was a ransom for all of them, if they would only submit:

"God...hath commanded **all men everywhere** to repent" (Acts 17:30).

Ordained is the same word as "putting into" of 1:12. There is not implied here any special service of ordination or consecration. Paul was singled out and called and equipped by God, not by men or by any elaborate or secret rites. Baptism (after belief of the truth) is the only special ceremony whereby a person may become a "minister" or servant of God.

A **preacher** is a 'herald' (Diag., NIV) or a 'proclaimer', one who makes a public proclamation on another's behalf. Note how Paul makes the application of two Old Testament quotations (Joel 2:32; Isa. 52:7) to himself and his work:

"For **whosoever** shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach ('proclaim'—Diag.) except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" (Rom. 10:13-15).

For an explanation of **apostle** see 1:1.

Paul was a **teacher of the Gentiles**. This included the Romans, whom the Jews hated by natural inclination as 'dogs', but to whom God offered His abounding grace and love. For this purpose Paul was God's "chosen vessel" (Acts 9:15; 26:17; Gal. 2:7-9).

Verity is translated as "truth" in the RV.

8 I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.

God may be lawfully worshipped in any place (John 4:21, 23). But this verse refers especially to the assemblies of the saints. And the men (or 'husbands') must pray there, in contrast to the women (vv. 9, 12). (Perhaps Paul means that not only those on the 'platform', but also those in any place in the 'congregation' may be called upon for prayer.)

The **lifting up holy hands** was a common practice among the ecclesias. But let us remember that form means nothing, and "let us lift up our hearts with our hands" (Lam. 3:41).

The hands mentioned here must be "holy"—set apart for the work, cleansed from sin, hands that have not shed innocent blood; "clean hands and a pure heart" (Psa. 24:4). Paul uses this phrase almost as an expression of sacrifice. We offer God the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving; but unless this offering is accompanied by that other sacrifice (clean hands and a pure heart—James 4:8), our prayers cannot be pleasing to Him. The priest offered after he had first cleansed himself.

Without wrath means 'without anger, having no bitter arguments, no hard feelings' as the following quote demonstrates:

"Whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment... Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there remember that thy brother hath ought against thee: Leave there thy gift before the altar, and

go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift" (Matt. 5:22-24).

Christ is certainly speaking for our benefit too. The gifts and sacrifices which we offer are our prayers (Psa. 141:2; Hos. 14:2) and Christ is the altar to which we approach (Heb. 13:10). Before we pray to God, let us see that we have clear consciences, or else our prayers will avail us nothing. Unless we forgive others, we will not be forgiven (Matt. 6:15).

Doubting means 'discussion' (the Greek word has been carried into English as 'dialogue'), 'disputing', 'controversy'. The same word is translated 'imaginings' in Rom. 1:21. This word means much more than just honest doubt or weak faith. It means "vain disputings" (6:4), evil thoughts of the heart (Matt. 15:19), faith-destructive speculations. Angry disputes are out of place any time among brethren, and they are especially damaging when brethren are trying to draw near to God in prayers and service. To accomplish anything, we must all pray together confidently, "nothing wavering" (James 1:6,7), in unity of mind and love for one another. We must doubt neither God; Christ's work in us; nor the sincerity of the brethren. Prayer is a time for submersion and submission of self before God. Our mind must be readied to come into His presence.

III SISTERS: MODESTY AND SILENCE (2:9-15)

These verses (comparable to 1 Peter 3:1-6) concern the position of sisters. Two points are strongly emphasized. First, modesty and reserve in dress and deportment, with inner rather than surface ornamentation. Secondly, silence in the ecclesial meetings.

Men and women are very different in many ways. The modern world, in its godless ignorance forgets this divinely attested fact. And the distinctions seem to become more and more obscure each day. Each sex has its own special weakness and its own special strength. Each has its own place and function in the Body of Christ.

To the extent a sister departs from either of these divine requirements, she cheapens herself and lessens her true spiritual usefulness in the Body. It is always wisdom to make sure we are well over on the safe side of any command—conform to its spiritual purpose and value.

These are not merely arbitrary and restrictive commands. Rather they are to make sisters more fitted and more suited to the fulfillment of their own very real and very necessary part in the welfare and activity of the Body.

As mentioned previously, some of Ephesus were “rich in this world” (6:17). Some were certainly quite well educated in this world’s wisdom. For them, the lures of high ‘fashion’ and women’s ‘rights’ were not so completely thrust aside as they might have been. Paul is speaking through the young Timothy to such as these. And he is speaking in the ecclesial world of today, adrift in an age full of the same notions that plagued the ecclesia in Ephesus.

2:9-15 SISTERS: MODESTY AND SILENCE

9 In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array.

The phrase *in like manner also* is a reference back to v. 8: Men may pray publicly, but this is an activity closed to women—as are many other activities in the ecclesias. But Paul is quick to show Timothy here, that women are not without their own peculiar sphere of responsibility. “In like manner” they must willingly fulfill their station.

These two verses, then, must refer to the obligations of the sister in the meetings, as the public prayers of the men were offered in the meetings. But who can doubt that Paul intends these characteristics he describes, modesty and self-restraint, to be manifested at all times everywhere?

The words “I will” or “I desire” should be inserted before the phrase *that women adorn themselves in modest apparel* in accordance with the phrasing of v. 8. The word *modest* is translated as “becoming” in the Diaglott. Other versions render this as seemly, suitable, proper, or orderly. *Apparel* includes more than dress. It may be translated as ‘deportment’ or ‘bearing’. Actions are very much

a part of this “apparel”! This reminds us of so many Biblical passages showing clothing as a symbol of our walk, our life in the Truth: Job 29:14; Psa. 132:9; 1 Pet. 5:5; Isa. 11:5; and Rev. 19:7, 8.

By *shamefacedness* Paul means that modesty which is firmly rooted in the character, not the modesty of a showy affectation. The word *shamefacedness* is an awkward translation, however, because it lays stress upon the word “shame”, and it implies an embarrassed and frightened diffidence in no way intended by the original. Rather the Greek (which appears here and Heb. 12:28) indicates ‘reverence’.

Sobriety or “propriety” (NIV), denotes soundness of mind and judgement. It is an habitual, inner self-government, which puts a constant rein upon the natural desires and passions. Sobriety puts into action what the “shamefacedness” recognizes to be proper.

With the qualities of modesty and self-restraint the sister must adorn herself so as to be pleasing in God’s sight. “The LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart” (1 Sam. 16:7). God sees the thoughts and intents of our hearts (Heb. 4:12), and our “adornments” must be those characteristics in which He finds delight. These verses are especially for the woman, but the ultimate application is for any with ears to hear:

“Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price” (1 Pet. 3:3, 4).

Paul is commending the virtue of self-restraint, or refusal to conform to the foolish fashions of a vain and changing world. Perhaps this point is driven home firmly when we consider the counter-examples of Scripture: The harlot of the Apocalypse, with her wanton ways, her brazen attitude, her rich **clothing** (Rev. 17:4), the scarlet “attire of an harlot” (Prov. 7:10) and the garments of violence (Psa. 73:6). Isa. 3:16-24 presents the same type of grotesque picture: The daughters of Zion, the very members of the ecclesia in Isaiah’s time, were haughty, wanton, and flirtatious with every imaginable type of ‘fashionable’ nonsense and tastelessness. Does not such a perverted, hideous picture indeed emphasize by contrast the virtues of modesty and sobriety?

How closely should a sister conform to the fashions of the world, as to dress, make-up, and so forth? Perhaps a few words would be appropriate here. We have already noted the apostle’s commands to restraint and modesty. And we have referred to several counter-examples which Scripture puts before our eyes (especially Isa. 3).

One point we must always remember is this: Men and women are born, make changes while they live, grow old, and die: and others come to take their places. This world’s fashions come and go, and the only thing certain about them is that nothing will remain the same for long. But the **Almighty** God of heaven never changes. In this is sufficient reason to shun (as much as is reasonable) the passing fancies of a godless world. If we follow the world’s standard we are constantly

changing. But if we accept God's standard we have a steadfast, immovable rock on which to stand.

By scrupulously and slavishly following the fashions of this world, we are showing our misplaced dependence upon it. We are showing that we regard the favor of the world as of greater value than the favor of God. We think more of the world's fellowship than we do of God's fellowship.

Furthermore, stylish dress, elaborate hair-styles and make-up, which imitate the changing fashions of today, give the impression to others of a similarity of fashion in thought and behavior to those we imitate. This is something which a believing sister should never imply. As much as is practicable we must endeavor to show our separateness from the world. (The tendency to go too far in the other extreme must of course be avoided in this as in other matters. Else we may become hopelessly Pharisaic, endlessly scrutinizing the outward appearance of others to the detriment of our own inner selves). Extreme 'modest' dress may bring undue attention as well as undeserved identification with other groups who by their 'modesty' brings as much attention to themselves as immodest dress. The sister of Christ should be modest, neat, tasteful, moral, moderate—not suggestive or skimpy in her clothes, not excessive in her spending, not elaborate and time-consuming in her hairdos. The overall key is for the sister to be modest, not seductive in apparel and deportment.

Our 'clothing' should follow the example of the Israelites, to whom God spoke the following:

"Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they make the fringes in the borders of their garments throughout their generations, and that they put upon the fringe of the borders a ribband of blue: And it shall be unto you for a fringe, that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the LORD, and do them: and that ye seek not after your own heart and your own eyes, after which ye use to go a whoring: That ye may remember, and do all my commandments, and be holy unto your God" (Num. 15:38-40).

The ribbands of blue upon the hems of the Jew's garments were to draw their attention to the heavens, from whence their God had revealed Himself to them. It was to remind them of their peculiar duty to the one true and living God who had called and separated them to His obedience.

How do the fashions of today compare to this God-given instruction? Sad to say, the hems upon the skirts of today's 'fashionable' only draw attention to the lusts of the flesh; never to the commands of God. May our clothing be a reminder of our unchanging obedience to God, not of our slavery to a changing world! If the world's blind masses follow a fleshly god of tinsel and glamour and worship the naked human body and refuse to be persuaded otherwise **let them alone**. Let our young sisters remain as far from such unholy enticement as common-sense allows. They have an infinitely higher calling. God has called them to peace and holiness. Young sisters, trust to the characteristics of the spirit, to encourage the companionship of like-minded young brothers.

The phrase *broided hair* only occurs this one time in the New Testament. It is translated as “wreaths” (Diaglott) for the hair—and simply as “elaborate hair arrangements” (Amplified Bible). Can the emphasis of natural appearance to men above spiritual appearance to God ever be right? Common-sense and simplicity should be the guiding principles in our attitude to all non-essentials.

The *pearl* of great price cannot be bought by us. It adorns the inner and outer man.

10 But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.

In the assemblies, the men pray, but in the assemblies and elsewhere, women may show their works rather than words. Good works are always more than a satisfactory substitute for good words.

The statement that righteous women are “adorned” with good works is the literal interpretation of many beautiful passages—passages concerning the preparation of the spotless bride of Christ:

“Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints” (Rev. 19:7, 8).

All the saints are the collective bride of Christ. Each of us is a member of the multitudinous woman to be joined with Christ in the marriage which His Father has prepared. At the judgement only those who have truly kept themselves as “chaste virgins” (2 Cor. 11:2) and who have carefully prepared their wedding garments will be allowed to participate in this glorious feast.

“Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire?” (Jer. 2:32). We must not forget those spiritual garments which will insure the approval of the Bridegroom:

ITEM	SIGNIFICANCE	REFERENCE
Gown of wrought gold	Faith by works (1 Pet. 1:9)	Psa. 45:13, 14
Gown of needlework	Painstaking labor	Psa. 45:13, 14
Girdle or sash	Constant readiness and careful walk (Luke 12:35, 36; 1 Pet. 1:13)	Isa. 61:10
Ornaments and jewels	Wisdom (Job 28:18, 19; Prov. 3:13, 15) and modesty (1 Pet. 3:3, 4)	Isa. 61:10
Sandals	Preparation (Exod. 12:11; Eph. 6:15), as for a march or military operation (Isa. 5:27)	
Headdress and veil	Humility, modesty, and deference—in the woman (1 Cor. 11)	

Having all these characteristics, the women (and the men as well) are indeed “clothed with good works” and they are ready to stand before their Master.

11 Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection.

This is translated “in quietness with all submission” by the Diaglott and most other versions. The learning in subjection does not appear to be limited to learning in the ecclesia. A similar command is found in 1 Cor. 14:34, 35:

“Let your women keep silence in the ecclesias: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the ecclesia”.

This is in no way a punishment upon women, nor is it a proof that they are inferior to men, because in Christ there is no real difference between male and female—“For ye are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28).

The relative position of men and women is only another of the ways by which God illustrates a lesson for our instruction. Women are to submit cheerfully to their husbands “as unto the Lord”, for the husband stands in the same position to his wife as Christ does to the ecclesia (Eph. 5:22-24). (Note also that the husband must be careful not to abuse the privilege of this dominant position—Eph. 5:25, 28. It is not a privilege he earned or deserves; he was given it by God). In this matter, the natural is but a vague representation of the glorious spiritual ideal—the complete and loving submission of our own will to the will of our Lord:

“Yet not I live, but Christ liveth in me” (Gal. 2:20).

Another act by which a woman demonstrates her modest subjection to her husband (and to God) is in covering her head when the occasion requires it (1 Cor. 11:3-16).

These verses (1 Tim. 2:11 and 1 Cor. 14:34, 35) are fraught with difficulty. The broad picture is obvious and without quibble, but problems have arisen and still persist in applying the principle to everyday ecclesial life. We may safely insist that the sisters refrain from speaking at all in the memorial meetings and those for the public proclamation of the Truth. Furthermore, we may insist that, at all times, the sisters not assume the leadership of a Bible discussion (v. 12). To go beyond this and to legislate sisters’ complete silence at every other ecclesial function as well leads us to the question: Just what constitutes the “ecclesia”? For example, might not a single couple—husband and wife—constitute in some cases the whole or proper “ecclesia”—thus requiring by the strictest possible construction the sister’s absolute silence even in the sole presence of her brother-husband? Let it also be realized that the word for “silence” used in 1 Tim. 2:11 is almost identical to the “peaceable” of v. 2 and the “quiet” of 1 Pet. 3:4—where in each case a content and obedient and humble manner of life (not absolute muteness) is intended. (In this connection, no one would think of citing Hab. 2:20—“The LORD is in His holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before Him”—so as to enforce an animal dumbness upon all men). Thus Paul’s commandment to Timothy

concerning the sisters may be obeyed, to the benefit of the ecclesia, without going to the extreme of a crotchet in the matter.

The quotation of 1 Cor. 14:34, 35 is more explicit: "It is not permitted them to speak". Yet one is still faced with the problem of defining the "ecclesia". What are the prerequisites of an 'official' ecclesial meeting? We understand that some latitude may be allowed to each ecclesia or family group, based upon such factors as the relative number of brothers and sisters, the degree of isolation, and the consciences of those most directly involved.

12 But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.

The words *suffer not* are better translated as "do not permit" (Diag. and others).

The words *to teach* are from the common Greek word for 'teach'. The women are certainly not to teach in the public meetings, but this does not preclude their teaching of children or outsiders in certain circumstances: Both Aquila and his wife Priscilla, took Apollos and "expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly" (Acts 18:26). And the older women are even commanded to instruct the younger women in their proper behavior (Tit. 2:4, 5). But for a sister to presume to teach brethren in an assembly is an entirely different matter. Not that a woman cannot be as wise in God's word as a man; this is not the point. These verses serve to confine the woman's sphere of influence to its rightful place—the home and family—where great good may be accomplished quietly (see also 5:10, 14).

Paul also instructs that a woman is not *to usurp authority over a man*. *Usurp* signifies to grasp, to seize wrongfully. There are many more ways for a woman to be domineering than just by teaching the assembly. And all such usurpations are forbidden. In both ecclesial and family life the woman should concede the authority of final decisions to the man. This is the right way, as God intended it to be. The man is the head of the woman. (Here the Greek for "man" is *aner* which commonly [but not exclusively] signifies 'husband'. The reference in the immediate context, to Adam and Eve, would seem to indicate where the primary emphasis of this passage lies. However the passage cannot possible mean that single sisters can teach in the ecclesia because they do not have a husband). But again, men must be careful not to misuse their pre-eminence, because they did not really earn it. It was only given to them by God. To get even more to the point, the woman's relative position to the man is designed to teach the man submission also (for all are subject to Christ, as his collective Bride).

Husbands should always take into account the feelings of their wives. "So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies..." (Eph. 5:28). An enlightened love, which makes one willing to learn and change and cooperate can solve the most difficult marital problems.

The words *in silence* are from the same word as in v. 11—similarly translated "quiet" in the Diaglott.

We might conclude our consideration of these two verses by quoting from Robert Roberts, from his diary of his voyage to Australia. He tells of a case of ecclesial discord in which he was called upon to mediate:

"There was no question of public speaking. All were agreed that the law of the Lord prohibited woman's voice from being heard in public assembly. The question was whether in the non-public working or management of things, woman's voice might be allowed a place.

The question seems an extraordinary one. The Lord's law is never directed to the prescription of impossibilities. You can no more suppress a wise woman's influence and wise woman's voice, than you can suppress the law of gravitation. You may prevent her delivering a public address: but you cannot prevent her giving good counsel, and you ought not. Though woman, by Divine law, is in subjection, she is not to be extinguished.

If the Scriptures appoint man as her head, they do not exclude her from partnership in all that concerns their mutual well being. They show us women:

1. Laboring with Paul in the Gospel—Phil. 4:3;
2. As official servants of an ecclesia with business in hand, which the ecclesia was called upon to promote—Rom. 16:1-3;
3. Exercising the prophetic gift—Acts 21:9;
4. Prominently ministering to Christ himself—Luke 8:2, 3; and
5. Sometimes leaders in Israel, like Deborah—Judges 4:4.

The denial of public speech to women is as far as we are justified in repressing them. I have seen tyrannical and unsympathetic men wrongly using Paul's authority to put down and quench godly women more qualified than themselves to exercise judgement and give counsel. Let women certainly be modest, but let her not be reduced to a cipher which God never intended. She is intended as a comrade and a help, which she greatly is, when enlightened and treated rightly.

We ought to be thankful when women turn up who are able to help with wise suggestion. To object to such on the score of 'ruling the ecclesia' is to evince either a shameful misconception of duty or an itch for headship which disqualifies for the true service of the ecclesia.

No man who wants to be head is fit to be head. The headship that comes from service is the only headship that is either useful or tolerable, or, in the long run, possible. Where the spirit of exalting each other, instead of exalting ourselves, prevails (as Christ commands), there is little danger of difficulties arising, and an easy settlement of them if they do arise."

13 For Adam was first formed, then Eve.

See Gen. 1:27—"Male and female created He them". But this general statement is explained in detail in ch. 2, where we are told that God first created Adam (v. 7), who remained alone for a time (v. 18), and then created Eve out of Adam's side (vv.

21, 22). Paul uses a similar argument again, this time in 1 Cor. 11:8, 9 to demonstrate the woman's submission to the man:

"For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man."

In passing we might well note how often Paul appeals to events in the early chapters of Genesis. Certainly he believed that account to be the inspired, genuine history of man—not some abstract allegory. The modern 'science' that can question the literality of these accounts is most definitely a 'science falsely so called' (6:20) and the "wisdom of this world" (1 Cor. 1:20).

Formed is a peculiar word, found only twice in the New Testament: here and in Rom. 9:20: "the thing **formed**", in reference to God as the master potter and man as His workmanship. From these verses we see the idea of man's creation as the forming of a vessel from the clay by God's own hand.

14 And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.

The Diaglott margin renders *deceived* as "thoroughly deceived"—and Weymouth and Rotherham agree. There seems to be some difference among the available New Testament texts at this verse. But compare 2 Cor. 11:3: "The serpent **beguiled** Eve". Eve allowed herself to be thoroughly deceived, to be swayed by her emotions. She was led away by "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" (1 John 2:16), set in such a pleasing form by the subtle, amoral reasoning of the serpent. (Of course the lusts that led her away were not working in her as they are in us. They are now part of our physical make-up—they are constantly pressuring us. Eve first exhibited these tendencies which caused her to fall to temptation, and they became an inherent factor in all her descendants, which motivates them inexorably to evil rather than good).

The woman acted upon emotional impulse—desire, without proper regard for God's word. She did not demonstrate a ready faith in God's promises. She fell to the deception of the serpent—believing it spoke the truth. (This is quite a lesson for us: We are often ready to do something, knowing it is wrong, if we can only justify it by appealing to another's counsel).

Eve should have spoken with Adam before transgressing and Paul seems to bring this out. He tells the woman to look for spiritual judgment from her head, her husband, rather than doing something on her own. Eve should not have taken the step to "become as the Elohim". This usurpation resulted in sin and grievous punishment. She was then commanded to serve Adam. Paul shows forth this point. Man is for authority (not as a lord, but with love) and woman is for subjection.

This perhaps explains the problem of 1 Cor. 11:10, "because of the angels". Because Eve sought to be equal in authority to the angels Paul says that a woman must cover her head, her glory, to demonstrate her subjection of a "lower" position to the angels. She is not yet equal to the Elohim. Not only this, but she also is subject to the authority of her husband.

Eve was first in the transgression, the **first** to be deceived, the **first** to fall into transgression. John Thomas speaks of these verses in 1 Timothy as Paul's appeal to 'the unhappy consequences of Eve's talkativeness and leadership in transgression' (Elpis Israel, p.122).

In Gen. 3:13 Eve admits that *the serpent deceived her*; but in Gen. 3:12 Adam states simply that:

"The woman which thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat."

Adam was enticed by Eve. This did not pardon him, for he was in knowledge, but the woman was **first** in the transgression. It is probable that Adam was further influenced by the fact that Eve seemed to be none the worse from her experience; she had certainly not died.

On this matter the following words may also apply:

'A man should never permit the words of a woman to intervene between him and the laws of God. This is a rock upon which myriads have made shipwreck of the faith. Adam sinned in consequence of listening to Eve's silvery discourse. No temptation has proved more irresistible to the flesh than the enticing words of woman's lips. "They drop as a honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil: but her end is bitter as wormwood, and sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death; and her steps take hold on hell" (Prov. 5:3-5). Adam was a striking illustration of this truth...' (Elpis Israel, p. 123).

In this verse (v. 14), Paul seems to be saying that men are often guided by clearer, cooler reasoning than women and that women are more prone to spur-of-the-moment, emotional decisions. But man must not feel that he is superior to the woman. Each sex merely has its own capabilities. Even by their natures, men are born to be leaders of the needs of their wives. Women are born to follow and to support their husbands in the Truth.

Perhaps Robert Roberts has expressed the difference best:

'There is congruity in all the ways of God when the relations established by His law are observed. Man is the head, but only for nurture and protection and honour of the woman. Woman is man's equal fellow-heir of the salvation that is offered in Christ, but not to usurp the position that belongs to a man both by natural constitution and divine appointment. Man is for strength, judgment, and achievement. Woman is for grace, sympathy and ministration. Between them, they form a beautiful unit—"heirs together of the grace of life" ' (Law of Moses, p. 220).

To go even further along this line, we should all—brothers and sisters—be subject in love to one another: Looking for Scriptural encouragement and counsel before making important decisions; showing regard for the experiences and preferences of others as far as is practical. In short, behaving as a true family should. We refer in this regard to such passages as James 3:14-18; 5:16; 1 Cor. 13:4-6; 12:25-27; Rom. 14:1-4, 10, 13; 15:13; Gal.6:1-2; and many others.

15 Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.

A correct understanding of one little word opens up the depth of the phrase *notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing*. The word *in* is the Greek *dia*—which means more precisely “through”. This phrase is then very similar to that of 1 Cor. 3:15, where it is said that we are saved by (*dia*—“through”) fire (which symbolized trials—1 Pet. 1:7). Also, note Acts 14:22: “We must *through* (*dia*) much tribulation enter the kingdom of God”. Trials and hardships are the paths over which we must all travel. They are the refining vats through which we must each pass so that our faith may be purified. God does not enjoy seeing us suffer but by His chastening He is helping and teaching us to walk in the right ways and He is molding our characters.

Thus we see child-bearing for what it is—a necessary trial for God’s children. It was first a punishment placed upon the woman for her part in the first sin. The woman was to have sorrow and pain in childbirth, and her husband was to rule over her (Gen. 3:16). But it is God’s mercy and foresight that the very childbearing which serves to remind women of the part Eve played in the original transgression may be one of the trials through which they may enter the kingdom.

Let us now view this phrase in a slightly different way. In another sense, God made possible the reward of eternal life through that role of woman which was a punishment. In this verse the word *childbearing* is preceded by the definite Greek article: Paul seems to be speaking about a single, very special birth: “*the* childbearing”. At the same time that Eve was receiving the punishment for her sin, she received the promise of a special man to be born, called “the seed of the woman”, through whom the serpent or sin power would be fatally wounded (Gen. 3:15).

This same promise is mentioned by Isaiah—that a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, who will be called “God with us” (Isa. 7:14). And also in Jer. 31:22—that a new thing shall happen: “a woman shall compass the man”. These promises were all fulfilled in the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, who was conceived not by the will of man, but by the Spirit of the Most High overshadowing Mary (Matt. 1:21-25). This same Jesus, throughout his life, resisted sin in all ways and died a sacrificial death so that the way to life might be opened to all men and women. Thus the sisters can take courage to serve God in quietness and self-restraint now, comforted with the hope offered by the seed of the woman”.

We may view this phrase in yet another aspect—that of the *spiritual* rather than the natural bearing of fruit to God. Through this we are all saved. In Rom. 7:4, Paul likens the ecclesia to a woman, as he so commonly does. Her former husband has died, which is a way of saying that we have become dead to the present world and its lusts and that we are no longer the servants of sin (Rom. 6:17). With her first husband now dead, she is at liberty to be married to another, Christ who was raised from the dead. And this new alliance (which we now have with Christ) is for the purpose of bringing forth fruit unto God (Rom. 7:4). With Christ’s help, in our new relationship with him, we may produce “the fruit of the Spirit”: love,

joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance (Gal. 5:22, 23). We may then be saved through this bringing forth of fruit—this new walk in the Truth, this new life in Christ, with new desires and new goals. The “child” which each saint bears is himself: “a new man in Christ Jesus”. We must be “born again” (John 3:5)—not only by water at baptism, but by the Spirit-word (1 Pet. 1:23) to “newness of life “ (Rom. 6:4). By doing this we shall be saved.

This can also be rendered, “through her childbearing”. She can be saved through her childbearing—how? Paul has just stated that the sister is to be modest and in subjection—So what can she do? She can bear children—not just carry them for 280 days and then deliver them; but nurture them, thus fulfilling the quiet, unsung duties of motherhood and the house (5:10, 14). By presenting mature, developed servants of God in the form of the children she has so wisely and scripturally brought up.

Maternal characteristics are those of self-sacrifice, preservation of others, compassion, patience, duty; unyielding and demonstrative and forgiving—**loving**. This is another aspect in which the sister is saved in her child bearing. Often, these characteristics go undeveloped until she becomes a mother and these characteristics are most desirable in a saint.

They refers to the women from Eve onwards. For *faith* see 1:5. *Charity* is the word *agape*—the self-sacrificing love (1:5) born of the incorruptible word of God (1 Pet. 1:22, 23). *Holiness with sobriety* refers to sanctification and purity with self-restraint, a fight with oneself and a victory over one’s lusts (v. 9). In another of his Pastoral Letters Paul summarized these virtues very well:

“Denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” (Titus 2:12).

SUMMARY

In this section (2:9-15) Paul has shown us that women have their own special duties, which are consistent with their own special inclinations. Although sisters may not usurp the authority of a man, and although they must also remain silent in the public meetings, there is nothing demeaning in this. They may do these things joyfully, showing through their subjection to their husbands their subjection to God also. And they may rejoice in the same hope as their husbands, the hope offered in God’s Son Jesus, the man born to Mary, “the handmaid of the Lord” (Luke 1:38; Psa. 116:16). May each of our sisters find her own means of service and expression of love—as she prays to the Father: “Behold Thy handmaid”.

Another note: It is very possible that the “faithful saying” which opens chapter 3 in the AV refers to these closing remarks of chapter 2.

IV QUALIFICATIONS OF BRETHREN (3:1-13)

The qualifications outlined in this section are required of **all** brethren, but the presence of the required qualifications must especially be assured in all chosen to lead and serve the ecclesia. A serving brother must avoid anything that could reflect adversely on the Truth, or discourage his brethren, or cause the weak to stumble. All work in the Truth is to be aspired to in the true spirit of serving God most fully and acceptably, but such work and positions have great added responsibilities.

These are God's direct commands, and it is vitally important that we weigh them fully when selecting serving brethren, or when selected to be serving brethren.

A. 3:1-7: BISHOPS

The word "bishop" may to many minds conjure up a false notion. Those whose minds have been influenced by the Catholic and Protestant traditions think of "bishops" as great and powerful men, wearing luxurious robes, and dwelling in immense palaces and cathedrals. However, this type of "bishop" is vastly different from what Paul intended by the New Testament word translated here and elsewhere as "bishop". (Note in this connection Christ's words about John the Baptist's modest clothing and manner—Matt. 11:7-11).

The New Testament word is *epi-scopes*—literally an 'overseer' or superintendent. In the common usage of the word, "bishop" and "elder" are different names for the same class of persons. In 1 Peter 5:1, 2 Peter addresses the **elders** among the brethren, instructing them to "feed the flock of God...taking the **oversight** thereof..." The **oversight** of the ecclesia refers to the duty of the **overseer** (*epi-scopes*). This same word appears in Heb. 12:15, where it is translated "**looking diligently** lest any man fail of the grace of God". Thus the bishop is to be a watchman—keeping careful watch over the ecclesia and taking action against any tendencies toward error or wrong behavior.

A point might be stressed here, since we have introduced the term "elder". Age or long experience in the Truth can be good qualifications. However, age or long years in the Truth by themselves are not always a mark of an elder. As Elihu put it in Job 32:6-9:

"Great men are not always wise: neither do the aged (always) understand judgement."

In "feeding the flock" (1 Pet. 5:2) the bishop performs the office of a pastor (or shepherd), feeding his charges from the pure word of Truth, and leading them out of danger. There is really only one true "Shepherd and Bishop"—and this is Christ (1 Pet. 2:25). But others designated as bishops must follow his example, just as Peter obeyed the Lord's command, "Feed my sheep" (John 21:16, 17).

A bishop in the first century was entrusted by God with some measure of responsibility and authority over the ecclesia. In Jerusalem there were some whom Paul called "rulers" (Heb. 13:7, 17, 24)—whom their brethren were to obey. (Since no one today is directly appointed by the Holy Spirit and judging from the ecclesial mistakes of the past we must be very careful to examine what even 'elders' say.)

Also, any with the privilege and responsibility of being a 'ruler' (in its present restricted sense) should heed carefully Jesus' words in Luke 22:26,27:

"He that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve... I am among you as he that serveth."

Thus the bishops were leaders of the ecclesia, answering at the present time most closely to the ecclesial arranging brethren. Bishops were overseers and shepherds of the flock. In the following analysis of these verses we shall learn more of both their duties and the characteristics they should show forth. As to the qualifications of bishops we may note that what is insisted upon in this Scripture, and in the corresponding passage in Titus, is **character**. The apostle Paul does not require an overseeing elder to be well-educated in the wisdom of this world. Nor does he require him to be a successful and shrewd businessman (although his ability and qualifications to manage ecclesial business must be considered). Neither must he be a man who has flourished in his profession or otherwise obtained outside prominence. A bishop need not even be a polished speaker. But what Paul does insist upon is spotless character and a good report.

1 This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.

This is the second occurrence of the phrase *faithful saying*. (Most likely, this occurrence refers back to 2:15.) See the list, 1:15, and the progression outlined there.

In the phrase *if a man desire the office of a bishop, desire* literally means 'to stretch forward in order to grasp'. A brother should desire the office as a means of serving and glorifying God. A brother should seek to serve voluntarily, willingly, without constraint, with a ready mind (1 Pet. 5:2). He should not shrink from rendering a service for which he is qualified. Neither should he fear reprisals from the non-Christian community against ecclesial leaders (a great threat in Paul's time, but scarcely at all today). If he were to hold back his service due to some false sense of modesty, he would in effect be burying his talent and hiding his light under a bushel. Nevertheless he must also serve with no thought of reward ("not for filthy lucre"—1 Pet. 5:2) nor of personal ambition. Let those who have a passion for this work realize the seriousness involved and examine themselves on the basis of the following qualifications. If they qualify, with God's grace, let them serve with zeal—if not, let them suppress the desire.

The idea of a *good work* is really 'a noble, fine or excellent work'. A righteous person would desire the office as a good work, not as a good honour or position:

"But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, **do the work** of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry" (2 Tim. 4:5).

The office of an elder or bishop (overseer) in the days of Paul was often a difficult and dangerous position. It involved much labor; it was full of risk; it meant a severe and painful existence; it meant suffering the accusations and reproaches of jea-

lous men. Yet from the standpoint of a true servant of God, it was a great and honorable work.

Of what did the work consist? The bishop was to make frequent decisions in ecclesial business affairs. The bishop was in a position to "save souls", that is, to turn men from their sins and put them back on the right track (Prov. 11:30; James 5:19, 20). The bishop might speak publicly and privately to the brethren, for comfort, warning, exhortation, and support (1 Thess. 5:14), "to stir up pure minds by way of remembrance" (2 Pet. 3:1) and to "provoke (incite) to love and good works" (Heb. 10:24). Generally the bishop had as his special responsibility the perfection and edification (building up) of the saints (Eph. 4:12). He was commissioned to "tend (feed) the flock of God" (1 Pet. 5:2), to "lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees" (Heb. 12:12).

Again, there is frequent exhortation in these Pastoral Letters (more than in Paul's other letters) to maintain good works and for men like Timothy and Titus to be examples of them (4:12, 16).

2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach.

This verse presupposes the existence of bishops in Ephesus where Timothy was. Bishops were also known in Crete where Titus resided. Furthermore, James, one of the elders or bishops at Jerusalem, was a respected leader whose counsel and opinion was often sought (Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18). It is safe to say that the bishops were recognized leaders in all the first century ecclesias. (Paul's first letter to Timothy and his letter to Titus stand together in contrast to 2 Timothy. 1 Timothy and Titus are much more concerned with ecclesial organization, procedure, and activity; 2 Timothy, like Philemon and 2 and 3 John, is more of a strictly personal nature than the other two Pastorals. So it is understandable that it contains no reference to bishops).

A bishop must be blameless or literally 'one who cannot be laid hold of', not open to censure, above reproach (cf. 5:7). Truly Solomon says, "A little folly in him that is in reputation is like the stink of dead flies in good ointment" (Ecc. 10:1). Nowhere do minor faults stand out greater than when they appear in prominent men. First of all then, and most importantly, a bishop must be a man to whom no just exception may be taken, by anyone, for any cause.

The phrase *the husband of one wife* has been the center of some disagreement among commentators. It may indicate that there were some Christians as late as 60 A.D. who had several wives under the permission of Mosaic of Roman laws, and who were allowed to keep them in this early period of transition. It seems almost certain that such brethren had married more than one wife **before** they embraced the Truth. The fact, however, that such men were baptized and received into fellowship indicates that they were accepted as the Truth found them and were not required to sever any existing marriage ties as a condition of baptism. No restrictions were placed upon such men except that they could not hold the office of a bishop.

Other commentators feel (wrongly, it seems) that this is a command that elders may have only one wife for all time, that is, that they may not remarry if their first wife should die. (John Thomas writes of Tertullian, a bishop of the early apostasy, who flourished about 100 years after the apostle John. Among heresies either introduced or given formal acceptance by this man was the disapproval of such second marriages: (*Eureka*, vol. 1, p. 437: Mosheim's "Ecclesiastical History", pp. 83, 84). But there is no Scriptural command or precedent for this. There is just as good reason for a widower to marry as for a bachelor to marry (1 Cor. 7:8, 9).

The most logical and simplest explanation of this passage is as follows: The Greek phrase is "a man of one woman", or a faithful husband, not guilty of any indiscretion. In the midst of very lax Greek standards of marriage and adultery, a bishop must be very careful to stand apart and to remain faithful to his wife. He must give no appearance (even if innocent) of following the prevailing trends of immorality. If we view this phrase in this light then this phrase is consistent with 5:9, where it is said certain women should have been the "wife of one man". (At no time were women permitted to have several husbands. And this could not mean that a woman who had been widowed twice was any less worthy of care simply because of her two marriages. It must mean instead that she should have been wholly faithful to each of her husbands in turn).

It is also a possibility that Paul has divorce in mind. Divorce was as common in Paul's day as it is today. In this view, a brother who was divorced and remarried, for whatever reason, would be excluded from any 'official' position of service in the ecclesia—although being received into fellowship.

Note the contrast between first century Christianity and the apostasy which was to arise. One had the healthy, God-given attitude that marriage was honorable; the other commanded the unnatural (for most) condition of celibacy to its bishops (4:3).

The word *vigilant* means to be 'wide awake, watchful, discerning and aware, concerned for the needs and the dangers in an ecclesia'. A bishop must be a man capable of seeing danger at a distance and a man able and willing to warn his brethren. A bishop must not be afraid to expose and fight the evil practices and deceptions which may arise in the last days (2 Tim. 3:1-5). In Ezek. 33 we read of Ezekiel's commission as "a watchman unto the house of Israel" (v. 7). There God outlined his duties. If he saw danger coming he was to sound the alarm (v. 3). But if Ezekiel saw approaching trouble and neglected to warn his brethren, then he was held responsible:

"If the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people not be warned...their blood will I require at the watchman's hand" (v. 6).

There are "bishops" in the Christadelphian body today who are not performing their duties as "watchmen". All brethren (and especially bishops) must be vigilant. We hear so often that we must watch the 'signs of the times'. But many look at the signs of today, which tell of the nearness of Christ's return, without making any real effort to be ready when he does come. It is not enough just to be aware of the

political “signs of the times” and their relation to the world around us. We must also be aware of the “signs of the times” **inside** the brotherhood today:

1. a growing looseness in doctrine and especially practice;
2. a blurring of the lines between the ecclesia and the world: “eating and drinking with the drunken” (Matt. 24:49);
3. a respect for the world’s “science” and learning;
4. a desire to “get along” materially;
5. a tendency to “smite the fellow-servants” (Matt. 24:49)
6. a growing sense of self-righteousness, and self-sufficiency and complacency;
7. a decrease in keen anticipation and prayer for Christ’s return: “My lord delayeth his coming”.

This list could go on and on. And we must warn our brethren of these dangers from within:

“Cry aloud and spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins” (Isa. 58:1).

Those who hold the Truth in its purity should be the “trumpet of God, giving a clear sound to prepare all the brethren for the last days of increased trouble and error. But “if the trumpet give an **uncertain** sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?” (1 Cor. 14:8).

The word *sober* means grave, self-restrained and self-controlled, not excitable or impulsive or flippant or silly. The word is variously translated: “sober-minded” (RV) and “discreet” (the same word as translated in Tit. 2:5). It is also rendered “of sound mind”. Like a sound and healthy body, nourished and built up in the Truth, the mind is directed and motivated by clear, controlled decisions based on the Truth in the Word.

Again, the bishop must not only be “vigilant” concerning the signs of the times, but he must also interpret their warning to better prepare his brethren for Christ’s return and the judgment:

“Therefore let us not sleep, as do others: but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love: and for an helmet, the hope of salvation” (1 Thess. 5:6-8).

Finally, the bishop must watch not only those in his charge, but he must carefully examine himself as well: “Take heed unto thyself” (4:16).

Sober is related to inward feeling: *of good behaviour* (“respectable”—NIV) to outward conduct. Together, both of these characteristics give a complete, balanced picture.

Orderly in outward public appearance; decent and correct; well-mannered; open and communicative; courteous and considerate of others. The true brother of Christ

must be consistent throughout, having no spot or blemish. Even in small details the bishop must reflect the example of Christ. Often we view service to God as a number of great acts, expansive gestures, intermingled with a great many more acts done only for ourselves. We must get out of this notion. We must understand that **everything** we do is to be motivated by our love for God and for others; that **everything** we do be “of a good behaviour”.

Given to hospitality literally means “a lover of strangers”, one who is happy and eager to care for others. Lodging strangers was one of the good works to be done by widows (5:10). And Paul commands that we “distribute to the necessity of the saints, be given to hospitality” (Rom. 12:13: See also Rom. 16:2; 1 Pet. 4:9), “for thereby some have entertained angels unawares” (Heb. 13:2). Paul writes to Philemon, fully expecting this brother to provide him a lodging when he comes (Phm. 22). John writes to “the well-beloved Gaius”, remembering his ministrations in this same regard (3 John 1, 5). In the first century travel through the Roman Empire was quite hazardous and a traveller was very glad to find friendly lodging on his journeys. Today we are not called upon very often to aid strangers, but we do have the frequent opportunity to entertain brethren. One of the unique aspects of the Truth is that brethren may travel thousands of miles to visit other Christadelphians, whom they do not know, or scarcely know, and with whom they may have very little in common in external matters and yet their bonds in the Truth, their common love for the things of their Lord draw them together as if they were old friends. There is nothing more beautiful in this world than to experience this kind of love and helpfulness and consideration among brethren, founded wholly on their love for God. It is the fulfillment and reciprocation of God’s love for us:

“Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:2).

“Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Matt. 25:40).

The word translated *apt to teach* is used only here and in 2 Timothy 2:24 in the New Testament. It signifies being able and ready at all times to teach others, enthusiastic in the Word. Must the elder be a prominent and skilled speaker? It is probable that in Paul’s day most speaking and teaching was informal and more in the nature of conversation as opposed to oratory. And in our day it is not necessary for an elder to possess a polished delivery or a professional speaking voice. But it seems that he must certainly have the mental **aptitude** to give a good, ready answer to a question concerning the Truth—and the foresight and initiative to seek out those who most need instruction.

The bishop must be ready to teach. It seems that the qualifications of this verse follow a sort of sequence: The bishop must first be vigilant, sober, and of a good behavior. The development of these qualities is not the only preparation for teaching. But he must not begin teaching without these qualifications. For a class teacher, better to have a conservative and sober brother (who may not be elegant and refined) than a flashy, wordy leader whose personal life is suspect.

There is so much of beauty in God’s word; every chapter, every verse abounds in lessons for us. In 2 Tim. 2:23, 24 Paul instructs his young student to avoid fool-

ish and unlearned questions that only arouse strife. There are so many useful things to teach that doubtful, fanciful and sensational ideas may wisely be discarded. The servant of God must be "apt to teach", but he should not dispense doubtful interpretations. He should teach the Word in its simplicity; seeing that those taught receive the pure milk of the Word, before going on. (See the note on "godly edifying"—1:4).

If the bishops are to be ready always to teach, then others should be ready always to learn. We should be engaged in teaching and learning much more often than just at our weekly Bible classes. The rewards of Bible study do not come in five minutes, or even in five days. If there is lack of serious and prolonged effort and application to this book, then expectation of true knowledge and any real profit is in vain.

The implication of these principles is that any Christadelphian who, over a lengthy period of time, gives more leisure time and effort to the mastery of some other subject, or to the acquisition of some other skill stands self-condemned by that very thing. This may sound harsh, but no amount of excuse-making can evade this stark truth.

If the Bible really is the only book in the world to have come to us directly from God, then it demands and deserves more and better attention than any other; than all other books. Is such a view unrealistic? How can it be? Paul wrote that "all Scripture...is profitable" (2 Tim. 3:16), and in another place he described it as the "Word of God, which effectually worketh in them that believe" (1 Thess. 2:13) for sanctification and cleansing (Eph. 5:26). If Paul was correct, then there is a transforming and guiding power in this book which we must harness to our lives. We must attempt to find elders to teach us and our children properly. We cannot afford to neglect the teaching of God's word.

3 Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous.

Of course a bishop should not indulge excessively in strong drink. Liquor relaxes the inhibitions and causes its user to do things which he would not normally do. (The Bible has some terrible stories of what has happened to people through over-indulgence in *wine*: Noah in Gen. 9:18-27; Lot in Gen. 19:30-38; Amnon in 2 Sam. 13: 28, 29). An intoxicated person is governed by the lusts of the flesh rather than by a consideration of God's laws. (Use of drugs—including marijuana—must also be strictly avoided, for they are intoxicating in effect).

Also a bishop should not be concerned with banquets and social affairs and places of worldly entertainment. He must maintain a firmly conservative attitude toward the behavior of the world, which is growing continually worse around him. He must be a firm pillar to which younger brethren in doubt may seek for an example. An immoral atmosphere and worldly friends can be just as intoxicating as liquor. (Taken in small amounts, worldly involvement may not seem harmful; but a little association leads to greater excesses, until their victims are trapped in moral 'drunkenness'.

In the Bible wine is used for anything that dulls the mind and the senses. Any false doctrine or any wrong activity becomes a kind of drug turning one's mind from a true worship and a godly life. The priests of Isaiah's day were "drunken, but not with wine" (Isa. 29:9). They were drunken in their own ignorance; and they were **willingly** ignorant, preferring pagan ways above God's word. In Lev. 10 the sons of Aaron offered "strange fire" to God (vv. 1,2), being drunken (v. 9). The priests and "prophets" of Israel erred through wine and strong drink (Isa. 28:7-13). God will not be acceptably approached by a man drunken either with wine or with an ungodly philosophy. The priests, who ministered to God's business in the Holy Place, were to be alert and clear-minded. The saints, who dwell in the "Holy Place" now and who offer spiritual offerings to God, must be in the same pure condition. We must be the anti-type of the Nazarite (Num. 6:3, 4) and the Rechabite (Jer. 35:5-7)—who refrained from wine, that their service to God might not be hindered. Let bishops and all others remember the proverb:

"It is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes, strong drink; lest they drink and forget the law" (Prov. 31:4, 5).

The word *striker* is used twice in the New Testament, once here and once in Tit. 1:7. A bishop must not be "violent" (RSV, NIV), or wound another, either by physical force or by gossip and slander and insinuation. He must not be quarrelsome or argumentative. Some believers never rid themselves of their combative tendencies, and they try to deceive themselves and others by constantly engaging in debate concerning the Bible (usually upon profitless questions (1:4, notes; Tit. 3:9). They want to convince others that they are "earnestly contending for the faith" (Jude 3), but in reality they are earnestly contending only for their own honor, to prove their own intelligence and skill. They are contending with their brethren out of jealousy. This sort of behavior drew forth the most severe censure from James:

"But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not...This wisdom...is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work...From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?" (James 3:14-16; 4:1; cf. Matt.24:49).

Such behavior is in direct contrast to Paul's commands. The believer, even when expressing a difference of opinion or belief, must strive to be conciliatory and understanding, not abusive toward his opponents. The servants of God must be patient, "in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves" (2 Tim. 2:25). This is the "wisdom from above—pure, peaceable, gentle..." (James 3:17).

Not greedy means 'not a lover of money' (NIV) or 'not anxious for base (or questionable) gain'. Compare 1 Pet. 5:2: "Feed the flock...take the oversight thereof...not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind". A true bishop must not be concerned with material things. He must be heedless of himself and his own comforts, seeking first the kingdom of God" (Matt. 6:33). "He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house" (Prov. 15:27). "They that will be (desire to be) rich fall into temptation, and a snare...for the love of money is the root of all evil" (1 Tim. 6:9, 10).

Christ himself had no place to lay his head. When he sent his disciples forth, he commanded them to take only the barest necessities. And so it should be with us.

The word *patient* suggests waiting meekly for God's salvation..." It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD" (Lam. 3:26). Real patience is the same as faith in God's ability to supply a man with whatever he needs. We all profess to believe that "what God has promised, He is able also to perform" (Rom. 4:21). But unless we demonstrate our faith in our daily lives, by truly waiting for His help and by refraining from evil pursuits just for the sake of gain and apparent security, we have no real patience or faith. To be truly patient means to be calm even in the face of a raging storm, or calm in the midst of a great crisis, or calm in the simple little inconveniences and bothers of natural life—having true inner peace, knowing that ultimate deliverance will come from God.

A bishop must not only be patient toward God's promises; he must also be patient toward his brethren: "Love suffering long" (1 Cor. 13:4). Of this quality we have the example of Christ, who patiently taught his disciples time after time, who helped them when they stumbled and lacked faith. No doubt, at times he felt like abandoning the effort, for they were so slow to learn and so bent on keeping their own natural affections. But he loved them dearly; he loved them despite their short-comings; he prayed for them and he persisted until his efforts began to bear fruit. Can we do any less toward our brethren?

Whatever the precise meaning of *brawler*, it cannot be very different from the "striker" considered just above. It probably indicates an individual who is prone to quarrelling or feuding. A bishop must be considerate for the feelings of others. He must not be pushy, headstrong, high-handed, disrespectful, or presumptuous. He may often achieve success by tact. This is not to say that he must be a shrewd and crafty manipulator but rather that he must have a sympathy for the beliefs and prejudices of others and he must whenever possible not offend weaker brethren (Rom. 15:1). Much harm has been done by brethren who were right in their concepts, but too hasty in their actions—stepping on toes and offending brethren.

Not to be *covetous* seems quite similar to the injunction just above, against greediness for gain. But a person may covet more than money. He may be envious of another's power, influence, or prestige. For this reason some men desire to be teachers while lacking the necessary qualities (1:6, 7). A covetous person helps no one, not even himself.

Covetousness is a sickness that eats at a person, until it consumes him, until he can think of nothing but himself and his own pride. It was such a sense of self-importance that prompted the rebellion of Korah, Dathan and Abiram against Moses and Aaron ("They envied Moses also in the camp, and Aaron the saint of the LORD"—Psa. 106:16). And their miraculous destruction is God's warning to us (Num. 16). Such covetousness may arise within an ecclesia, where older brethren vie with one another for leadership and preeminence. Let us pray (and exert ourselves) that it be otherwise:

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" (Psa. 133:1).

4 One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity.

These next two verses, as well as v.2 above, prove that first-century Christian bishops married and reared families. How could such verses as these apply to the 'priests' of Roman Catholicism? The Catholic superstition is a fulfillment of the predicted heresy of 4:1-3—those teachings which lead away from the true faith in many particulars, one of which is in denying marriage its rightful honor. Far from unfitting a man for service to God, a normal, godly home life is a good preparation. A man with wife and children to care for tends to be less self-centered and is better able to understand the individual needs of others. Men of God like Moses (Psa. 77:20) and David (Psa. 78:70-72) learned by experience as shepherds of their flocks to be loving shepherds and to "stand before" God's ecclesia Israel.

One that ruleth well his own house means literally, "one who stands before his own house". The same word is used in Rom. 12:8 and 1 Thess. 5:12 of ecclesial leaders who "stand before" the house of God. Perhaps the word "rule" is too harsh. A bishop should stand as the head of the house, as one in authority, but not as the autocratic dictator which the word 'rule' may imply. The stress should be placed upon love and care and directing of the family, and teaching by example, not upon ruling them.

A person who rules well his house will *have his children in subjection with all gravity* or as the NIV has it "He must...see that his children obey him with proper respect. It is well known that a child's earliest years are the most formative. That is, what he learns in those years will remain with him all his life. It is very important that even youngsters be taught the way of God. This is a great duty, and it is one thoughtlessly neglected by many believing parents. God has given us our children, just as he has given us everything else. And with every gift comes a responsibility. It is a command to parents that they instruct their children:

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

This is the perfect axiom of parent-child relationship in the Truth. This is the guideline, the example. God, the perfect parent and Jesus, the perfect Son. We **must** train our children to be obedient to their natural parents, so that they might develop the desire to be obedient to their heavenly Parent.

Gravity is translated as 'dignity' in the Diaglott and other versions. The same word is given as 'honesty' in 2:2. Paul tells Titus that elders should have "faithful children not accused of riot, dishonesty, or unruliness" (Tit. 1:6).

5 For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the ecclesia of God?

We see that the household was regarded by Paul as a good training ground. We may learn lessons in our day-to-day contacts within the family to help us in the care of

God's ecclesia. (The AV rendition "church" is of course "ecclesia" in the Greek, meaning the assembly of ones "called-out"—all those who have been separated from the world—Acts 15:14.)

If a family man has shown that he has not the capacity to govern his little society, with which he is continually present, and over which he possesses a large measure of authority—how can he expect to successfully oversee a larger society, often scattered and not in the same way subject to discipline?

God's ecclesia is a household, a family. We are all the "children of God" (1 John 3:1). If bishops would bear this in mind—that we are as one family—they would have good guidelines in confronting many common ecclesial problems. The ecclesia is a family and a household. Should not the bishops—as heads of the family—be concerned when a member of the family is absent? If the ecclesia is a family, should there be any jealousy among its members? Or any reluctance to talk with one another and to resolve personal differences? Would the head of a real family, for example, communicate with his children by cold, official letters when personal conversation is possible?

And finally if we found in our home some terrible threat to the well-being of the family members should we not expel it? Would we tolerate the presence, for example, of some dread disease in our household, where the infection might be easily passed from one to another, if we had the power to isolate and finally eradicate it? Of course we would not! And the principle is precisely the same with the ecclesia and the fearful diseases to be found in the world today. A righteous elder cannot ignore such problems, hoping they will go away by themselves.

6 Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.

The word *novice* in Greek is *neophuton* (compare the English "neophyte") and means literally, "a young and tender plant"—not strongly rooted and grounded in the Truth (Eph. 3:17; Col. 2:7). Plants symbolize converts to the Truth (Matt. 15:13; 1 Cor. 3:6,7). A bishop should not be a new convert, still trying to sink down his first roots, for then he will have even greater difficulties.

Lifted up means "puffed up" and is from the Greek *tuphos*, which signifies "smoke". (Compare Matt. 12:20, where the same word is translated "smoking".) In figurative language, the pride which a novice might experience becomes a smoke-screen to obscure and cloud his vision. Other translations substantiate this figure: Rotherham uses the word "beclouded" here, and Weymouth uses "blinded". A man confident of his own importance sees everything differently from those around him. Especially does such a man see himself in a different light. A famous poet tells us, how much differently we might behave if we could see ourselves as others see us.

There has been sufficient comment on *pride* already. Let us simply quote the well-known proverb.

"Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall" (Prov. 16:18; see also 18:12; 29:23).

The word **devil** (Greek *diabolos*) elsewhere is translated as “slanderer”.

The word *krima* signifies more precisely judgment or criticism (1 Cor. 6:3, 4, 7; Matt. 7:2), rather than outright and eternal condemnation. The thought seems to be ‘...Lest you fall into being criticized by a slanderer (and thus bring dishonor upon the Truth)’. This was the fate of David—who was lifted up to commit the great sin, thereby causing God’s enemies to blaspheme (2 Sam. 12:14; compare 1 Pet. 5:8 and Rev. 12:10). This thought is carried forward in the succeeding verse.

We must mention also the ultimate condemnation of the proud and unrepentant men who were led by their covetousness to oppose the authority of Moses (v.3; Num. 16). Compare also James 3:1, 2:

“My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation. For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.”

The responsibilities of a bishop are much greater than those of other men:

“To whom much is given, much will be required” (Luke 12:48).

7 Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

A bishop *must have a good report of them which are without*. This was especially important in the first century when believers were closely watched by hostile authorities for any sign of hypocrisy or failure to live by their professed faith. And it is important today as an instrument to convert others to our hope. If aliens can see that our belief has made a drastic change from the ordinary in our lives, then they may be compelled to learn more about it. For this reason we must “let our light shine before men”—that they may examine our actions and our beliefs, and that they may be led by our sincerity to embrace the gospel, thus “glorifying our Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 5:16).

See notes on v.2: “Blameless” and “Of good behaviour”.

Lest he fall into reproach refers primarily to the reproach of men. Enemies of the Truth are very quick to spot our inconsistencies and use them against us.

The snare of the devil (*diabolos*) is the outside world. How can a man be an effective leader of an ecclesia if he is exposed to the eyes of the outside world as a hypocrite?

If we begin to be reproached by the world for failure to live up to the high standards of the Truth then we may be led further to forsake the Truth entirely. The reproach that may continually surround us for former sins might lead us into the snare of becoming as bad as our reputation. Despair of recovering reputation might, in a weak moment, lead us into a complete abandonment of the Truth. (See Jer. 18:12: “And they said, There is no hope: but we will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart.”) The “devil”, both outside and within, is setting a snare for us. “He” is telling us that it is no use trying to do the impossible, but that it is better to forget the whole thing. And unless we

are careful, we succumb to this type of reasoning. God has called us to perfection, but we must not be discouraged when we fail to reach that state. The characteristics of these previous verses are to be sought, and be developed gradually. Although we may fail to follow them as we should, we must use our failures and learn by them, to grow even more.

Too often in the history of ecclesial life, men have been chosen as leaders for their flamboyant speech and behavior, for their smooth and men-pleasing words, like the people of the world choose their political leaders. (By choosing such men ecclesias fail to follow Paul's instructions found here. And they become just as guilty as the wicked men they have chosen for their leaders. Their condoning, their standing aside while others make wrong decisions, condemns them as accessories). Men who are proper for the job of bishops are the perfect opposite of this: they are humble, self-effacing, and honest, with no inclination toward theatrics, deception, misrepresentation or manipulation. They are straightforward men, whose lives are open books, who serve God sincerely and conscientiously in every way, and who say exactly what they mean.

It is **our** duty to choose our leaders in this present age of turmoil and uncertainty: We do not have men directly appointed by the Holy Spirit but we must choose men to help us maintain Scriptural standards, praying in this for God's guidance. "Ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein..." (Jer. 6:16). "Strait is the gate and narrow is the way..." (Matt. 7:14).

B. 3:8-13: DEACONS

There seem to have been in Paul's day two classes of serving brethren: bishops and deacons. Judging by the literal meaning of the words, we may conclude that the bishops were for all practical purposes the leaders of the ecclesia and that the deacons were their assistants. The Greek *diakonous* is translated as "assistant" in the Diaglott. Other translations give this word as "servant". And the word *diakonous* is sometimes translated in the KJV by "minister". (Note that the "ministry" in Paul's day was a humble service, not a privileged, salaried position like today's "clergy" would presume to make it.)

The word *diakonous* appears often in the New Testament, referring to the many variations of service and classifying many varied (and probably overlapping) groups as servants. It is used of the following:

1. The angels who ministered to Jesus—Matt. 4:11;
2. Jesus himself—Luke 22:27; Rom. 15:8;
3. Timothy, even though he would surely have been an "elder-bishop" too—1 Tim. 4:6.
4. The other apostles—Acts 1:25; 6:4;
5. A sister—Rom. 16:1;
6. All the followers of Jesus—John 12:26; Eph. 6:21;

7. A special class of ecclesial servants—as here.

All believers should minister (as “deacons”) to one another in love.

“If any man *minister*, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth” (1 Pet. 4:11).

There are certain capacities of loving service that all might fill. However, while this is true, there was in the first century a special class of servants or deacons which a person might not become until he or she had been ‘proved’ (v.10). The first reference to such a special class is to be found in Acts 6:1-3, when seven brethren of honest report were selected to ‘serve tables’, that is, to minister to the personal needs of the poor.

One point must be stressed again, concerning ecclesial offices. Such an office is not a position of power. It is a position to serve others effectively. Robert Roberts makes this point quite clear:

“One point ought to permeate all appointments in the house of Christ, and that is the one laid down by Christ, when speaking of the exercise of authority of one Gentile over another, he said, ‘It shall not be so among you.’ ‘He that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he that is chief as he that doth serve’ (Luke 22:26). The appointment of brethren to certain offices is not the appointment of men to exercise authority, but of men to serve. For this reason, it is wise to speak of them all, in whatever capacity, as ‘serving brethren’...It keeps in view the fact that official brethren are only brethren performing an office for the good of the rest, and to some extent shuts the door against the corruption which generated the apostasy, and developed the clerical usurpation” (Ecclesial Guide, pp. 13, 14).

8 Likewise must the deacons be grave, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre.

Nearly all of the qualifications listed in this verse may be found in verses 2, 3 where they are considered in the notes. The “likewise” at the beginning of this verse points backward to those verses. Some of the qualifications of the elders are left out in this section concerning the deacons, but there is no reason to feel that the left-out ones are less important. Should the serving brethren (or any brethren at all) justify being without any of the virtues of verses 2, 3? Certainly Paul intended the qualifications for serving brethren to be no less stringent than those for bishops. We are all commanded to be perfect, even as our Father in Heaven is perfect (Matt. 5:48; 1 Pet. 1:15, 16). Awesome as such a goal seems, we must acknowledge it as a goal. How often do we encourage imperfection and excuses for failure by reminding ourselves of the natural imperfections of the flesh!

Not doubletongued seems to be the only characteristic not found also in the earlier section. The words mean ‘not of double speech’, not saying one thing to one person and something else to another. In this category falls the smooth-tongued flattery of those anxious to please their superiors and to advance their positions. “Therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips” (Prov. 20:19). “A *double-minded* man is unstable in all his ways” (James 1:8).

9 Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.

See the notes on v.16 where this *mystery* is expounded. Notice also that “faith” is preceded by the definite article. There is only one true faith, “the Faith” as God has revealed it to man.

For an explanation of the phrase *in a pure conscience* see the notes on 1:5, on a *pure heart*” and a “good *conscience*”. See also the contrasting defiled, or “seared”, conscience of 4:2. The conscience of a deacon must be “pure”, or purified, having removed everything that is base or foreign. He must have been tried or proved (v.10); his faith must have been refined as though it had passed through the fire (1 Pet. 1:7). A mere scholarly acceptance of the gospel is not enough. If not accompanied by an earnest commitment, such a belief will result in strifes about non-essentials (6:4; 2 Tim. 2:23; Tit. 3:9) or moral laxity (2 Tim. 3:6) or despair (2 Pet. 1:9; 2 Tim. 3:5). The life of Christ must be manifested every day in the true believer: “Christ liveth in me” (Gal. 2:20). He must live by faith, trusting in God, with a conscience free of sin, and a confidence to go before the throne of grace (v.13; Heb. 4:16).

10 And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless.

Proved means ‘to be purified, tested, as metal in the fire’. Some areas of service should not be open to everyone, but only to those who have proven their capabilities—who are not novices (v.6) and who have lived by the instructions of verses 2-8. Timothy was to choose carefully the elders (5:22) and today the entire ecclesia must exercise the same care in choosing arranging and serving brethren.

The phrase *then let them use the office of a deacon* sounds very officious and bureaucratic. It is much better to say, “Let them serve”. (*Diakoneo*—to serve as deacons.)

Being found blameless means ‘having (already) been found blameless (irreproachable or unaccused)’, as best Timothy was able to determine. Of course no one but Christ can judge a man’s intentions, but we must try to discern at least whether the candidates seem to be living according to Paul’s words in these verses.

11 Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things.

Wives is better translated as ‘the women’—that is **all** women in ecclesias. Again, the apostle expands the scope of this chapter. He intends that all sisters, just like all brothers, obey *all* his commands here in this chapter. How could it be otherwise?

However, the primary point here must surely be this: A brother’s fitness for leadership may be judged in how well he leads his family, **including his wife!**

Slanderers is the same word (*diabolos*) as is usually translated “devil” by the KJV. But the “orthodox” belief concerning a supernatural being of evil called the Devil cannot be fitted into such verses as this (or 2 Tim. 3:3 or Tit. 2:3). Here *diabolos* is certainly applied to mortal women and there is no way at all to escape this

fact. So the translators were forced to render *diabolos* by its proper meaning "slanderer" or "false accuser" (which it should have in every instance). This is a perfect example of organized religion's preference (whenever the least bit possible) for heathen fables over God's word.

Faithful in all things is certainly a comprehensive expression—faithful in all things. Careful not to repeat the confidences of others, nor to utter slander and gossip. (A brother with a wife who would spread abroad the delicate personal matters which he might be called upon to handle, has no business being a serving brother.) Lovingly submitting to the husband as the head of the family and the representative of Christ. Seeking always to serve in small ways, behind the scenes. Careful and conservative in the instruction of the children. Supporting the ecclesia's meetings. In thinking upon these things, we cannot help but think of the example of Ruth:

"For **all the city** of my people doth know that thou art a **virtuous woman**"
(Ruth 2:11).

12 Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife ruling their children and their own houses well.

For the phrase *let the deacons be the husbands of one wife* see the note on v. 2.

For the phrase *ruling their children and their own houses well* see notes on v. 4.

13 For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.

For they that have used the office of a deacon well is better translated as "For they that have served well as deacons" (compare v. 10). No good is accomplished merely by possessing an office. Neither is any good accomplished by using an office for oneself. Good is accomplished only by using the office as an effective means of serving others and thereby of serving God. Again and again in this letter Paul stresses the importance of good works. Good works are a necessary consequence of a true belief. If we do not bring forth fruits to God we are to be chopped down and cast into the fire (Matt. 3:10). When we stand before Christ at the last day our service will be judged as well-done or undone. Today (while it is called "to-day") we must continue serving; there is no "early retirement" from the Truth!

Purchase to themselves has the idea of 'gain' (NIV), but not in the sense of a bargain struck. We cannot "buy" with time, money, or works either an honorable position or eternal life.

The phrase *a good degree* means an honorable position, a good standing. As those of the world see it nothing could be less honorable than to stoop to serve others. The world admires most those wealthy and powerful men who serve only their own whims. But the truly honorable work is the work in which Christ engaged and the work to which he calls us: the service of others, the washing of the dis-

ciples' feet. The only worthwhile honor is found in humility. The only true happiness is found in serving others.

If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example...If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" (John 13:14, 15, 17).

Paul is also referring to the excellent standing which our work now will gain for us in the future. Some may serve as deacons in special offices. Others may simply serve as brethren and sisters in a thousand different ways. But all are doing a good work, with this goal in mind: "a good degree", an honorable position when each stands before the judgment seat of Christ. "It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him" (2 Tim. 2:11). If we humble ourselves and suppress our own desires to do God's will (as Christ did) then we will have the same reward (as he has).

Through our service we demonstrate *the faith in Christ* we have acquired and through serving we acquire more *confidence* [which is a better word than *boldness*] and assurance in what we believe and hope. Through serving we become more familiar with our faith and with whom our faith rests. Such "boldness" comes not from ourselves, but from our faith. And in the end we shall have our confidence (through God's grace) rewarded.

If we have served God well (in any capacity), if we are fighting a good fight and if we are truly striving every day to do His will, then we may have the confidence and assurance to come into His presence in prayer through our mediator Jesus Christ. And we will receive the strength we need to go on, the confidence to speak to others the "mystery of the gospel" (compare Eph. 6:19).

V FOUNDATION OF TRUTH (3:14-16)

In this section (the pivotal point of the entire epistle) Paul expresses his purpose in writing to Timothy and he gives us a concise yet sublime definition of the Ecclesia. The Ecclesia is God's household, the support and light-stand of the Truth, the guardian of the "mystery of godliness".

FOUNDATION OF TRUTH: 3:14-16

14,15 These things write I unto thee shortly : But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

Paul was an old man by this time and doubtless in poor health, due to a life of difficult travels and innumerable stresses and strains. He knew very well that whatever he chose to do would be possible only if it were the Lord's will (James 4:13-15). He might **never** be able to come to Timothy. Even a man like Paul was little different from us in this respect (and in this is a basis for serious thought). He could not plan his future with certainty. He must work while it is called today, for the hour would soon come in which the time for labor was past (John 9:4).

That thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself has the idea of 'that you may know how to **conduct** yourself and what to say to those who depend on you for leadership'.

Remember that Timothy had just been given the qualifications for those who "desire the office of a bishop"...or deacon. Timothy had a difficult work ahead of him. He was a young man with a great responsibility and there would be those who would despise his youth and zeal. These qualifications were for him also, that he might make the most of his ability and opportunity to "edify" the house of God.

The phrase *in the house of God* does not refer to any real structure, made with men's hands. When Solomon spoke at the dedication of the temple, he made this quite clear:

"But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded" (1 Kings 8:27)?

But nevertheless this temple of Solomon's time, in which God's glory came to rest, was emblematic of a greater house, a house to which such allusions as Paul's statement here have their highest realization. The "House of God is in the greatest sense the **household** of God or the **family** of God. "House" in the Bible commonly means a family rather than a building. (The family of Israel was once called God's house: see Num. 12:7 and many other references). Paul is still thinking of the same type of "house" when he writes in 5:1, 2 that Timothy should treat the saints as parents and brethren. Compare also Matt. 12:50:

"For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother".

The real house of God was first of all Jesus Christ (John 2:13-22), a man which God Himself "built up" in a very unique sense. And each believer is in turn a

“temple of the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19). [The Corinthians, to whom Paul spoke and other first-century believers were pre-eminently a Holy Spirit temple, in that many members possessed special gifts of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12). But in a broader sense they and we also possess the Holy Spirit in the word of God believed among us: (John 6:63; 1 John 5:6; Eph. 6:17)]. Finally, all the believers “fitly framed together” (Eph. 2:21) are a “spiritual house” (1 Pet. 2:5)—a living house built of “living stones”. We are the “house of God” (Consider also 1 Pet. 4:17; Heb. 3:6; 10:21)—His “tabernacle” (Heb. 8:2) or dwelling-place (for He dwells among us in our hearts and minds) built up around Jesus the chief cornerstone (Eph. 2:20; Psalms 118:22).

We are to be “bond-servants” in God’s house to serve the brethren. Timothy is exhorted to be a willing servant in God’s household just as Moses was (Heb. 3:5).

The church of the living God is the “ecclesia” of God: the assembly of His “called-out” ones (cf. v. 5). In our midst is the ever-living God, “Who only hath immortality” (6:16). This household or ecclesia is to be as alive and vibrant and joyful and energetic as the God Who dwells therein.

The pillar is a ‘support to hold up an edifice’. God’s “house” of Truth is supported by men of spiritual stature, strong in the faith, “pillars” such as James and Cephas and John (Gal. 2:9). The ecclesia is the pillar of God’s Truth. It is the only light-stand in a corrupt and pleasure-seeking world, a world groping in the darkness of the “god of the earth”. The ecclesia is the “mainstay” or “bulwark” of the Truth having a duty to defend the gospel from attacks arising within and without, keeping in good repair the one foundation laid by Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 3:10, 11). As a light-stand the ecclesia has a duty to proclaim the Truth to others and to keep the light atop the pillar always shining before men (Matt. 5:14-16).

Such men as James and John, who comprise the true ecclesia, will find eternal dwelling places as part of God’s temple:

“Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out” (Rev. 3:12).

The complete assembly of called-out ones will be fitted together around Christ (“the chief corner-stone”: Eph.2:20) at the “marriage of the Lamb” (Rev. 19:7, 9). The whole purpose of the Truth is encompassed in God’s Memorial Name, Yahweh Elohim, which means “He Who Shall Be Mighty Ones”. God’s purpose in Christ is to bring to perfection a special group of people, an “ecclesia” to show forth his transcending glory. From the one “Seed of the woman”, by his strength in word and deed, comes the victory over the seed of the serpent. From the one “seed” comes the fruitful vine of the faithful ones. From the one “lamb without blemish” comes a great flock of spotless ones. From the one “captain of our salvation” comes a great army of mighty Spirit-beings.

In Gen. 28:18, after witnessing the Almighty’s power and receiving His promises, “Jacob rose up early in the morning”, set up the pillar upon which he had rested, and anointed it. This upright and anointed pillar represented the resurrected and immortalized Jesus Christ. In this enactment Jacob showed his faith

in the Messiah to come (“I have waited for Thy salvation, O Yahweh”—Gen. 49:18) and his own hope of partaking in this same reward.

When Moses read the words of the law to the nation of Israel about Yahweh making a blood-covenant with them and revealing His glory in a vision (Exod. 24), Moses erected an altar (symbolizing Christ: Heb. 13:10) and surrounded it with twelve pillars, “according to the twelve tribes of Israel”. No doubt this found its expression in Christ’s promise to the twelve “apostle-pillars” that they would sit with him upon thrones, ruling over God’s “house” in the Kingdom (Matt. 19:28; Rev. 21:14).

This same hope is foreshadowed in Joshua 4. As Joshua leads the tribes of Israel across Jordan to inherit the promised land (compare the eternal “rest of the sabbath” offered by the New Testament “Joshua” in Heb. 4) he took twelve men, one from each tribe. These men brought with them twelve stones and erected them in the midst of Jordan as an altar and a pillar for a sign and a memorial. This typifies New Jerusalem, the city of the saints designated by God to rule the world, the “house of God” established upon its twelve foundation-pillars (Rev. 21:12-21).

The Greek word *hedraïoma* translated **ground** appears only once in Scripture and is difficult to translate exactly. It has been variously translated as mainstay, bulwark, foundation and anchor. A similar Greek word is translated “steadfast” in 1 Cor. 7:37 and 15:58, and “settled” in Col. 1:23. John Thomas translates it as both foundation and support. (The technical meaning may be the arch-support which joins together and anchors pillars in most ancient architecture).

Finally, the word **ground** has a connection with the holy “place” or sanctuary in which Jacob rested:

“There is a sense in which Jacob's pillar of stone exists as a house of Elohim even now, and in intimate connection with the house he will see when he awakes from his present know-nothing state. Paul presents to us this sense in the saying, that “a House of Deity is an ecclesia of living Deity, a pillar and ground (material habitation, from “*hedraïoma*”, a habitation of gods) of the truth”—1 Tim. 3:15. This pillar and habitation is “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Anointed being chief-corner”—Eph.2:20. As a monumental pillar, the inscription upon it is ‘the exceeding great and precious promises’ believed by each saint, or ‘living stone’, of which the pillar is composed—‘promises’ concerning the kingdom and name to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as narrated by Moses. This pillar was anointed on the top of it (Gen. 28:18) on the Day of Pentecost, when the spirit was poured upon the apostles (Acts 2:1-4). That anointing was perpetuated in “the testimony for Jesus” which has reached even to us, and with which every true believer is anointed. An ecclesia, however, is not only a pillar inscribed with the truth, but is a ‘ground’ (*‘hedraïoma’*) of the truth. It is a material thing made up of ‘gods’, as David styles them, or of ‘children’ of Deity’, according to 1 John 3:2; Psa. 82:6. These are anointed with the truth, and therefore they are a god-habitation, or *hedraïoma*, of the truth.

"In regard to this word **hedraioma**, it may be remarked here, that it occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, nor in any classical author. The word is derived from **hedra**, which signifies 'a seat, habitation, especially of gods, a temple, altar, and etc.' Hence, the expressiveness of the word, and its peculiar and exclusive application to a habitation of the truth constituted of gods, or children of Deity, who are, as represented in the Apocalypse, 'the Altar', 'the temple', 'the Holy city', or as Paul expresses it, 'an habitation of Deity by spirit'—Eph. 2:22." (**Eureka**, Vol. 1, pp. 391-392)

One should read carefully all our brother's comments in this section of his work entitled "A Pillar in the Temple". In these few pages he expounds a great number of Scriptures dealing with God's holy pillars.

It might be profitable to note the similarities between this V.15 and the experience of Jacob at Bethel (Gen. 28), already briefly mentioned. Jacob was at that time fleeing from his brother Esau, whom he had cunningly betrayed and cheated of his privileges. Jacob, caught in a whirlwind of contradictory emotions, must have begun to wonder if God had not deserted him and forgotten the promises He had made. It was that night that Jacob came, frightened and tired and bewildered, to a certain "place". (The Hebrew word "place" is often used in the sense of a consecrated or special place, a place of worship, or an altar.)

It was here that Jacob saw his vision of a stair-way from heaven, with the angels (God's ministering spirits—Heb. 1:14) ascending and descending upon the stone of Jacob's bed. By this he was reassured of God's promises to him personally, and to his seed to come:

"And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all families of the earth be blessed. And behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of" (Gen. 28:14, 15).

Jesus takes up the strain of thought here, by declaring in John 1:51 that the angels were to ascend and descend upon the Son of Man. Jesus thus was the stone upon which Jacob rested, and which he placed upright and anointed the following morning. In this pillar we see clearly the purpose of the Father and the mission of Christ in being at first as a stone of no repute (but upon which the faithful rested through the dark 'night', with only dreams to sustain them), and then set upright in the morning of resurrection and anointing with the greatest glory—God's immortal Spirit power. "The stone which the builders [the chief priests and rulers] rejected, the same is become the head of the corner" (Psa. 118:22).

In this chapter (Gen. 28), almost every word leads us to 1 Tim. 3:15:

"That thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the **house of God**, which is the ecclesia of the living God, the **pillar and ground of the truth**."

Of course, the most obvious features of connection between these two Scriptures are the **“house of God”** (which is the meaning of *Beth El*—Gen. 28:19) and **pillars**. (The pillar as we have seen represents Christ and his ecclesia: “And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God’s house”—Gen. 28:22).

As Jacob says “How **dreadful** (wonderful, awe-inspiring) is this place: this is none other but the **house of God** (Gen. 28:17)—so Paul likewise exhorts Timothy to solemn **reverence** and careful behavior in such a grand place as God’s household.

Also, “the Truth” (in v. 15) is often an Old Testament equivalent for the covenants of promise to the fathers. And “the living God” probably has its counterpart at Bethel too, because in the Old Testament this phrase often means “the God of the living creatures”—with obvious references to the cherubim and the angels. It is in God’s house only that His angels minister to even the least of His saints, as they evidently did to Jacob:

“The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them” (Psa.34:7). “(God) Who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went” (Gen. 35:3).

16 And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

The word **and** indicates Paul is following up what he had begun in v. 15: “So that you might comprehend the magnitude of that great Truth of which the ecclesia is custodian”.

Without controversy is translated by the NIV as “beyond all question” and means ‘undoubtedly’, ‘confessedly’, or ‘no one can dispute the fact that...’

This verse affords us an interesting and instructive example of a misapplication of Scripture. It is reported that a brother once justified contention and debate among Christadelphians by referring to these words and paraphrasing: “Unless we continually have controversy among ourselves we shall never arrive at the true interpretations of God’s Word.”

Timothy was a bishop at Ephesus, where many members of the ecclesia were once pagan worshippers of Diana represented by the stone or meteor that fell from heaven. But they had since “turned from idols to serve the living and true God” (1 Thess. 1:10). And they now believed in Christ, the true Word made flesh, the bread of life that came down from heaven.

Some in Timothy’s ecclesia had at one time been among the hordes of people who fervently cried, “Great is Diana of the Ephesians” (Acts 19:28). They had perhaps also participated in the “mystery cults” of Greece, with their secret rites and celebrations only for initiates. This shout is opposed by that of, “Great is the mystery of godliness.” And far more wonderful than the colonnaded temple of Diana is the pillared “house of God, the ecclesia of the living God”. Let us say with due reverence, then, “How dreadful (wonderful) is this place!”

Mystery is from the Greek *musterion*—from which the English word “mystery” is derived. Christ is the revealed **mystery of godliness**—a visible manifestation of Deity, testified before men, to offer God’s salvation to all:

“The mystery... **now made manifest** ... the glory of this mystery... which is **Christ in you**, the hope of glory “ (Col. 1:26,27).

“While God lightly esteems the wisdom of the reputed wise, there is a wisdom which He invites all men to embrace. This is styled ‘the wisdom of God in a mystery’; it is also termed ‘the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world, which none of the princes of this world knew’ (1 Cor.2:7). It is said to be hidden in a mystery, because until the apostolic age, it was not clearly made known. This will appear from the following texts: ‘Now to him that is of power to establish you according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret in the times of the ages, but now (in the time, or age, of the apostles) is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets made known to all nations for the obedience of faith’ (Rom.16:25,26).’ By revelation God made known unto me, Paul, the mystery, which in other ages (former ages under the law of Moses) was not made known unto the sons of men as it is now revealed unto the holy apostles and prophets by the spirit, that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel’ (Eph.3:3, 5, 6).

“Here is the ‘knowledge of God,’ in which are contained ‘exceeding great and precious promises’, the understanding of which is able to make a man wise, and ‘a partaker of the divine nature’. Now, although these hidden things have been clearly made known, they still continued to be styled the mystery; not because of their unintelligibility, but because they were once secret. Hence, the things preached unto the Gentiles, and by them believed, are styled by Paul, ‘the mystery of the faith’, and ‘the mystery of godliness’, some of the items of which he enumerates: such as ‘God manifest in the flesh, justified by the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory’. Thus an **intelligible mystery** characterizes the once hidden wisdom of God, and becomes the subject matter of an enlightened faith.” (Elpis Israel, pp. 3, 4)

The remainder of this verse is a point-by-point development of that “mystery of Godliness”—the revelation of Christ to all men and man’s step-by-step comprehension of the love of God directed toward his salvation. In the Greek original this section is rhythmic, much like the Hebrew poetry of the Old Testament. Possibly Paul is quoting from some well-known Christian hymn of the first century, or an early “statement of faith”. Notice how these several points form parallels with the very last part of Mark’s Gospel, and with a section of Peter’s first letter also.

1 TIM. 3:16	MARK 16	1 PETER 3
"Manifest in flesh"		"Put to death in the flesh" (v. 18)
"Justified in the spirit"	"He is risen" (v. 6)	"Quickened by the spirit" (v. 18)
"Seen of angels"	"After that he appeared unto two... and they went and told it... Afterward he appeared unto the eleven (v. 12-14)	
"Preached unto the Gentiles"	"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel" (v. 15)	"Preached unto the spirits in prison" (v. 19)
"Believed on in the world"	"He that believeth and is baptized..." (v. 16)	
"Received up into glory"	"He was received up into heaven" (v. 19)	"Gone into heaven" (v. 22)

(It almost seems as if these were well-memorized points in the early Christian's "statement of faith", so often are they reiterated in the New Testament writings. Possibly here is another of those "faithful sayings" scattered throughout the pastoral letters).

Such a parallel would be of value in demonstrating the true meaning of "the spirits in prison".

All modern editors reject the reading "*God* was manifest in the flesh" in favor of "*Who* was manifest...", with obvious reference to Christ. Nevertheless, Christ *was* and is a manifestation of God, properly understood. The Word (Wisdom, Purpose, Message) of God was made flesh, and dwelt among men (John 1:14; 1 John 4:2). Christ, although the Son of God, was also "born of a woman, made under the law" (Gal.4:4)—shaped in flesh (Psa. 51:5; Rom. 8:3; Eph. 2:14)—made in all points like his brethren (Heb. 2:9, 14). Christ in his own self bore our sins in his own body (Isa. 53:4; 1 Pet. 2:24). In other words, he suffered from the effects of Adam's sin in his mortal nature, just as all of Adam's other descendants. "Every spirit (teacher) that professes that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God" (1 John 4:2).

But how could a mere man in any way be the "Word of God"? The Jews who heard Jesus speak asked how a mere man could speak as he did. They imagined that his words were only the utterance of a fleshly mind. John Thomas speaks of this:

"But he told them that this was not so; for he said, 'My teaching is not mine, but His who sent me', and John also testified that 'he whom the Deity has sent,

spake the words of the Deity', as Moses predicted in Deut. 18:18, concerning the Christ, saying, 'I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall be, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him.' And so when the Word became flesh, the Word-Flesh recalled attention to what Moses had written and said, 'He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words... the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last days. For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father who sent me, he gave me a commandment what I should say, and what I should speak'—John 12:47—'the words of eternal life.'

"The words, then, that came out of the mouth of Jesus, are to be received as the direct teaching of the Eternal Spirit, and to be interpreted of him." (*Eureka*, Vol. 1, p. 103).

While Christ was like all other men in his nature and the temptations he had to undergo, he was different in that he never succumbed to the lusts of the flesh. By his whole life he condemned sin in the flesh (Rom. 8:3), becoming "dead to sin". And when Christ died, death could have no more dominion over him: "He that is dead is freed from sin" (Rom. 6:7). The grave had no more dominion over him and God, after declaring His own righteousness in condemning Jesus' body of sin (Rom. 3:26), could demonstrate His mercy as well, in raising Christ from the dead to eternal life. Jesus was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection of the dead" (Rom. 1:4). Jesus was "vindicated" or "endorsed"—as the Greek word signifies (Matt. 11:19; Luke 10:29). Jesus was *justified* (declared just or righteous) *in the spirit* by being "born of the spirit" through a resurrection to life (Rom. 1:4; 1 Pet. 3:18):

"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36).

Christ's resurrection to life was a proof of his righteousness and an example and guarantee to those "in Christ" that they might similarly be accounted righteous through him (Rom. 4:25).

He was also *seen of angels*. This may be a simple reference to the angels who attended upon the events of the resurrection and shortly thereafter (Mark 16:5). When Jesus was elevated to his new immortal state he was able to say, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28:18). And with the mention of this new power, there seems always to be present the angels of God, as a witness of that newly-gained dominion:

"Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him" (1 Pet 3:22).

But a more satisfying explanation, in view of the context here in 1 Timothy, as well as the parallel in Mark 16, might be this: The "angels" (messengers) relate to the disciples who saw Jesus shortly after his resurrection to life:

"Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils. And she went and told

them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept. And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not. After that he appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went, and told it to the residue: neither believed they them. Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen" (Mark 16:9-14).

These appearances (1 Cor. 15:5-8) were of more immediate importance than those to the angelic beings, as it was in this way that Jesus established the first-century ecclesia and instructed the early believers in the more complete principles of the gospel. Since this section of Paul's letter is concerned with the ecclesia, God's house and the "mystery of the faith", it would seem to be more appropriate to understand the term angels as referring to those mortal messengers who were to witness to the world the foundation of the faith—Jesus, a living Messiah. (Compare such passages as Luke 24:34; Acts 9:17; 13:31; 26:16).

Christ was *preached unto the Gentiles*—All the "mystery of Godliness" points to this, that God in His love wished all men to be saved (2:4) and that He has provided His son to be the Saviour of all men that believe (2:6). For this reason, Christ told His disciples: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15; Matt. 28:19; Rom. 16:26). Paul especially would be inclined to emphasize this, being the special apostle to the Gentiles. In Eph. 2:13, Paul tells these Ephesians, to whom Timothy ministered:

"Now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ."

Even Peter saw this same thing, for he told the Jews at Pentecost:

"For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts 2:39).

This was driven home to Peter even more forcibly when he saw the vision of all manner of animals, clean and unclean, after which he remarked:

"God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean" (Acts 10:28).

Of course God's plan, ultimately to offer salvation to the Gentiles, is foreshadowed a hundred times in the Old Testament and in many of Christ's parables too. Sometimes it is even stated in simple prophecy (Isa. 49:6; 57:19).

Christ was *believed on in the world*. It is not necessary from this that Christ must be believed throughout the earth. It means only that he will be believed upon by a remnant, a mere handful called out of the various races and nations of mankind. This is the mystery of Godliness, that a few of the poor and humble of this world, who have made themselves nothing for Christ, may yet gain all things in the age to come. True Christianity never will be a popular religion of the masses in this present age; rather, it will always be the "sect everywhere spoken against" (Acts 28:22) or ignored by the majority.

And he was *received up into glory*, the consummation of God's mystery of revelation. This same Jesus who once walked and taught among other men was taken into heaven (Psa. 110:4), but he will so return in like manner as he ascended into heaven (Acts 1:11). Until then he is the life of God, by anticipation, for all the saints. For our life is hid with him or in him now (Col. 3:3), but it will soon be revealed to those of us who may be found worthy when hopefully "we shall be like him" (1 John 3:2; 1 Cor. 13:12). Christ the high priest, having offered his own blood for an atonement, will return from the Most Holy to his waiting brethren "the second time without sin unto salvation" (Heb. 9:28).

Thus the mystery of Godliness has its beginning in God's manifestation through Jesus alone and its conclusion in God's manifestation by Spirit in a multitude of sons—"God all in all" (1 Cor. 15:28).

The mystery of Godliness is the greatest of all things: the development of the ecclesia, God's pillar and household, first by the preaching of Christ, in his life, and then the preaching of his disciples and the ecclesia today—with the ultimate expectation of taking out a remnant, of preparing a people for their Lord.

"But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4:3-6).

Truly we may exclaim, with Paul: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen." (Rom. 11:33, 36).

VI LATTER DAY APOSTASY (4:1-5)

We have just finished considering Paul's words in 3:16 concerning the "mystery of godliness". This mystery has been revealed for all the world to believe. This revealed mystery is an affirmation of certain basic, logical and wholly satisfying truths. It is an intelligible mystery (Luke 8:10; Rom. 11:25) to all those who are not lost (2 Cor. 4:3). But here Paul presents to us a second mystery—a mystery that has enslaved much of the 'civilized' world. This mystery is termed (even by its proponents) 'an incomprehensible mystery'. Its doctrines are in no way logical, but rather they are a concoction of flesh-pleasing, God-defying theories. Those who question certain points are branded as 'heretics'. Paul also calls this second mystery the "mystery of iniquity".

"There shall come a falling away first, and that man of sin (shall) be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God...For the *mystery of iniquity* doth already work...whose coming is after the working of Satan with all the power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them a strong delusion, that they should believe a lie" (2 Thess. 2:3, 4, 7, 9-11).

How would this apostasy develop? It would grow up gradually in the early ecclesia. It would gain its impetus from greedy and ambitious worldly "bishops", who had forgotten (or never learned) the admonitions of Paul (1 Tim. 3:1-7).

"For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ" (Jude 4; cf. 2 Pet. 2:1).

Greek philosophy and the Gnostic mysteries were embraced by some leaders in the early ecclesia. There was (and still is) something appealing about the mysterious. Since many of the converts were of this persuasion before baptism, they would perhaps bring with them into the ecclesia doctrines other than the Truth. Another element which led to the adulteration of the Truth was the teaching of the Judaizers (Acts 15:1; Gal. 5:1-3; Rev. 2:9). This was warned against by Paul (Gal. 1:6-9; 1 Tim. 1:4-7). Several years before, when Paul had spoken personally to the elders of Ephesus, he had told them this:

"Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:30).

The union of the two apostate systems (Greek-Roman paganism and corrupted Judaism)—from whence the Catholic system sprang—was prophesied in Zech. 5: Here the prophet saw a woman sitting within an ephah, a measuring container used in trade. She was called a "curse" (v.3) and "wickedness" (v.8) and she originally resided at Jerusalem where ungodly priests "made merchandise" of religion. But she was lifted up from the earth and carried to a new dwelling place in Shinar or the land of Babylon (v.11). The woman represented the Jewish apostasy, with its cold

formalism, its “letter of the law” rather than the spirit. She was the murderer of the Lord, and she resided in Jerusalem until 70 A.D., when the temple was overthrown and the Jews scattered. But the same spirit of apostasy was carried over into Christianity—the evidence of which may be seen throughout Paul’s letter to the Galatians and in Acts 15, where certain Jewish Christians were contending that Gentile converts must be circumcised and keep the law. This false ‘woman’ held her children in bondage to the Law of Moses, which had been done away with in Christ.

It is a great warning for us that such a gruesome apostasy as that to be seen in the ‘Holy Mother Church’ should have its beginnings **within** the ecclesia! “In the latter times many shall depart from the faith”. Hence the exhortation “Examine yourselves (to see) whether ye be in the faith” (2 Cor. 13:5).

LATTER DAY APOSTASY: 4:1-5

1 Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.

Now—“But” (RV, Diag.) indicates sharp contrast to what just came before. Paul had been speaking of the wonderful gospel mystery in its purity; but now he must present the very antithesis of this, in the blasphemous mystery of iniquity.

The Spirit most likely here is equivalent to Jesus himself. Paul probably has in mind the warnings of Jesus, as in the Olivet prophecy:

“Take heed that no man deceive you... for many shall come in my name...and shall deceive many...And many false prophets shall arise, and shall deceive many...and shall show great signs and wonders” (Matt. 24:4, 5, 11, 24).

That Jesus is sometimes (after his glorification) referred to as “the Spirit” may be seen in various references: The messages to the seven ecclesias in Asia, are sent from the one holding the seven stars in his right hand (Rev. 2:1), having been dead and yet now being alive (v.8), the “Son of God” (v.18), etc. But those same letters are also described as “what the Spirit saith unto the ecclesias” (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29, etc). And again, Paul refers to the glorified Jesus as a “quickening (i.e. life-giving) Spirit” in 1 Cor. 15:45.

The word *expressly* is used only once in the New Testament. Other versions render it “distinctly”. But the root word means “to pour out”: God had revealed through His Holy Spirit to Paul this warning of apostasy to come. He had “poured out” this infallible revelation upon the apostle. Possibly Paul is thinking of that communication which led to his statement in Acts 20:28-30, concerning a falling-away to come.

In the latter times some shall depart from the faith—that is, “in later days”—a phrase that may include the very “last days”, but also all the intervening time periods. In the original the word *depart* carries an implication of apostasy but stronger even than that, it signifies “to desert”, or “to instigate to revolt”.

In every age since Paul spoke this prophecy, many have revolted against the one true faith. Perhaps he was merely reciting the prophecy of Dan. 11:35, spoken of the time when the "god of the earth" would come into power:

"And some of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white, even to the time of the end."

(In the Bible, "some" may often be read as "many"—as in John 6:64,66: "'There are some of you that believe not'...From that time **many** of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him." (See also note regarding "some", 1:3.)

The very purpose of most of Paul's correspondence was to fight this tendency to fall away. In 2 Thess. 2:7 (written in 54 A.D.) Paul had said that the "mystery of iniquity" was already at work.

But Paul is talking to us today as well, in the very last times—the last days of the rule of the nations. It is in this time when apostasy can be clearly seen not only in the great churches around us, but in the very body of Christ also, among those who have the true form of godliness, but who by their actions deny the power thereof (2 Tim. 3:5).

"When the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8) Will the believers still be living and praying as they should? Jesus' words from a remote time ring very true today.

"And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure to the end, the same shall be saved" (Matt. 24:11-13).

Yes, these words may have had applications to other ages than our own. But who can deny their fitness even today?

Seducing means "deceitful" or "wandering" (in the sense of vacillating from side to side). In 1 John 4:1, *spirits* is the term used of teachers:

"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world."

These men with their false doctrines wander from place to place. They creep stealthily into a group; they travel wherever itching ears are ready to receive their words.

These same teachers were described by Jude at approximately the same time, as recalling memories of Cain, Balaam and Korah. Furthermore he says:

"These are spots in your feast of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever." (Jude 11-13).

Certainly a warning to those in Paul's and Jude's time, but no less a warning to us today!

In the phrase “Doctrines of devils” *devils* should be translated “demons” as in the RV margin; RSV; and NIV. In New Testament language, those persons who are insane or in some such way afflicted are said to be possessed by demons, or even to be themselves demoniacs. Their “wisdom” is not from above, but is earthly, sensual, and “demoniac” (James 3:15). The leaders of Catholicism, and their deluded followers, have become insane in their opposition to God’s truth. (Witness the terrible atrocities of their inquisitions and scourges through the Middle Ages). The Pope and his top-level advisers are mad in their desire for authority over the world. The Pope expounds his ludicrous theories, and his priests run to and fro to “demonize” their subjects with their “power and signs and lying wonders”. And a Protestant Christendom, which once at least made a show of opposing Popery, now moves closer and closer toward reconciliation and cooperation with the power in the Vatican. The “harlot daughters”, once estranged, are now returning to their infamous Mother. Paul foresaw this demoniac madness which the Wicked One manifests, a madness which will deceive many, until it realizes its abrupt end in the destruction of the brightness of Christ’s coming (2 Thess. 2:8).

Paul may also have in mind the supposed disembodied spirits so commonly worshipped by the apostasy (Rev. 9:20). It was the renowned pagan philosopher Plato who said, “All **demons** are an intermediate order between gods and mortals”. The deification of heroes and emperors by the polytheistic Greeks and Romans was encountered by Paul (see Acts 17:18—where the strange “gods”—AV—is actually this very word “demons”!), and it was the worship of such that he described as “...sacrificing to”, “having fellowship with”, “drinking the cup of...**demons**” (1 Cor. 10:20,21). This worship of “demon-idols” was carried over intact into Roman Catholicism. Hundreds of “saints”—some pagan, some Catholic, some who never even existed—have been “canonized” by the Pope and his Cardinals. These “saints”, just like the ancient gods and goddesses, are assumed to be mediators and benefactors for their constituents, on a retail basis. (This is a direct violation of the Scriptural doctrine that there is only **one** mediator, the man Christ Jesus—2:5). Untold millions in revenue have found their way into the purses of the Church, as its priests buy and sell the souls of men (Rev. 18), as garments and bones purported to have been those of the great “saints” are foisted upon their subjects, and “lying miracles” are heralded as witnesses to the truth of Catholicism.

Thus men claiming to be Christian do not worship God through His Son Jesus, but they prostrate themselves before the Virgin Mary, ‘Mother of God’, St. Joseph, St. Francis and all the other ‘saints’ “in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels” (Col. 2:18).

“But in his estate shall he honor the God of forces” (Dan. 11:38). John Thomas translates this as “gods of fortifications”, and he connects this with the “demons” of Catholicism in the following extract:

“Chrysostom, in his homily on the martyrs of Egypt, says: **‘The bodies of those saints fortify the city** more effectually for us than impregnable walls of adamant; and like towering rocks placed around on every side, repel not only the assaults of enemies that are visible, but the insidious stratagems also of invisible demons, and counteract and defeat every artifice of the devil

as a strong man overturns the toys of children'. The Greeks and Latins made the most of these wonderful martyrs. **Believing in ghosts, or disembodied human** spirits, they proclaimed the translation of their shades to heaven to act as mediators and intercessors with the Virgin and her Son; but kept their bones and dust in church-shrines to protect, defend, or guard them from all enemies, demons, and other evils to which the flesh is subject. Speaking of these times of intense superstition, Gibbon says: 'The Christians of the seventh century had insensibly relapsed into a semblance of paganism; their public and private vows were addressed to the **relics and images** that disgraced the temples of the east; the throne of the Almighty was darkened by **a cloud of martyrs**, saints, and angels, the objects of popular veneration; and the Collyridian heretics, who flourished in the fruitful soil of Arabia, invested the Virgin Mary with the name and honours of a **goddess**.' (Exposition of Daniel, p. 62; see the entire sections, "A God of Guardians" and "Guardian's Bazaars", pp.61-70.)

Some would translate this last phrase of v. 1 as "doctrines taught by demons" (NIV), thus making it virtually equivalent to the preceding "seducing spirits". There is no difficulty in accepting such a translation when it is recognized that "demons" are in reality **men** who are possessed—by the "demons" of mental illness and delusion. In a very real sense, men who imagine and teach the existence of disembodied spirits may become that which they worship—demonizing and seducing "spirits" who corrupt others. It was said of the false gods in David's day, that "they that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them" (Psa. 115:8).

2 Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron.

For comments on *speaking lies in hypocrisy* see notes, 1:20. The purpose of The Great Apostasy is to seduce others by a show of sanctity—as did the Pharisees (Matt. 15:1-14; ch. 23). "A mouth speaking great things" (Dan. 7:8; 11:36).

Those who speak lies *have their consciences seared with a hot iron*. *Seared* means 'branded' (RV; RSV), marked in the forehead (Rev. 14:9; 17:5). The metaphor is from the practice of branding slaves and criminals, the latter on the brow. A Scriptural comparison would be the mark God placed upon Cain (Gen. 4:15). Those deluded by the Catholic superstition "brand" themselves with the sign of the cross, the mark of the beast. They brand themselves as "slaves", slaves of their masters Sin and the ecclesiastical Sin-Power, whom they serve even unto death (Rom. 6:16, 21). And, like Cain, they are thus marked by God as criminals in His sight.

The word "seared" is translated also as "cauterized" implying a self-inflicted insensibility and callousness. The followers of the beast are cauterized with a hot iron in their foreheads or minds. They are **willingly** ignorant (2 Pet. 3:5), having given themselves over wholeheartedly to their deluded state:

"Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart:

Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness" (Eph. 4:18, 19).

God only goes so far with such people. If they continue in their course of willful sin, He will at last leave them completely (2 Thess. 2:11; Rom. 1:28).

Even in the Truth we may fall to such a degree that our consciences, no longer guided by the Word of God, cannot any more turn us from wrongdoing. Let this consideration spur us on! Each individual must never cease to examine himself, his motives, and his actions. And he must act as a watchman, that those around him do not fall prey to the blindness of heart that leads to a seared conscience and willful sin.

3 Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.

By their **pretended** piety in *forbidding to marry*, the priests of Rome try to win support for their absurd doctrines. The language here presupposes a power strong enough in its full maturity to enforce its peculiar doctrines upon others, as the Catholic hierarchy does to its clergy. Merely to teach and practise celibacy, as have done a number of exotic minorities, is not enough to provide a fulfillment of this prophecy. "Forbid" is a strong word and implies commanded and enforced celibacy rather than chosen celibacy. Only the Catholic Church has effectively done this.

Such a state of forced celibacy is so unnatural for most, negating as it does the benefits of home and family influence (3:2, 12). These often act as softening agents upon those who would otherwise be self-centered and narrow-minded. The Levitical priests were never prohibited from marrying.

Perhaps Paul's recommendations to some (who could receive it) in 1 Cor. 7 ("Seek not a wife", and "It is good to abide even as I") have been misused in forcing celibacy upon all the Catholic clergy. But it is more likely that this false doctrine had its beginning among the small Jewish sect of Essenes which flourished in this time.

Again, we may refer to Dan. 11, where in vv. 36, 37 the prophet speaks of the king who shall arise, exalting himself above every god, and disregarding the desire of women. And so he continues and prospers "until the indignation of God is accomplished".

Commanding to abstain from meats was a common practice in the Catholic Church for centuries. Recently the hierarchy has begun to "modernize" their rules ever so slightly in anticipation of appealing to the Protestant "daughters". "Let no man judge you in meat or drink" (Col. 2:16).

This no doubt had its beginnings with the Judaizers, who tried to enforce the law regarding the abstinence from "certain" meats. There were also different sects in Paul's day whose ascetic behavior called for abstinence from meat, *which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving*. He is "the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy" (6:17). Although many receive God's

blessing without ever acknowledging Him, it is not His desire that they do so. And in the future Kingdom there will be sustained and unanimous thanksgiving to Yahweh—for all men will believe and know the Truth, “from the least to the greatest”. But for now we alone render true Godly thanksgiving.

Of them which believe and know the truth refers to those who have “full (complete, accurate) knowledge” (*epi-gnosis*). Not just the incomplete partial “gnosis” of the Gnostics. Such people as these should not, because of their marriage and eating of meats, feel inferior to the ascetic hypocrites (v.8). “For the Kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy” (Rom. 14:17).

4 For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving.

Every creature of God is good since everything that God created He called “very good” (Gen. 1:31; compare 9:3). As Paul tells the Romans, “There is nothing unclean of itself...All things indeed are pure” (Rom. 14:14,20).

“Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled” (Tit. 1:15).

The word *refused* or “rejected” (RSV, NIV) literally means “to be thrown away”. This is what Peter learned so dramatically, when he saw a certain vessel descending from heaven with all manner of animals therein. He was commanded by God to kill and eat, but he protested, only to be rebuked: “What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common”. And Peter was able to say, “God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean” (Acts 10:9-16, 28). Our Lord also says, “There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him” (Mark 7:15). In this very matter of eating, again Paul has said that dietary differences among people are of no consequence:

“For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him” (Rom. 14:2, 3).

All things given by God for our nourishment should be put to their intended use. The good gifts of God are to be put to good use, “for the earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof” (1 Cor. 10:26). In 1 Cor. 8 and 9 Paul explains that certain of these good gifts were put to evil use in idolatrous sacrifices. And he leaves us the principle, that some things are to be refused, if only for the reason that their use might cause scrupulous brethren to stumble. (Such verses as in Rom. 14 must not be used to justify abusive, impure practices like smoking and drinking. The context of the various passages here indicates that Paul is speaking of food, items to be used for nourishment).

Finally, in this simple truth, that not a creature is to be refused, we see by type the great promise that God is no respecter of persons, that God will refuse no man. Men are creatures of God; all have the chance to become acceptable to Him—if they are cleansed and continually sanctified by the Word of God:

"Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you" (John 15:3; compare Psa. 119:9).

5 For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.

Anything to be used by the saints, whether food or clothing, is something special to the godly, who recognize that all things come from God. He has promised to provide us all things necessary if we only seek first His Kingdom. No doubt He takes precautions to see that these things come our way, so that we may have all sufficiency in food and raiment, which leads to that "godliness with **contentment**" (See 6:6, 8).

"I have been young, and now am old: yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread" (Psa. 37:25).

"The eyes of all wait upon Thee; and thou givest them their meat in due season...The Lord preserveth all them that love him" (Psa. 145:15, 20).

The custom of rendering thanks to the Father, at mealtimes especially, finds many precedents in Scripture. Among others, we have the following:

Samuel in the feast—1 Sam. 9:13;

Jesus in feeding the multitudes—Matt. 14:19; 15:36;

In the memorial feast—Luke 22:19, etc.

After his death and resurrection—Luke 24:30;

Paul on the ship, in the presence of aliens—Acts 27:35.

Paul also makes the corresponding point that nothing is good, unless we use it with praise and thanksgiving to Him from Whom all blessings flow (Rom. 14:6). Whatsoever is not done in faith is sin. The use of any comfort or convenience or privilege which we have is sin, unless we can recognize and acknowledge God's hand in providing it.

VII PERSONAL CONDUCT (4:6-5:2)

Chapter 4 also deals with the contrast between self-imposed rules of physical self-denial and obsession with physical exercise, and true spiritual exercise and development of the whole man unto godliness through study of and obedience to the Scriptures. It is by these means, Paul implies, that the incipient apostasy in vv. 1-5 will be arrested, collectively and individually.

It is easy to get these things out of proportion, to be obsessed with physical well-being to the neglect of the infinitely more vital spiritual growth and development and well-being. Physical health, no matter how well attended to, inevitably passes. Soon the grave claims the best-kept of mortal bodies. But spiritual health, diligently pursued, is doubly profitable. It will teach us wisdom and gain us divine care for the present existence, and can be good for eternity.

Each of the two sections under this heading begins with a reminder to Timothy, that he be diligent to present these exhortations to others in the ecclesia: "Put the brethren in remembrance of these things" (v. 6), and "These things command and teach" (v. 11). Can we do any less? Can we realize the importance of these commands and then choose not to present them to our brethren?

A. GODLINESS, TRUST IN GOD 4:6-10

It cannot be stressed too often, what godliness meant to Paul. Possessing a statement of faith, with a list of doctrines to be accepted does not in itself make one godly. Godliness was not the mere ability to quote page after page of Scripture. True, these things are important in their place. But true godliness is something far beyond this. It is found in a humble and careful adherence to the principles of chapter 3. True godliness is a matter of conduct or practical "theology"—at least it was for Paul. And it should be for us. The importance of good works is the oft-recurrent theme of this whole letter. Our manner of life should reflect our spiritual development. The word must be in the mind, but it must be used, it must direct every action. The word must live in us and we must live in the word.

6 If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou has attained.

Put the brethren in remembrance of these things—this was Timothy's duty as an elder and a watchman: to offer the advice he had received from Paul (and which Paul had received from Christ) publicly and privately to outline the proper duties and proper character of brothers and sisters, and to warn them of the coming apostasy and the threat it posed. Nothing has ever been achieved by turning a blind eye to potential problems in the ecclesia.

Minister really means "deacon", and it is translated as "servant" in the Diaglott. While the word may indicate an ecclesial office (3:8), it is still used in the general sense of a servant.

The verb *nourished up* (Greek *ektrepho*) is the present participle: it should be rendered "being nourished up". Timothy is being exhorted to continually partake of

the nourishment of God's word, both the milk and the meat which become a steady, well-rounded diet of spiritual food. Only if he does this day by day will he continue to be a worthwhile servant:

"Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of; knowing of whom thou has learned them; and that from a child thou has known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Jesus Christ. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:14-17).

The *words of faith and of good doctrine* (in short, the Scriptures!) are the essential nutrients for the health and development of the spiritual man. Without it, he will waste away. If the words are distorted or contaminated, at best they will cause spiritual indigestion, and at worst "food poisoning".

In the words of faith is better translated as "In the words of **the** faith; the words in which true faith finds expression:

"For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope" (Rom. 15:4).

Of good doctrine refers to those Godly teachings as found in vv. 13, 16. Sound instruction in righteousness.

The phrase *whereunto thou* [Timothy] *has attained* has the idea of that which you have "closely followed" (Diaglott)—and are still following. Compare the AV margin in 2 Tim. 3:10. The KJV is misleading here. We must never think we have attained to all the knowledge that we need. The same word which is used here is found also in Mark 16:17: "And these things **shall follow** them that believe". We can never feel we have completely achieved a living knowledge of the Truth, but we must tirelessly strive toward that goal.

7 But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness.

Profane does not mean vulgar, in the modern sense of profanity. It means instead having nothing whatsoever to do with God, being wholly ungodly and unclean (1:19; 6:20), as the "profane" Esau (Heb. 12:16). *Old wives' fables* refers to those inconsequential prattlings which are all too common to a certain class of elderly and idle women. (It is a further sorrow that such a preoccupation with such things is not even there confined, but seems to be the pleasure and hobby of many of both sexes and all ages.)

Paul is referring in this verse especially to the ungodly and profitless doctrines as in v.1-3, some of which arose out of Jewish rabbinical speculations. He is also referring to the myths and fabricated "mysteries" of the secret pagan societies which flourished in Egypt and the Middle East. (See the notes, 1:4.)

The word translated as *exercise thyself* implies strenuous, agonizing exertion, another of Paul's references to the vigorous athletic life of the Greek. One of Paul's favorite figures of the believer's life is that of the athlete straining every muscle to attain a goal and to achieve a prize.

Exercise thyself rather unto godliness means to exert yourself to attain the right state of heart and mind, a consistent aim in life. The Greek ideal was the development of the whole man. Even though their ideal of the perfect man was quite different from Paul's, still the underlying concept was the same. The believer should subordinate everything else to his one desire, the development of the whole spiritual man through study and obedience.

"Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the **whole man**" (Ecc. 12:13).

8 For bodily exercise profiteth little; but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

Bodily exercise is from the Greek "gymnasia". By this term Paul means more than physical effort. He means the coordination of body and mind, in consistent and tireless training and effort, to master some skill. The pianist or dancer or athlete practises continually, striving always toward perfection, but never quite achieving it. Another type of such bodily "exercise" is the adherence to strict rules of diet, such as fasting (Luke 18:12: "I fast twice in the week"), which Paul mentions in v. 3, or the other ascetic tendencies to self-denial which characterized both Jewish and Greek thinkers in that time: going barefoot, wearing sackcloth, abstaining from marriage and meat.

Bodily exercise profiteth little—or "for a few things"—in contrast to the *all things* for which godliness is profitable. Or, as the margin indicates, "for a little time only": Physical health lasts only a few years, and a skill lasts hardly longer. They are but man's feeble efforts and they are bounded by his own inherent limitations—sickness and death. If man does not appeal to one greater than himself, he cannot rise above what he is by nature. If he places confidence in his own strength, to deny himself this or that, he may have removed temptation, but he is no better for it—if he has not replaced these items with positive, godly thoughts and works. He is like water, running down, seeking its own lowest level. He is like the man who has rid his house of one foul occupant only to see seven unclean spirits fill the void. Without God in his life, nothing can profit him very much.

But godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. What can we add more than this! Godliness in this present life brings to the disciple of Christ a sense of spiritual "peace"; a feeling of oneness, unity, inseparableness with God; well-being and consolation even in the midst of trials.

"Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness: and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33).

Such a person gains “peace” and contentment now, even as he looks expectantly toward that greater “rest” of the Kingdom.

To have peace with God makes all possible worries harmless and out-of-place. This is *godliness with contentment* (6:6). It can only come with complete, undivided dedication to one goal of life. Peace is not freedom from external strife. It is freedom from internal strife, because our minds are full of love and “Perfect love casteth out fear...he that feareth is not made perfect in love” (1 John 4:18). Jesus, even in the anguish and anticipation of his terrible sufferings, was still able to say:

“Peace I leave with you... In the world ye shall have tribulation: but in me ye shall have peace...Let not your hearts be troubled” (John 14:27).

The godly person, just as Christ, has already “overcome the world”.

9 This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance.

The phrase *this is a faithful saying* refers back to v.8 (see notes, 1:15).

For commentary on the phrase *and worthy of all acceptance*—“reception” (Diaglott) see notes, 1:15.

10 For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe.

The faithful saying, in essence, is that godliness is profitable, a thing to be desired. *Therefore* (to this end, or with a view to achieving this godliness), we will labor and suffer reproach:

“Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby” (Heb. 12:11).

Note the progression of thought here. In v.7 Paul tells Timothy “Exercise thyself”. But then he next includes himself with Timothy and all the brethren: “we labor”, as fellows, teammates striving together, helping one another toward the same objective. In the same way Paul speaks of “Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellowlaborer in the gospel of Christ” (1 Thess. 3:2).

The word *labour*—Greek *kopiaō*—suggests strenuous toil, and is used by Paul in Phil. 2:16 to describe athletic fatigue. Thus he continues the “exercise” metaphor of vv. 7,8.

The translation *suffer reproach* [KJV] is based on the reading *oneidizometha*, which according to most modern scholars is incorrect. The alternative manuscript reading *agonizometha* has much more support, and accords better with the context: “Agonize” is from the root *agon*—an athletic context. Thus, following this alternative, RSV, NIV, and others have “strive”.

We trust is better translated as “We have set our hope upon...”: “Hope” is *elpis* (note 1:1).

The phrase *the living God* is stressed throughout. Our God is a *living* God; words very appropriate to an ecclesia whose members formerly worshipped lifeless idols, as in Ephesus. Throughout his letter to that ecclesia the apostle Paul emphasizes the unlimited power at our disposal in the *living* God of Israel, man's only Saviour.

"The exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power" (Eph. 1:19).

"To him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Eph. 3:20).

Our hope is in a God who keeps His promises.

He is *the Saviour of all men, especially of them that believe*. God is the *Preserver* (Diag.) of all men, for a time, by His spirit (Acts 17:25, 28). Especially is this preservation true of the saints: "All things work together for good..." (Rom. 8:28, 31). "The eye of the LORD is upon them that fear Him...to keep them alive in famine" (Psa. 33:18, 19). God provides us with a "sufficiency" in all things which we truly need (6:6; 2 Cor. 9:8).

God is the *Saviour* (to everlasting life in Christ) of not just one race or one family, but of all men. That is, God offers salvation to the Gentiles along with the Jews, in short, to all men who will listen and come. And He is not willing that any should perish (2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9; Lam. 3:33; Ezek. 18:32; 33:11). God's great power of which we have been speaking is most evident in the gospel, "Which is the power of God unto salvation to all that believe" (Rom. 1:16). Christ is a redeemer for all men prospectively, but really only for those who truly believe in him (notes, 2:6).

BE AN EXAMPLE: 4:11-5:2

In chapter 3 Paul carefully outlined to Timothy the requirements of a serving brother: to be blameless, vigilant, sober, experienced, patient. In 4:1-5 he spoke of an apostasy which was even then working, and which would grow in strength as the years passed. Paul is telling Timothy and us that the days ahead will not be easy ones. They will be times to try even the best-prepared of men, with the main troubles coming from within. And there is only one way to combat the errors that arise. We must remain well-informed in the Word, and we must each one take heed to himself, that he is following the apostle's teachings of godliness so that he will not lead others astray.

11 These things command and teach.

These things take us back to the previous section. They include the refusal of ungodly fables and speculations and the following after sound words of faith and godliness. They include a trusting in God despite adversity. These things Paul both commands and teaches. Paul commands it as the only behavior pleasing to God, for our God is a jealous God, and unwilling that we share our devotion with others. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." Paul teaches it as a father to his "own son in the faith" (1:2), lovingly imploring him to follow these Divine precepts, for

his own good. God's standards are not harsh and restrictive in their keeping, but instead they bring "great gain" even in this life. We can achieve personal growth in character as a result of following God's instructions. He does not restrict us from those things which bring us true benefit. He withholds nothing from those He loves. The 'restrictions' only upset the man of the flesh, who can expect harshness when he stands before the Supreme Judge if he ignores these 'restrictions'. Children do not often know what is truly best for them. The spiritual chain of command is put into action. Paul enjoins Timothy to command or charge the "followers" of Christ to follow those principles which he and Paul have been commanded to follow. As an example, Timothy must live his faith and thereby teach others.

12 Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

For more details on the phrase *let no man despise thy youth* compare the similar passage in 1 Cor. 16:11. It seems, from all accounts, that Timothy was a relatively young man (*Neotes*, however, is said to indicate any age up to forty), although he possessed the qualifications for a leader. But like Robert Roberts many years later, he must have discovered that some older men envied his ability and position, were taken aback by his zeal, and therefore were always ready to condemn him for any little mistake. He had to be doubly careful in whatever he did so that his 'enemies' would have no occasion to criticize him. He would also have to develop an insensitivity to their constant badgering and heckling.

Also, as Paul mentioned previously (3:6, 7), the young are subject to pride in a large degree. Timothy is warned to carefully steer clear of all vain pretensions and ambitions, common to the young in authority.

The phrase *be thou an example of the believers* is an exhortation to be a type or pattern, for the believers to follow. Paul, who labored so much among the **unbelievers**, was an "example" for them (1:16)—in that he had once walked contrary to God, but had been forgiven of his sins done in ignorance, and had completely reversed his course of life. Timothy, who worked among the **believers**, should be their example, in the ways of godliness which Paul explains in the next few verses.

James says, "If any man offend not *in word*, the same is a perfect man" (James 3:2). This is one of the most difficult areas in which to be wholly consistent to our calling. Our tongue can slip, it seems, before we have an opportunity to consider the effect of what we say. For this reason we should all be "slow to speak". The Scriptures give much detailed instruction regarding this essential bridling of the tongue. Let us all search our hearts to see whether by failure to properly use and control this member we are making our religion vain. The Scriptures refer to a dozen or more different uses of the tongue in which we betray our professed faith: lying, evil-speaking, backbiting, talebearing, foolish talking, talking too much, talking proudly, contention, answering in anger, flattery, murmuring, complaining and giving lip-service.

If we look only superficially at this, we may feel that we never offend in words. But if we look more deeply, remembering how the law of God searches down into

the dark and sometimes unsuspected roots of our innermost thoughts and motives, we shall realize that all these warnings are matters of real concern for each of us. Let us all carefully consider the words of the Psalmist: "I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress" (Psa. 17:3). See also the comments in 5:13.

The words *in conversation* may seem to be synonymous with "in word", but in reality it complements it. "Conversation" is correctly translated as "manner of life" in the RV. The original Greek word refers to behavior. "In word" has to do with our speech, and "in conversation" has to do with all our other activities, that may make impressions upon others.

Charity (Greek *agape*) is the truest love, a self-sacrificing *love* toward others (so translated in RV). It is perhaps best explained in 1 Pet. 1:22:

"Seeing ye have purified your lives in obeying the truth (at baptism) unto unfeigned love ("phileo"—companionship, closeness—the first step) of the brethren, see that ye also **love** (*agape*—true, divine, complete love) one another with a pure heart fervently".

The true love of the brethren is reached through successive stages. It is not something that one immediately feels, but it is a feeling which must continually grow greater and greater in our hearts, until there is no room for hate and envy and strife.

Most versions omit the phrase *in spirit*. It has very slight support from the manuscripts.

In faith means show that your faith is real. Do not give lip-service to an ideal, while making your personal decisions on another basis. Be consistent, live by your faith—that others may see what it really means to you.

Purification is a process of attainment and it involves certain, specific, successive steps. We never attain perfect *purity*, but we make a constant effort: "Every-one that hath this hope purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3:3). "Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double-minded" (James 4:8). The Law and the relation of the priests to the service of the tabernacle stress ceremonial purity and cleanliness. We are the antitype, "the holy priesthood", the fulfillment of the priestly ideal. It is our duty to purify our hearts and minds (1 Pet. 1:2; 1 John 3:3).

13 Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.

The introductory words *till I come* indicated [as stated before, 3:14, 15], that Paul hoped to return to Ephesus to inspect the progress of Timothy and the ecclesias and to straighten out any problems that might have arisen. But this phrase *till I come* calls to mind the coming of Christ also, for it is so often used otherwise in that sense. Paul was a bishop or an overseer of the brotherhood. In his travels he might make visits to the various ecclesias. Jesus, in his first advent, was typical of the Levitical priests who came to inspect questionable dwellings. If the building were unclean the priest would decree that it be destroyed (Lev. 14:44, 45). This is exactly what Jesus did. He came to inspect the Jewish "ecclesia" and nation,

and he found the temple and its worship filthy before God. Therefore, he decreed its removal along with the destruction of Jerusalem:

"They shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation" (Luke 19:44).

(Visitation is from the same word in the Greek as "overseer").

And in the same way, when Christ comes again to the earth, it will be as a bishop or "overseer" to inspect his people. (In 1 Pet. 2:25 "bishop" is the same word as "visitation"). He will then judge them, punish the wicked, and reward the faithful. And his judgement will be upon the basis of how well we have followed his directions, as recorded here.

The words *give attendance* are better translated as "give attention and time" or "devote yourself" (NIV). Notice the great stress which this phrase places upon what follows. Not just "Do these things", but "Give your complete, undivided attention to them. Do them with all your heart, mind, and soul".

For Timothy the *reading* would be the Old Testament Scriptures which he had known from a child (2 Tim. 3:14-17). Doubly so for us, the Old Testament and the New are both necessary, both equally important, both requiring careful and prayerful study both confirming and completing one another.

Paul seems to be referring especially to the public reading of the Scriptures before an assembly. The same word is used in Acts 13:15, where the Scriptures were formally read in the synagogue following a regular pattern. It was in such a situation that Jesus himself "stood up to read" (Luke 4:16). The reading aloud would be either accompanied or followed by explanatory comments after the example of Ezra and the priests:

"So they read in the book of the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading" (Neh. 8:8).

Public reading, along with exposition and exhortation, still provides the framework of our ecclesial meetings, as well it should. The brother who is called upon to read must remember that his duty is just as important as that of the presiding brother or exhorting brother or praying brother. He is the translator, so to speak, of God's Word. He should convey its meaning respectfully, carefully and coherently. His responsibility is to do more than just give a half-hearted, unthinking recitation of words. But good reading goes beyond mere technical proficiency. The quality of the voice is not the primary concern; neither are proper pronunciation and correct pauses the only things that count. What matters most is that he read with his heart words that are for him living and vital! How refreshing it was once to hear a brother interrupt his public reading of a chapter to make a helpful comment upon the text! Clearly he understood his purpose. He was not just 'reading'. He was going beyond the cold formality. He was "giving attention to reading"!

Exhortation is the practical application of Scriptural precepts, including appeal, entreaty, example, and encouragement. We should not use the word or the power of exhortation to adamantly pursue our own theories (1:4-7), but to nourish ourselves and others in the simple teachings of godliness. Timothy was to accept

and give exhortation, being a responsible deacon, guiding and provoking his brethren in love to do those necessary things.

The word *doctrine* is rendered “teaching” by the RV, RSV, and NIV. Again the doctrine referred to is the apostles’ doctrine, the teachings of Christ (Acts 2:42). The stress is upon the practising of good works.

14 Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.

Timothy probably received some special Holy Spirit *gift*, which was to be used for the upbuilding or edification of the believers. See especially the notes on 1:2. Timothy would have received his gift from the apostle Paul (1:10; 2 Tim. 1:6) who transmitted it according to the *prophecy* or instruction he received from God.

The *presbytery* simply means “elders”. Paul must have given Timothy his authority and power in some special ceremony of ordination (Acts 14:23; 16:4), though we take pains to keep as far as possible from any comparison with the unenlightened rituals of the apostate churches. Only the apostles had the power to invest others with the Holy Spirit in any of its manifestations. We may then view the apostles as the “elders” of the entire body, who through their representative, Paul, selected and transferred ecclesial authority to Timothy (2 Tim. 1:6).

The imposition of hands is both traditionally and Scripturally the means of transference or transmission. The Jew laid his hand upon the sacrifice to **transfer** his guilt to the animal (as in Lev. 1:4). The patriarchs thereby transmitted God’s hereditary blessings (as in Gen. 48:14), as Moses did God’s authority to Joshua (Num. 27:18-23). The laying on of hands by the apostles and others healed the infirmities and even gave life to the dead (2 Kings 4:34; Mark 6:5; Luke 4:40).

In a secondary sense, this phrase may refer to the laying on of hands by the Ephesian elders, in voluntary selection (5:22) of Timothy as their leader. In this understanding, they would merely be acknowledging Timothy’s authority, already received from Paul and the other apostles. Perhaps this was needed for the benefit of the members of the Ecclesia who might not readily have accepted Timothy’s credentials. This Ephesian “presbytery”, though some may have possessed Spirit gifts themselves would have not been able to transmit such power to others, not being apostles.

15 Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all.

Meditate is one of those colorless English words which very improperly gives the sense of the original. The RV and NIV rendering is much better: “Be *diligent*”, indicating an active, inquiring mind—a comprehensive understanding of applied knowledge. The modern word “meditation” conjures up the picture of passive theorizing or of mentally wandering in a cloudy atmosphere of “devotion”. But a quick reference to a reliable concordance soon sets this idea right by revealing that the Bible words translated “meditate” all have to do with speech and talking! So true meditation is a literal talking, either to God or to one another: **Exhort** one

another...(Heb. 10:25). "Then they that feared the Lord **spake** often one to another" (Mal. 3:16).

Give thyself wholly to them means 'Love God and serve Him with all your heart and all your energy' (Matt. 22:37). Nothing less than the fullest effort is expected. God is not pleased with a part-time, lukewarm devotion (Rev. 3:15). Be absorbed completely in your service to God. We get the same idea in the phrase, "Walk in God". Live your life wholly encircled, clothed by the Spirit-Word of God's Truth. Walk in light, as children of the light. "Be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long" (Prov. 23:17).

We promise to become living sacrifices—daily putting to death the tendencies of the flesh. Regardless of the time that we enter the vineyard, we must labor and never relax—until the end of the day.

Timothy's *profiting* [*progress* (RV, RSV, NIV), the same word as "furtherance" (of the gospel) in Phil. 1:12, 25] was to *appear to all*. As others could see Timothy as a living example of the gospel he professed, they might be encouraged to try harder themselves. "Let your light shine before men" (Matt. 5:16) means more than just for the conversion of aliens. "Let your light shine" also before the brethren, to strengthen and help them. Both Timothy's personal **benefit** from the study of the Truth and his **growth** in the Truth were examples for others.

16 Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them; for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.

Doctrine should be translated "teachings" again, as in v. 13. True doctrine, or true teaching is the basic foundation for everything else. It was not enough for Timothy to tell **others** to pay attention to this word. He must do it himself as an example first. It is much more effective to lead others by doing rather than just by telling. The ecclesia is a chain, made up of individual links; and a chain must be pulled, not pushed!

For in doing this Timothy would *both save himself, and them that hear* him. A prophet must warn his fellows or he is held accountable himself (3:2; Ezek. 33:4, 5; James 5:20). He must "declare the whole counsel of God" (1 Cor. 3:10-15), not holding back things for the sake of "peace". And he must take heed to his own warnings first and foremost or he will have no hope of success.

CHAPTER 5.

1 Rebuke not an elder, but intreat *him* as a father; *and* the younger men as brethren.

The ecclesia is a family (1 John 2:1, 12-14)—a family that has a closer tie, a sounder reason for unity, than has any natural family: "the bonds of the Truth". A close-knit family is a unit, a body, better able to face trying situations, since they have "the same care one for another" (1 Cor. 12:25).

Just as in chapter 3, these next two verses demonstrate the family nature of the ecclesia and consequently the close personal relationships of the Truth. Ecclesial

elders should always be aware of this family nature of the ecclesia, showing care and consideration in their dealings with brethren. In this they have Paul's example: "I am become all things to all men" (1 Cor. 9:22).

Rebuke not an elder means 'never censure an old man harshly'. The verb is used in the New Testament only this once. It signifies "to lay blows upon" (figuratively), "to castigate". Here it seems by the context that Paul is speaking of any older brother, for in v. 1, Paul is speaking of the different age groups of individuals within the ecclesia. Contrast this with the section beginning with v. 17, where the "elders" are those that "bear rule", that is, the leaders of the ecclesia.

For **intreat him as a father** other versions have 'exhort, beseech, plead with, appeal to, implore'. (*Intreat*—*parakaleo*—is the same as the word translated "exhort" in 2:1.) In these two verses, each believer is to be treated as a family member—father, brother, mother, or sister. The ecclesia is our real family. We are reminded of Jesus' words:

"Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother" (Matt. 12:48-50).

The idea is not to build barriers of animosity and resentment, but to admonish with the love you would show to your natural father, only here there is more reason. Timothy was relatively young, and going to an older brother in correction would be enough to alienate that person if not handled properly. This does not remove the duty of correction; yet it is aimed towards temperate action.

Paul exhorts Timothy to treat **the younger men as brethren**. Of course, they are brethren. But here Paul uses the word in the family sense—as 'equals'. Though inferior in position, attainments, or knowledge to Timothy, they were still his equals in God's sight and deserving of respect and honor as such.

2 The elder women as mothers; the younger as sisters, with all purity.

Elder is the feminine form of "presbyter", used only in this verse. A similar word is found in Titus 2:3. Indeed, the elder sisters may be as "mothers" to the young Timothy (compare Rom. 16:13). In Judges 5:7, Deborah is said to have arisen "a mother in Israel". She assumed this position as a prophetess or teacher when no man was ready to assume this role, but she then wisely stepped aside when Barak arose as a righteous leader. However, she still offered him encouragement and solace for the difficult task he had to perform. Barak trusted her so much that he said, "If thou wilt go with me, then I will go" (Judges 4:8).

The younger were to be treated **as sisters, with all purity** or 'with due respect, courtesy, and propriety'. This scarcely needs a further comment. Timothy was to show purity on his own part (4:12; 5:22), and all his dealings with the younger women were also to be in the utmost purity of action and intention.

The relationship in the Truth is a close, personal family relationship, that is, it should attain to the mutually affectionate and tender ideal that family relationship **should** be, though often sadly is not.

Relationship in the Truth is not a cold, impersonal, critical business, nor a mere technical relationship. There must be a deep, personal, living feeling and closeness. If there is, the necessary mutual reproof and correction will be gently offered and lovingly accepted. Pointing out where we feel others are wrong is often necessary and often a duty. Done in the right spirit, it is an evidence of love and care. But, it is one of the hardest, if not **the** hardest, thing to do right in the Spirit and not in the flesh. Fleshly fault-finding comes so easily and naturally to all.

First of all, we should so live all the time and have such a continuous and strong relationship of affection and understanding among us that reproof could be given and received with perfect freedom in the spirit of love. This is an ideal never fully attained but earnestly to be striven for.

VIII WIDOWS (5:3-16)

This section is about widows. It is very interesting and has a practical bearing on today's problems. How should the aged and dependent be cared for?

The emphatic over-all teaching of this portion is that, generally speaking, it is a private and not an ecclesial matter. Well-meaning individuals may feel this should be ecclesially organized and undertaken on a large and official manner. But all the emphasis and force of Paul's words here is on restricting organized ecclesial participation except in special circumstances and on stressing individual responsibility. Three times he emphasizes this basic principle: verses 4, 8, 16.

In a sense the ecclesia itself is a "widow", since her bridegroom has been taken away (Matt. 9:15) and she awaits the return of her husband or lord (Rev. 19:7, 8). There are, therefore, important lessons for the whole ecclesia to learn from these verses (i.e., v.10; Matt. 25; 34-40).

A. WIDOWS INDEED 5:3-10

Paul says it is acceptable for "widows indeed", those with absolutely no one who should care for them, to be taken on as regular ecclesial responsibility, but even then only with several rigid and demanding restrictions (vv. 9, 10—which we shall examine).

What of others who are equally in need, but do not so qualify? The general and consistent instruction of the Scriptures concerning love and care for others, especially those of the Household, would adequately take care of all needs in a Body that is truly and spiritually alive. The divine command to **all** is:

"He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none, and he that hath meat let him do likewise" (Luke 3:11).

All who are **truly** in the Truth will not only be willing, but happy and eager to do so, as children of a bountiful Father. For those not of this enlightened and spiritual disposition, God has nothing to offer. "As a man soweth, so shall he reap".

3 Honour widows that are widows indeed.

The Greek for *honour* is *timao*, from which "Timothy" is derived. *Honour* means "support" (Diag.), as in the English "honorarium". The same Greek word clearly means this in Acts 28:10. "For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother" (Matt. 15:4). "Despise not thy mother when she is old" (Prov. 23:22). There were ample provisions for the care of widows in the Old Testament (Exod. 22:22; Deut. 14:29; 27:19), as well as for fatherless and strangers. God Himself set the pattern in His care for the weak (Deut. 10:18; 24:17; Psa. 68:5). The trouble was that the Jews did not truly live by the Law. It remains for the followers of Christ to fulfill this requirement. This is the essence of true religion—"To visit the fatherless and afflicted" (James 1:27). We see hints of this assistance in Acts 6:1; 9:39.

4 But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God.

Nephews is translated as "grandchildren" by RSV and NIV.

Let them learn first to show piety at home means 'Let their relatives learn as their first obligation to be "dutiful"' (Diag.), their **duty** being the honouring or support of parents (Matt. 15:4, 6). "These should learn first of all to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family and so repaying their parents and grandparents" (NIV). In these verses in Matthew, Christ condemned those Jews who claimed to "dedicate" their goods to God's service, when their sole aim was to preserve their own wealth and to avoid contributing to the welfare of their parents.

Requite means "To render proper returns..." (Diag.). Can we ever repay our parents? Our children learn how to treat us by the way we treat our parents.

5 Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day.

A *widow indeed* would be the widow who would not fit into the above category (v.4). That is, she would have no relatives to care for her. The RSV substantiates this. "She who is a real widow and is left all alone".

The truly desolate, those with no strength of their own, "the poor of this world", are those most able to *trust in God*. We must first learn to humble ourselves, to see ourselves for what we are, weak and pitiable, before we can have true trust and faith in our Heavenly Father. Here is the Divine rationale for pain and suffering.

Such a person knows her help comes from above. She is like the lily, who relies wholly upon God's care:

"Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these" (Matt. 6:28, 29).

Thus she is a widow in the natural sense only, because the Father in Heaven is her true Husband and Protector.

Supplication and prayers would be 'petitions and devotions' (notes, 2:1). Anna was a superb example of this:

"And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day" (Luke 2:37).

See also Psa. 119:164 ("Seven times a day do I praise thee") and Dan. 6:10 ("He kneeled upon his knees three times a day").

6 But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth.

Life is given to man for one reason only, to serve and glorify God, to give Him pleasure and to be useful in His eternal purpose.

Pleasure in the abstract is not of itself wrong. There is, in fact, infinitely more true pleasure and enjoyment and satisfaction in the Way of Life than the way of death. David said of that glorious condition to which he looked forward in faith.

"In Thy presence is fullness of joy, and at Thy right hand are pleasures evermore" (Psa. 16:11).

But Paul is talking about self-pleasing as a motive, compared with God-pleasing as a motive. It is the motive and the motivation that determines whether our service is spiritual or carnal. If we serve God simply to get ourselves into the Kingdom and enjoy its pleasure, this is merely a higher and disguised form of the same old selfishness.

But if we forget ourselves, and serve God out of the joy of love and gratitude and worship and devotion, we shall find all other things are added unto us. Pleasure sought selfishly is never found. It only comes as a by-product of love and service.

Pleasure means 'self-indulgence' (Diag., RSV). The only other occurrence of this word is in James 5:5, where the rich men are addressed.

"Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter."

The word does not necessarily imply what the world calls wicked. It really has to do with pampering and spoiling oneself.

For additional comments on the phrase *dead while she liveth* compare Rom. 8:13: "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die." And Rev. 3:1: "I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead". In Eph. 2:1, 5 Paul speaks in a positive fashion of those once "dead" in trespasses and sins, who have been "quickened" or made alive. But the sad truth is that so many of these, in little ways, and step by step, relapse into the death-state of selfish indulgence.

7 And these things give in charge, that they may be blameless.

These things has reference to what is mentioned in verses 5 and 6. *Give in charge* means "command"—as in 1:18—to the widows.

They refers to the *widows* who were to be *blameless*. That is, whether seeking support from the public alms of the ecclesia or not, the widows of the congregation should struggle after an irreproachable, self-denying life, and show publicly before men that they were indeed the servants of Christ. In these words there seems a hint that the former lives of many of these women-converts to the Truth had been very different from their current lives, and that in their new profession as believers there was great need of watchfulness on their part not to give any occasion to slanderous tongues.

8 But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.

Paul has made his instruction clear to the widows. Now he instructs the brethren in their duties regarding the care of widows.

In the words *if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith*, we are again reminded that the true faith is a way of life, in love. The Faith may be denied in daily practice, even if hypocritically kept in word and appearance—many of the scribes and Pharisees being perfect examples (v. 4). Neglecting the most elementary Christ-like duties is no less to be condemned than renouncing the Truth itself. All we have belongs to God; we will answer for our use of what is His.

A person who does not provide for his family *is worse than an infidel* or an “unbeliever” (Diag.), because he has no excuse, being responsible (through his knowledge) to serve God, on penalty of death at the judgment if he fails. Even an “unbeliever” will perform these duties from natural promptings.

9 Let not a widow be taken into the number under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man.

In the phrase *taken into the number* a very special word is used only here. *Katalego* (from which we get the English “catalogue”) signifies “enrolled” or “listed”. There must have been a special roll in the ecclesia with the names of those widows to be supported in whole or part by the ecclesia (compare Acts 6:1). The names on the roll were to be limited to those who had the qualifications of these two verses. “Let not a widow be enrolled, unless she has been...”

It is the intention of all of us, widows included, to be “enrolled” in the book of life (Phil. 4:2, 3). But in this too, we must first meet the qualifications.

Having been the wife of one man means simply, a faithful wife (compare 3:2). This cannot be a ban against a second marriage for a widow, because Paul himself says that the young widows should marry (v.14). And a woman twice widowed could be just as worthy as one who had been married only once.

In a spiritual vein, the True “Israel” must have been the faithful “wife of one man” and one man only (Ezek. 16:8; compare Prov. 31:10-31)!

10 Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints’ feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work.

The qualifications here are quite similar to those other lists in chapter 3 which can be read for particulars not expounded here. Compare also the similarities with the works which elicit the approval of Christ the Judge in Matt. 25:34-36.

A widow *well reported of* is one who has “borne witness” within and without the ecclesia “*for good works*” (which Paul enumerates here).

If she have brought up children means if she has reared them in the “nurture and admonition of the Lord”, a primary duty for wives and mothers. Bishops’ children were always to be well-behaved and faithful (3:4). (Of course, we cannot suppose that this would exclude the childless widows from ecclesial care, if they were otherwise deserving.)

Others have rendered this: “If she have nourished children”. She should have given those young ones under her care a solid diet of spiritual food—to produce

healthy children of God. "Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6). This word "to train" may be given as "initiate" or "dedicate" (as Samuel's mother dedicated him to the service of Yahweh in His temple—1 Sam. 1:28).

In a broad way, the exhortation to parents (and particularly the sister-mothers) could be stated as: "Give your children adequate and regular meals of the spiritual food of life, that they might gain full understanding and become dedicated thereto."

The word for "child" in the verse (Prov. 22:6) means "a child from infancy to adolescence". This is the period of development when a child is receptive to principles which will mold his character for a lifetime. The same word is used in Prov. 20:1: "Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right". Whilst lacking in full understanding, a child may nevertheless manifest an attitude toward the things of God that will identify him or her as one striving to develop divine principles in daily life (Luke 2:52; 1 Sam. 2:26; Prov. 3:1-4).

The phrase *if she have lodged strangers* means 'if she has shown hospitality to travellers' (3:2, note).

See John 13:2-11 for the example of Christ who *washed the saints' feet*. This ties in with hospitality, but it depicts the true and most complete love and consideration. Paul had no doubt experienced such hospitality. For a man travelling great distances on foot, either in sandals, or barefooted, the feet would be in dire need of washing from the dust, and for the aches and possible blisters. It depicts true servitude and is perhaps symbolic of all humble and commonplace tasks done on behalf of others (1 Sam. 25:41; Luke 7:38). Such "menial" tasks, though despised by the proud and mighty, receive their reward from God. Jesus spoke of visiting the sick as an honorable task and he praises the feeding and clothing and giving of drink to even the least among his disciples (Matt. 25:35-40; Compare James 2:15,16).

The phrase *if she have relieved the afflicted* indicates that Paul may be concerned at this time with some wide-spread persecution of the Christians. He is writing here during the time of Nero, who ruthlessly mistreated and even killed the saints of the Most High. It was during this time that Peter wrote his first letter exhorting the believer how best to survive the time of severe trial.

It is almost needless to point out that brethren may be afflicted in ways other than open persecution so that "relieving the afflicted" may take many other forms as well. The ecclesia is, or should be, a family, and it is largely by mixing in one another's homes that we can really get to know each other, to learn of another's weaknesses and problems (Gal. 6:2), and grow in mutual concern and brotherly love (2 Pet. 1:7, 8). Here is plenty of opportunity for useful work for any and every widow.

B. YOUNG WIDOWS: 5:11-16

The young widows are those most likely to be drawn aside by temptations, to marry out of the Truth, to "live in pleasure". Giving such as these a guaranteed

income (on a permanent basis, at any rate) would only open the door to other troubles, as Paul shows.

11 But the younger widows refuse: for when they have begun to wax wanton against Christ, they will marry.

Wax wanton is better translated “to grow restless”, as it comes from a root word signifying “to remove the reins”. We have here a metaphor of a horse being freed and allowed to run wild. The young woman is freed from the necessary guiding and perhaps restraining influence of a husband in the Truth.

Most translators render *wanton* as “sensual” or “passionate”. After having close marital companionship cut off, it is possible that this young widow will seek to involve herself in order to fulfill her previously awakened desires. Her mind could then be on more or less immediate self-gratification, as opposed to service in the ecclesia and obedience to Christ. It is a pity that, in early life, when health and zeal and energy are strong, we serve self rather than God and that only later, when the natural vigor for life declines, do we turn our hearts fully toward God. Let us listen to Solomon:

“Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them” (Ecc. 12:1).

Nothing is wrong with widows marrying in the Truth; so Paul must mean by the phrase *they will marry*—marriage with an alien, perhaps hastily entered, in opposition to the command to marry “only in the Lord” (1 Cor. 7:39). Compare v. 14. The key to this verse is in the phrase “against Christ”.

12 Having damnation, because they have cast off their first faith.

They have “apostasized”. Very few things are more destructive to a life in the Truth than to marry one outside the saving name of Christ. From the very beginning there has been a sharp distinction between the children of God and the children of the world. God’s whole purpose of redemption depends upon the former maintaining a faithful and holy separation from the latter. Union between them, in defiance of this eternal ordinance and purpose, has brought untold misery and punishment and evil. It has, time and time again, sidetracked the called-out people of God into the dead-end of failure.

The Scriptures abound in warnings against alien marriage. The sons of God marrying the daughters of men resulted at last in the Flood. Abraham and Isaac, faithful sojourners looking for the kingdom, opposed such marriages for their sons (Gen. 24:3; 28:1). The Law forbade the yoking together of the clean ox and the unclean ass (Deut. 22:10). Moses said to take no alien spouses (Deut. 7:3, 8). Solomon’s alien wives turned his heart from God (1 Kings 11:1-11). Ezra (chs. 9, 10) and Nehemiah (13:23-29) tell us of the evils of such alliances, and Paul has stressed the serious wrong of such unions (2 Cor. 6:14-18).

13 And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not.

And withal can be paraphrased as 'and even if this is not the case, they will...'

The phrase *wandering about from house to house* means not just wandering aimlessly, but "gadding about" (Diaglott, RSV) with the express purpose of gossip. "By much slothfulness the building decayeth; and through idleness of the hands and the house droppeth through" (Ecc. 10:18). This "house" may well be the house of the ecclesia. In contrast to this is the description of the virtuous woman:

"She looketh well to the ways of her household;

And eateth not the bread of idleness" (Prov. 31:27).

Both the Proverbs and the prophet talk of the feet that "run to evil, and make haste to shed innocent blood" (Prov. 1:16; 6:18; Isa. 59:7). Such idle gossips may be murderers in the Lord's sight. How do they kill? With a word or an insinuation, they sneak through the night and shoot arrows at the unsuspecting and innocent. "Whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment" (Matt. 5:21, 22).

"Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life in prospect" (1 John 3:15).

The perfect picture of righteousness to follow is the description of the woman of Prov. 31:

"She openeth her mouth with wisdom:

And in her tongue is the law of kindness" (v. 26).

But how far we fall short of this ideal! Unless we are constantly careful and unless we are purely motivated by love and the mind of the Spirit we shall find that much of our conversation about others, when honestly evaluated by divine standards, comes under the heading of gossip and backbiting—or in other words—*tattlers and busybodies, speaking things which [we] ought not*.

True, there are times when it is necessary to speak of the faults of others. But unless it is truly necessary, and done in the scriptural way and in the proper Scriptural spirit we are running a grave risk of divine condemnation. The Spirit through Solomon declares:

"The words of a talebearer are wounds and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly" (Prov. 26:22).

The immediate reaction of the flesh, on reading this passage, is to be struck with how remarkably it fits someone else. But let us for the time being curb this evasive reaction and consider how remarkably they fit ourselves—how many times we have allowed the natural malice, of which we all have a share, to lead us into this flesh-gratifying sin. "The words of a tale-bearer are as dainty morsels" (Prov. 26:22, RV)—how true and searching is this divine analysis!

The way of the Truth is the way of love, in all relationships. If our feelings toward our brethren and sisters are not in pure love, regardless of their faults and weaknesses, then we ourselves are not the children of God, but are of the world. Love is kindness and gentleness and a desire to help and strengthen. Solomon records again:

“He that covereth a transgression seeketh love,
but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends” (Prov. 17:9).

This does not mean a glossing over or condoning of what is wrong, but a proper, pure-hearted, sympathetic, loving approach with a desire to build up. Let us take heed that we do not stand at the judgment seat exposed before all as what Paul describes as “tattlers and busybodies”. It is a very easy and common sin. “Speak evil of no man” is the command (Tit. 3:2).

14 I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully.

As all the context [v. 11] shows clearly, Paul must be speaking of younger widows when he speaks of *younger women*. It is better to marry if they find they cannot contain themselves (1 Cor. 7:8, 9). Again, of course, marriage is to be “only in the Lord” (1 Cor. 7:39).

For comments on *bear children* see the explanatory notes, 2:15.

The phrase *guide the house* is from *oikodespoteo*, literally “to rule the household”.

The question arises: Is this verse a prohibition against married sisters working outside the home? After all, the “virtuous woman” is pictured as diligent in business, at least some¹ of which would need to be carried on in the outside world (Prov. 31:16, 24). It is best not to lay down absolute rules in this matter, while at the same time affirming the wisdom of general principles. Generally, and most of the time, a married sister’s surpassingly useful sphere is in the home. And especially is this true when she is the mother of small children. No ‘baby-sitters’ or ‘day-care centers’ can begin to do for her children what she can. The young mother who goes out to work each day, for the sake of a higher “standard of living”, will very likely do a second-rate job at both her tasks. The loss to her secular employment will be temporal and minimal, but the spiritual loss to her family may be incalculable!

The solution? Forget about “keeping up with the Joneses”; and be thankful for the opportunity (rare in these days!) of making a real “sacrifice” for the Truth. Recognize that the common tasks of the household are a test of your patience and faith; as much as accomplishing some “great thing for the Truth”, they are the

¹ There is a considerable difference between going out of the home for a short period of time to transact business, and being away all day with a nine to five job working for a boss. We must not forget that the virtuous woman had servants at home to look after the children when she was out. Putting a child in a ‘child care’ center, or letting them fend for themselves when they come home from school is in no way comparable to this.

means to gain eternal life, if done joyfully and wholeheartedly, as unto the Lord (2:15).

For comments on the phrase *give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully*, compare 3:6, 7. The first-century believers had many pagan opponents. The word for “adversary” here means “one who is set over against”, as in Tit. 2:8. These men went about seeking whom they might devour (1 Pet. 5:8). Inconsistent behavior by one believer would place all her brethren in the same bad light before the heathen and would bring reproach upon the gospel and the God she claimed to serve.

15 For some are already turned aside after Satan.

Some had turned aside to the world. Perhaps their alien husbands had led them away from the Truth. (*Satan* is the world, as in 1:20, the “adversary”—v. 14—of the Christians.) What a sad thing this must have been! Some had served the Truth for a time, but had been drawn aside by the cares of the world. Their cases were so well-known that Paul needed not even to mention their names. And the warning is so clear that it really need not be mentioned either: “Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples (types), and are written for our admonition. Wherefore let him thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (1 Cor. 10:11, 12). What a pity that in the “books” of the Father some saints are remembered only in that they turned aside from their high and glorious calling to mingle and marry with the world, and to perish at last in the “wilderness”.

16 If any man or woman that believeth have widows, let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed.

Let not the ecclesia be charged means ‘let not the ecclesia be instructed to care for such’.

The word *relieve* has reference to financial relief. Indiscriminate hand-outs by an organization are not always the best policy—our governments have begun to discover this. In the household we must guard against this also. Institutionalized charity is a cold and humiliating and depersonalizing thing. Individual and private love and care is a beautiful, mutually-blessing bond of perfectness. Officially organized schemes can easily have dangers and problems and disadvantages.

We must be guided by the Spirit’s teaching, whether we see its wisdom or not. But we often can see the wisdom, especially if we first submit in humble faith. In this case we can clearly observe around us many ill-effects from schemes that ignore the Spirit’s teaching—

- Encouragement of shirking personal responsibility;
- Constant pressuring for money to keep ambitious schemes afloat; Unhappy and unsatisfactory conditions of the recipients;
- The constant danger of an ever-growing centralized bureaucracy;
- and an organization held together more and more by its external structure and less and less by any common faith.

IX ELDERS (5:17-25)

The word “elders” is *presbuteros*, which signifies older persons. Sometimes in the New Testament, this word is used to denote seniority in general (as in v.2; Luke 15:25; John 8:9; Acts 2:17). At times, the word refers to the Jewish elders of the synagogue (Matt. 15:2; 16:21; 26:47, 57; Mark 7:3, 5; Acts 4:5, 23), usually associated with the scribes and Pharisees. These were in authority by virtue of their greater years, and after the pattern of elders throughout the Old Testament times, who performed the judicial and executive offices among the various families and tribes (Num. 11:16; Deut. 27:1). And the word *presbuteros* is found in the Septuagint in Gen. 50:7 and Num. 22:7, referring to Gentile “elders”.

But in this section the elders were certain people appointed to serve in the first-century body. In the earlier section concerning bishops we explained that elders and bishops are at times synonymous terms. Compare Titus 1:5, 7: “Ordain **elders** in every city.. For a **bishop** must be blameless...” And Acts 20:17,28: “He called the **elders** of the ecclesia...(and said to them) the Holy Spirit hath made you **overseers** (the same word as ‘bishops’), to feed the ecclesia of God”.

The only important difference between these two words is this: “elder” indicates the mature spiritual experience and standing of those so described (the **inward** character). In contrast, “bishop” lays stress upon the character of the elder’s work, comparable to that of a shepherd (the outward manner of service).

THEIR TREATMENT: 5:17-21

Elders occupied a special position in the ecclesia, then and now. This is not an elevated position as such, but one of responsibility due to Scriptural maturity through knowledge and experience. The judgment of such men in spiritual matters was (and can be) valuable. It is necessary that others be respectful of elders because of their years of faithful service and their spiritual maturity. (But being respectful does not imply being a “respector of persons”, nor slavishly worshipping men and men’s ideas.)

17 Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.

The elders were to **rule well** (“direct the affairs”—NIV) of the ecclesia as loving “fathers” in God’s family (cf. 3:4, where the same word “rule” is used). The picture of a dictatorial, domineering person handing down Olympian pronouncements is not what is intended here. The true picture is that of Christ, standing before his brethren, lovingly and yet sternly, as a faithful guide and example.

Double honour refers to a twofold honor—now and later. Honored by discerning men of God now, and honored by Christ and the Father in the future.

Double is also used in the sense of ‘much greater’ (as in Rev. 18:6). The Old Testament and the Law of Moses, which previewed the gospel system of affairs in many ways, outline the duties and privileges of the first-born son, the elder. He was to be the leader and decision-maker of the family. On him devolved the responsibilities for family care, should his father die. More importantly, he assumed

the role of priest for the entire family. (This was superseded when the family of Aaron was designated the first-born of all Israel.) And along with all this, the elder was to receive a "double portion" of inheritance in the Promised Land.

As in v. 3, so also in v. 17 *honour* refers to material provisions (Acts 28:10), and possibly also to respect and obedience. Even today there may be a time when ecclesial or individual funds can be effectively used to aid an elder brother who labors in God's vineyard. But such matters must be handled with tact and love. A brother's service for the Truth must not degenerate into a pay-as-you-go, business-like preaching of smooth and pleasing words for the sake of money. Making a brother dependent upon the financing of others may dull the sharp sword of the Spirit which he endeavors to wield. *They who labour in the word and doctrine* might be elders concerned specifically with financial matters, or the care of the poor. There might be elders who had the Holy Spirit gifts of healing or speaking with tongues. But Paul here especially singles out those who had the "best gifts".

"God hath set some in the ecclesia, first apostles secondarily prophets, thirdly, teachers..." (1 Cor. 12:28).

Greater responsibility and greater "honour" (in the sense already described) was conferred upon the brethren receiving the gifts of interpreting and expounding the Scripture. These gifts were the most important, for they might be the more readily used to the edification of the body in love. Paul himself could certainly be classed as an elder of this type.

18 For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his hire.

The singular word *scripture*, as here, is used of a particular passage of the Old Testament (John 7:38, 42; Acts 1:16; 8:32, 35). The plural in the Greek refers to the sacred writings as a whole (Matt. 21:42; Luke 24:32; John 5:39).

The oxen who turned the great treadmills to grind the grain were not *muzzled* in any way, so that they might reach down, and thus partake of the fruit of their labors. This typical lesson from the law is found in Deut. 25:4.

Paul uses this same scripture in another letter:

"Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working? Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? Who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof?...Say I these things as a man? Or saith not the law the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, THOU SHALT NOT MUZZLE THE MOUTH OF THE OX THAT TREADETH OUT THE CORN. Doth God take care for oxen? Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partakers of his hope. If we have sown unto you spiritual things is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?" (1 Cor. 9:6-11).

Paul is here encouraging the wealthier ones to use their abundance to the good of the Truth, by supporting those who have labored well. However, in another place,

Paul speaks of a danger that might come up when certain brethren are supported by others:

“Neither did we eat any man’s bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you: not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us. For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat” (2 Thess. 3:8-10).

Paul was not customarily supported by any brethren, but this was only by his choice, so that no man could make his preaching void (1 Cor. 9:12, 15). He could have received wages, but his reward was in witnessing the fruits of the planting of the gospel, the gospel that is free to all, “without money and without price” (Isa. 55:1).

Paul’s words of warning were not heeded by some, and this led to the development of the paid hierarchy of the apostasy—men who depended upon their constituents for support and who therefore preached what their followers wanted to hear and not what they needed.

The statement that *the labourer is worthy of his reward*’ is comparable to Luke 10:7 and Matt. 10:10, where Jesus is sending forth his twelve disciples. Here he certainly expected that they would be provided food and lodging, so he counselled them not to make extravagant preparations. Instead they were to trust that God would provide them with what was necessary, from one source or another. This is an excellent example for us to imitate in our attitudes to the work of the Truth.

Again, the future aspect is hinted at also. Is not one who labors in the work of the Truth also allowed to partake of its benefits? Is not the workman in the Father’s vineyard to receive just wages, at the time when every man shall be rewarded according to his works?

19 Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses.

Those that do good are often unjustly accused by those who are jealous of their positions and labors, and by those presumptuous ones who seek their own glory and not the Lord’s. A man who is in the forefront, giving stirring and meaningful and stern exhortations, fighting vigorously for the maintenance of truth and peace in the ecclesia, will probably incur much more than his share of wrongful criticism and insinuation from those who themselves lack the vigor, determination or desire to oppose error, or laxity, or to stimulate to activity.

Timothy was never to consider any accusation against an elder unless it were “at the mouth of” (RV) two or three witnesses. To go even further, this is the proper course for an ecclesia in hearing an accusation against **anyone** (Matt. 18:16; 2 Cor. 13:1, and the related O.T. passages of Deut. 17:6 and 19:15).

20 Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear.

This is of course only after private efforts have failed, in accordance with the principle of Matthew 18. A brother having a matter against another should first go to the offender alone, then (if this fails to win the brother) with one or two others, making diligent efforts to reclaim him from his error. Only when this has failed may he go before the whole ecclesia and a public rebuke be issued. The public aspect is stressed here because these elders stand as examples of the Truth to those within and without the ecclesia. In certain cases, disfellowship may be the only course (1:20). This would point out that there can be no respect of persons when willful transgression is practised. These matters affect the “elders” as well as the “lambs”—we are all subject to God and prone to fail. (Refer especially to v. 21).

21 I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality.

I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ or “I command thee, in the presence of God and His Son.” This is a reminder that everything we do or think is known to our Father in heaven:

“Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do” (Heb. 4:13).

Timothy must judge impartially, for he himself will be judged by Christ.

Perhaps *the presence* of the Father and Son is a reference to the implicit oath taken by believers—a vow which Christ and God can discern, and one which they expect to be fulfilled.

The elect angels is translated as the “chosen messengers” (Diaglott, Rotherham). The angels of God, “who encamp around about them that fear the Lord” (Psa. 34:7), who minister to the heirs of salvation (Heb. 1:14).

Timothy is exhorted to *observe these things* which meant to ‘guard and preserve, especially the things concerning elders’—their duties and their responsibilities—topics which Paul had already handled (3:1-7).

Timothy was to ensure that the ecclesia acted in a way which did not *prefer one before another, doing nothing by partiality* or more literally, “without prejudice”. He who presides over a great community must be without party feelings and must follow the Truth’s dictates at every turn. In the ecclesia of God that has not always been so, and it has led to unhappy divisions, where the whole truth has not surfaced and misrepresentations (perhaps deliberate) have taken the place of truth. This leads to factions, jealousy and reprisals, where there was once, and should still be, undivided love. Unprejudiced judgment is difficult, but if a man would “rule” the ecclesia of God he must learn to judge righteous judgment. The ministrations of the overseer should have a basis of equality. Playing favorites is for a child of the world, or a politician, not for a saint of God.

THEIR SELECTION: 5:22-25

Extreme care and caution should be exercised in the selection of elders. The following is good advice for today’s ecclesia.

22 Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure.

Laying on of hands was the means whereby elders were ordained to office (4:14; 2 Tim. 1:16; Titus 1:15). "Do not be over-hasty in laying on hands in ordination" (NEB). An examination of the individual alongside the qualities of ch. 3 should be made. God's guidance should also be sought by prayer in such matters.

An alternative rendering and interpretation of this verse might be: "Do not be hasty in condemning or speaking reproachfully of an elder"—thus making this phrase follow up on v.19.

This could very well fit better than the allusion to selection—the context would seem to point to this. It could also apply to anyone in the ecclesia who needed correction. Perhaps a good paraphrase of verses 22, 24, 25 might be: "Don't be too hasty to bring someone before the ecclesia for reprimand, and be sure to have two or three witnesses when this individual is an elder. On the other hand, if you hesitate to act when it is warranted, you could become a partaker of this individual's wrong by allowing it to foment or condoning it in any other fashion. Don't support others who also may seek hasty judgment. In any case look prayerfully into the matter and strive for purity in your behaviour. In some cases it is easy to judge—the obvious is manifest. In other situations we cannot judge. But rest assured, neither good works nor sins can be hidden from the view of the one who is coming."

Neither be partaker of other men's sins is translated as "Neither have fellowship" by Rotherham, and "Do not share in" by the NIV. The ecclesia as a whole is responsible for the deeds of an elder whom they have selected, or whom they unwisely allow to remain in office—for he is exercising the authority of that office with their sanction and as their representative.

A second possibility in interpreting this verse is that it may include a "laying on of hands" in fellowship, with the re-admission to the ecclesia of brethren previously withdrawn from (for example, 1:20). Caution should be used in such a situation as this also. This might, because of emotional involvement or family ties, be carried out too hastily, thus destroying any benefit.

Keep thyself pure is spoken both to the individual and to the ecclesia. Choose your serving brethren carefully; remove them from office if they act unwisely or unscripturally. Do not **directly** have company with sinners and so become defiled by touching the dead body. Withdraw from those that walk unworthy of their high calling. This letter and all of Paul's letters counsel the same things with no slackness in acting against the open sins of others.

Paul is also warning Timothy against hasty judgment, for if he joined with those who might suddenly, without sufficient cause, lay hands on a brother for purposes of ecclesial reprimand, he himself will be subject to the higher judge. It is just as wrong to be too hasty as it is to be too hesitant.

Regardless of how we may take this verse, whether in selection of elders or in ecclesial reprimand, care in decision, and purity and sincerity in action are stressed.

23 Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities.

The NIV has *stop drinking only water*. In this verse Paul feels it necessary to qualify what he means by "Keep thyself pure". Timothy may have been of a weak constitution, as Paul had seemed himself to be, and he would then need the strengthening effects of a little wine. (This verse is a corrective against the suggestion that "wine" in Scripture means unfermented grape juice and nothing more. If so, then what strengthening effect could be derived?) Also Timothy may have been prone to follow the example of the ascetics (4:3, 8). We recall from reading his autobiography the recounting of a similar miscalculation on the part of Robert Roberts. While a young man he embarked with the best of intentions upon a strict (but unbalanced) vegetarian diet, only to come dangerously close to ruining his health. Paul is saying here, "Not that I enjoin upon you that extreme and foolish 'purity' which is asceticism. You may even go so far as to use a little wine, as it might be needed for your health." God commands believers to use all Scriptural means which may be at their disposal for preserving health to keep their "temples" sound. But it is good never to forget the other side of the coin. "Be not drunken with wine" (3:3; Eph. 5:18). Our thoughts must not be clouded by the effects of alcohol or any other strong depressant or stimulant.

The sentiment here expressed is inconsistent with the opinion of some fanatical advocates of total abstinence, that drinking wine is altogether incompatible with true Christianity. Pharisaic 'purity' in such cases does not guarantee true godliness. On the contrary, it can lead to mechanical, rote worship, in following the do's and don'ts of "the Law". Even so, common sense (scriptural sense) should guide us in matters such as this. Paul recommends this to Timothy for purely medicinal purposes, not as a means of escape or a way to warm the 'cockles of his heart'. In addition, we must consider the weaker members because our liberty should not be an occasion of stumbling to someone else. "If meat makes my brother to offend, I will not eat meat so long as the world stands." We would not want our liberty to be an occasion of stumbling to someone outside the faith either. An elder will give no occasion for the Truth or its adherents to be evil spoken of. Ascetic ideas regarding alcohol seem to play a more professed role today than in the past (wine was frequently taken with the meals in Jesus' day). Therefore this word of caution.

[The very unpretentious quality of this tidbit of personal advice is an argument for the genuineness of this letter. Would an imposter have thought to include such mundane butt practical details? This verse could have come from no pen but Paul's.]

24 Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after.

The open sins of some men proclaim their sure condemnation to all discerning brethren even before the judgment. And consequently, there are some sins which **must** not be ignored or glossed over by brethren, and some characteristics which should (if nothing else) influence their selection of serving brethren.

But the sins of some men are so well hidden that they are never manifest until the judgment, at which time their sins confront them. (Thus the “tares” of Christ’s parable—Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43). Neither Timothy nor we can see all the sins of our brethren. Imagine what a sorry state we would be in if we could! We should not search for their sins either. We cannot truly, fairly and completely judge them (1 Cor. 4:5). The final decision is Christ’s, who judges the hidden man of the heart, through the all-knowing power of the Father and the Spirit-word (John 12:48; Heb. 4:13).

25 Likewise also the good works of some are manifest beforehand; and they that are otherwise cannot be hid.

Those *good works* which are done in secret now will not *be hidden* when we stand before the judgment seat of Christ, “that everyone may receive in his body, whether he hath done good or evil” (2 Cor. 5:10).

X GODLINESS WITH CONTENTMENT (6:1-21)

This last chapter is all related, though the relationship may not be immediately apparent. It is about slavery, godliness, contentment, riches, the good fight of faith and (finally and above all) defending and preserving that glorious treasure entrusted to our care. The common theme throughout is that present conditions and circumstances, either of handicap or privilege, from the extremes of abject slavery on the one hand to abundant riches on the other, are utterly unimportant and not to be either rebelled against or sought. Life is too short. The important thing is **Godliness with contentment!** Not just godliness, not just contentment, but godliness **with** contentment. A faithful life together with a joyful, peaceful and thankful mind.

A. SLAVES 6:1-2B

The Greek word *douloi* signifies bond-servants; that is, servants under bondage—more precisely, slaves.

Slavery was perhaps the most perplexing of questions which early believers had to face. It entered into all grades and ranks and it was common to all people and nations. The very fabric of society seemed knit and bound together by this miserable institution. Commerce was chiefly responsible for slavery in the old Roman world. To preach against it openly would be to foment rebellion, so foreign was the thought of social injustice and equality to the “enlightened” mood of that age. (We also know from early Christadelphian literature that there were in America, in the last century, slave-owners whose presence in the ecclesias was the occasion of some dissent.)

It is probable, in the very nature of things, that slave-owners would be very few among the believers. The vast majority would be either slaves or poor free men. The Gospel was preached to the poor, and its principles have the greatest appeal to them.

In the Roman Empire in New Testament times slaves outnumbered the free. (On one occasion the Senate passed a decree that all slaves should wear a distinguishing mark. When this was put into effect, it was repealed almost immediately, because the number of slaves was so great that the authorities realized how numerically superior they would be if they should decide to join together in rebellion.) Very often the slaves were in chains continually day and night. The master had power of life and death. Slaves had little or no right or protection under law, no property, no true marriage, no choice of a mate—their master gave or took mates at his will. The children belonged to the master as slaves for any use or purpose the master desired. Runaway slaves usually received torture, branding, and often a cruel death. (If our version were more consistently translated, this aspect of New Testament times would be more obvious: Three-fourths of all the appearances of the word “servant” in the Authorized Version should be translated as “slave”, as in most modern versions).

The Scriptures do not condone slavery. But neither do they seek to destroy it, any more than they seek to directly destroy any other of the vast multitude of

inequities that make up natural human society. Through much of history and almost to the present slavery has been a major aspect of human society. Actually it is a much wider and more inclusive thing than generally regarded. That is, all dictatorship is actually slavery. All industrial and economic oppression is actually slavery, especially where the victim's circumstances leave him no choice but to submit. A world-famous Russian author has recently called to the attention of Westerners the true "slave-and-master" foundation of Communist society. We should never forget in our prayers our brethren striving to uphold the Truth in Communist and other totalitarian societies today.

It has been a universal characteristic of man to seek to oppress and enslave his fellow man and to use him to increase his own wealth, power and leisure. Slavery in its various forms, fiefdom, serfs, peasantry and so on has been the common lot of the poor up until very recent times. Practical slavery still exists in much of the world today, wherever the few rich, who own all the land and control access to legal and political redress, can exploit and oppress the vast and hopeless masses of the poor. Slavery is just one part of the great human fabric of evil and wickedness. For the Bible to seek to abolish slavery would require it to write the laws for all nations, appoint all rulers and judges and enforce justice by divinely-led police forces. This is exactly what will happen, but not now. It will come about in God's own proper time and not before.

The greatest slavery of all, before which all else pales into insignificance, is man's slavery to his own selfishness and fleshly desires and to this all are in bondage. Most, indeed, are eager victims with no desire for freedom. This is the deep root of the weed to which we must lay the axe of Scripture. Chopping off the branches only makes the evil fruit grow bigger.

The purpose of God is concerned with preparing a people for eternity by adversity. And, in God's wisdom, slavery and poverty are sometimes part of the general, evil, human background that God is using to develop character and shape His determined ends. The Bible's purpose is not to reform the world—not just yet! Its present purpose is to call out and prepare a people for God. The present evil constitution of man is the necessary furnace of affliction for the purifying of the saints. The Bible is concerned with the character of the individual, the release from the universal slavery of self and sin, and the preparation for God and eternity. It tells the slave to serve his master, whether he be good or bad, as service done to God and accepted by God. It tells the master to treat the slave as he himself would desire to be treated, with perfect justice and mercy, even as he hoped in mercy to be treated by his Master Christ.

1 Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed.

As stated before, this verse can apply to more than the literal *slaves* of Paul's time. The believers were in reality the slaves of their Roman lords, being subject to "the powers that be" (Rom. 13:1). And all the poor and middle-class believers (which certainly comprised the majority) were in effect slaves as well: slaves to a

cruel, heartless economic system. The natural course would be for a slave or a humble workman to hate his lord, and to "cut corners" and cheat him of his due, or to escape bondage if possible. Paul, speaking God's words, puts this on a much higher plane. We are not just serving ignorant, wicked men. We are at the same time serving GOD in heaven.

"Servants (Slaves), be obedient to them who are your masters according to the flesh...with good will, doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men" (Eph. 6:5,7).

And to this agree also Paul's words in Titus 2:9, 10:

"Exhort slaves to be obedient to their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again; not purloining, but showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things."

If the believer were a servant to an **unbeliever**, his submissiveness would indicate how thoroughly the Truth had affected his life. If he were a servant to a **believer**, all the more reason to serve diligently in the bonds of love. Practising this on a natural plane will develop the same characteristic on the spiritual plane. We are all slaves of the Lord.

It would not matter if the master treated the slave justly or unjustly. The slave should consider this system as temporary and passing, remembering that Christ has purchased him with his life-blood, promising manifold payment for unquestioning duty (1 Pet. 2:18-24). The slave should be reminded that at one time he had served in the bondage of a master who was terribly exacting, and who had offered nothing in return. He had once served that fearful power Sin and the wages of the employer Sin was everlasting death (Rom. 6:17-23).

Again, turning to the natural, a slave was to be faithful to his master unless his master demanded that he violate a law of God; a man must serve God first (Acts 4:19; 5:29; 1 Cor. 7:21-23).

The *yoke* is a very significant Scriptural symbol; it is commonly used as the symbol of one's subjection to another whether we are speaking of nations or individuals. The humble sojourners of God's Truth are *under the yoke* to the alien world in which they must live. Their profession of faith has made them a reproach and a byword to the scoffers. In the same way their leader Christ was "of no reputation", a man despised and rejected (Isa. 53:1, 3). And yet our Saviour saw beyond his afflictions of the moment to the glory that would follow consequent on his enduring firm to the end. And with this in mind he could say:

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me: for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matt. 11:28-30).

This is quite a contrast with the heavy yoke of bondage to the flesh. Though we are slaves of Christ under the yoke, he helps us in our labors. And he promises us the reward:

"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. 4:17).

The name of God and his doctrine would be blasphemed should the pagan masters of Christian slaves come to believe that their slaves' new faith inculcated discontent and rebellion. We may be slandered or mistreated as persons, but we must not act so as to bring any kind of discredit or infamy upon the Truth itself (Rom. 2:24; 2 Sam. 12:14). We should keep this thought before our minds in all our dealings with the world.

2a, b And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren; but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit.

Despise is to 'think lightly of, disregard, or treat with disrespect'. Because a believer is in the employ of a brother of Christ, his responsibility to him is in no way slackened.

But rather do them service is better translated as "But serve them all the more." This is galling to the pride of the flesh; but as the command of God, faithfully obeyed, it is strengthening to the spirit. Anything that contributes to pride and self-satisfaction—possessions, position, worldly knowledge, power, prestige—hinders in the Way of Life. Anything that contributes to humility and self-abasement and recognition of weakness and need—slavery, poverty, low position—helps in the Way of Life, if accepted in the right spirit.

Faithful simply means "believers" (RSV; NIV), and is so translated above ("believing").

In some translations *beloved* is translated as the "loved ones" (loved by God, and by Christ). Or, "they are one with them in love"; that is, they share the same love, a love for the one true God and a close bond of love which exists between them. Believing slaves and their believing masters are really "one"—for they are all the "slaves of God"—fellow-servants in the same service, the service of men for the glory of God. For them there is "neither bond nor free" (Gal. 3:28). This common hope, this united expectation, generates a love of the highest order and greatest purity.

The slaves of believing masters could more directly see the good of their labors, for they were helping those who believed in Christ, their fellow laborers, "those who *benefit* by your service". They had the words of Christ as an incentive:

"Even as you did this to my brethren, you did it to me" (Matt. 25:40, 45).

B. THESE THINGS TEACH AND EXHORT: 6:2C-5

This sub-section has a strong emphasis upon the character, thoughts and ambitions of false teachers.

2c These things teach and exhort.

Teach is the command of God, and **must** be obeyed. *Exhort* means 'to plead with, urge'. Timothy (as a loving brother) was to ensure that this be done for their own good.

There is some difficulty in placing the stress of these words from the Apostle. Is he referring to all that has gone before? Is he referring only to the slave/master situation? Or could he perhaps be referring to verse 6 of this chapter? "These things teach and exhort, dear Timothy. For godliness with contentment is great gain". One thing is certain, regardless of the primary inference, and that is to be content with Jesus Christ, whatever position we may find ourselves in. When we find ourselves in the "household" of God, let us accept this wonderful station, and surrender to our only master and obey Him. Let us keep His house free of disturbances and let us keep and guard the rules or ways of the household.

3 If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and unto the doctrine which is according to godliness...

There were undoubtedly some in the ecclesia at Ephesus who were still interested in such temporal, ineffective pursuits as social change and advancement, rather than an acceptance of God's arrangements and a contented "growing in grace and knowledge". The rich and socially-conscious "Laodiceans" of today also serve a "gospel" of civic improvement and fashionable protest.

These men who taught *otherwise* and did *not consent to wholesome words* did so by their actions. A man's words do not always reveal his true, deep-down mind; but his actions always do.

The word *wholesome* is from a Greek word the basic meaning of which concerns the health of the body, and it forms the root of the English word 'hygiene'. It is possible that Paul added this word to his vocabulary because of his long association with Luke the beloved physician. The metaphor was peculiarly suited to the purpose at hand for Paul in writing this letter. In his early ministry Paul had been concerned with building up the body of Christ (Eph. 4:12-16), nourishing it from the Word of God (4:6).

But when the Body matured it faced a new danger. False teachings, or disease germs, began to enter, encouraging wrong belief and wrong behavior—endangering the spiritual health of the community at Ephesus. (This same thing had happened to the Old Testament "ecclesia", and the result may be seen in Isa. 1:5,6). The only antidote to the creeping infection within the Body of Christ was (and is today) a return to sound, wholesome, **healthful** words.

These words were to be found in *the words of our Lord Jesus Christ* who taught men humility and submission by word and deed: Matt. 5:38-43, 26:67; Isa. 53:7; and 1 Pet. 2:20, 24.

The word *doctrine* [in the phrase *the doctrine which is according to godliness*] may be more appropriately translated as "teaching". This, then we may read as, "the teaching which *harmonizes* with godliness". Again and again in this letter, we come face to face with the extreme importance of good works. Paul

shows us that our walk in the Truth is inseparable from knowledge and that the gospel truth is inseparable from the virtues of meekness, patience, and faith. Anytime we see a professing believer who by his actions, consents not to this advice from the meekest of men, we can rest assured that whatever he has to say (in his loud and pompous manner) is of little use. Whatever amount of true knowledge we have is mirrored in our faithful actions.

4 He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings.

On the word *proud* or “puffed up” see note at 3:6. For “proud, knowing nothing”, the NEB has “a pompous ignorance”, a translation which can scarcely be improved upon!

Knowing nothing is better translated as “Knowing nothing well”. Proud in his own knowledge, but knowing nothing of the “doctrine which is according to godliness” (v. 3). It is possible for one to know the tenets of the Truth in a theoretical way, but to be at the same time totally ignorant of its purposes and practices; not able to comprehend the real gospel of love because he is too involved in self. Compare this with 2 Tim. 3:5: “Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof”.

Knowing means ‘fixing one’s thoughts on’. This person is not only without knowledge, but cannot even think rationally.

Doting about questions continues the medical parallel. If any man rejects healthful words (v. 3), he is “doting” (or ailing), and his speculations about unprofitable questions (1:4), rather than strengthening the Body of Christ, are consuming it as doth a cancer (2 Tim. 2:17).

Noseo (“doting”) is here used as the opposite of *hugiaino* (“sound” or “whole-some”, in 1:10; 6:3; 2 Tim. 1:7, 13; 4:3). If a man does not accept the health-giving teachings of Scripture he will necessarily become sick in mind. In this context, he will become sick over questions (*zetesis*—debates) and “word-wars”; he will become preoccupied with and, therefore unbalanced by vain academic and intellectual meanderings. For all his arguing and debating he will still be destitute of the Truth. Spiritual sickness often has the outward appearance of cleverness and precision; but such appearances mask the reality as described by Paul elsewhere:

“Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the Truth” (2 Tim. 3:7).

Strifes of words is translated from the Greek *logomachia* which means ‘a word fight, or warring with words’. A variant of this word is found in 2 Tim. 2:14 where it is translated “to war with words”. These are the only two places the word is found. It has well been said that “Words are merely the counters of wise men, but they are the money of fools”. Words are only tools which the wise man uses to convey his thoughts. He conscientiously defines and uses his words so that they may mean but one thing. To the foolish and vain man, words are an end in themselves.

This man that Paul speaks of spends so much time in useless debate, he never has time for true reflective thinking. By stimulating strife he creates an atmosphere of mistrust, envy, doubt, and anger, not only in himself but in others as well. He says, "Let's not accept authority; let's question it"—no matter how devastating the results. So there is constant undermining and an atmosphere of instability.

Much trouble has come to the Truth throughout the centuries due to strifes and debate, quibbling over this or that. Since the Truth's revival, problems have occurred because certain men were not careful with their words or were perhaps unwilling to clarify the meaning of their words or phrases: others building on uncertainty would compound the problem until error developed, and with error came one of three situations: (1) Division and/or dissension; (2) Further declension of the truth; (3) A gentle but firm handling of the situation. All too often numbers 1 and 2 were (and can be) the results.

We should exercise care that we neither create strife with our words; create strife by "morbidly" questioning other's words; nor judge others unnecessarily by their words. "Strifes of words" have caused some to be driven away by the intolerance of others who would not listen to explanation. How diligent we should be to strike the proper balance!

"Word wars" bring all these situations: *envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings*. They have led brethren to lie, deceive, misrepresent matters—the way has been left open for "evil surmisings", suspicions, and compromise. "Word wars" set battle lines; sides are chosen—cliques formed; there are accusations and then counter-accusations, leading to grudges and mistrust.

Railings means 'revilings, slanders, abuse'. Sadly it reminds us of the world of political intrigue, with which no true believer should have any connection.

5 Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself.

Perverse disputings is a single word in the Greek, used only here in the New Testament. It signifies a "continual friction". This rubbing against, this irritation, serves (by our medical parallel) to keep open the wound first inflicted by the unprofitable question—so that the gentle salves and bandages of balanced Scriptural teachings may not do their job of healing the infection.

A favorite phrase of Paul in the Pastorals (2 Tim. 3:8; Titus 1:15) is *men of corrupt minds*. The medical parallel again: These men's minds are full of corruption. They are "atrophied". Like a withered arm or leg, they have lost the use for which God intended them. And thus corruption of mind will spread to endanger the whole Body of saints. What is the agent by which the corruption begins? The answer is in these verses: above all else, a pride in self which chokes the subservience to God's Word; then social consciousness which serves to center our mind on the world; and finally the desire for material gain.

"Destitute of the truth"—Or "deprived of the truth". By giving heed to vain speculations and questions that only promote strife, and by neglecting the simple

teaching of “godliness with contentment”, these men have deprived themselves of the Truth:

“Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith; not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men that turn from the Truth” (Tit. 1:13, 14).

The word *destitute* (or “deprived”) may be used in a judicial sense. If men continue in the way of ignorance, God may eventually judge them for it, and “give them over to a strong delusion, that they might believe a lie, that they might be damned who believed not the Truth” (2 Thess. 2:11, 12). “And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind” (Rom. 1:28).

Supposing that gain is godliness can be translated as “Supposing that godliness is a source of gain”. This translation presents the right idea better than the KJV. The Gospel is free to all:

“Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money: come ye, buy and eat; yea buy wine and milk without money and without price” (Isa. 55:1).

It is to be freely given without thought of recompense. The Apocalyptic letter to Pergamos indicates there was there a class of people (called Balaamites (Rev. 2:14; Num. 22:17, 37) who thought their profession should bring them wealth—strikingly comparable to today’s apostate clerics. Peter wrote concerning these people:

“But there were false prophets also among the people, even there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth, shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgement now of a long time lieth not, and their damnation slumbereth not” (2 Pet. 2:1-3).

We are bought by God—purchased with His Son’s blood (1 Pet. 1:18, 19). We are His slaves; we cannot sell what we ourselves do not really possess—i.e. salvation comes from God, through Christ. These men tried to sell the Gospel; they tried to misappropriate that liberty which is in Christ Jesus. Acts 8:13-21 tells of Simon, a man who supposed he could purchase the Holy Spirit. Let us note carefully what Peter tells him:

“Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money.”

Similarly, another class of men thought that righteousness would yield them great present benefits. Thus (in the case immediately at hand) they wanted to persuade the believing slaves (vv. 1, 2) that the recovery of their liberty was to be considered a privilege of believers, which they ought to claim as their right. By this same principle, these men sought worldly wealth and present comfort by their religious profession, and as their leading object. Thus they failed to understand, or neglected,

God's basic principle of operation: that men must develop their character through adversity and chastisement.

Men intent on personal gain (whether if be riches or position or prestige) will be inclined "to teach things which they ought not, for base gain's sake" (Titus 1:11). If ephemeral gain rather than God's service is their motivation, then attention to present advantage will replace faith and hope in the future.

These men "suppose that gain is godliness"—or that prosperity is a sign of blessedness, and similarly, that affliction of God's people can only be as punishment. This was the error of Job's acquaintances: no more correct today than it was then. If we think that by our being pious, God will give us such wealth—then perhaps we should re-examine our motives. God's great purpose is to develop a faithful people through trials and hardships (1 Pet. 1:7; Job 23:10):

"And ye have forgotten the exhortation that speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him: for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. But and if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons" (Heb. 12:5, 6, 8).

And the examples of those sufferings of the faithful fill the eleventh chapter of Hebrews: a "cloud of witnesses" to refute the error that "worldly gain is godliness".

The phrase *from such withdraw thyself* is omitted in many manuscripts and thus also in most modern versions. However, if we include it in the text, it may mean one of two things:

1. Paul is cautioning Timothy to withdraw himself from such ideas as the love of gain, and strifes and disputings. Compare v. 11: "Flee these things."
2. Verses 3-5 are one sentence. Reading only the first and last together: "If any man teach otherwise... from such withdraw thyself." We need to be careful not to disfellowship a brother unnecessarily; but such teachings and actions as Paul refers to here may grow to be so troublesome that action becomes essential. (1:19, 20). At any rate, Paul provides us with a rule of thumb which we must sometimes sadly apply: "If any man teach otherwise... withdraw thyself." Compare also 2 Thess. 3:14):

"And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed."

And also Titus 3:10:

"A man that is an heretick, after the first and second admonition reject."

C. GODLINESS AND GAIN 6:6-10

Paul showed in v. 5 that godliness is not a source of gain in the usual sense. However, here he shows that there is a sense in which this notion is true.

Some in Ephesus were confusing the aim and purpose of the Gospel—which is godliness—with the aim of present human betterment and improvement of social conditions. This is sacrificing an eternal betterment for a mere temporal one. Their

course, even if well-meant, would at best bring only present, external, material betterment; and in striving for present good, they would confuse and lose sight of the eternal purpose.

6 But godliness with contentment is great gain.

Worldly riches bring with them no guarantee. The only thing worth having in our brief wanderings, the only real “gain” at present is **peace of mind**. We should be content with whatever our present state might be from a material standpoint, knowing that we have a treasure that “neither moth nor rust doth corrupt” (Matt. 6:19, 20; Luke 12:33). Paul beautifully reveals to the Philippians the secret of his divine peace of mind:

“I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and how to abound: everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need” (Phil. 4:11, 12).

and to the Hebrews:

“Be content with such things as ye have: for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee”. (Heb. 13:8).

This contentment or peace or sufficiency was a state of mind that had to come by a process of learning. Jesus said, “Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart” (Matt. 11:29). And of the Son of God himself it is recorded, “He learned obedience by the things he suffered” (Heb. 5:8). Chastenings and privations are absolutely necessary for those who seek to be the sons of God.

“I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me” (Phil. 4:13). This is the glorious secret of God’s plan to which His servants alone have been initiated. Riches and prestige mean nothing. Armaments and political power mean nothing when compared to the power of God, Who can in a moment assemble ten legions of angels (Psa. 20:7; Matt. 26:53). This wonderful access to the infinite power of the Almighty can be ours, regardless of present circumstance. “When I am weak, then am I strong” (2 Cor. 12:9, 10). When we most fully realize and are impressed with our utter helplessness and dependence on our Father, then are we most strong through the transforming power of His Son. Then we learn truly to “trust in the living God...” (4:10).

How can we consider spending all our precious time in pursuit of the riches that perish? God has guaranteed that if we seek first the kingdom, then everything we need will be given to us (Matt. 6:33). Of course, this cannot be used as an excuse for slothfulness—because among the duties we **must** perform to God’s honor is the providing for ourselves and our dependents (5:8). But we cannot let our attentions be always upon attaining a living in this world. And never should our concern be upon bettering our social standing or standard of living. God has promised us a “sufficiency in all things” (2 Cor. 9:8). (The word “sufficiency” is the same as “contentment” in the original.)

God has given us all we need of the world’s goods, so that we may devote the greater part of our time and energies working for Him. We need only to appreciate

the words of David to know this “godliness with contentment”, the marvelous peace of mind in the midst of a world of trouble and uncertainty:

“The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord; and He delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with His hand. I have been young and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread” (Psa. 37:23-25).

Yes indeed, true godliness is a source of great gain, in an assurance which most will never know. Our faith is truly a conviction based upon substance—a trust in the “Rock”: of the wilderness, a heavenly hope transcending worldly baubles. “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want” (Psa. 23:1).

7 For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.

“The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away: blessed be the name of the LORD” (Job 1:21). Compare the parable of Luke 12:20, 21. Compare also Psa. 49:17 and Ecc. 5:15 (“As he came forth of his mother’s womb, naked shall he return to go as he came, and shall take nothing of his labour, which he may carry away in his hand.” This picture runs throughout the book of the Preacher. The grave is the ash heap of mankind—in it there is no hope.)

Paul’s line of reasoning is obvious. If we could, at death, take our possessions with us into a future state, then there would be at once an end to the “contentment” (V. 6) with whatever position we occupy now. This is because the possessions of the future would then in some way be dependent upon this present existence, and what we might eke out of the earth by the sweat of our brow.

Ignorant and superstitious men have believed this fallacy from primitive times. Nearly all ancient cultures bury their dead with the best provisions possible for their trip into the unknown. But those who know the Truth realize man’s state in all its stark reality—of poverty and blindness and weakness. What God gives him now is only a provision for his journey **through** this life, to be dispensed with (just like a used bus ticket) when the “destination” of death is reached. We are even more helpless at death than we were when we came into the world. Without the hope of resurrection to life man is no better than the animals. Thank God we have hope!

8 And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.

Food means ‘nourishment’ which includes food and drink. Note also the spiritual significance. Christ is the “Word of God”—the “bread of life” (John 6:48) and the “water of life” (Rev. 22:1; John 4:14). What he teaches us of the way of true life is essential nourishment.

Raiment is literally a ‘covering’, which includes shelter as well as clothing. This might also refer to the other half of our spiritual needs. We need the **nourishment** of God’s Word, and the ‘covering’—the robe of righteousness found only in Christ (Rev. 3:4, 5; 19:8; Eph. 4:24; compare also 1 Tim. 2:10).

With these *let us be therewith content*. Compare this phrase with Phil. 4:11. Here again, as in v. 6 “content” is the same as “sufficient”. Nourishment and covering are all we truly need.

John the Baptist told a group of soldiers to be “content” or satisfied with their wages. (This is the same root word as the “contentment” in 1 Timothy). This reference (Luke 3:14) is interesting in view of the fact that Paul in his letter to Timothy is also speaking to “soldiers” (cf. vv 11-14). We are offered the wages of inner peace—that peace which passes all understanding—and the eternal dwelling in peace which will come through God’s mercy and grace. As soldiers clothed in God’s armor, warring against sin in our members, what else could we want as wages? No doubt we should be satisfied with what God gives us, as we look back and consider that the only compensation from our previous employer was death (Rom. 6:23).

Our fight then, like Paul’s, should be motivated by confidence in God—living for God, satisfied in Him, not worrying about present situations. Could we, like Paul, sing hymns of praise and thanksgiving while bound in prison?

9 But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.

In the next two verses, Paul shows that any more than the “sufficiency” of v. 8 is an added weight of temptation, something that is best laid aside. We should be thankful if we are “not overly burdened with perishable riches”.

It is not only the *rich* which *fall into temptation*. This is something that may afflict the poor as well as the rich. Perhaps it troubles them even more so. Notice Paul says *will be* or “want to be”. Rotherham has “who are determined to be”. Those poor and weak who fervently wish to be rich or powerful are turning their eyes from the one important goal. So not only are the wealthy brethren liable to this temptation, but so are the poor, who feel compelled to “keep up with the Joneses”. A little money, a little “security”, only increases their desire for more and more, until all other concerns are blotted out.

It is not the possession of riches that is wrong: it is the *trust* in riches as a “strong city” (Prov. 10:15) that turns us from godliness. Rich men are therefore not told to cast their riches away, but simply not to trust in them (v. 17). And elsewhere they are counselled to “make friends” of their wealth by putting it to good use in God’s service (Luke 16:9).

A *snare* is a maze and tangle of conflicting motives. “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other: or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Matt. 6:24). How man can deceive himself! What vanity and self-centeredness and blindness! How can he excuse the grovelling passion for base gain as a commendable virtue, as a praiseworthy and healthy enterprise, as a manly making of provision for home and family! And yet every new and useless acquisition pulls him deeper and deeper into the morass—another useless pampering of self, another idol to add to the “temple”—until, by little degrees, he is at last worshipping things instead of God.

These snares lead to *many foolish and hurtful lusts*. There is an instructive progression here, which we must recognize and shun. If we first lack a genuine trust in God that He will provide for us, then we may begin to crave or lust after present wealth and position. And this one desire, “the root of all evil”, will lead into another ungodly craving, and another, and another—pulling us down as into quicksand. We want one impractical and immoral “idol”, we sacrifice and work to gain it, and then we immediately want another—just as flesh-pleasing, just as wasteful. Let us not be like foolish children, hiding in our playpens, amusing ourselves with expensive and frivolous toys, until the urgency of the Truth has completely disappeared from our lives.

These lusts *drown men in destruction and perdition*. *Destruction* refers to the ruin of body and mind now, in the blind and ceaseless treadmill of striving to be rich, and then sacrificing God’s word, and rushing to “enjoy” the fruits of that wealth. But such men, like the Gadarene swine, know not until it is too late that they are rushing to “drown” themselves in a sea of luxury. And this is inevitably followed by *perdition* which is the greater ruin, the complete and eternal downfall, the loss of immortality. “Whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God” (Luke 12:20, 21).

10 For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

Notice that it is the *love* of money, not money itself, which leads to evil. This v. 10 is one of the most misquoted verses in the Bible!

The love of money may lead to many other evils. “For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil” (NIV). All sin has its root in the loss of faith, but the loss of single-minded trust in God, leads man to feel that he himself must provide for all his wants. Better to be poor and humble, that we might tend more toward prayer and supplication (5:5).

Then, just as now, there were examples among the brethren, of those who had erred from the “godliness with contentment”. They had *coveted after* money and *erred from the faith*. They had been “seduced” from the faith (as the same Greek word is translated in Mark 13:22). Just as Eve was tempted by the words of the serpent, and led away by her lusts, so they are tempted:

“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world” (1 John 2:15, 16). “But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death” (James 1:14, 15).

Leaving the Truth causes a person to be *pierced...through with many sorrows*. They make themselves victims to many agonies of mind, many regrets, many gnawings of conscience at wealth gained with the sacrifice of eternal good.

It has been suggested that these last two verses are based on the betrayal of the Lord by Judas Iscariot, who, for the love of silver, delivered up the Master to be crucified. Judas's fate was **literally** to fall into destruction (Acts 1:18)! The fate of those who follow him is described as being "pierced", or "transfixed", with "pain" or "sorrow" which is from the same Greek word *odune*. Here, perhaps, is a reflection of the agony of the Lord Jesus as his hands and feet were transfixed by the Roman spikes. Judas must have thought he had gain initially, but he soon realized the worthlessness of the thirty pieces of silver; likewise, his followers, who hasten to be rich, will suffer all the pains of crucifixion, but know none of the glory.

Perhaps Paul is thinking of David's words:

"Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another god" (Psa. 16:4).

The imagery used in this verse could also be that of a man who wanders from the straight, direct path of life, to gather some seemingly fair root growing at a distance from the right road upon which he is travelling. He wanders away and plucks it: and now that he has it in his hands he finds himself pierced and wounded with its unsuspected thorns. Such were the experiences of Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, who coveted money and garments—only to be smitten with leprosy (2 Kings 5); and Achan, who hid the goodly Babylonish garment—and was stoned for his trouble (Josh. 7)

D. GOOD FIGHT OF FAITH: 6:11-14

Paul, in his letter to this same Ephesian ecclesia, where Timothy was, had instructed them in similar military terms, to "put on the whole armour of God, that ye might be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Eph. 6:11). In speaking directly to Timothy, Paul exhorts him (and us) to fight the good fight of faith (compare 1:18). And in ch. 6 of his letter to Ephesus he describes the weapons to be used in this fight.

Eph. 6:14-17 particularize the whole armor of God—the belt, or girdle, or binding together of Truth; the protective breastplate or heart-covering of Righteousness (not self-accomplished, but "It is God that worketh in you" and "We are His workmanship, created unto good works"); feet shod with the "preparation"—the preparedness—the eager, enthusiastic readiness to serve the Gospel of Peace—"How beautiful are the swiftly running feet of him that bringeth good tidings of peace!" (Isa. 52:7).

"Above all" the shield of Faith—belief, confidence, assurance—the unassailable conviction that God is and that He will unfailingly reward all who diligently seek Him with all their heart. This shield will defend against every attack, every assault of the enemy, all his inflammatory darts of temptation and evil desire, all his shafts of discouragement and doubt.

"And take Salvation for your helmet", or more fully, as in 1 Thess. 5:8, "for an helmet the Hope of Salvation". Why a helmet and a breastplate, if the Shield of Faith is all-sufficient protection? Because "Faith without Works is dead" (James 2:17, 20). The head must be enclosed by the hope that Paul says comes by a tested

steadfastness, and the heart must be covered by the righteousness that comes from God.

And finally, the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. That is the weapon against all the rulership and authority and domination of evil, both within and without. The Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, the one and only weapon of offence—sharper and more piercing than any literal sword—searching and dividing between soul and spirit—between that which is fleshly and that which is of the Spirit (Heb. 4:12). Only the Word can discern, and teach us to discern by its insight, our own hearts and motives.

He has mentioned six elements of the armor of God. What is the seventh? That he describes in vv. 18, 19—Prayer.

“Praying always, with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.”

Another version puts the thought perhaps a little clearer:

“Use every kind of prayer and entreaty, and at every opportunity pray in the Spirit. Be on the alert about it; devote yourself constantly to prayer for all God’s people.”

Those who bring their lives to this state of devotion will stand approved before Christ. There must be an urgency and intensity about our supplications—a great consciousness of inadequacy and shortcoming and spiritual need. We may fight the good fight of faith only if we have the backing of our Father in heaven.

Now returning to this section of 1 Timothy, let us first notice the progression of verbs. They picture so precisely the “military operations” of our faith. First of all, there is something to **FLEE**: “Flee these things” (cf. v.11). Often, a tactical retreat is necessary before an army may advance safely. And then **FOLLOW** (v.11) a new leader, Christ our Lord. We follow Christ, and then we **FIGHT** (v. 12) his fight, and **LAY HOLD** (v.12) or capture the prize—our glorious hope. And finally, once we have laid hold upon this hope of eternal life, we must keep it (v.14) firm to the end. What a glorious campaign we fight against the forces of darkness and sin: **FLEE, FOLLOW, FIGHT, LAY HOLD, AND KEEP!**

11 But thou O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.

Timothy was a *man of God*. Sometimes we tend to forget that these characters of the Bible, of which we read so often, were just men and women, with the same weaknesses that we have. We sometimes excuse our feeble attempts in contrast to their lives, by telling ourselves how much more favored they were than we. This is utterly wrong! The very reason that we have the examples of these men of faith is so that we may see how much our experiences are the same as theirs. When God through Paul addressed Timothy, “O man”, he was speaking for our benefit. And He expects us to obey, just as the ancient worthies did.

The phrase *Man of God* is used quite frequently in the Old Testament—of Moses, Samuel, David, Elijah, and others. In the New Testament it is found only in the Pastorals, where works are stressed. The “man of God” is such a man only by doing the works of God. Behind the use of the phrase here lies Paul’s characteristic thought, that all Christians are in the same relation to God as were the most favored servants of God in the Old Testament. And it is just as incumbent upon all believers to emulate these men of faith—who showed their faith by their works. We are reminded of the impressive list Paul compiles in Heb. 11, of men and women of faith, and of Paul’s conclusion to the matter:

“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us” (Heb. 12:1).

A “Man of God” is a man born from above, not by the will of the flesh nor by the will of man, but the will of God (1 Pet. 1:23). A believer born of God (James 1:18; 1 John 5:1), no longer a “man of the world”. A man of God, well-stocked with the provisions of Scripture (2 Tim. 3:17) for the doing of all good works. God’s property, bought with a price, with no life of his own. “Yet not I live, but Christ liveth in me (Gal. 2:20).

This word *flee* was chosen to emphasize the dangers involved here. This word in Scripture always signifies a hasty escape from danger, usually danger which brought death. We should not play around on the edge of the cliff, like carefree children without falling; but we should flee far and quickly from any danger of an ungodly walk.

These words were of course written first of all to Timothy. Covetousness of wealth and gain is such a strong temptation, that Paul felt even Timothy needed a special warning. Let us remember Timothy’s position. Before, he had been a faithful companion of Paul in his travels, most likely he was the sufferer of hardships, privations, and persecutions. But now, in wealthy and worldly Ephesus Timothy had perhaps attained some measure of personal comfort. Here was the reason he was to be warned: the greater struggle is to overcome comfort. Israel did not turn away from God when she suffered (for then she realized how much she needed Him); but when she abounded, she soon forgot her Maker. When she waxed fat she lost her trust in God and forgot to praise Him as the benefactor. The temptations to sin were nearby, on every hand, and God could more easily be put out of mind in the presence of plenty. So it might have been with Timothy, and might be with us!

“No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life: that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier” (2 Tim. 2:4).

Many of us are now living in a climate of unprecedented wealth and leisure and “opportunity” (of the wrong sort). Let us not begin to question whether we need God anymore. We need Him more now than we ever did before!

Timothy was exhorted to *follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness*—Flee one thing, then follow after another. (This

contrast of negative and positive is repeated by Paul in 2 Tim. 21:22 and Titus 2:12.) Carrying out the idea of the soldier's campaign, this word "follow" means to "pursue in order to find or overtake", or "to follow after earnestly". The characteristics of a faithful soldier of God are to be pursued with all the diligence at one's disposal. They never come to one who sits passively and waits. We should emulate the fervent spirit of Jacob, who clung so tenaciously to the angel, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me" (Gen. 32:26). In the battle of faith, the evil must be overcome with good (Rom. 12:21).

Righteousness is used in a general sense for the inner life of a believer shaped after the law of God. An inner feeling of peace and contentment and conviction which finds its expression in the longsuffering and tireless works of a Paul or a Timothy.

Godliness is the Greek *eusebia*—the specific word¹ used so often by Paul in the Pastorals, to speak of good works.

Faith, love and patience are three additional characteristics which Paul urged Timothy to *follow after*. The comment by James is appropriate here: "knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing" (1:3, 4).

Let *patience* stand in the place of hope—as the endurance of trials, with the steadfast, immovable expectation of life eternal. "For he is faithful that promised." Then we have here the three cardinal rules in the Truth: "Now abideth faith, hope and love." This is the only 'Trinity' which the true believer will recognize. These three related characteristics so often appear together in Paul's letters, as in 1 Cor. 13.

Meekness means 'gentleness of feeling'. In imitation of the meekest of men, the Lord Jesus. A meekness to accept whatever God offers in this life and to be content with it.

12 Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.

For comments on the words *fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life* see Eph. 6:11-18 again. Compare 1 Cor. 9:24 ("Run the race") and Phil. 3:13, 14 ("Press toward the mark for the prize"). The words "fight" in this verse are from a root, from which our English word "agony" derives. The old stirring metaphors of the Greek ideal are here intended, the agonizing Olympic contests for the prize. "Lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience (endurance) the race that is set before us" (Heb. 12:1). Put to death your enemy the flesh by growing in the spirit (Gal. 5:16-26). The prize to be gained is a "stephanos"—an athletic award in the form of an evergreen coronal wreath, which to the spiritual eye symbolizes kingship and life ever new and fresh (*Eureka*, vol. 1, pp. 386-389). This is the real prize: the "crown of life" (Rev. 2:10; James 1:12), and the privilege of reigning as kings and priests with Christ in God's kingdom.

¹ This word has been discussed in the introduction.

Not long after Paul wrote these words to his young student Timothy, as he sat again in a prison cell about to face death, he was able to say:

"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown ('stephanos') of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only but unto all them also that love his appearing" (2 Tim. 4:7-8).

Lay hold means to take hold of, to capture, to seize. *Eternal life* is not now in our possession; instead, we must seek for it (Rom. 2:7). We hold firmly to the hope now, and in the great day of judgement we redeem that hope for the real thing.

The phrase *whereunto thou art also called* is translated by the Diaglott as "for which thou was called out". God has been, for thousands of years, engaged in calling out of the nations a people for His name. (Acts 15:14). We see this plan in the lives of Abraham and his sons, of Moses and the children of Israel, and in the call of the nations to the one hope of Israel.

"Draw me, we will run after thee" (Song 1:4). Jesus said, "No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him" (John 6:44). "Ye are bought with a price," Paul says (1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23). We each must first be attracted to Christ because of the peace which he offers ("Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"—Matt. 11:28). First comes selection, or our choosing by God (for He chooses each of us for a special purpose, and we are each very important to Him). But we must also come to God by our own free will. Afterward comes the following, the running after Christ. As Paul tells us, "Be ye followers of me, even also as I am a follower of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1). As sheep, we hear our master's call, and we obediently follow.

Certainly we must note, before passing on, the parallel with Gideon's 300 soldiers—inasmuch as Paul is definitely speaking here of our holy warfare. When the children of Israel gathered together to oppose the Midianites, God was concerned that the people might be too many—lest they win and be puffed with pride in their own strength, saying "My own hand hath saved me" (Judges 7:2). So He commanded Gideon to trim down the number by two means. Firstly, he said, "Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from Mount Gilead. And there returned of the people twenty and two thousand; and there remained ten thousand" (7:3). This was still too many—

"So he brought down the people unto the water: and the LORD said unto Gideon, Every one that lappeth of the water with his tongue, as a dog lappeth, thou shalt set by himself; likewise every one that boweth down upon his knees to drink. And the number of them that lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, were three hundred men; but all the rest... bowed down upon their knees... And the LORD said unto Gideon, By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you..." (7:5-7).

Of 32,000 men God chose only those 300 (less than one in a hundred) who were alert enough to recognize their true position of danger, who would not take their eyes off the enemy for even one second, and who were ready for battle at all times. These same lessons apply to us today. God is watching us to see our attitude: how

do we treat the enemy before us? Do we casually ignore him, while satisfying our own desires? Or do we always remain on the guard, with a mind to discern good and evil? In the final analysis, God will only call those 300 faithful of Gideon. The other 30,000 are but actors on the stage for a few moments. Many are called (initially), but few are chosen (for the actual work, and to receive the soldier's wage). And should it be otherwise? God does not save by many or few. Numbers of men mean nothing to Him. One man may be a more effective instrument in His hand than a hundred men. Let us go bravely into battle, not caring about numbers; nor should we be afraid if our companions, once called, later fall away in fear:

"We will rejoice in Thy salvation, and in the name of our God we will set up our banners: The Lord fulfill all they petitions...Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the Lord our God" (Psa. 20:5, 7).

This *good profession* (*homologia*, as in v. 13 also) *before many witnesses* must have been made at the same time that Timothy was first called to eternal life. This would have been at his baptism. Baptism is the event in which every believer shares in making a public confession of his belief. But we would be negligent if we did not point out how many more opportunities we all have, in daily life and by special efforts, to continue our profession in different ways before many witnesses of the world.

13 I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession.

I give thee charge means "I command thee", as in 1:3, 18.

For more detail on the phrase *in the sight of God...and Christ Jesus* see the notes at 5:21.

The word *quickeneth* is better translated as *preserves*. The *all things* refers especially to us, the saints—4:10). Fight the good fight of faith, always remembering that God stands with us, to support us, to lift us up, to lead us forward.

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me" (Psa. 23:4).

Before Christ Jesus means 'in the presence of our Lord', our special succourer and advocate (Heb. 4:15; 1 John 2:1).

Christ Jesus stood in the presence of the alien lords such as *Pontius Pilate* and *confessed* boldly the same faith as we do, who followed the same course first, as our example.

"Thou sayest that I am a king, To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I would bear witness unto the truth" (John 18:37).

Christ came into the world, but he was not of this world (Matt. 27:11). He had already made that decision, when he refused to weaken to the Satan's offers of worldly wealth and power (Matt. 4:8-10). And he remained faithful to that decision

during the next three years. He preferred instead the “godliness with contentment” which is “great gain” (v. 6), and this is what he professed and exemplified.

Just as Jesus made his faithful *witness* before Pilate and then endured the humiliation and agony of the Cross (which is called a “baptism” in Luke 12:50), so the candidate for baptism must first make his confession and then undergo baptism, which is itself a showing forth of Jesus’ death (Rom. 6:3).

14 That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The *commandment* is to “fight the good fight of faith”—the one, all-encompassing command to which this entire letter has been dedicated: a patient, trusting struggle. The word *keep* is *tereo*—meaning to ‘watch, guard, preserve’. It is aorist imperative, which indicates that the statement is given with military curt-ness.

Without spot echoes the theme of Solomon’s Song of Songs. The ecclesia is the multitudinous Bride of Christ, of which her spouse says, “There is no spot in thee” (Song 4:7). Paul’s discourse upon marriage in the letter to the Ephesians is based upon this ideal—the perfection of the Bride through the life and sacrifice of Christ:

“Christ loveth the ecclesia, and gave himself for it...that he might present it to himself a glorious ecclesia, **not having spot**, or wrinkle, or any such thing” (Eph. 5:25, 27).

But Christ has not done all our work, though we continue to benefit from his work. We need to do more than just lean upon Christ and depend on him to do all. We need to work ourselves, to try to keep his commands properly and to keep ourselves “without spot” (James 1:27; 2 Pet. 3:14).

Timothy was exhorted to be *unrebukeable*. Some who had not kept the spirit of the commandment had already been “rebuked” (1:18-20). What a warning to contemplate!

The length of time to be unrebukeable was not long. It was only *until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ*. The great expectation of the early ecclesia was that Christ would shortly appear in person—2 Tim. 4:1; Titus 2:13; 2 Thess. 2:8. The great apostasy mentioned in 4:1-5 corrupted this glorious hope by degrees, treating it as a doubtful speculation, and then as a profound allegory, and at last as a damnable heresy. As the soldier of God fights the fight of faith, he keeps his eyes firmly upon that certain future, when Jesus Christ “shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom” (2 Tim. 4:1).

E. GLORY TO GOD: 6:15, 16

This is the second interjection of praise to God. One is in ch. 1, the other in ch. 6. Paul begins and closes this letter with the thought, “Honour to God”. (This is the significance of Timothy’s name—see notes, 1:2.) These two verses emphasize that “God is light”.

15 Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords.

The words *his* and *he* refer to Christ (cf. v. 14) who at a predetermined time *shall shew* or reveal God by his earthly reign (Compare notes at 2:6). When the proper time for the coming of the Saviour, ordained of old, had at last arrived, then “the Word of God was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). Christ brought the light of God’s knowledge to men (2 Cor. 4:4,6), teaching them to glorify God and preaching of the kingdom to come, when all the earth will be filled with God’s glory (Num. 14:21). And this kingdom will assuredly come, even though some scoffers ask, “Where is the promise of his coming?”—2 Pet. 3:4. When Christ returns from his Father’s right hand, to be glorified with his brethren, then our hope will become reality, and our riches (our lives) that have been hid will be manifest (Col. 3:3, 4). What use is there in playing among a few trinkets now, in view of the fact that Christ will come shortly, bringing us all things that we could hope for? The calm realization that God will certainly manifest this salvation in His Son in the near future is a great step toward that “godliness with contentment” of which Paul has been speaking. God was (is) in Christ reconciling the world. God revealed Himself in His Son and will do so again.

God is *the blessed and only Potentate*. The One God is the only real Power. God is *blessed* because He is the fountain of all blessings, the source and giver of our life and breath, from whom comes the glorious gospel of hope (1:11). God is the *only Potentate*, the only power, the only ruler. Even Christ must say, “Of mine own self I can do nothing” (John 5:19, 30; 8:28).

The title *The King of Kings, and Lord of Lords* is pre-eminently God’s title. There are Old Testament parallels in Deut. 10:17; Psa. 136:3; Dan. 4:34. Christ may bear it (Rev. 17:14; 19:16), but only as the manifestation of his Father. God is King over those men styled kings, and Lord over all whom men call lords in this age and in the age to come.

16 Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.

For more detail on the phrase *Who only hath immortality*—compare 1:17. Again it is referring to the Father, God Almighty. God only has underived immortality. God brought to light, or made possible, the way to immortality through His Son (John 3:17; 10:10, 26, 28) by the gospel (Mark 16:15, 16; Rom. 1:16). Men do not have immortality, as they must seek for it (Rom. 2:7).

God Almighty dwells *in the light which no man can approach unto*. Paul is contemplating a heavenly scene of splendor impossible for human eyes to behold. Yet the Father purposes to manifest His glory also upon earth through the corporate body of Christ. Even upon earth the reflection of effulgent light (through the medium of His chosen ones—the Cherubim of Ezek. 1:28) will be, at times, far too dazzling for mortal sight. They will shine like the stars of heaven (Matt. 13:43; Dan. 12:3), just as Christ does (Matt. 28:3).

If the saints, who as the “moon” only **reflect** God’s resplendent glory, can nevertheless shine so brightly themselves, how much more does their Father, “Who covers Himself with light as with a garment” (Psa. 104:2). This no doubt also refers to the fact that God is not confined by our concept of time and space.

The Father is a wonderful being *Whom no man hath seen, nor can see*. God is called “invisible” in 1:17. Much sport has been made of the Bible by shallow men who claim to see a contradiction in this. They read such passages as Exodus 33:11 to prove that Moses saw God (*Elohim*) face to face, but they neglect other passages like Acts 7:35, which show that the **angels** were God’s messengers to communicate with man:

“Behold, I send an Angel before thee...Beware of him, and obey his voice... for **My name is in him**” (Exod. 23:20, 21).

God could direct one of His angels so that the angel became in effect God. Compare, for example, Gen. 32:30 with Hosea 12:3-5. Abraham was said to have talked to God, but a careful look at Gen. 18:1,2 and 19:1 shows that he dealt only with angels.

“No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared Him” (John 1:18).

Confined by our current limitations we cannot physically see God. Tainted by our sinfulness we cannot bear to see Him in His resplendent purity.

If men wish to know God, they may know Him through His Son, who has revealed Him (v. 15).

F. RICHES IN HEAVEN: 6:17-19

These verses resume the theme of verses 7-10. The natural desire and tendency of men is to accumulate money and possessions, for various real and supposed motives of “taking care of their own” or doing great and spectacular things for the Truth. This, if we are not very careful, leads again to confusing gain with godliness. God’s work is primarily with the poor and He chooses weak and poor instruments for the purpose that the glory may be of God and not of man. After speaking earlier of those who **desire** to be rich, Paul now turns to those who are already rich.

17 Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.

Those *that are rich in this world* may be “rich in this world”, but not necessarily rich in the world to come. There were a few wealthy believers in the first century, especially in Ephesus, although they were the exception rather than the rule (1 Cor. 1:26). As said before, it is not in itself a sin to be rich, but it is the occasion of sore temptation (v. 9).

Paul asks Timothy to **charge** the rich in the ecclesia *that they be not high minded* or “haughty” (RSV), “arrogant” (NIV), foolishly proud, feeling that the

chance of their having money makes them better than their poorer brethren. Notice what Paul says:

'Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits" (Rom. 12:16).

In fact, if a brother has by his own effort accumulated great wealth, he may have reason to feel inferior to his poorer brethren, for he may have neglected those things which are most needful.

The words *uncertain riches* are perhaps better translated as *the uncertainty of riches*. Jesus' parables often speak of this pride and this trust of rich men in their riches. In one such parable, Jesus begins:

"Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:15).

The rich man spoken of here thought that the protection of the inheritance was essential to his life, but Jesus says that a man's life does not consist in wealth; a man is *what he is*, not *what he has*. True wealth is measured by our Father in the degree of our closeness to Him; or, in the words of Jesus in concluding the parable, in being "rich towards God". To know God is life; to know His saving truth is to possess a "treasure". True riches are those things which are pleasing to God. In rare cases a man may have earthly riches and so regard them that they do not interfere with his hold on the "true riches". Abraham is an outstanding case.

On the other hand it does not follow that poverty is a virtue, for a poor man can be eaten up with covetousness as much as a rich man, and so also miss the real wealth. Yet it remains true as a general that "the poor" tend to appreciate the gospel more than the rich who, because of their possessions, are too busy enjoying the present life to be concerned with a future.

"The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully; and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years: take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry" (Luke 12:16-19).

This man had no thought for others. He could have used his abundance to help many. He had no thought that the fruitful seasons which had made him rich were due to the rain from heaven and the power of each seed having life and that these were matters beyond his ultimate control. Behind his prosperity was the power of God. He heeded not the warnings: "If riches increase, set not thine heart upon them" (Psa. 62:10). "The prosperity of fools shall destroy them" (Prov. 1:32).

God made an assessment of the man: "Thou fool"—clear, and emphatic, and true; for the folly was apparent in that he had not power over his own life, when that was required of him. He was planning for "many years" ahead, but God said "this night". What then of his plans, his barns, his fruits, his goods? They ceased to be his—they were only his till the lease expired; wealth cannot buy off death. "No man can redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom that he should not taste

of death" (Psa. 49:7). The rich man, used to finding in his wealth the key to all doors, stands helpless before the door of the Kingdom of God.

The issue might be focalized in this way. At the judgment, when a man is stripped of all that men consider to be riches, is he then "rich" or "poor"? (Rev. 3:17). God reveals that man's state and his end: "Thou fool!"; and Jesus says, "So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God" (Luke 12:21).

Paul now asks Timothy to exhort the brethren about *the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy*—the living God of Christ, in contrast to the dead gods and goddesses of Ephesus:

"But our God is in the heavens: He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased. Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not: They have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not: They have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat. They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them" (Psa. 115:3-8).

Let us never think that idols are of no concern to us. This very thing of which we have been speaking, the love of money, is a terrible kind of idolatry (Col. 3:5),.

These sayings declare plainly enough that earthly riches may fly away and only the treasures of the spirit are permanent. But these riches are also the very symbols for the world around us, in which men set their hearts. And those whose hearts are in the world (who worship the world as an idol) are as doomed to perish as the world order to which they belong: they, like it, will consume away like smoke. The only worthwhile "store" must be laid up with God.

The Psalms speak of God as "laying up" a store for the righteous (Psa. 31:19). If their desire is set on this divine treasure, then they will have "treasure with God", and the "godliness with contentment" in this life. But God may store judgment for the future as well as goodness and a man's own life determines what kind the store shall be. So men may be said to lay it up by their own actions:

"Riches profit not in the day of wrath: but righteousness delivereth from death" (Prov. 11:4).

As he does in his letter to the Ephesians, Paul constantly draws the contrast between the senselessness and weakness of the idols and the omniscience and omnipotence of the one true, living God. God has the power to give us *all things*—temporal and eternal (4:8). This reminds us of 4:3: Paul thinks again of those apostate teachers who condemn some foods as unclean, while at the same time hastening after all that "clean" money!

18 That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate.

The benefit of the rich man's goods is in its *spending* (for worthwhile purposes), not in its hoarding! Again, and again the same theme: *good works*, godliness, is not some monastic contemplation; it is a striving among the bustle of the world to

do the will of God, actively, eagerly, lovingly. It is the seeking for the place where one's possessions or talents might be best used to the glory of our Father.

Ready to distribute means many things—"Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality" (Rom. 12:13). "Pursuing hospitality", entertaining strangers (Heb. 13:2), "given to hospitality" (1 Tim. 3:2). "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2).

Willing to communicate means to be liberal, "willing to bestow" (Diaglott), generous in giving. *Communicate* is from the same root word as "fellowship" (*koinos*). This word signifies a having in common (Acts 2:44), a sharing with one another, both in material possessions and in sympathies:

"Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep" (Rom. 12:15).

It is one thing to share one's goods from a cold sense of duty and quite another thing to share material goods *and* warm, loving, spiritual sympathies at the same time. "*Fellowship*" is much more than meeting together on Sundays to break bread. "Fellowship" is much more far-reaching. It enters into every aspect of our lives. In each thing that we do, we are either doing it in the fellowship of God's Truth and His children, or in the fellowship of the world.

19 Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

Paul has been thinking upon Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount:

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal" (Matt. 6:19,20; compare Luke 18:22).

Men think they make lasting provision when they lay up a store of valuable clothes, supplies of food, or a hoard of money. But moths may destroy the fabrics, insects and rodents corrupt the grain, and thieves may burrow through the mud walls and steal the gold. The saying covers all the forms in which wealth is customarily hoarded; none of them is safe.

Not only does God lay up treasure for those who are God-fearing, but they are a treasure to Him. "They shall be mine", He says..."a peculiar treasure" (Mal. 3:17). This is the thesis of Malachi's message that the true Israel are "they that fear the Lord" and who alone are written in His book of remembrance; and it deliberately recalls the use of the same expression at the beginning of Israel's national history (Exod. 19:5). They are chosen as God's prized possession. But it is Abraham's seed by faith who are truly God's treasure; and so Peter writes to those "sojourners of the Dispersion" who are "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Christ"; and in the language of the law and in the spirit of the prophet he says: "But ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye should show forth the excellencies of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Pet. 2:9).

These are the Lord's "inheritance", a term which is used of Israel of old (Exod. 34:9; Psa. 33:12). And Paul, applying the Old Testament language to spiritual Israel, can write to the Ephesians of "the riches of the glory of God's inheritance in the saints" (Eph. 1:18). But if they are the Lord's inheritance, He also is theirs. "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: Thou maintainest my lot. The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage" (Psa. 16:5,6). The words are those of the spirit of Christ in the Psalms, but what is true of him is true also of those who are "in him".

In the light of these sayings of the Psalmist we can feel the force of the Lord's words, "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matt. 6:21). The heart will turn as surely as the needle of a compass toward what it really values. No amount of outward religious performance will change its direction for long if the world is its attraction. But if God is our prized possession, then to Him our hearts will be drawn; and He is the only possession which can never perish, and can ensure that the possessors will never perish either. We cannot pretend that delight and a sense of wealth in God come easily to human nature; only a long and constant direction of the mind can bring the consciousness of that precious treasure, that "godliness with contentment". Paul advises us:

"Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth, For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God" (Col. 3:2,3).

Life is our treasure; and our treasure, like our citizenship, is in heaven (Phil. 3:20).

Eternal life is translated by the RSV as "life indeed". Linked with the similar phrase in v. 12, the thought is this: there is a life now, and if men are not careful they will come to feel that this is the only important life. All their making of provisions will be with this in mind. They will forget about the future, that which is really life—the only life that does not finally reward us with pain and sorrow and death.

Solomon speaks of God "laying up" sound wisdom for the righteous.

"He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his saints. Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path" (Prov. 2:7-9).

It needs to be stressed here (or else a misconception may arise) that man cannot, by his own self-centered labors, lay up this store which will guarantee him eternal life. This was the mistake of the Pharisees, who leaned upon the letter of the Law, but failed to keep its spirit and were condemned thereby. And it may be our mistake today.

We must rely upon our Father in Heaven. We have to beseech Him for assistance and then He will work through us. He will give us the "sound wisdom" we need, not the knowledge that puffs us up in our self-importance (1 Cor. 13:4), but the simple and practical wisdom to guide us in our day-to-day works. Then we shall, but only with God's help, attain to that true "godliness with contentment".

G. THE TRUTH: 6:20a

20 O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust

Perhaps this is an allusion to the parables of the talents and the pounds (Matt. 25:14-30; Luke 19:12-27). In the parables, money is deposited to the trust of the disciples as though to a bank, for the purpose of earning "usury" or interest. Christ has given each of us the Truth and we must utilize it to the best of our ability, not casting it aside to decay through negligence, nor neatly storing it away in a white napkin!

What a poignant picture we have here! What an uplifting example to stir us from our lethargy! Paul, the aged, with no family of his own, is beginning certainly to feel the approach of death. He knows his days are numbered, and that he has "fought a good fight" (2 Tim. 4:7). Will those whom he leaves behind carry this fight forward, or will they allow the gospel of Christ to languish without strong and resolute warriors? As the apostle John was to say in his declining years, Paul also "had no greater joy than to hear that his children walk in the Truth" (3 John 4). Paul's most fervent desire, as he neared the end of his sojourn, was that Timothy his own son in the faith (1:2) would keep that trust committed to him and would in the end lay hold on the prize of eternal life. May we do the same, following the examples of all those faithful ones that have gone before.

H. APOSTASY TO "SCIENCE": 6:20b-21a

The last mention in this letter of that glorious gospel is followed by a final mention of one of the false teachings, which was a nullification of the pure and simple Truth. Of the false conceptions mentioned here there is much evidence today, in the Body as well as outside.

20b Avoid profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called.

Profane and vain babblings were useless and profitless disputes which are discussed in the notes at 1:4, 6.

Developments at Ephesus, and other ecclesias, led to new heresies which Paul calls *science falsely so called*. John's first letter (90 A.D.) was written to correct serious error that was developing among the ecclesias. John does not name the error, but the general opinion is that it was an early form of Gnosticism. The full growth of this heresy did not come until the second century, but its earliest forms had been revealed before John, and it is here mentioned by Paul to Timothy, when he warned him to be on his guard against the "oppositions of science (Greek 'gnosis') falsely so called".

The theory of Gnosticism threatened the ecclesia from within and constituted a more seductive and dangerous doctrine than persecution from without. The apostle John wrote to counteract the influence of a so-called "higher form" of "knowledge" that challenged the foundation of faith. The peril came not from men who were out to destroy the Truth, but from those who thought that they were improving it by

loosening its restrictions and whose aim was to make it "intellectually" respectable.

By the time John wrote (towards the end of the first century), many members of the ecclesias were second or even third generation believers, and this is also the case today in regard to the most recent revival of the Truth. Then, as now, the pioneering spirit was being set aside and more and more time was being given to mere speculation upon minor points (1:4).

Jesus had warned of this: "The love of many shall wax cold" (Matt. 24:12). By John's time, as today, the first thrill of the early establishment of ecclesias had faded, and, in many instances, the early flame of zeal had dimmed to a flicker. John ministered at Ephesus, Timothy's ecclesia, and Christ warned this very ecclesia: "I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love" (Rev. 2:4).

Therefore, while Paul and John always exemplified that great love for their brethren, they also manifested a stern attitude toward those who would undermine the faith with their theories. In describing them, Paul uses such words as "heretics", "blasphemers" and "hypocrites"; and John is even stronger: "liars", "seducers", "false prophets", "deceivers", and "anti-Christ". In this way they wrote, in the abundance of their love, though it must have appeared to some as extreme harshness.

The Greek word *gnosis* signifies "knowledge", and the Gnostics claimed to be "knowing ones". However, the form of knowledge they embraced did not constitute a greater understanding of the Bible, or a growing in "godliness". Gnosticism was not, like some heresies, an open enemy of the Truth. It professed to give its approval and patronage to the gospel. But the Gnostics professed to have a better way than Christ and the apostles. They said that the Scriptures did not need to be taken historically and literally and it was not necessary to believe that the Scriptures contained all that was essential to eternal life. The philosopher whose mind was enlightened by a greater knowledge from other sources need not trouble himself much about his conduct. Righteousness was of no account in comparison with his new illumination. It is a matter of indifference what the human body does. We can certainly understand how such a liberal philosophy was so much in contrast to the righteousness of the pastoral letters, where good works are seen as the **evidence** of our faith.

21a Which some professing have erred concerning the faith.

In contrast to the "profession" of vv. 12, 13, some brethren *profess* their own crotchets, their own self-satisfying theories, while others profess the pure and simple faith, and live their lives by its commands. *Have erred* means "have missed the mark", an active, knowing sin (1:6).

I. CONCLUSION 6:21b

21b Grace be with thee. Amen.

In the phrase *grace be with thee* the text should probably read “you” (plural) rather than *thee* (singular)—as in 2 Tim. 4:22 and Titus 3:15. This would mean that the letter was designed for others beside Timothy.

Paul concludes as he has begun, with the prayer for grace from God (1:2). This is the grace that God offered to Paul, to Timothy, and to all the brethren at Ephesus, and lastly to us. This is the grace which leads a man to serve God in sincerity and truth.

We must keep bringing ourselves back to this—the simple, personal work of each individual, day after day.

The Truth is a very simple, individual, personal thing, passed on in joyful zeal from person to person, radiated in personal example, personal dedication and personal holiness.

Look at the example of Christ. Look at the example of Paul. This was the living power that swept the Roman Empire in the early centuries. All the might of Caesar’s legions could not stand against an humble little band of believers who marched under the banner of their Lord. And this is the work which by God’s grace we must carry forward—each individual one of us in this our brief “day of salvation”.

“Amen.”