

Commentary on Timothy

By

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pChapter 1 Introduction

1 Timothy

Henry Allen Ironside

1 Timothy 1:1-4

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope; unto Timothy, my own son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord. 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, neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do. (vv. 1-4)

There are three letters of Paul that we generally speak of as Pastoral Epistles: 1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus. They are so-called because they were written to servants of Christ who, in a very special sense, had the care of God's people in different places. These two young men had been converted through the instrumentality of the apostle Paul and had gone out to preach the Word in association with him. From time to time he left one or the other to help in various newly formed churches in order that the young converts might be established in the truth. Both of these young men had shepherds' hearts and delighted to care for the sheep and lambs of Christ's flock. In these three letters Paul writes to them regarding certain things which, as pastors, or shepherds of the flock, they needed to keep in mind. Of course, these letters are not only for those who have special gifts along these lines, but they also contain instruction for all God's people.

The great outstanding theme of the two epistles to Timothy is "the truth according to godliness," while that of the letter to Titus is "godliness according to truth," thus giving us the two sides of the subject. In the

letters to Timothy, Paul emphasizes the importance of holding fast the faithful Word; in that to Titus he stresses the necessity of godly living in accordance with the Word of truth.

The first letter to Timothy was evidently written after Paul's release from his first imprisonment; therefore, it is a later letter than the Prison Epistles, such as Philippians, Colossians, Ephesians, and some others. First Timothy was written after Paul had appeared before Caesar. Because the charges against him were not found sufficient to warrant his execution, Paul was set free. If we can trust the records that have come down from the early days, Paul then went as far west as Spain, preaching the Word. He returned later to the East and ministered throughout Asia Minor, different parts of Greece, and Macedonia. After several years he was rearrested and taken back to Rome, and on this second occasion was condemned to death. First Timothy fits in between his liberation and the second arrest, while the second letter to Timothy was written from Paul's death cell.

This first letter seems to divide into five parts: chapter 1 is the first division, and the outstanding theme is grace contrasted with law. Chapter 2, the second division, stresses the importance of prayer, both public and private. Chapter 3 is the third division and gives the divine order in the church of God. Chapter 4, the fourth division, is a prophecy of conditions that will prevail in the latter times, and the importance of holding fast to the truth as apostasy rolls on. Chapters 5 and 6 together give the fifth division of the book in which we have various admonitions not only for Timothy but also for all of us.

We notice at this time just the four opening verses of the first chapter. In the first two verses we have the apostolic salutation: "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope; unto Timothy, my own son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord." An apostle is a "sent one." The meaning is almost the same as that of our word *missionary*, but the word *missionary* does not necessarily carry with it a sense of authority. The apostles were appointed by the Lord Jesus Christ, specially commissioned and sent forth to proclaim His gospel

throughout the world. We have twelve apostles in the Gospels. Judas forfeited his place by his treachery. In the first chapter of Acts we have Matthias elected to fill the place of Judas, and that makes the Twelve complete.

The apostleship of Paul was of an altogether different order. The Lord Jesus said to the Twelve that in the regeneration, that is, in the coming glorious kingdom, “Ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Matt. 19:28). Paul could not be included in that list because he did not know the Lord during His life on earth. But Matthias was one who had kept company with the apostles from the days of John the Baptist until the time of his election to fill the place of Judas (**Acts 1:21-22**). Evidently it was by the Spirit’s guidance that he was elected to fill that place.

God had a special ministry for the apostle Paul: he was to make known the truth of the mystery of the body of Christ, and was commissioned to go unto the Gentiles and proclaim the glorious message of the gospel in all its power and fullness. He had special authority committed unto him as an apostle of Jesus Christ, “By the commandment,” he says, “of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope.”

I like that expression: “God our Savior.” Many are inclined to think of God as a Judge rather than as a Savior; but remember, it was God who “so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (**John 3:16**). The death of our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross did not enable God to love men. It was the expression of the love of God toward men. “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (**1 John 4:10**). And so now we who are saved can look up to Him and say, “God our Savior!” Ordinarily we think of applying this expression to our Lord Jesus Christ. Of course it is more often used in connection with Him than with any other Person of the Godhead, but it is blessedly true that God the Father is our Savior as truly as God the Son. So Paul here links the two together: “God our

Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope.” He gives Him His full title.

I wonder if you have ever noticed that when our blessed Lord was here on earth no friend of His is ever said to have addressed Him by His given name, Jesus. That is a lovely name. It is so significant. To many of us it is the sweetest name we have ever heard. It means “Jehovah the Savior.” It was the name given to Him in His humanity. But we never read of anyone going up to Him and saying, “Jesus.” He was always addressed as Lord or Master, and He approved of that, for He said, “Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am” (**John 13:13**). After His death, and inspired by the Spirit of God, the apostles used the simple name “Jesus” very frequently in telling of events that had taken place. But when they wanted to give Him special honor they used His full title—the Lord Jesus Christ. He is Lord because He should have absolute authority over the hearts of men. He is Jesus because He was Jehovah come down to earth, taking our humanity upon Himself in order that He might save us. As to His office, He is Christ, which means the “Anointed,” the “Messiah.” Peter said, “God hath made the same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ” (**Acts 2:36**).

“God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope.” Christianity has a message of hope. As we look around over the world today we see so many things that have a tendency to make one utterly hopeless and pessimistic. But when we turn to the Word of God we find what He has revealed concerning the present age and the final blessing of this world, and the heart is filled with hope, joy, and comfort. The apostle Paul delighted in that word *hope*. I think you will find it forty times in his epistles. Here it is “the Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope.” In **Titus 2:13** we read of “looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.” In **1 Thessalonians 1:3** it is “patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father,” and in many other places and ways the apostle uses this word *hope*. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself is our hope. We are looking for Him to return. We are looking for Him to transform these bodies of our humiliation and make them like unto His glorious

body. Our hope is to see Him as He is and to become like Him. What a blessed hope it is!

Paul addresses himself to Timothy and speaks of him as “my own son.” He really uses the more intimate term in the original, “my own *child* in the faith.” In what sense was Timothy his child in the faith? Well, you remember that when the apostle Paul went to Lystra, as recorded in the book of Acts (chap. 14), he was first welcomed as a god and then stoned, as the people thought, to death. But as a result of his ministry at Lystra, a young man, half-Jew and half-Gentile (his mother was Jewish, and his father was a Greek), was brought to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ—this young man was Timothy. He had been well-instructed in the Old Testament, and when Paul came to Lystra and preached the gospel Timothy was ready to receive Christ. When Paul went to Lystra the second time some years afterward, the brethren recommended Timothy as one suitable to be set apart for the gospel. Paul had an interview with young Timothy and decided to take him along with him. There were no theological seminaries where people could go for a quick training in spiritual truths and practical work, but the older took the younger with him. Barnabas took Mark with him in early days, and later Mark became the companion of Peter. Paul took different ones with him on various occasions, Timothy, Titus, Silas, and others. In this way the younger men gained experience and confidence until they were able to launch out independently for the Lord.

Paul had a deep affection for Timothy. There is always a close bond between a servant of Christ and those whom he has led to the Lord as their Savior. I cannot tell you what a joy it is to know that one has been used to bring many to know the Lord Jesus Christ. It just thrills one’s heart to think that God has given the privilege of bringing so many with the Spirit’s leading to accept Him as their own Redeemer. Oh, there is no joy like this! If you have never led anyone to Christ, and yet you are a Christian, you have missed something that would do your soul good. Try to win someone else to Christ or tell somebody else about the Lord Jesus, and if you have the joy of hearing that person confess Christ as Savior for the first time, you will count it one of the greatest thrills you can have!

Paul's love for Timothy is shown in his words, "My own [child] in the faith." And he wishes him "grace, mercy, and peace." Notice that when he addresses churches or groups of people as such he speaks of "grace and peace," but when addressing an individual he puts in another word, "grace, *mercy*, and peace." Individuals need mercy. Individuals are conscious of their failures; they are conscious of their need of special divine help. In each instance, when Paul speaks to individuals particularly, he gives them this threefold greeting: "Grace, mercy, and peace." It is not the grace that saves in the beginning that he has in view, but the grace that keeps, the grace that sustains: "He giveth more grace" as we go along our pilgrim way. It is not the mercy as a result of which our sins are forgiven in the first place, but that mercy which we need from day to day when conscious of failure and shortcoming, when we come to God and confess our sins: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (**1 John 1:9**). It is not the peace *with* God which every believer has—"Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (**Rom. 5:1**), we should all enjoy that peace from the very beginning—but here it is the peace *o*/God, that peace which keeps our hearts in confidence and restful quietness in the midst of adverse circumstances.

As we read in **Philippians 4:6-7**, "Be careful [anxious] for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Did you know that was in the Bible? You have heard it quoted often. You have read it often. But do you practice it? When you get into trouble, what do you do? Do you worry, fret, and say, "Dear me! I do not know how I am going to get through this, or how I shall face that?" Or do you say to yourself, "God has told me to be anxious about nothing but to tell Him about it" ? So you go to Him, spread the whole thing before Him, and say, "It is all right. I know He will undertake. I know He will do what is best."

“Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.” God is the Father of all who believe; He is the Creator of all men. But man, who was created in the image and likeness of God, has turned away from Him. Sin came in, and the image was marred and the likeness lost, so men have to be born again. Jesus emphasized that when He said to Nicodemus, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (**John 3:3**). When men trust Him as Savior, when they believe the message of the gospel, they receive this new life. They are born again. They have a right to look up to God and say, “Father!” Do you know Him as your Father? He is a loving Father. He is deeply interested in every detail of your life. There are many people who have trusted Christ as Savior who, I fear, have never yet realized His Lordship. Beware of calling Jesus “Lord,” and slighting His command. There is a little ditty that goes something like this:

If He is not Lord of all,
Then He is not Lord at all.

He should have absolute authority over our lives, for we have been bought with a price, even His precious blood. If you have trusted Him as Savior, then recognize His lordship and give Him the right-of-way in your heart and life.

Now it is evident that the apostle, acting with apostolic authority, commended a special ministry to Timothy, and yet he did not put it on the ground of a command. He said, “I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus.” You see, when grace controls the heart, / *command* becomes / *beseech*, so Paul says, “I besought”—I pleaded with you. The Christians in Ephesus needed help and special ministry, and Paul urged Timothy to remain in Ephesus and lead the saints on and give them pastoral care while Paul, himself, went on to Macedonia.

He gave a special commission to Timothy, “That thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine.” It is interesting to trace that little word *some* through this epistle. You will find it frequently: “Some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling” (1:6); “Some having put away [a good conscience] concerning faith have made shipwreck”

(1:19); “Some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils” (4:1); “Some are already turned aside after Satan” (5:15); and so on.

There were those who were teaching things contrary to the truth of God; so Paul says to Timothy, “Stay there if you will and help the saints, and warn those teachers of false things, and charge them that they teach no other doctrine than that which has been delivered unto the saints.” Just what that false doctrine was we are not told here, but as we read on it seems evident that it is a mixture of Jewish legality and Oriental mysticism, probably that which eventually resulted in that esoteric religious system which had a large influence for the next one hundred years. It was called *Gnosticism*. Do not misunderstand the word, it is not agnosticism but *Gnosticism*.

“Neither give heed to fables [Oriental fables] and endless genealogies [that refers particularly to certain Jewish genealogies], which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do.” Today we still need to beware of systems that do not build up our souls, but instead only serve to get Christians occupied with unprofitable questions. There are some people who delight to argue. John Bunyan has said, “Some love the meat; some love to pick the bones.” And you will find people who delight in picking the bones of vital doctrines but get very little nourishment from the truth of God’s Word, because, instead of being occupied with Christ, they are occupied with various side issues. Now Timothy was to warn the saints to beware of things like that. That which builds up the people of God is heart occupation with Christ. If we are taken up with Him we will become increasingly like Him.

Chapter 2 Law and Grace

1 Timothy

Henry Allen Ironside

1 Timothy 1:5-11

Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned: from which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling; desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm. But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully; knowing this, that the law is not made for a 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 manslayers, 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; according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust, (vv. 5-11)

In these words the apostle Paul brings out very vividly the difference between two great principles: that of grace, which has been manifested in the cross, and results in love for God and love for our fellow men when we trust that grace; and the principle of law, which demands a righteousness that sinful man can never fully render. We have noticed that one of the objects which the apostle had in writing this letter was to put Timothy on his guard, and to charge him to use care concerning certain emissaries of a legal system who were moving about among the early Christian churches, seeking to pervert believers from the simplicity that is in Christ. This system was based partly on the law of Moses and partly on Eastern mystical traditions. It developed in after years into what became known down through the centuries as *Gnosticism*, the advocates of which claimed they had a superior knowledge not

vouchsafed to other Christians. They sought to gain as many proselytes to their system as they possibly could.

Paul stressed the importance of faith in Christ, which involves salvation by grace alone and not by works of righteousness which we have done, or by any fancied merit of our own. He shows that we are saved by grace alone, and when we have trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ and are justified by faith, that faith results in the love of God being shed abroad in our hearts. With this comes ready obedience, but not as a matter of legality. It is easy to do the things which please God when we love Him supremely. The heart readily seeks to please those whom we love, and so the apostle says, "Now the end of the commandment [the charge he was giving to Timothy] is charity." Our old English word *charity* really means "love." "[Love] out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and [the manifestation] of faith unfeigned."

When one's conscience is aroused and is seized with the terror of the law, when he realizes that he is lost, then he can never find real rest or peace until he finds it in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. When he sees that all his sins have been put away by that work, then his conscience is purged, and he is at peace with God. With this is linked the communication of a new life. The believer in Christ is born again, and being born of God, he has a new nature that delights in holiness, purity, and goodness. He is actually a partaker of the divine nature. Therefore he loves God. He loves his fellow Christians. He loves lost men who are still in darkness and living according to the course of this world. This is why genuine Christians are willing to sacrifice in order that they may win others to Christ.

It is this that Paul emphasizes in writing to the younger preacher, Timothy. He stresses the need of preaching the Word, the importance of this gospel of Christ which is the sole remedy for sin. Some had swerved from this and had turned aside unto vain jangling because false teachers had gotten into the church, and some were not strong enough to resist them and so were carried away by their specious theories. They had swerved from the simplicity that is in Christ. It is ever the object of the Devil to obscure the truth and get Christians occupied with something

that will hide the glorious face of the Lord Jesus Christ and becloud the truth regarding His finished work.

Such evil teachers were active at Ephesus where Timothy was laboring: “Desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm.” These self-appointed teachers had no knowledge of that which they professed to proclaim. They displayed their own ignorance as they sought to add law to grace. This very fact proved that they did not know what they were talking about, because law and grace will no more mix than will water and oil. They are two altogether different principles. The law says, “Be good, and I will bless you”; grace says, “I have blessed you, now be good.” They are opposites. The law says, “*Do this, and thou shalt live*”; grace says, “*Believe this, and thou shalt live.*” Law demands; grace freely bestows.

Paul says that we know the law is good. We do not ignore the importance of law; we do not set aside the authority of the Ten Commandments. Preachers of grace are often asked if the Ten Commandments were ever abrogated. No, the law remains with all its stern demands. But the believer has died to the law in the Person of Christ, who is the end of the law to every one that believes. But to the unsaved the law speaks as loudly as ever: “We know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully; knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane.” By the term *righteous* here we are to understand those who have been made righteous in Christ. The law is for the lawless and disobedient. It is not designed to show spiritually-minded believers how to behave.

If you are a Christian you do not refrain from taking the name of God in vain because you learn it is contrary to law. You love your heavenly Father, and because you love Him you would not think of using His name carelessly. Every Christian knows the sense of shock, of displeasure, that comes whenever he hears the name of God the Father or of the Lord Jesus Christ used profanely. Why is it that it stirs us when many of us were not concerned about such language as this before we were saved? It is because we have now a new nature, a new love for the

Lord Jesus Christ and for God who, in His mercy, has brought us to know Himself. And so, I repeat, it is not the law which teaches us how to behave. If we refrain from stealing it is not because the law says “Thou shalt not steal,” but because we have no desire to steal, even if we were ever addicted to such wickedness as this before we were saved. Now our desire is to be a blessing to others and not to wrong them in any way. Thus we see that the law is not for righteous men and women.

What then is the standard of the righteous? It is Christ Himself. The Word of God reveals Him as our example, and we seek to walk as He walked. The consistent believer seeks to be like Him, to love as He loves, and to behave as He would behave. The righteousness of which the apostle speaks is a righteousness that springs from a renewed mind. We delight to honor the One who redeemed us.

The law still speaks to the ungodly. It convicts the sinner of his lawlessness. In **1 John 3:4** we read, “Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.” But this is not exactly what John meant, as every careful Greek scholar knows. It might be better translated, “sin is lawlessness.” Sin is self-will. It defies the law of God, which insists on righteousness. “Knowing this, that the law is not made for a 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 manslayers.” Is not that rather strange? It is not murderers in general who are mentioned, but “murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers,” as though to put it in the very strongest sense. The law says, “Thou shalt not kill.” That forbids all murder.

Let me say this, dear young people, you do not have to stab your mother with a knife or a dagger, or strike your father with a club in order to kill them. You can kill them by your willfulness. Many a dear mother has gone down to an early grave heartbroken because of the evil behavior of a loved son or daughter, and many a father has sunk under the awful blow of a son or daughter who turned away from the path of righteousness. We need to remember that murder does not necessarily mean driving a knife into the heart or mixing a cup of poison, but it may consist of

anything that breaks a dear one's health and results in early death. And so the law is given for the lawless, those who would destroy others.

Note the awful list of sinners mentioned in verse 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." I have heard people say, "Why does the Bible have those nasty words in it? I do not like to read them, and I do not like to hear them read from the pulpit." It is not the words that are so bad; it is the vile sins that they represent. The Holy Spirit always uses the right words to describe these shameful sins in order that men might realize their wickedness and corruption when they indulge in such sins as these.

If I dared to believe all that I am told by Christian high school teachers and college professors, I would have to believe that many of the youth of our land today are becoming almost as corrupt as the people before the flood, and conditions are as vile as those in Sodom and Gomorrah when those cities were destroyed with fire from heaven. From what these teachers tell us, many young people of high school and college age, as well as older people, are given to the very sins depicted here. But to everyone comes that stern command, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," and that covers every kind of sexual evil. If people would only listen to the voice of the law we would never have such terrible crimes against children and others which have become so prevalent in this and other enlightened lands. God's law is defied, and so sin flaunts itself openly and men glory in their shame.

The law is given for liars. "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour." Men are in the habit of distinguishing between different types of lies. Some lies are called "white lies," and some are called "black lies." But my Bible tells me, "All liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone" (**Rev. 21:8**). It does not make any distinction between white, black, and gray lies. So the commandment comes to every untruthful person, condemning falsehood of every description.

“And if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine.” In other words, the law was given to convict men of every sort of sinfulness and wickedness. All such are exposed to the righteous judgment of God. “For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them” (**Gal. 3:10**). The only way one can ever escape that curse is by personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He died to redeem us from the curse of the law; He was made a curse for us: “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree” (**Gal. 3:13**).

“If there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine.” Notice how frequently Paul uses this word *sound*. Of course I realize he was writing by inspiration; nevertheless, it appealed to his own heart. *Sound* means “healthy,” and when the apostle speaks of *sound* doctrine, he means doctrines that are conducive to spiritual health.

If we will turn to some of the other passages in these Pastoral Epistles where he uses this word, it will help us to get the force of it: “If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome [that is, *sound*] words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness” (**1 Tim. 6:3**). “Hold fast the form of *sound* words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus” (**2 Tim. 1:13**). “For the time will come when they will not endure *sound* doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears” (**2 Tim. 4:3**). “Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by *sound* doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers” (**Titus 1:9**). “But speak thou the things which become *sound* doctrine: that the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, *sound* in faith, in charity, in patience” (**Titus 2:1-2**).

Through all these Pastoral Epistles, Paul emphasizes the importance of teaching the spiritually healthful doctrine. The proclamation of the truth of God’s Word is conducive to health spiritually. False teaching leads to death and decay. Where the teaching in the classroom and from the pulpit is sound, it has an effect for good, and tends to build up believers

in holiness of life and Christlike-ness in character. Where it is otherwise, it has the very opposite effect.

Paul concludes this section with the words, “According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.” Now in order to get the connection we should notice that all that is included from the first word of verse 6 to the last word in verse 10 came in parenthetically. Go back to verse 5, “Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned”; now verse 11: “According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.” The glorious gospel is really the gospel of the glory. It is an expression peculiar to the apostle Paul. In **2 Corinthians 4:4** he says, “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.”

Paul spoke of the gospel as the gospel of the glory because it tells of a glorified Christ, a Christ who once bore our sins when He hung as a bleeding Victim on Calvary that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. He is now the glorified Man seated on the right hand of God in heaven, and Paul was eager to proclaim the message about that Man in the glory, so he calls his message the gospel of the glory. This is the message that has been passed on to us. A glorified Christ at the Father’s right hand tells us that the sin question is settled, and now God can save in righteousness all who come to Him and believe in His Son.

Chapter 3 The Chief of Sinners Saved

1 Timothy

Henry Allen Ironside

1 Timothy 1:12-17

And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting. Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen, (vv. 12-17)

There is tremendous power in Christian testimony. All who are saved are not called to be preachers; all do not have the gift of teaching. But all who have trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ ought to have something to say about the great change that comes into the life when Christ is received as Savior and owned as Lord. The apostle Peter tells us we ought to “be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear” (**1 Peter 3:15**). We may not know very much about theology. We may not be very familiar with the deeper Christian doctrines. But if we have definitely trusted Christ, we ought to be able to say with the one-time blind man of **John 9**, “One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind,

now I see” (v. 25). We were blind before we saw the Savior, but when He revealed Himself to us His glory shone through those darkened lids of the eyes of our souls, opened them, and lighted them forever.

I know there are some people who are inclined to discount Christian testimonies. They do not seem to enjoy meetings in which people come together to tell what the Lord has done for them. But it seems to me that the way the Lord uses testimonies in the New Testament ought to be a rebuke to them. Take, for instance, this case of Saul who became the apostle Paul, the writer of this letter to Timothy.

We have the story of his conversion at least six times in the New Testament. In **Acts 9** we have the historical account of his conversion. In **Acts 22** we find him telling about it to his Jewish brethren on the steps of the fortress by the temple in Jerusalem. In **Acts 26** we find him relating his experience again before the Roman governor Festus, King Agrippa, and his consort, Bernice. Then in the epistle to the Galatians, chapters 1 and 2, Paul goes over the wondrous story once more, and he tells how he, the one-time enemy of the cross of Christ, reached the place where God revealed His Son in him. In **Philippians 3** we have his testimony repeated. He tells us of his religion before he saw the Lord; and how afterward, because of that wondrous vision of Christ in glory, he was able to say: “But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ” (Phil. 3:7-8). Then here in the first epistle to Timothy, in this opening chapter, he says, “And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; who was before a blasphemer, and a

persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.”

There are many people who profess to be Christians who do not have any conversion story to tell. Of course I recognize the fact that some came to Christ early in life as mere children, and they have but a hazy recollection, if any remembrance at all, of what took place at the time. We are not to discount their conversions because they cannot give a clear account of them. The Lord Jesus said to adults, “Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 18:3). Children are ideal subjects of the kingdom. It is wonderful to win the children to Christ before they come to know anything of the wickedness and corruption of this world. I know some people sneer at child conversion, but it is a great thing to save the children.

An evangelist had spoken on several occasions in a particular church. On one occasion he met some friends after the meeting, and one asked, “Any results from your message tonight?” The evangelist said, “Yes, three and one-half converts.” The friend said, “You mean there were three adults and one child.” “No,” replied the evangelist, “there were three children and one adult.” The three children have their whole lives before them, but the adult has lived half his life and has only a fraction left. That is the reason the evangelist said “three and one-half converts.” That ought to be a word of encouragement to all Sunday school teachers and young people’s workers to sow the seed in the hearts of boys and girls. Remember, it is the incorruptible seed, and you can count on it to spring forth into life.

If people have passed through the years of childhood and come up to youth or maturity without accepting Christ, and then at last are convicted by the Spirit of God of sin, righteousness, and judgment, and they turn to the Lord and

trust Him as Savior, they ought to have a very definite story of conversion to tell. They should certainly know this: that they were lost sinners. They were helpless. They were unable to save themselves. Then they heard the voice of Jesus bidding them come to Him, and they came in all their sin and guilt. They trusted Him, and He saved them. They ought to know the reality of the new birth.

The apostle said, "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me." Stop there for a moment. "Enabled me!" How many people there are, when you speak to them of the importance of coming to Christ, who will say, "Yes, I would like to become a Christian, but I am afraid I would not be strong enough to live the Christian life. I do not want to make a profession and break down, and thus bring dishonor on the name of the Lord." If it depended upon us, we certainly would break down. But when we once trust Christ as our Savior and are born of God, the Holy Spirit comes to dwell within us, to be the power of the new life; it is He who enables us to live for God and serve Him as we seek to make His gospel known to others. It was this over which Paul rejoiced.

"I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry." Do not misunderstand the expression "counted me faithful." Saul of Tarsus had been unfaithful. The word for "faithful" is the same as "believing." "He counted me to be a believer." And whenever anyone believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, God saves him. And He saves us in order that we may serve Him. Paul says, "He counted me *to be a believer*, putting me into the ministry." That is the only way one ever becomes a true minister of Christ. He must be put into the ministry by the Lord Himself.

There are some men who have become ministers simply by solicitation or advice of friends or relatives. Others have

“entered the ministry,” as it is called, because of worldly ambition. They think of it as one of the learned professions where there is an opportunity to give one’s self to the study of social problems, religious theories, and other interesting questions. Again, others are moved by a real compassion for the souls of men, and they endeavor to qualify as pastors and leaders in Christian work in order to carry out humanitarian plans for the alleviation of the miseries of underprivileged people. Some of these motives are good and some are not. But it is not in any of these ways that God makes ministers. He takes men up in mercy, saves them by His grace, and puts into their hearts a burning desire to make Christ known to the world. That is what He did for Saul of Tarsus. When God makes a man a minister, His word is as a fire in his soul, and he can say, “Woe is me if I preach not the gospel.”

“Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.” Paul never could forgive himself for this in after years. He says in one place, “For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God” (**1 Cor. 15:9**). And again, we read in **Acts 22:20**, “And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him.” Paul looked back with horror upon those years. He was intensely sincere at the time. A man can be very sincere in wrong things. “I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them” (**Acts 26:9-10**). God in grace saved him, and all that was put away. But Paul never forgave himself to the day of his death for the part he had taken in persecuting

the church of God. He says, "I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief." The poet was right when he wrote:

There's a wideness in God's mercy,
Like the wideness of the sea;
There's a kindness in His justice,
Which is more than liberty.

For the love of God is broader
Than the measure of man's mind;

And the heart of the Eternal
Is most wonderfully kind.

Saul of Tarsus was persecuting the church of God. But even then the heart of God was going out toward him until the time when His grace should be revealed to him, and Saul the persecutor should be changed into Paul the Ambassador of Christ. God had mercy on him because he acted in ignorance. He was sure that Christianity was all wrong. He did not understand until the day when he caught sight of the risen Christ in glory. "And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." Immediately after his conversion he began preaching Christ. "And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God. But all that heard him were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests?" (**Acts 9:20-21**).

It was grace that so mightily changed Saul: grace broke him down on the Damascus road; grace brought Ananias to him to give him a special message, showing how gladly the church of God would receive him when he put his trust in the Savior; grace empowered him to go forth and preach the gospel. The man who goes forth to preach Christ must go in

faith and love—faith in the One who lives to save, love for the souls of lost men. There are many professional ministers today, but a merely professional preacher is an abomination in the sight of God. The servants of God must be motivated by the love of Christ. That was what characterized Paul.

Now we get that wonderful declaration that has been repeated so often by gospel preachers: “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.” Many have the idea that Christ came to save good people, but He tells us, “I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Matt. 9:13). Listen to me, if you can prove that you are not a sinner, then I can prove from this Word that Jesus did not come to save you. “They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick” (Matt. 9:12). He is the Great Physician, healing sin-sick souls. If you have never come to Him, will you not come today and prove the reality of His saving power? Do not fear that you are too great a sinner. Read the words again: “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.” The chief of sinners has been saved already, so you can only trail along behind. He who described himself as the chief is now in the glory. Therefore you need not fear lest you are too bad for Christ.

Listen to the apostle’s confession, “Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.” “I obtained mercy.” We do not receive salvation because we deserve it, “but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost” (**Titus 3:5**). Paul says, “That in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.” I get two things from that

last clause: Paul tells us that the Lord saved him as a pattern. He became a pattern to all future believers—he, the chief sinner, was saved by divine grace. Then I think Paul had this also in mind: he was saved by a revelation of Christ from heaven. Someday his own people Israel are going to have a wonderful revelation of Christ from heaven, and then they, as a nation, will turn to Him. So I believe Paul had Israel in mind when he said that he was a pattern “to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.”

He closes this section with a wonderful doxology. His heart is filled with worship and praise, and he bursts forth in these words, “Now unto the King eternal, immortal [incorruptible], invisible [Deity is invisible to the human eye], the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.” This is the grateful expression of worship that rises from the heart of the saved sinner. It tells of a soul exulting in the matchless wonder of redeeming love.

Chapter 4 Maintaining a Good Conscience

1 Timothy

Henry Allen Ironside

1 Timothy 1:18-20

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; holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck: of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme, (vv. 18-20)

We come now to consider the very solemn charge which the apostle Paul gave to his son in the faith. We have already seen that Timothy had been left to help the church at Ephesus. There were special responsibilities resting upon him there, and it was important that he should be careful as to his own walk and testimony in order that he might be an example to others. So Paul says, "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 Christian life is a conflict, particularly the life of a Christian minister. God desires all His servants to be good soldiers of the Lord Jesus Christ. Timothy was therefore called to war a good warfare. It is very evident that at the time he was recommended to the work of the Lord by the brethren at Lystra and Iconium that a prayer meeting was held, and as the elder brethren laid hands upon him and

commended him to the work of the gospel, in some special way the Lord gave him a gift which before he did not have. We get some intimation of that from Paul's words, "According to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare," and from 4:14 of this letter, "Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery."

Paul stresses or seeks to impress upon this younger preacher the importance of "holding faith and a good conscience." Notice how these two things go together. It is impossible to hold the faith if one is not careful to maintain a good conscience before God. Here I understand *faith* to mean not merely confidence in God but also the truth of God, the faith once for all delivered unto the saints. Every little while we hear of someone who, in days gone by, was apparently a preacher of the Word giving up the faith that he once proclaimed. Men, who in early days preached the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, His atoning, sacrificial death and physical resurrection, no longer proclaim salvation through His blood or the need of the new birth. They have turned from the truth and accepted what some call the "new liberal theological attitude." They have become reprobate concerning the faith.

And people wonder why it is that such men have apostatized from the truth of God which at one time they professed to love. If we were able to look into the lives of these men, we would find that somewhere along the line they failed to respond to the call of God and they put away a good conscience. Thus they lost the ability to properly appraise doctrinal principles, and eventually they found it a relief to give up the truth they once proclaimed. Men do not fall suddenly into grave error. Such failure is the result of

permitting the conscience to become denied so that it no longer registers as it once did.

We may spend a little time profitably in looking at a number of Scripture verses in connection with conscience. What is conscience? The word thus translated is really a compound and literally means “co-perception.” It is that within us which enables us to distinguish between right and wrong. You remember the little girl who was asked, “Do you know what conscience is?” She replied, “Oh, yes, it is something in me that always tells me when my little brother is doing wrong.” That is the way a lot of people look at conscience—something indefinable within them by which they judge other people. Conscience is that which should tell us when we are right and wrong. It is “knowing with oneself.” Conscience was acquired by the fall in Eden. There was no need of a monitor to warn unfallen Adam about evil, or to tell him the difference between right and wrong, between sin and righteousness, for he knew only that which was good until he partook of the forbidden fruit. Then he knew good and evil.

Conscience needs to be instructed. When the apostle Paul was making his defense in Jerusalem, he said, “Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day” (**Acts 23:1**). When he said that, he was reviewing his whole life before he was converted as well as afterward. Even before he knew Christ he sought to keep a good conscience. In other words, when he persecuted the Christians, he did it with a good conscience; when he tried to destroy the infant church, he acted conscientiously. But his conscience was not properly instructed. He thought it was the right thing to do because he believed that Christianity was an evil system. He believed that Christians were enemies of God and that he was acting in accordance with Scripture which commanded that false prophets be destroyed. He told Agrippa in **Acts 26:9-10**, “I verily thought with myself, that I

ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them.” So it is not enough for one to say he lives according to his conscience.

On the other hand, we should not go against conscience, for when we do that the conscience becomes defiled. Conscience needs to be instructed by the Word of God. In **Romans 2:14-15** we find that thought carried out. We have seen that conscience is that which bears witness to what is believed to be right and wrong: “For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another.” “Their conscience also bearing witness”—that is true of even the most wicked people, for their own consciences warn them when they are about to do something which they know to be wrong, and conscience accuses or excuses them, according to the measure of light they have.

In **Titus 1:15-16** we read of a defiled conscience: “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. They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.” These verses tell us of the condition of unconverted people who have turned away from that which they knew to be right morally. They knew how they ought to live, but they did the opposite. Consequently, the conscience became defiled, and a defiled conscience is no longer a safe guide.

In **Hebrews 10:22** we read, “Let us [the apostle is speaking to Christians] draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.” An evil conscience is the result of persistence in sin. If men continue to defile themselves, the time will come when the conscience becomes thoroughly evil, and sin is no longer dreaded. When we come to Christ our hearts are sprinkled from an evil conscience. If men do not come to Him but insist on sinning against the light, refusing to heed the invitation which God has extended to all men to turn to Him in repentance and be saved, then eventually the conscience ceases to be active. It becomes seared. “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; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their consciences seared with a hot iron” (**1 Tim. 4:1-2**).

This is most solemn. Sin hardens. The conscience becomes like flesh that has been seared with a hot iron. It no longer responds. It can no longer be depended upon. In this state men may commit the most wicked and abominable things, and apparently there is not the least exercise of conscience. It is because they have gone so far in disobeying that which they knew to be right that they no longer have any concern whatsoever. They are given up to a seared conscience and a reprobate mind, and with that comes utter hardness of heart. But if men are willing to turn to God, if they realize they have an evil conscience and long for a pure and a cleansed conscience, they may obtain it through the work of the cross.

In **Hebrews 9:9-10** the apostle is speaking of the various ordinances of the Levitical economy, “Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; which stood only in

meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation.” That is, the sacrifices offered on Jewish altars could not give a man a perfect conscience. They could not cleanse his defiled conscience, nor free him of an evil conscience. But the Lord Jesus Christ has offered Himself as an all-sufficient sacrifice for sin.

We read in verses 13-14 of the same chapter of Hebrews, “For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” Knowing that the sin question has been settled to God’s satisfaction the troubled soul can afford to rest in the knowledge of what Christ has done, and so the conscience no longer accuses but is purified by faith, because the blood of Christ, God’s Son, cleanses from every sin all those who come out from the darkness of nature into the light of God’s presence, in which they walk ever afterward. Now as believers we are responsible to walk before God with a good conscience.

Let us turn back to 1 Timothy, and notice a verse which we have considered already in these addresses: “Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned” (1:5). Then in this same chapter, the verse which we read at the beginning of our present study: “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; holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck.” Both the apostles Paul and Peter stress the importance of maintaining a good and pure conscience. In **1 Peter 3:16** we read,

“Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.”

Let me just add this word while on the subject of conscience. You and I are responsible to be careful not to offend needlessly the conscience of a weaker brother. Some people are very legal. They are exercised about matters with which stronger Christians are not concerned. And so those who perhaps fancy they are stronger are warned to be careful in this matter of conscience. I am my brother's keeper. I am not to allow myself to indulge in anything that will offend or stumble one who is weak. This is very important, as we may bring grievous injury upon the soul of another if we insist on our liberty in that which to him may seem a very grave offense.

“Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck.” There were those who had turned from the great fundamental principles of Christianity and were living in ways displeasing to God. They had put away a good conscience. They knew what God's Word required of them but went against their own consciences, and little by little they got to the place where they were no longer very much exercised. The conscience is like a rubber band. You pull it, and it snaps back. You pull it again, and it snaps back. But if you keep on pulling it, by-and-by it loses its elasticity and, finally, does not snap back at all. It is very dangerous to trifle with conscience, for if we act contrary to this inward monitor, we find the reaction becomes less and less, until eventually there is no reaction at all. Then we are likely to make shipwreck of the faith.

It is easy to lose the truth of God if we do not live in obedience to the Word. We do not hold the truth simply in the mind. We learn it through the heart and the conscience, and we hold it by keeping a conscience that is void of offense.

Paul here mentions two men who had turned from the truth and were propagating blasphemous error. They had put away a good conscience and so had turned from the truth of God. Paul says that he delivered them unto Satan that they might learn not to blaspheme. They were excommunicated from Christian fellowship and put back into the world that they might learn not to play fast-and-loose with that which God had revealed. John tells us that we—that is, Christians—are of God, and the whole world lies in the wicked one. We are warned, “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world” (**1 John 2:15**). When we profess Christ we step out from the world and come into Christian fellowship. We are separated to the Lord, and we should maintain that separation constantly. These two men had professed to know and love Christ, but they had departed from the truth. The apostle commanded that they be put outside the fellowship of the church of God. In other words, thrown back into the world which at one time they professed to have forsaken. They were delivered unto Satan “that they may learn not to blaspheme.” Discipline should always be with a view to restoration. In **1 Corinthians 5:5** we read, “To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.”

So the important lesson for us all is the necessity of maintaining a good conscience before God. We should not become careless as to our behavior in regard to that which pleases the blessed One who loved us enough to shed His precious blood to redeem us from the bondage of our sins.

Chapter 5 Unlimited Redemption

1 Timothy

Henry Allen Ironside

1 Timothy 2:1-7

I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. 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, (vv. 1-7)

In these verses we have an earnest exhortation and a very marvelous declaration, and the two are most intimately linked together. The exhortation has to do with our responsibility in respect to prayer. We read in the first verse, "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men." One of the first great responsibilities resting upon the people of God is supplication and prayer.

Four things are brought before us here. The word *prayer* suggests any kind of approach to God as we draw near to Him to present those things that are on our hearts. The word *supplication* goes somewhat deeper, and has to do with matters about which we are greatly exercised and which cause intense concern. The word *intercession* suggests prayer on behalf of others. Our blessed Lord “ever liveth to make intercession for [us]” (**Heb. 7:25**). And now while we are here on earth it is our privilege to intercede on behalf of fellow saints, on behalf of Israel, on behalf of the nations generally, on behalf of unsaved people that they might be brought to know the Lord, and on behalf of rulers that they might be guided aright.

With prayers, supplications, and intercessions we always should link thanksgiving. In **Philippians 4:6** the apostle says, “Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.” When we come to God in prayer to supplicate for needed blessings or to intercede on behalf of others, we should not be ungrateful as we think of His dealings with us in the past. You will remember that in **2 Timothy 3:2** unthankfulness is connected with unholiness. Thankfulness and gratitude to God, and holiness of heart and life are linked intimately together.

Notice the scope of intercession in the last part of the first verse and in verse 2. We are to pray for *all men*. We can do that only in a general way. We do not know what the will of God is as to the lives of all men, but we learn from the following declaration that it is God’s desire that all men should be saved. So we can pray in fellowship with God that the Holy Spirit may bring men under conviction of sin, to confess their lost condition, and to see their need of Christ. We are not to confine our prayer to just a few of our own little circle, but our hearts are to go out to

all men. We are to pray in a special sense for those who have been given responsibility as rulers, in all nations. God Himself it is who has divided us into nations, and it is God who puts one man up and another down. It is He who gives authority to different men, and they are responsible—those who are placed in positions of leadership—to act in accordance with the Lord's will. They do not always do it. In fact, very infrequently perhaps are they concerned about doing the will of God. But, as Christians, we may help them in this by prayer.

We are to pray “for kings, and for all that are in authority.” When we come together in a public service, we usually pray for those who are in authority. But are we as much concerned about remembering them before God when we kneel alone in His presence? I am quite sure of this: if we prayed more for those at the head of the country and in other positions of responsibility, we would feel less ready to criticize them. We would be more disposed to recognize the heavy burdens resting upon them and to understand how easy it is to make mistakes in times of crises. Our rulers need divine wisdom that they might govern well in subjection to Him who is earth's rightful King. As we pray earnestly for them, we are furthering our own best interests. Because as the affairs of nations are ordered according to the will of God, His people find living conditions more comfortable and more enjoyable. So we are told to pray “for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.”

Christians are to be examples to others of subjection to the government. When difficulties arise and differences come up that divide people and set one group against another, we should be characterized by quiet, restful confidence in God as we refer these things to Him in

prayer. God told Israel, when they were scattered among the nations of the earth, to pray for the peace of the different lands in which they dwelt. This is a responsibility that rests upon us as believers today.

“For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour.” The apostle uses this beautiful term—“God our Saviour”—a number of times in this epistle. How precious it is to think of God in that connection! In our unsaved state we knew Him as God the Judge, but now since we have come to know Him as revealed in Christ, He has become God our Savior.

We get a very definite reason why we should pray for all men: God our Savior wills, that is, He desires to have, “all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.” I hope we believe that. I find that some of my brethren do not seem to believe it. They speak as though there are some men whom God has brought into existence for whom there is no possibility of salvation because they are not among the elect. I find no such teaching as this in Scripture. We read in that wonderful passage—the miniature Bible, as Luther calls it—“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (**John 3:16**). Thank God, we can go to men everywhere and tell them,

There is plentiful redemption
In the blood that has been shed.

No matter how far they have drifted from God, no matter what their sins may be, they do not have to peer into the book of the divine decrees in order to find out whether or not they are of the chosen or the elect. If they come in all their sin and guilt, confessing their iniquities and trusting in Christ, then they may have the assurance from His

Word that they are saved. It has been well said that the “Whosoever *wills* are the elect, and whosoever *wonts* are the non-elect.” All who will may come. Jesus said to those who refused His testimony, “Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life” (**John 5:40**). It is the desire of God that all men should be saved. He says, “Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?” (Ezek. 33:11). This expresses His attitude toward all men everywhere. But their salvation depends upon their coming to the knowledge of the truth—that is, believing the gospel.

Yes, God desires that all men should be saved, and He has made provision whereby all may be saved if they will: “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.” This is the gospel. It is our responsibility to carry it to the world. There is one God. All other objects that men worship as gods are only idols. They are powerless to save. There is “one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.” He it was who came down from heaven and took humanity into union with His Deity in order to make God known to men, and to give Himself a ransom for all. Now He has gone back to God on behalf of men. He ever lives to intercede for us. Scripture does not know of any other mediator. The blessed Virgin Mary is never referred to in the Bible in this capacity. Nor do we read of saints or angels as mediators. Our Lord Jesus alone stands between us and God, even as His work on the cross is the only ground of our salvation.

He who desires to know God, to be assured of sins forgiven is directed to Jesus by the Holy Spirit, speaking

through this Word. “There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (**Acts 4:12**). And, thank God, no other is needed. That name is all-sufficient. He came to earth to give His life a ransom for us. He tells us Himself that, “The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Matt. 20:28). Some might think the word *many* there indicates that His redemption is not available for all, but the Holy Spirit negates that thought by what we read here in verse 6: “Who gave himself a ransom *for all*, to be testified in due time.” While it is true that only those who believe on Him will be actually redeemed, yet He gave Himself an available ransom for all. If ever you are lost eternally, it will not be because God was not ready to save you. If you are shut away from the Home of the Blessed for the ages to come, it will not be because there was not a welcome for you if you had come by way of Calvary’s cross. There is no other way, no other salvation than through the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that work avails for you if you will come and put your trust in Him who accomplished it.

This is the message that Paul carried through the world, “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.” Who ordained Paul? Some would say that Ananias ordained him, but who ordained Ananias? From the record he does not seem to have had any special human ordination. But who ordained Paul? The Lord tells us, “I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee” (**Acts 26:16**). So Paul’s ordination came when the blessed Lord Jesus appeared to him on the Damascus turnpike, and Paul could have said

in the words of the beautiful seventeenth-century poem, which has been rendered into English by Frances Bevan:

Christ the Son of God hath sent me
Through the midnight lands:
Mine the mighty ordination
Of the pierced hands.

The Lord ordained Paul as preacher and apostle to go to the Gentiles with the gospel of a full redemption whereby all men might be saved. This was the special mission committed to him. And while he never forgot his Jewish brethren as he went from place to place—he usually sought them out first—his great work was to make the gospel known to the Gentile world. And what a world it was! It was a world literally rotten in its vileness and corruption. A world given to the worst kind of paganism and idolatry. A world in which men were enslaved by the Devil and powerless to deliver themselves. It was into such a world as this that the apostle Paul proclaimed the One “who gave himself a ransom for all.” And when men believed the message they were saved. They were transformed, and they who had been led by Satan captives of his will became captives in the chains of love, delighting to serve the One who had died to redeem them.

Chapter 6 The Consistent Christian Woman

1 Timothy

Henry Allen Ironside

1 Timothy 2:8-15

I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting. 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; but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works. Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety, (vv. 8-15)

In the first part of this chapter we considered the exhortation to pray for kings, for all who are in authority, and for all men everywhere. We noticed that the exhortation was based on the fact that it is the will of God that all men be saved. All men will not be saved, but that is because they set their desires against God's desire. He desires them to be saved. They desire to fulfill the lusts of the flesh and to live in opposition to the will of God. But if

people repent and turn to God, no matter what the record may have been, no matter how sinful and vile, there is forgiveness, abundant grace in the heart of God and sufficient merit in the work of our Lord Jesus Christ whereby all may be saved.

Having dealt with the theme of plenteous redemption, the Apostle goes back to the subject of prayer and stresses the importance of holiness of life if one would pray aright. God has never promised to answer a prayer that comes through unclean lips. True prayer must be backed up by a holy life.

We read, "I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting." There are three things to note here. First, prayer, in order to be effectual, must come from those who are seeking to walk in holiness before God. All men are entitled to approach God, but they must be careful that they are living such lives as will commend their prayers to God. If people are living in unholiness and uncleanness, they have no right to pray. They have no title to pray. God has never promised to hear the prayers of people who are not walking righteously before Him. So many people neglect prayer until some great crisis comes. They drift along, toying with their consciences, putting away a good conscience, and allowing themselves to do things which at first conscience condemns and to which afterward it becomes indifferent because of repeated offenses. And then comes the time when they want to pray. They feel the need of prayer. Perhaps some loved one is seriously ill, and they try to pray for his recovery, and then they find that their prayers are hindered because of unjudged sin in the heart. We can pray with confidence only when our prayer is backed up by a godly life. "I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without

wrath and doubting.”

Second, we are to pray without indignation or malice, but with love to all mankind. God will not answer a prayer calling down punishment on someone else. If we, in our childish, fretful way, should come to God asking Him to deal in judgment with another whom we feel has offended us, we cannot expect God to hear such a prayer. We are to love our enemies and pray for them that persecute us. We are to “lift up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.”

Third, the doubter is like one tossed by the waves of the sea. Our Lord Jesus said, “Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them” (**Mark 11:24**). When we pray in faith we are sure that we pray according to the will of God as He makes that known to us through His holy Word. It is important then that the Christian should back up his prayer with a holy life and implicit confidence in God.

Having said this, the Apostle turns to the subject of our sisters in Christ, and brings before us certain things which Christian women need to remember if they would live consistent lives to the glory of God. First he says, “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.” *Shamefacedness* is really “shamefastness”—standing fast in modesty, not bold or self-assertive, nor flaunting personal charms in a way that careless, godless women of the world do.

“But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.” I would rather listen to some fine Christian woman expound these verses than stand up here, a man,

and talk to my sisters in Christ regarding them. I would rather that one of their own was giving them this message, but it is incumbent on me as Christ's servant to bring before you just what is in His Word. Remember this, no matter how such Scripture verses as these are spurned by the worldly and backslidden, they are just as truly a part of God's Word as **John 3:16**.

I remember years ago at a special series of meetings a servant of God was opening up many precious truths in connection with our calling in grace, our place in the body of Christ, our inheritance in Him, and other spiritual themes. One lady who attended the meetings was so stirred that she told how these truths had meant much to her and that she had received great blessing from them. Then in the course of the series of messages the preacher came to a certain passage in **1 Corinthians 14** that had to do with women's behavior in the church of God. As he was reading—it was an open Bible class where people were free to ask questions—this same lady who had testified to having found such blessing through the precious Word spoke up and said, "I do not believe that. I think this is all nonsense. Paul was an old bachelor who hated women, and that is why he writes the way he does. We can't depend upon what he says."

The preacher said, "My dear sister, you have been rejoicing in the truth that nothing 'shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord' (**Rom. 8:39**), haven't you?"

"Yes," she said, "I do rejoice in that."

"Well," said the preacher, "I am pained to have to inform you that Paul said that, and Paul was an old bachelor, so you can't depend upon what he says! I understand you have been rejoicing in the truth that there is 'one body of

which Christ is the head.”

“Yes,” she said, “I rejoice in that too.”

“Well, I am sorry to have to tell you that that is something made known to us by Paul, and Paul was an old bachelor, so you can’t depend upon what he says.”

He went from one Scripture to another, pointing out the truths which were given to us by Paul, until that dear lady burst into tears and said, “May God forgive me. I see now that I have been trifling with the Word of God.”

One part of the Word is as truly inspired as another part. When you come across some things in God’s Word that you may think are perhaps questionable, remember that the Holy Spirit who presented Christ as Savior, the Holy Spirit who showed how the way into the Holiest has been opened, is the same Holy Spirit of God who tells our sisters how they ought to behave, and how careful they ought to be to maintain feminine modesty.

Let me read it once again: “In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety,” not depending on outward things for their charm or glamour, as it is called today. “Not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.” Oh, how we all appreciate a woman whose adornment consists of the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, manifested by patient consideration for others and seeking to do the will of God in grace and humility, so that Christ may be magnified in all her ways! Many of us who were brought up in Christian homes can thank God for examples such as we have seen in our own mothers. Many times as I see how some girls and women of today behave, I thank God my dear mother was not one of these

painted, bleached-hair, cigarette-smoking, immodestly dressed women, but a sweet, quiet, godly, Christian woman—a mother who brought her children up in the “nurture and admonition of the Lord.”

Women, God has given you a wonderful privilege. It is true, as we have heard it said so often, “The hand that rocks the cradle [though we may not have cradles any longer] is the hand that rules the world.” It is given to mothers to set such examples before their children that they can count on God to save them in their early days, and where mothers obey what we have here they can expect God to honor their faithful testimony.

Do not misunderstand and think of this passage as absolutely forbidding women to wear comely ornaments. Compare the passage in **1 Peter 3:3-4**, “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.” Now notice that if we were to understand that the Spirit of God is forbidding women to do up their hair neatly or forbidding them to wear an occasional ornament of gold, then He is also forbidding the putting on of apparel—and the unfortunate thing is that too many women seem inclined to take that latter part literally! But women are not to depend on these things for their judgment. A woman might have her hair put up ever so beautifully; be arrayed in the loveliest, costliest kind of gown; and decorated with the most beautiful ornaments but have a hard, cold, unforgiving, vain, unchristian spirit. And so her outward adornment would count for nothing. The real adornment is that which springs from a heart in subjection to the Holy Spirit of God.

Then as we pass on we come to a Scripture against which some of our sisters rebel: "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence." What is the Apostle insisting on here? We note from other Scripture passages that women are permitted to teach in certain circumstances. But here she is forbidden to teach, or to usurp authority over the man but to be in silence. Here and in **1 Corinthians 14:34-35**, Paul is speaking of the regular meeting of the assembly when the whole church comes together to worship God, and at that time the man, we are told in Scripture, is to stand before the people as the representative of the Lord Himself who chooses to speak in that way through His servant. Whereas the woman pictures the church itself in subjection to Christ, receiving her instruction from Him. She is not to take a public place as teacher nor usurp authority over the man. This does not mean that she is not to teach at all. The question of women having Bible classes, teaching boys and girls, conducting women's meetings, or even evangelizing—going out and proclaiming Christ to the general public—is not brought up here.

Let me give an illustration which will perhaps make clear what the Apostle is telling us here. I had a rather unusual experience some years ago. I went to a certain summer Bible conference for the first time. On this occasion I was invited by Dr. Torrey. A lady Bible teacher was present whom I had not met before. I think out of mischief Dr. Torrey seated me at the table with that lady, because he knew how I felt as to women preachers. I had the privilege of eating with this gracious lady twice a day, and we became quite well acquainted. As I was coming out of the tabernacle after my address at eleven o'clock one day I

noticed a blackboard sign that read, "At four o'clock Miss So-and-so will give an exposition of the book of Acts." I decided I would go and hear her, which I did. At dinner I was in my place ahead of her. When she came in, she shook her finger at me and said, "You should not have attended my meeting. You were there only to embarrass me."

"Why do you say that?" I asked.

"You do not believe in women preachers," she said. "You believe in taking literally those passages of Paul's."

I asked her, "How do you believe in taking them?"

She replied, "Well, I do not know. They have troubled me during most of my ministry. I do know God has given me a gift to teach His Word, and I feel responsible to do that. But I have never understood what Paul meant when he said, 'I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.'"

I said, "I do not have any trouble about it. When we gathered on Sunday for the regular service where Dr. Torrey was to preach, if you had gotten up and walked up to him and said, 'Dr. Torrey, I understand that passage. I'll do the preaching this morning.' Then I believe you would have been definitely disobeying this command. But when I saw the sign that at four o'clock this afternoon you were going to give an exposition of the book of Acts, I said to myself, 'If Sister Priscilla is going to expound the book of Acts, I can be like Apollos and can sk at her feet, and I'll be glad to do it.' So I went to hear you, and I enjoyed what you said. I got a great deal of help from your address. You did not usurp any authority over me. I went voluntarily to hear you." Everything seemed clear to her then, and she thanked me for what I put before her.

What the Apostle is saying here is that the woman has her place, and the man has his place. We each have our place in nature, and just as the one cannot change places with the other in nature, so we must not attempt to change places in the order of the church of God here on earth. This has nothing whatsoever to do with our place in the new creation. In the new creation before God there is neither male nor female, but all are one in Christ Jesus. When we get Home all differences will be gone forever, and we will be manifestly one in Christ in that day. But here on earth we have different responsibilities.

What would you think of a home where the wife said to her husband, "From now on I am going to be the wage earner. Husband, you look after the children, wash the dishes, clean the house, and I shall go out and earn the money?" That home would be topsy-turvy. God has ordained that the husband should provide the support for the family, and that the wife should care for the home and bring up the children. There may be times when the husband is unfit for employment, perhaps an illness which prevents his going out and working, and the dear, devoted wife will work and support the family. In that case they have to change places. If the husband has enough strength to do the dishes and clean the house and does not do it, he ought to be ashamed. "Husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel" (**1 Peter 3:7**). A friend once said to me, "Just what does that mean: 'Giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel?'" I said, "It means washing the dishes for her when her head aches." God has put each in his place. Mark, it is not that God is discounting the woman and her capabilities, but she has her sphere and the man has his.

The man is more or less dominated by his head—if he has

any head; whereas the woman is likely to be controlled by the heart. I have often heard my wife say, "I don't like that man." I would ask, "Why?" "I don't know," she would say. "I just don't like him." "Well, why don't you like him?" I would ask. "Is he not a good man?" "I can't tell you why, but I just don't like him," she would say. And it would not be long before we would find out he was a rascal. Women sometimes have certain premonitions, and it is a good thing, because it often saves them from being misled.

"For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression." Adam was not deluded. It was not to Adam that the Devil said, "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree in the garden?" (**Gen. 3:1**). Satan said that to the woman. Her trouble was that she dilly-dallied with the Devil. She should have said, "It is not for me to say what I heard the Lord say to my husband. Go to him, and he will tell you." But she did not do that. She undertook to act for herself. Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived. I take it that Adam got into the transgression out of love for Eve. His heart was with her, and he determined that he would rather be with her in the place of disapproval than to be alone without her in a wonderful place of blessing. Adam went into it with his eyes open, and so he had to leave the garden of delight and go into the cold world.

After the fall God put upon Eve the curse of pain in travail: "In sorrow thou shalt bring forth children" (**Gen. 3:16**). But we read here in 1 Timothy, "Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety." The Greek has "*the* childbearing." Many have taken it that this means as the woman brought sin into the world she shall be saved through the Lord Jesus Christ who was born of

a woman. It is a rather difficult passage. On the other hand, there seems to be a great deal of comfort here for prospective parents. I cannot help but believe that this has reference to the hour of her trial, when she shall be preserved in childbearing, "If they continue in the faith [with love] and holiness with sobriety." I cannot quite fit the last part of this verse with salvation by grace if we think of it only as the incarnation. I think it has reference to the bringing of children into the world and the preservation of the mother at such a time, provided the husband and wife together continue in the faith with godliness and sobriety.

In this passage God puts before us the consistent Christian woman—and what a testimony for God is such a woman in the world today! I do not know of anyone whose influence counts more than that of a godly woman. It counts with her husband, the children, and with all those with whom she has to do. I do not know of anything that puts a greater reflection on Christianity than a careless, slothful, vain, carnal woman professing to be a Christian.

Chapter 7 Qualifications for Office in the Church

1 Timothy

Henry Allen Ironside

1 Timothy 3:1-13

We need to recognize the fact that Scripture distinguishes between gift and office. Our risen, glorified Lord, we are told, has given gifts unto men. “He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers” (**Eph. 4:11**). These are divinely-given gifts for the edification of the church. It is God Himself who qualifies men for any of these particular lines of service. A man is not an evangelist because he goes to some school and develops a set technique and methods of preaching. A man is not necessarily a teacher of the Word because he takes some course of Bible instruction and then endeavors to pass on to others that which he has learned. But the risen Christ, by the Holy Spirit, qualifies men to do the work which He has for them. Never in Scripture do we have the least intimation that a man has to be humanly ordained in order that he may preach the gospel or teach the Word. We do not get anything like that in the Bible. It is the Lord Himself who gives the gifts. When He imparts the gift of preaching or teaching to any man, then the recipient is responsible to use his gift to the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. Some of the most widely used ministers of the gospel that have ever lived were never ordained by man. Charles H. Spurgeon, pastor for many years of the great Metropolitan Tabernacle in London, England, and one of the most outstanding Baptist preachers of his day, absolutely refused to be

ordained by man. He utterly repudiated anything of the kind, saying the Lord Himself had ordained him and that was sufficient. D. L. Moody was never ordained by man, yet was a mighty evangelist who won thousands to Christ.

In Timothy's own case there was undoubtedly some formal service participated in by Paul and the elders of Derbe and Lystra before he went forth with the Apostle in itinerant missionary work. This is generally spoken of as his ordination, and perhaps it is correct to so speak, but actually it was more in the nature of a commendation and expression of fellowship. In response to the prayers and the laying on of hands of Paul and the elders on that occasion, God gave to Timothy a special gift to qualify him for the ministry he was to perform.

In the present section of our epistle, 3:1-13, Paul gives by inspiration the qualifications for official position in the local church. The officers may or may not be men of special gift. They must be men of sincere piety and exemplary lives. Verses 1-7 have to do with the selection of bishops, or overseers, and verses 8-13 with that of deacons, or servants.

Scripture recognizes these two offices in the church. Bishops and elders are one and the same, as a careful examination of certain passages will show.

"This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work." We see both offices in the book of Acts and also in the Epistles, and these elders and deacons are definitely appointed by the church. In the case of elders they were ordained by the apostles or by apostolic authority. The word *ordained* does not necessarily mean all that we sometimes put into it. We read, "Ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted

themselves to the ministry of the saints” (**1 Cor. 16:15**). The word rendered “addicted” is the same as that rendered “ordained” elsewhere.

First then notice what is said of those who are called bishops.

This is a true saying, if a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil, (vv. 1-7)

“This is a true saying, if a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.” The word translated “bishop” means “overseer.” If we turn to the epistle to Titus, we see that an elder and bishop are one and the same, “For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee: ... For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre” (1:5, 7). You see the Apostle is saying to Titus, “Now Titus, in order to complete the organization of the churches in Crete, you go from church to church and select out of the fellowship of your brethren suitable men to be ordained as elders in each of these churches.” Then he gives the qualifications of a bishop. In

verse 5 the word *elders* is used, and in verse 7 they are called *bishops*. *Elders* implies they are to be men of mature years. But the other term *bishops* means that they are to be competent to bear rule in the church of God.

You will never find anything like the modern bishop in the Bible. A bishop today, both in the Roman Catholic Church and in other churches which came out of Rome, is one of superior rank set in authority over other ministers. But there is no such idea as that in Scripture. In **Acts 20** we find a number of bishops in one church, instead of one bishop set over many churches. In verse 17 the Apostle is addressing the elders of the church, and in verse 28 he says to them, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." The word *overseers* is a translation of the same word rendered *bishops*, so he says to these elders that they are to take care of the flock of God over which the Holy Spirit has made them bishops.

A great many things have come into the professing church for which there is no warrant in Scripture but which people take for granted. In certain organizations you have first a lower order of clergy called deacons, then a higher order called elders, and the highest of all called bishops. Some recognize even a higher order than these called archbishops, and then a few are selected from the archbishops, given red hats, and called cardinals. All that came in as a result of the church's departure from its early simplicity and of its imitation of the ways of the pagan systems.

What we need to keep in mind is that elders and bishops are one and the same. In the local church these are

responsible for the spiritual affairs of the church, and we learn here the type of men that should be selected for this office.

Go back to verse 2: “A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife.” Do not misunderstand. The Apostle does not mean that a bishop must be sinless. If so, we could not have any bishops. Charles Spurgeon said a certain man whom he knew at one time was very pious. Mr. Spurgeon said he thought the man was practically sinless, until one day he said he was. Then Mr. Spurgeon knew he was not. A bishop must be a man of pure motives who desires to glorify our blessed Lord. He must be “blameless” as to motives. Then he is to be “the husband of one wife.” It is amazing to think that in one of our great religious systems they hold that a clergyman of any character must have no wife. Scripture distinctly states that a bishop is to be “the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach.” Those who hold the office of bishop are to be men who are interested in showing forth to others the grace of God in their Christian testimony. And, if God gives them a special gift, they are to use that gift in teaching the Word, not depending upon stimulants for inspiration but upon the Holy Spirit of God. They are to manifest a kindly interest in their brethren and in all men: “no striker,” not one who readily loses his temper; “not a brawler,” not quarrelsome; “not covetous,” or a lover of money.

“One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?).” This is a very important qualification. We have often seen men aspiring to this office in the church whose children were a disgrace to them because

of their willfulness and worldly ways. But the man who is fitted to have oversight in the church of God is one who has proven his ability to shepherd others by the way he rules his own household.

“Not a novice [not a new convert], lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.” The Devil fell through pride. He was created a glorious angel, Lucifer, but his heart was lifted up with pride, and because of that he rebelled against God and fell. He who was one of the anointed cherubim of the throne of God is now “that old serpent, the devil, and Satan.” So the Apostle warns of the danger of selecting one who has been converted recently, and putting him in the special position of bishop, lest he be lifted up with pride.

“Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.” Men chosen for bishops are to be of such character that even the people of the world can look up to them and see in them what Christians ought to be.

Likewise must the deacons be grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless. Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. 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, (vv. 8-13)

Here we have the qualifications of a deacon. The word *deacon* really means “servant,” or “minister,” and a deacon is to take care of the temporal affairs of the

church of God. All who are deacons do not bear the title. For instance, a treasurer is a deacon, ushers are deacons, the men who look after the building, the trustees, are all deacons according to the Word of God. In **Acts 6** we read of the first deacons. Seven men of honest report were chosen to take care of the distribution of the funds and the ministering to the poor and needy saints of Jerusalem. The word rendered “ministration” in **Acts 6:1** is *diakonia*. Those who attended to this work were deacons, therefore.

In **Romans 16** we find the feminine word for deacon. The Apostle sent his letter to the Romans by the hand of a lady who was traveling to Rome, and he calls her “Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea” (**Rom. 16:1**), literally, “a deaconess of the church at Cenchrea.” She served the church. So a woman who serves the church is called, in Scripture, a “deaconess.”

Deacons must “be grave,” not given to frivolity, but realizing the seriousness of the work they are to undertake. “Not doubletongued”—one who will say one thing to one person and the opposite to someone else is double tongued. A deacon must be a man whose words can be depended upon. “Not given to much wine,” not exhilarated by stimulants. “Not greedy of filthy lucre,” not men who are seeking to enrich themselves.

“Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless.” That is, they must be converted men, who, having received Christ, are faithful to the truth of God and obey His Word, ever seeking to maintain a pure conscience.

Next the Apostle mentions the wives of the deacons.

Inasmuch as the deacons have to do with the temporal affairs of the church, their wives are likely to cause endless trouble unless they are wise, godly women. If the wife is a busybody she can destroy very easily her husband's influence for good. So the Apostle says, "Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things." The word for "slanderers" is the plural for "devil"—that is, "she-devil." The Devil is the great slanderer. And the deacon's wife must be one who is not characterized by anything like that. "Sober, faithful in all things." A wife like this is a great asset to any man.

Reverting to the deacons, Paul says, "Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well." You get the same qualifications for those in charge of the temporal affairs of the church as for those who oversee its spiritual affairs. They must be men who maintain good order in their own houses.

Then in verse 13 he has a very nice thing to say for the encouragement of the deacons, "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." In other words, they who have delighted to serve the people of God, they who have had a real heart interest in the work of the church to the glory of God, they that have used their office unselfishly and faithfully "purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus."

We have that illustrated in a very remarkable way in the early chapters of the book of Acts. Among the seven deacons appointed on the occasion to which we have referred already were Stephen and Philip. Not long after Stephen's appointment as deacon we find him being led out by the Spirit of God to preach the Word and going

from synagogue to synagogue in Jerusalem, proclaiming the truth that Jesus was the Christ. He had used well his office as a deacon. He had purchased to himself a good degree, and he was honored by becoming the first martyr who laid down his life for Christ's sake. Philip also used well his office of a deacon. Later on we learn that he went down to Samaria and there preached the Word, and many of the Samaritans believed and were baptized. He became known as an evangelist. It was he who was used to bring the gospel to the Ethiopian treasurer of Queen Candace. And in later years we find Philip in Cesarea maintaining a testimony for God.

We may not all hold official position, but we are all to serve according to the gift given by the grace of God, and we are responsible to be faithful in whatsoever place the Lord has set us. But those chosen or recognized by their brethren as fit to be trusted with special responsibilities in the church need special grace for the work they have to do.

Chapter 8 The Mystery of Godliness

1 Timothy

Henry Allen Ironside

1 Timothy 3:14-16

These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: but if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. 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, (vv. 14-16)

These words immediately follow instruction given as to the appointment of certain brethren for official position in the church of God. The Apostle was hoping to rejoin Timothy, but in the meantime, by divine inspiration, he wrote: "These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: but if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." Now Paul was not telling Timothy how to act when he went to church! Timothy was not a mere child who had to be instructed as to his behavior among a congregation gathered to worship God.

When the Apostle uses the expression “house of God,” he is not referring to a material building. Men may speak of a building dedicated to the worship and praise of God as “the house of God,” and there is a sense in which it is perfectly correct to so speak. It is important that Sunday school teachers and those who have the instruction of children impress upon their hearts the necessity of reverent behavior when they come into the building that has been set apart as a place where we come together to worship and sing praises to God, to lift up our voices in prayer, and for the ministry of His holy Word. It is most unbecoming for boys and girls—little ones and older ones, too—to be running around through the halls, giving vent to loud laughter, and various noises that disturb and distress others. We should realize that there is a certain demeanor that should characterize us when we enter such a building.

We Protestants have much to learn as to this from Roman Catholic and other ritualistic churches. They would not think of permitting their children to run around noisily through the building which they consider most sacred. Neither would they give themselves to loud conversation, or even whispering that disturbs those who are gathered to worship God. I think we should be concerned about these things. One of the crying evils of our generation is that of irreverence or lack of respect for the things of God.

But when the Apostle used the expression “the house of God,” he was not referring to a material building. The “house of God” with him is the church of the living God, a spiritual building, made up of all those who are born of God, who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, “in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit” (**Eph. 2:22**). Again and again, both in Paul’s epistles and Peter’s first epistle, the church of God is

looked upon as being made up of living stones cemented together by the Holy Spirit, and in that building God dwells. We need to learn how we ought to conduct ourselves as members of the assembly of saints; how we ought to behave “in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground [bulwark] of the truth.” The only way we can learn this is through the study of the Scriptures, which tell us of the behavior that should characterize those who have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and recognize Him as Head of the body, the church.

This church is the pillar and ground or foundation of the truth. A pillar is for display purposes; the foundation is that on which the superstructure rests. The church was intended by our blessed Lord to be the pillar proclaiming the gospel of His grace while resting on the great foundation truths of the Word of God. We have no right to play fast and loose with revealed truth. We may be liberal with that which belongs to us, but this is God’s truth, and we are to stand firmly for the faith once for all delivered to the saints.

In the next verse the Apostle speaks of the mystery of godliness, or, as it might be rendered, the secret of piety. When the children of Israel marched through the wilderness from Sinai on to the Promised Land, they carried with them the ark of the covenant which typified the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ—the meeting place between God and men. We today are responsible to maintain this sacred truth concerning our blessed Lord to which the Apostle refers as the mystery of godliness. The term *mystery* does not necessarily mean something which is, in itself, mysterious, but a secret revealed only to initiates. It is the will of God that the church should understand this secret, should know the truth concerning

the Person of our Savior. This mystery is that of the incarnation—that God came down to earth, taking into union with His Deity a human body, a human spirit, and a human soul, so that He was both God and Man in one blessed, adorable Person.

“God was manifest in the flesh.” Some of the early manuscripts omit “God” and render it “the mystery of godliness: which was manifest in the flesh.” That is probably more correct than the later manuscripts, but the thought is clear that it was God Himself who came down into this scene and was manifested in the flesh. Jesus is both God and Man.

We read in the gospel of John, “No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him” (1:18) or, “told Him out.” Again we read, “The Word 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**). And so “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them” (**2 Cor. 5:19**).

In the second place we read that He was “justified in the Spirit.” He who was God manifest in the flesh was absolutely the righteous One conceived without sin. After His baptism in the Jordan, where He publicly dedicated Himself as the One who had come to fulfill all righteousness and so to settle the sin question, God the Father opened the heavens above Him, the Holy Spirit descended upon Him, and the Father’s voice was heard declaring, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matt. 3:17); or, “in whom I have found all My delight.” Thus He was justified in the Spirit. There was no taint of sin in Him. He was absolutely holy. As such He

was the suited Substitute to take the sinner's place and to endure the judgment that our sins deserved.

In the third place—and this is to me most interesting—we read, He was “seen of angels.” He is called elsewhere “the Image of the invisible God.” Did you ever stop to think of this? Before God became incarnate in Jesus Christ He was invisible to created eyes. God the Father was invisible; God the Son was invisible; God the Holy Spirit was invisible. Angels could look only upon the glory of God but could not see the invisible One. But when the Lord Jesus Christ came down to earth, when the Babe was born in Bethlehem's manger, He who was God from all eternity had become visible. As angels hung over that crib and gazed upon the face of that little Babe, they knew they were looking into the face of the God who had created them. As He walked on earth angels were beholding the wondrous works wrought by God manifest in flesh. And you and I shall see Him in all the blessed reality of His Manhood as well as His Deity throughout all eternity.

“Preached unto the Gentiles.” The word rendered “Gentiles” is the word elsewhere translated “nations”—that is, the time had come when God no longer was to have one people separated from the rest of the nations, but His love could go out to all mankind. So our Lord Jesus Christ is preached unto all nations. The message preached to the nations everywhere is that all may be saved who will turn to Him in faith.

Next we read, He was “believed on in the world.” After twenty centuries there are untold millions in unbelief. In fact, there are millions who have never heard His name. That ought to stir our hearts to increased missionary activity and missionary giving. But even among those who

have heard His name there are vast throngs who refuse to trust Him. But, thank God, all through the centuries since the cross vast numbers have believed. Today millions believe on Him and find in Him not only a Savior, not only the One who gives comfort and rest to their consciences, but they find also a loving, tender Friend who gives peace to the heart in the midst of the perplexities and toils of life. To believe on Him is to put your trust in Him, to claim Him as your own personal Savior.

Last of all we read, He was “received up into glory.” Paul was not giving a chronological account of the incarnation and life of our Lord Jesus Christ, but he was bringing out one truth after another in the measure of its importance. He who left the Father’s house came down to earth where He lived a sinless life. He who was the absolutely holy and spotless One went to the cross to die for our sins. He who was preached unto the Gentiles and who has been believed on in the world, He, the Man Christ Jesus, has been received up into glory. He is the very same Person in heaven today that He was when He was here on earth.

Many seem to have the idea that after the ascension of our Lord He ceased to be the Man Christ Jesus and became some kind of a spiritual being, so that they imagine they will never see Him as He was when He left this scene and returned to the Father. But the angels on Mount Olivet said to the disciples, “Why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven” (**Acts 1:11**). He is absolutely unchangeable: “The same yesterday, and to day, and for ever” (**Heb. 13:8**).

nails in His hand. When He descends the second time to take His kingdom and appear to His own people Israel, their eyes will be open to recognize Him. They will say to Him, “What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends” (**Zech. 13:6**). When at last we look up into His blessed face, we will see the marks of the thorny crown. As He lifts those loving hands, we will behold the scars left by the wounds, and we will say, “This is my Lord and my God,” even as Thomas said when he fell down in worship at the Savior’s feet.

Chapter 9 The Latter Days

1 Timothy

Henry Allen Ironside

1 Timothy 4:1-6

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; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; 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. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer. 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, where-unto thou hast attained, (vv. 1-6)

It is a remarkable fact that our blessed Lord and His apostles indicated, before they left this scene, the decadence of the very system which they came to introduce, that is, they came to introduce what we commonly call Christianity. Yet both our Lord and His followers afterward warned the early church that there would be a great departure from the truth and that increasing apostasy would be manifest as the years wore on, until eventually there would be a complete turning away from the faith. Men would accept antichrist instead of the Christ of God.

As we look back over the centuries that have passed since

apostolic days, we can see how literally these predictions have been fulfilled. All down through these centuries there has been increasing departure from the simplicity of the gospel. All kinds of false systems have come in, until there was a time when it seemed as though false teaching was the real thing, and the truth of God was looked upon as heresy. There has been a revival in the preaching of the gospel, however, for which we can be thankful to God.

Here the Apostle warns of a time of apostasy which was to come, as he intimates, “in the latter times.” The “latter times” are to be distinguished from “the last days” described in **2 Timothy 3:1**, “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.” There he depicts conditions that will prevail in the professing church immediately before the return of the Lord Jesus Christ—conditions which do prevail largely today throughout Christendom. But the period spoken of here in chapter 4 is called “the latter times.” This period is for us in the past. We look back, not forward, to the latter times. The events described here have taken place already. They have been fulfilled already.

In **2 Thessalonians 2:7** we read, “For the mystery of iniquity doth already work.” That is, vain, unscriptural teaching was even then beginning to permeate the church. Here Paul warns Timothy, and through Timothy all other believers, of some of the results of the condition that was to be manifested later on.

“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly.” All prophecy is by the Holy Spirit. It is He alone who can foresee the future. It is not given to man to do this. Men may guess what the future may be, and sometimes their guesses may turn out to be correct, but no man can speak authoritatively as to the future. He does not know what the next day may

bring forth. But the Spirit of God, looking down through the centuries of time, empowered certain of Christ's servants to predict many things that were to prevail long years ahead. In the Old Testament, a large portion is devoted to prophecy, but we also have prophecy in the New Testament. Here is an instance of the Spirit speaking expressly, "that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron."

You will notice there are three classes of personalities brought before us here. First we read of some who will depart from the faith; some who were nominal Christians, members of the professing church, but who would drift away from the truth as given by our Lord Jesus Christ and His inspired apostles. One needs only a slight acquaintance with church history to know how these words were fulfilled in what we call the "Dark" or "Middle Ages," but which the Roman Catholic Church calls the "Age of Faith," because those were the years in which people forsook the teachings of the Word of God and received the superstitious traditions of the Roman Church. They departed from the faith. They substituted the authority of the church for that of the Holy Scriptures.

The second class is called "seducing spirits," who propagate "doctrines of devils," or teachings of demons. These evil spirits are ever active in seeking to turn men away from the faith once for all delivered to the saints. They are in rebellion against God, and yet are permitted for some strange, mysterious reason to influence and even possess men and women who are not subject to the instruction of the Holy Spirit. They are led by their prince, Beelzebub, and are actively engaged in combating the faith of Christ.

Then there is a third class. We might not realize this from our King James Version, but the translation made by that great Greek scholar, William Kelly, reads: "Some shall fall away from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and teachings of demons by hypocrisy of the legend-mongers." That is the way evil teaching was to be presented to men, "through the hypocrisy of legend-mongers"—men who substituted legends for the truth of God. We look back through the centuries and see that these came in very early.

There were not many copies of Scripture available during the Middle Ages, and the great majority of Christians did not have even a part of the Bible, nor would they have been able to read it if they had possessed it. The few manuscripts that were available were generally in the hands of teachers. Many of them were kept in monasteries. And so it was easy for interested persons to foist legends and traditions upon the common people in place of the inspired revelation which God had given. Many such legends were promulgated in those dark ages.

It is amazing, as we look back, to see how ready people were to accept all kinds of myths rather than the precious gospel as made known in the Bible. One legend was that of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary, the teaching that she was born without sin, and so in that sense she was like her Son, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Another legend that was foisted upon the people was that Mary never actually died, but was taken up into heaven, crowned, and today reigns as queen of heaven. The legend of purgatory was substituted as a place of cleansing from sin instead of the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ alone. Many others came in and similarly nullified the plain teaching of Holy Scriptures. They were accepted as though of the same authority as

God's Holy Word, and so brought men's hearts into bondage.

Those who were Satan's agents in vending these legends, instead of the truth of the gospel, are said to have "their conscience seared with a hot iron." They reached the place where conscience no longer responded to the voice of God. Notice the contrast between these and those who stood for the truth in verse 9 of the previous chapter. The Apostle speaks of Christians as "holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience." The people of whom he is speaking in verse 2 of this fourth chapter turn away from the faith and accept false theories and invalid legends. They are said to have their consciences seared with a hot iron. They became utterly calloused.

In the next verse we read of certain manifest signs that help us to identify the persons whom the Spirit of God has in mind when He speaks so solemnly here. "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." Here are two outward things that would make it very easy for anyone to understand, when the time came, who and of what the apostle Paul was speaking as he wrote by inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

It was during those dark ages that an apostate church arose which taught that a celibate priest or monk was a holier person than the Christian father or husband, and an unmarried nun was on a higher moral plane than a godly wife or mother, and so certain ones were forbidden to marry. Now Scripture maintains that there are occasions when it is better to remain unmarried. For instance, if Christian workers are exposed to great dangers, it is far better not to think of marrying and

dragging wives and possibly children into such circumstances. But God Himself instituted marriage for a holy purpose. Men attempting to be wiser than God put the ban upon marriage, so that certain persons who were separated from the world as nuns, monks, and priests had to take a vow not to marry. By this we may see to whom the Apostle was referring here.

Then observe the next mark: "Commanding to abstain from meats." Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself told us, "Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man" (Matt. 15:11). But there soon grew up in the professing church the notion that the eating of meat on certain days should be refrained from because by so doing one could better master the desires of the flesh—a theory which has proven to be false. Men are still as sinful as before. Vegetarianism has never worked for greater holiness than the ordinary method of nourishing the body, which is according to God's own order. But men cannot seem to get away from this outward thing, which is the teaching of demons.

In *Foxes Book of Martyrs* an incident is related of a man who was to be burned at the stake because he would not bow down before a wafer and worship it as God incarnate. The wood bundles were piled around him, and the executioner was waiting to put the torch to them. A priest stood on a high platform nearby and preached a sermon. He took for a text the first two verses of this chapter: "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; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron." These words he applied to the martyr about to die as a condemned heretic. Having finished the sermon, the

priest said, "Have you anything to say before you are burned? Will you recant and receive the absolution of the church?" The man, looking up, replied, "I have nothing to say except that I wish you would read aloud the next verse following the two you have read." The priest looked at the passage: "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." Instead of reading it he gave the signal to put the torch to the wood, and then he threw the Testament into the fire. It was too much. It condemned him, and showed exactly where the evil was, and what was meant by the Holy Spirit when He spoke of the doctrine of demons to be made known in the latter times.

This evil system which began in the latter times is prevalent today all over Christendom, and there is a definite line drawn between the Holy Scriptures and these superstitions that have been foisted upon people as inspired and authoritative traditions. We ought to thank God for the open Bible, where truth is found so crystal clear!

The Apostle adds, "For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving." I wonder if we are as conscientious as we should be about giving thanks to God for the good things He has provided. It is shocking to notice Christians who sit down in public eating places and give no evidence that they have thanked God for what is before them. Perhaps they do thank Him silently, but do not let those around them realize it. Christians, wherever you are when you partake of food you should be careful to honor God by giving thanks. Many opportunities will arise to speak to needy souls, even at the same table or at a table nearby, if you bow your head in a restaurant or hotel and give thanks before

partaking of your food. Christians should never sit down to a table at home without giving thanks for that which God has spread before them. Yet I am afraid many of us fail even in this.

On the other hand, I have seen people sit down to a table and it may be that the husband will give thanks, and but within a few minutes he begins to fuss and growl about the food, complaining about it. Perhaps the poor wife has done her best, and that is all the thanks she gets! If we receive the food with thanksgiving then we should not complain about it. After all, no matter how poor it is, it is still too good for sinners. Had God treated us according to our deserts we would be in the pit of woe, forever beyond the reach of mercy.

“Sanctified by the word of God and prayer.” What a blessed thing it is when the Word of God is honored and the voice of prayer ascends to heaven as the family gathers about the table to enjoy the good things the Lord has provided. Many of us look back on such scenes of family worship, and how we thank God for the impressions made upon our hearts and lives in early days.

“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 [or healthful teaching], whereunto thou hast attained.” The minister of Christ is responsible to bring these things to bear upon the hearts and consciences of the people of God, in order that He may be honored and they may be preserved from the unholy teachings which Satan uses to lead many astray.

Chapter 10 Practical Godliness

1 Timothy

Henry Allen Ironside

1 Timothy 4:7-16

But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness. 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. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation. 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. These things command and teach. 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. Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. 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. (vv. 7-16)

In this particular section of the epistle, the Apostle dwells upon godliness in the life, particularly in the life of a

minister of Christ for he was addressing the young preacher Timothy whom he had left in Ephesus, in order that he might help the church there.

Now no man can lift another person above his own level. If a minister of Christ is going to be used of God in reaching and elevating others, he must be characterized by true piety himself. Paul knew Timothy and knew what kind of man he was. He writes in other places commending him earnestly as one who had been as a son to him in his service for the Lord. Nevertheless, he felt it necessary to stir up the heart of Timothy to the importance of living wholly for God. But as we study these words, we should not think of them as applying only to one in full-time service for Christ. There is a sense in which all Christians are called upon to be ministers of Christ, for a minister is a servant, and we are all looked upon as servants of the One who has redeemed us. We are to be occupied in seeking to make Him known to others as far as we possibly can.

In the first place, Paul says to Timothy, "But refuse profane and old wives' fables." How much this admonition is needed today! "Profane and old wives' fables"—that is, things that are opposed to the truth of God, imaginary ideas, such as ignorant old women devoid of spiritual insight might be inclined to circulate. Have you ever noticed that a great number of modern teachings which are leading people astray are but old wives' fables? Both Madame Blavatsky and Mrs. Annie Besant, the cofounders of theosophy, were "old wives" whose fables have deceived thousands. Mrs. Ellen G. White's fantastic "sanctuary theory," the basic doctrine of Seventh-day Adventism, is an old wife's fable. Mary Baker Patterson Glover Eddy was an old wife, who mothered what she falsely called "Christian Science."

These teachings are all contrary to the truth of God. Such have a special attraction for women of a particular type. And so Paul warns Timothy against all such perversions of truth. He says, “Exercise thyself rather unto godliness.” *Godliness* is just a clipped word. It was originally “Godlikeness” and so is rendered in some of the older English translations (Wycliffe has *Gudlyknesse*.) Godliness is genuine piety. That is its real meaning.

No one will live a truly pious life who neglects the means which God has given to us for this purpose. We have the Word of God; we need to study our Bibles. And we need to take much time for prayer. Then we must be faithful in testifying to those who are unsaved. To honor God in these things is to be exercised unto godliness.

“For bodily exercise profiteth little.” There are three different ways in which this clause might be read. As rendered in the King James Version, we might understand it to mean that bodily exercise is not of very great profit because life is so short, and eternal things are so much more important. John Wesley renders it, “Bodily exercise profiteth *a little*”—that is, somewhat, but not to be compared with exercise unto godliness. Others read it, “Bodily exercise profiteth *for a little time*”—the time we are going through this world. “But godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.” I would stress this and seek to impress it upon the hearts of all who are young in Christ.

My younger brethren and sisters, you who have strong, healthy bodies, you naturally and rightfully delight to indulge in certain physical exercises. But oh, let me press this upon your minds: just as these things have a place in the physical realm, it is far more important that you be strong spiritually. Do not neglect your soul as you care for

your body. Do not be so much concerned about bodily exercise that you fail to take plenty of time over the Word of God and in prayer that you may be strong, healthy Christians, whose lives will bring the approval of the blessed Lord at His judgment seat. Godliness is profitable all through this life. And oh, how profitable will it prove to have been when we leave this world and go out into eternity! After all, life is so short it seems a terrible mistake to devote the greater part of our time to concern for the things of this life while forgetting the important things of eternity.

I was somewhat acquainted with C. J. Baker, the father-in-law of Dr. Walter Wilson. He was a fine Christian businessman, head of a large firm in Kansas City which manufactured tents and awnings of all descriptions. He sold his merchandise very largely to circus and Chautauqua people. Every year he sent forth his catalog, knowing that it would be read by many unconverted showmen and others. I recall a greeting he had placed upon the first page: "With our best wishes to our customers for time and eternity, especially eternity." It was signed, "C. J. Baker." I often wondered what the reaction would be as these unsaved people received that catalog from that Christian man who expressed such concern for their welfare, not only in this life but also in the life which is to come! That is what really counts. Godliness is profitable, not only for this life but also for that which is to come.

Next, we have another "faithful saying." In 1:15 we read, "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." Now in 4:9-10 we have a faithful saying for the people of God: "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance. 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." This, you see, is for those who know the Lord, those who found out they were sinners and came to Christ and have been saved by His grace. How we should delight to labor and suffer reproach for His sake! We know how wonderfully God takes care of His own. But He "is the Saviour of all men." He is watching over all mankind, but especially is He the Savior of those who believe.

Then Paul says to Timothy, "These things command and teach." Timothy was a young man. Perhaps by this time he may have been about forty years of age, but a man of forty was comparatively young compared with Paul who perhaps at this time was close to seventy. So he writes to the younger man, "Let no man despise thy youth." That is, do not develop an inferiority complex because you are younger than some of those to whom you minister. Do not be concerned if they do not understand that God has called you to this position, and if they seek to ignore you because of your comparative immaturity.

"But be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation [that is, behavior], in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." A young man may be very immature in some respects, but if he is characterized by these things: careful as to his words, particular as to his behavior, and manifesting the love of God; if he is a man of faith and is careful as to purity of life, he will not have to try to compel others to accord him recognition. His behavior will accredit him to those to whom he ministers. They will realize that though a young man there is something about him that marks him out as a man of God, and not one who is careless in his walk and slack in his service, or who is seeking an easygoing life as a professional cleric.

“Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.” There are two different Greek words for “reading.” One means to read to others; the other means to read for one’s own instruction and information. It is the first word that is used here: “Till I come, give [attention] to reading”—that is, reading to others. On the other hand, may I add this: He who would be a faithful minister of Christ must take plenty of time to read for his own edification. He needs to read and meditate on the Scriptures and also such literature as God has provided in order to help him to better understand the Word. Having done this he can communicate to others the truth which has become precious to his own soul.

“Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.” That word translated “presbytery” is generally rendered “elders.” It is evident that the elders of the church at Lystra and Derbe had met together with the apostle Paul when Timothy was about to launch out in full-time service and had laid their hands on him, commending him to God in prayer. That is sometimes spoken of as Timothy’s ordination. We do not read in Scripture that anyone has to be ordained to preach the gospel, but the laying on of hands was an expression of fellowship. As these brethren prayed for Timothy, God gave him a special gift. These elders were men of God. It is far otherwise in many instances.

Charles H. Spurgeon, who always refused human ordination, used to say that in many cases when men profess to have the authority to ordain another to preach or teach the gospel and pretend that through ordination they are enabled to give him some special gift, it is just “laying empty hands on an empty head!” But in Timothy’s case these brethren prayed in faith, and God gave the

answer. I rather think it was the gift of a pastor that was conferred upon Timothy.

“Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all.” No one who really wants to count for God can afford to play at Christianity. He must make it the one great business of his life. Whether he is set apart for special ministry—as a missionary who is going to a foreign land, a laborer in the gospel in home fields, or whether he remains in business and seeks to witness for Christ there—he needs to give himself entirely to a life of devotion to the Lord.

Notice the closing words: “Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine.” Observe the order: first, “take heed unto *thyself*”—be careful about your own inner and outward life, setting an example to others. Then take heed “unto the doctrine.” We read of Ezra in the Old Testament who “prepared his heart to *seek* the law of the Lord, and to *do* it, and to *teach* in Israel statutes and judgments” (**Ezra 7:10**). Many people prepare the mind who do not prepare the heart, but Ezra put the heart first. He desired to know the law of God, and he learned it not only through the head but also through the heart. Then it says he “prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it.” He was not going to teach others what he did not do himself. And so God used and honored a man like that.

That is the way He does today. “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.” He is not speaking of the salvation of the soul. He is not referring to eternal salvation. But he is exhorting Timothy to be careful to live for God, to be a consistent, earnest minister of Christ, because in doing this he would both

save himself and others from many snares and difficulties. He would become a blessing instead of a curse to those to whom he ministered.

No one can live a godly life who has not first received Christ as his own Savior. You cannot live a Christian life until you are born again. I would remind my reader of the words, “He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life” (**1 John 5:12**). After Christ is known in this way we are prepared to lead others to Him and guide them in the path of obedience.

Chapter 11 The Church's Responsibility in Temporal Things

1 Timothy

1 Timothy 5:1-16

Rebuke not an elder, but intreat him as a father; and the younger men as brethren; the elder women as mothers; the younger as sisters, with all purity. Honour widows that are widows indeed. But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to show piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God. Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day. But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth. And these things give in charge, that they may be blameless. 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. Let not a widow be taken into the number under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man, 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. But the younger widows refuse: for when they have begun to wax wanton against Christ, they will marry; having damnation, because they have cast off their first faith. 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. I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully. For some are already turned aside after

Satan. 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, (vv. 1-16)

We hear a great deal today in many quarters about the Social Gospel, and by that is meant the implication that the one great business of the church of God in the world is to try to better the temporal circumstances of those among whom it ministers. Many churches have given up, to a large extent, the preaching of the gospel of Christ in order to devote themselves to this Social Gospel. There should be no question as to the fact that from the earliest days of the church, immediately following Pentecost, Christians did recognize that they had a responsibility to those among them who were in need and distress. We are told in **Galatians 6:10**, "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." But our great business is to go into all the world and preach the gospel. The Lord Himself gives gifts to teach and preach that the church may be built up in the things of God.

As Christians go on with the Lord, they will recognize their duty toward those in less comfortable circumstances than themselves. In other passages of the New Testament we have emphasized for us our responsibility as Christians to think of the needy and the suffering.

I remember years ago when working among the Navaho Indians in the southwest down in Arizona and New Mexico, we were having a workers' conference at one time. There came out from the East a representative of one of the larger denominations which was given to a great extent to this so-called "Social Gospel." He was speaking one afternoon, and said that he had been shocked as he traveled over the reservation and saw something of the filth and poverty in which many of the Indians lived. Turning to one of the missionaries he said, "My brother, I think your first

responsibility is to teach these people the use of soap and water and a toothbrush, and the use of vermin-destroying fluids of some kind or another. You will never be able to make Christians out of them until you show them how to improve their homes and teach them to value cleanliness and decency.”

When the man sat down, one of the young Navaho preachers got up and said something like this: “I was very much interested in what our friend from the East had to say. I never thought our responsibility was to go about and preach a gospel of soap and water. I thought it was to carry the gospel of the cleansing blood of Christ. But after we get one of our Navaho people saved, if he has been used to living in filth, when we go back to visit him we find things are all changed. When they get cleaned up inside then they want things clean outside.” He added, “I don’t want to take issue with our friend who has come to visit us, but I think he is putting the cart before the horse when he insists on the Social Gospel first instead of the gospel of the grace of God.”

Now that young Navaho was right. Many of us with years of experience have observed that there is nothing that changes the outward circumstances of people like having them get right with God in their hearts. But on the other hand, when we do get right with God, we ought to remember that we do have certain social responsibilities.

By the way, while I am speaking of this, let me add one other testimony to that of the Navaho. Many years ago when I was a Salvation Army officer we had gathered for an officers’ council—that is what others would call a ministerial association—and General William Booth himself was addressing us. He talked about the social program that he had proposed in a book that had just then been published titled *In Darkest England and the Way Out*. General Booth said, “My Comrades, never allow yourselves to put social

work before the gospel of the grace of God.” Then to illustrate what he meant he said, “Take a man who has ruined himself by strong drink, has become a confirmed drunkard, beggared his family so that his wife has been separated from him, and his children are in orphan homes. He is just a common drunkard on the street. Take that man and sober him up, get him to sign the pledge and promise never to take another drink, move him out into the country in a new environment, settle him down in a little cottage, teach him a trade if he does not know one, bring back his wife and children, make his home a comfortable one, and then let him die in his sin and go to hell at last! Really it is not worthwhile, and I for one would not attempt it.”

That was General Booth speaking. He was emphasizing the mistake of meeting the physical needs of people rather than the spiritual needs. First of all, get men right with God and other things will follow in due order.

In our epistle the Apostle is putting before Timothy some principles for the church of God. First we have three verses that deal with the matter of Christian courtesy. “Rebuke not an elder, but intreat him as a father; and the younger men as brethren; the elder women as mothers; the younger as sisters, with all purity. Honour widows that are widows indeed.” The Christian company was necessarily separated from the world without. When a person became a child of God in those days, he was soon outside the synagogue if a Jew and outside the fellowship of idolatry if a Gentile. These Christians were brought together in very intimate association, and their communion one with another was most precious and intense. But there is always the possibility that when people are thus linked together that they will forget that natural courtesy that should be shown to one another. The Spirit of God stresses the importance of this.

“Rebuke not an elder.” I take it he does not mean an official elder, because he contrasts an elder man with a younger man. He means: Do not rebuke one advanced in years. If such an one needs a word of admonition, go to him in a kindly manner and speak to him as one would speak to a father. But never, as a young man, upbraid an older man, because if you do it will only show your own ill-breeding and your lack of subjection to the Spirit of God. Deal with younger men as brethren. Timothy was a preacher of the Word. He was to look at all younger men in the fellowship as brothers in Christ and treat them as such. He was not to take a place of authority among them, domineering over them, but he was to seek to work with them as on one common level and recognize them as brothers in Christ.

He was to esteem older women as he would his own mother. What a beautiful ideal! He was to look upon a lady who had grown old in the service of the Lord with the same reverent feeling that he would look upon the countenance of his own mother and be ready to help her in any way he could. He was to treat younger women as though they were his sisters, with all purity. That is, never to act toward any young woman in a way he would not like some other man to behave to his own sister.

Widows who had lost their companions and perhaps were left without any visible means of support were to be honored because of the place they held. Homes such as are in operation today to shelter those who have no means of support were not known at that time, and the church had a special responsibility toward the widows for whom no provision had been made. The church still has a definite duty to fulfill to those of its own who are left in poverty and distress because of the decease of their natural providers.

On the other hand, relatives are never to turn over the care of widows to the church if they, themselves, are able to look

after these widows. “But if any widow have children or nephews [the word translated *nephews* really means “descendants”], let them learn first to show piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God.” If there is an aged sister left a widow and she has sons or daughters or other descendants, they are to understand that they are morally responsible to keep her. They are not to turn her over to some institution to look after her.

The Jews have a very interesting story that they tell of a young Jew who had the responsibility to care for his aged father. The young man married, and his wife was very proud and greatly resented having the care of her father-in-law in the home and having part of their money go to his support. So she was constantly nagging her husband, begging him to send the old gentleman to the Poor Farm. Finally the young man turned to his father and said, “Father, I shall have to take you to the Poor Farm.” The old man wept and pleaded, saying, “My dear boy, I am already seventy-six years of age. Please care for me a few years or months longer. I don’t want to die in the Poor Farm.” But the young man said, “You will have to come with me.” So he placed his hand on the old man’s arm, and they started down the road. On they went, the young man dragging his father by force while the old gentleman complained until they got to a certain tree. Then the old man stopped and said, “No! No! No! I will not go any farther. I didn’t drag my father any farther than this tree!” Is not the lesson plain?

If you are not gracious and kind to the old, the day may come when you yourself will be old and you will reap as you sow. We who can do so are to care for our older relatives. This is just ordinary Christianity in action.

“Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and

day.” That is, one who has been bereft of her husband in advanced age and feels her loss, but trusts in God and spends much time before Him in prayer is a blessing to the entire Christian community to which she belongs.

On the other hand, there are some widows who seem almost glad to have their liberty, and when the husband is dead they rejoice in their freedom. They give themselves to folly and pleasure. So we read, “But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth.” The church has no responsibility to support widows of that kind, and they themselves will have to answer to God for their careless behavior. Notice those words. They apply not only to careless widows but also to anyone else living in pleasure: “dead while she liveth!” The only right life is the life lived to the glory of God.

“And these things give in charge, that they may be blameless.” Again the Apostle stresses the responsibility of those who have others dependent upon them.

“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.” That is a serious word for anyone who refuses to labor and properly take care of wife or children or others dependent upon him. No matter what kind of religious profession a man makes, he has denied the faith and is worse than an utter unbeliever if he neglects his family and leaves them in want when by proper care he could meet their needs.

In the early church certain arrangements were made to provide for these widows. We see this in the sixth chapter of Acts. You remember the first murmuring in the church occurred because of some of the widows of the Greek-speaking Jews complained that they were not as well cared for as the widows of the Palestinian Jews, and that led to the

appointment of the seven deacons to handle the distribution of the funds for this purpose.

The Apostle says, "Let not a widow be taken into the number under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man, 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." It was these things that entitled a widow to the charity of the church: sixty years of age, presumably unable to earn her own living, a consistent record in the past—that is, she cared for strangers when she had a husband and a home. "If she have washed the saints' feet." It was an Oriental way of saying, "If she has been hospitable." It was a custom in that time, when one wearing sandals entered a home, a servant would bring water, remove the sandals, and bathe the travel-worn feet of the visitor. If the widow had done all these things for the comfort and cheer of her guests, then she certainly was entitled to the care of the church in the time of her bereavement and poverty.

"But the younger widows refuse." They presumably were able to earn their own living. It was not expected that the church should assume responsibility toward them. If so, it would have encouraged them in idleness. They would not have found it necessary to become employed in any useful calling. "For when they have begun to wax wanton against Christ, they will marry." In this way they might have brought discredit upon the church of God. God said to Israel, "Why gaddest thou about so much to change thy way?" (**Jer. 2:36**). These young widows, if they had no responsibility, would be in danger of wandering about from house to house. Not only would they be idle, but they might also become tattlers and busybodies, carrying tales from one home to another. When people have nothing else to do they generally set their

tongues working overtime. “The tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things” (**James 3:5**). To avoid idle gossip the younger widows should be gainfully employed.

“I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully. For some are already turned aside after Satan.” He had evidently heard of some in the church who had thus gone astray.

As he closes this section, Paul again points out the responsibility of the relatives to care for aging widows. “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.” It is just another way of saying, “There will be plenty of people needing the help of their brethren and sisters in Christ, and therefore let those who should care for any who are in such needy circumstances take charge of these distressed ones and not put a needless burden on the church of God.” This was God’s order in the early church, and it is still His order today. It is the business of the church to consider the poor and needy and minister to them as far as it can. On the other hand, it is but right that the members of a family provide for the needs of those related to them, if they can do so, and relieve the church of this additional load.

As children of God we are never to be selfish or stingy in ministering to those who are in poverty and distress. But we are not to encourage laziness, nor should the church be held accountable to support those whose own children can assume their care.

Chapter 12 Light on Life's Duties

1 Timothy

1 Timothy 5:17-25

Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward. Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses. Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear. 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. Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure. Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities. Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after. Likewise also the good works of some are manifest beforehand; and they that are otherwise cannot be hid. (vv. 17-25)

Continuing his exhortations to Timothy, Paul speaks again of elders, and here dwells on the respect due them. Those who are qualified to lead the people of God in this way and who have the responsibility of shepherding the flock of Christ should never be treated rudely or looked upon with contempt. Those who manifest particular administrative ability are to be counted worthy of double honor, or as the marginal note puts it, of "double reverence."

While we see no scriptural authority for giving the title of "reverend" to a minister of the gospel, as is commonly done in Christendom, yet it is evident that this particular Scripture may have seemed to some to give sufficient

authorization for the custom. For if the elders, who ruled well, are to be counted worthy of double reverence, then those not so distinguished are still to be revered. But it is worthy to note that, in our English Bibles at least, it is only God Himself to whom the title “reverend” is applied. In **Psalm 111:9** we read, “Holy and reverend is his name.” The Hebrew word so rendered is found many times in the Old Testament, however, and is often translated “dreadful,” or “terrible.”

Charles H. Spurgeon, who himself repudiated any such title, though a worthy minister of Christ, declared that if one sought the origin of this practice he would have to go back to Roman Row in “Vanity Fair.” He used to say ironically that if one minister should designate himself as the Reverend Mr. So-and-So, it would be just as correct for others to speak of themselves as the Dreadful or Terrible.

While recognizing all this, we need to remember that those whom God honors should be honored by us, and any leader who manifests true godliness in his life and is characterized by marked ability to administer the affairs of the church of God is worthy of reverence, “especially they who labour,” Paul tells us, “in the word and doctrine.” By so speaking he makes it clear that all elders were not necessarily preachers or teachers. Some were, but this was a special gift of God. In support of what he had just written Paul cites the Old Testament Scripture, “Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn” (**Deut. 25:4**). This links with, “The labourer is worthy of his reward.” When threshing was done by oxen it would have been cruel indeed to have refused the due portion of grain to the hard-working, patient animals who were thus employed. And so as God’s servants give themselves to earnest labor on behalf of others, it is only right that such labor be recognized and they themselves respected and, where necessary, properly supported. This is

a principle laid down elsewhere in the New Testament (**Luke 10:7**), and to which God's people may well take heed.

The next admonition has to do with charges of irregular behavior, or even of sinful actions in connection with one who is thus recognized as a servant of Christ. It is sad indeed when people thoughtlessly and often willfully spread evil stories about a servant of Christ without ever making any investigation and when others give heed to these without seeking corroboration. It is sadder still if anyone brings a charge of misconduct against an elder unless the charge is substantiated by other witnesses. Then, indeed, if the accusation is proven to be true, the office of the offender must not be allowed to shield him from blame. On the contrary, Paul writes, "Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear." The greater one's responsibility, the more careful he needs to be as to his personal character and behavior. No elder, however able and gifted, should attempt to shield himself from blame simply because of his office. The very fact that he serves the church in such a capacity makes him all the more accountable to live for God before the people whom he endeavors to instruct in holy things, or whom he seeks to guide.

If assemblies of God everywhere would keep these admonitions in mind, they would be saved from a great deal of sorrow and dissension. Where God's servants are recognized as His representatives, and their ministry is properly valued and their advice followed, blessing will result for the whole church. Where a spirit of independence and insubordination prevails, and believers generally look with indifference or even contempt upon those appointed by God to have the rule over them, who must give account for their souls at the judgment seat of Christ, the results are likely to be most disastrous.

It seems difficult for many of us to keep from extremes. We are inclined to overvalue those who minister the Word of God and bear rule in the church, and to look upon them as though above all criticism. Or, where a spirit of individualism prevails, we are inclined to undervalue God's servants and treat them somewhat as Korah, Dathan, and Abiram sought to treat Moses and Aaron in the wilderness, when they said, "Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them" (**Num. 16:3**). They failed to recognize the fact that it is God Himself who appoints and qualifies leaders or shepherds over His flock. These should be given proper deference, not in the sense of looking upon them as a priestly class who come in between the people of God and their Lord, but rather as the expression of God's goodness in caring for and shepherding His people as they go through the wilderness of this world.

It is a very sad thing when parents set the example before their children of belittling God's servants by calling attention, perhaps, to mistakes in interpretation of the Word, or ridiculing certain characteristic habits on the platform or elsewhere. These things naturally lead the children to think less of those who are seeking to help them, and so make it harder to reach them with the Word. Children should be taught to look upon the elders and ministers of Christ as servants of God, whose great concern is their eternal blessing. If parents will collaborate in this instead of detracting from the usefulness of a servant of God, they will help him to accomplish more than he could otherwise.

Concerning receiving accusations against an elder without full proof, may I refer to a somewhat amusing incident that I ran across lately. In a certain church bulletin that came to my hand I read the following statement from the pastor of a little church.

He said, "I have learned that a story is being rather widely circulated that on a recent occasion I forbade my wife to attend the services of another church, which were of a highly emotional character. When she refused to obey me and attended without my permission, I went to that church and dragged her out by the hair of the head, and beat her so severely that she had to be sent to the hospital. I feel it necessary to make a statement in regard to this story. In the first place, I never forbade my wife to attend any services to which she might wish to go. I have left her at perfect liberty to do as she pleases in matters of this kind. In the second place, I did not drag her by the hair of the head from such a service, nor did I beat her when I brought her home. In the third place, she was not so badly hurt that she had to be sent to a hospital, and she is not in the hospital now. And in the fourth place, as some of you know perhaps, I have never been married, so I have no wife to whom any of these things could apply."

It is very easy to start a false story going, and by the time it has passed through the lips of several persons it can ruin the testimony of the most devoted man of God. Mr. Moody used to say that a lie gets halfway around the world before truth gets its boots on to pursue it.

In verse 21 the Apostle lays another important charge upon Timothy, which has a wide application at all times. "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." The expression, "the elect angels," may cause some to wonder why these holy beings should be brought in here, but there are other Scripture passages that show that angels are learning the wisdom of God in us. They behold what is going on in the church on earth. Doubtless they rejoice when they see God's Word being honored, and His people walking before Him in

unity and in holiness of life. So the Apostle links them here with God Himself and our Lord Jesus Christ, as he charges Timothy to observe the things concerning which he has admonished him. The charge is surely not for Timothy alone, but is for all who have to do with government in the house of God here on earth. Nothing should be done out of deference to some favored few or to win the approval of certain individuals, but all should be done faithfully for the blessing of the church as a whole.

The next admonition is of great importance, particularly in days such as these in which our lot is cast, when one finds so many men going about through the country professing to be servants of Christ, perhaps representing some particular organization in which they are endeavoring to interest others in order to raise funds for the support of their work. Men like these have no right to expect to be taken into the fellowship of God's people and given endorsement simply on their own recommendation. Only too often churches have been altogether too gullible in receiving such men without making the slightest inquiry to find out their true standing, or from whence they come. It turns out often that such men represent themselves only and the money they raise is but for their own comfort and enrichment.

So Paul lays down the definite injunction: "Lay hands suddenly on no man." It is far better to make inquiry before taking up with a stranger than to find out afterward that he was utterly unworthy of confidence. It is quite possible to become so entangled as to be actually responsible, in measure at least, for the failures of unfaithful workers and false teachers. So the Apostle adds, "Neither be partakers of other man's sins: keep thyself pure."

In writing to the elect lady in his Second Epistle, John says, "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed:

for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds” (vv. 10-11). If we remembered that God holds us responsible for assisting and sustaining those who are unfaithful to His truth and whose behavior and teachings are of a subversive character, it would make us more careful to heed these words.

Verse 23 is the favorite text of practically every old drunkard who knows anything of the Scriptures. I would not dare attempt to say how many times this passage has been quoted to me by inebriates seeking to justify their indulgences in alcoholic liquor. “Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach’s sake and thine often infirmities.” It is certainly a great mistake to take advice such as this and apply it as though spoken to everyone under all circumstances. Evidently Timothy was suffering from digestive disturbances brought about, no doubt, by the intensely alkaline water found in some parts of the lands through which he traveled. The native wines of that time, which were quite different from the wines we have today, were calculated to correct this condition, at least to some extent. So Paul prescribed a little wine, which is a far different thing to convivial drinking of intoxicating liquor. This is a prescription authorizing the use of the wine as a medicine not as a beverage. If the circumstances be the same, it is perfectly right and proper to follow the prescription, but one should be careful not to use a passage like this as license for carelessness in the use of strong drink of any kind.

Proverbs 23:31-32 says, “Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.” There can be no mistake here as to the teaching of the Word of God in regard to the use of wine as a beverage. Generally speaking, it would be better to

consult a good Christian physician before acting on Paul's advice to Timothy, lest one aggravate his symptoms instead of alleviating them.

In the closing verses of this section we have something extremely solemn. We are told that, "Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after. Likewise also the good works of some are manifest beforehand; and they that are otherwise cannot be hid."

These words might seem to require very little comment, and yet it is well to press them home upon our own hearts and consciences. "Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment." That poor drunkard staggering down the street needs no one to proclaim him as a sinner. His behavior makes manifest his moral condition. His sins are open, going before to judgment. Anyone can recognize them. The licentious libertine soon bears in his body the evidence of his loose living. Men cannot indulge in pernicious habits without their very appearance advertising their guilt. Their evil behavior is manifested by every step taken; their sins are evidenced to all. And judgment falls, in measure at least, upon them even in this world, as we read in **Romans 1:27**, "Receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet."

Others may be just as wicked and just as godless along other lines, but their sins are not of the character that affect their bodies to any great extent, and so they are able to cover them up. They often go through life hiding their wickedness under a pretense of piety, but the day will come when all their sins will be manifest. When they leave this world they will find that those sins have followed them to the judgment bar of God, and every transgression and disobedience will receive a just recompense of reward. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also

reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting” (**Gal. 6:7-8**).

We have the other side in verse 25: “The good works of some are manifest beforehand.” There are those who have abundant opportunity to do good to others, and they take advantage of it and are lavish in their efforts to bless and help their fellows. It is impossible to hide such philanthropy, however modest the individuals themselves may be who thus delight in assisting the poor and needy. They are rich in good works, and what wealth this is! Who would not like to be rich in this sense! But there are other quiet, timid souls who long to be a blessing and help to their fellows, but who are not so circumstanced that they can do all they desire along these lines. Nevertheless, they live their quiet, humble lives in the fear of the Lord, seeking to do the will of God. When the day of manifestation comes and all believers stand at the judgment seat of Christ, everything will come out, and the Lord will reward everyone according to his own works. He will give His own estimate of all that has been done for Him. Those who were not always able to carry out the desires of their hearts will hear Him say in that day, as He said to David of old, “Thou didst well that it was in thine heart” (**1 Kings 8:18**).

What comfort this should be to any of God’s beloved people who have felt themselves hampered all their lives because poverty and straitened circumstances kept them from doing much that it was in their hearts to accomplish for Christ! How blessed to know that He estimates everything aright, and in that day His “Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord,” will be spoken to all who have sought to honor Him in this scene.

Chapter 13 Contentment Versus Covetousness

1 Timothy

Henry Allen Ironside

1 Timothy 6:1-10

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. 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. These things teach and exhort. If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. 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. 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, (vv. 1-10)

The outstanding verse of this section is the sixth: "But godliness with contentment is great gain." The Apostle is stressing the importance of contentment as opposed to that spirit of covetousness which so characterizes men of the world and is often found even among the children of God.

We need to remember that many of the early Christians were bondmen. Conditions of society that prevailed at that time were such that there were more slaves in the Roman Empire than there were free men. Even when the gospel began to be disseminated widely throughout the Empire we do not read of any movement on the part of Christian leaders seeking to overturn the institution of slavery, and that for a very good reason. Political circumstances and economic conditions were such in that ancient, pagan world that those in bondage as slaves to Christian masters were in a far better position than they could possibly have been if they had been freed and turned out to shift for themselves. But gradually throughout the centuries that followed as the nations received the gospel, the slaves were freed. Slavery was an accepted economic condition when Paul wrote to Timothy, and many of the early Christians were under bondage. So when the Apostle speaks of "servants" here, it is not hired servants as such that he has in mind, but "as many servants as are under the yoke."

He exhorts these slaves to contentment. One might say that they had very little with which to be contented, but Paul would have them able to say as he himself did, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content" (Phil. 4:11). He found that Christ was sufficient for all circumstances, and, thank God, it is just as true today! We live in a time of great restlessness. Consider the strife between capital and labor with which our own

nation is confronted. We never would have to face anything like this if Christian principles prevailed between the employer and the employee. But the spirit dominant generally is that of every man for himself, each attempting to get all he can for himself and to give as little work as possible in return. Christian men and women should be careful to follow the spirit of the admonition given here, "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."

A Christian employee should not be content to give less than honest work for the payment he receives, and he should look up to and respect those whom he serves. If it happens that he is working for a Christian, then he is not to take advantage of the fact that both are members of the body of Christ. They "that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren." It is so easy to expect more than one has a right to demand because the one who employs him is a Christian. The fact that both are Christians is not to change the attitude of the employee into one of self-will and independence of spirit, but should rather lead each to be considerate of the other. The very fact that the employer is also a believer is one reason why the other should do his part faithfully and give the very best possible service for the money he is receiving, "because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit. These things teach and exhort."

Paul next draws attention to the fact that what he has just said is in full accord with the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ, who Himself took the servants place. He said, "I am among you as He that serveth" (**Luke 22:27**). He warned His disciples against all self-seeking. He said, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called

benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve" (**Luke 22:25-26**). He also said that He "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:28). When He found His disciples disputing among themselves as to who should be greatest He said, "Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant" (Matt. 20:27). And so the Apostle says here, "If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is proud, knowing nothing."

Where do we find the words of our Lord Jesus Christ? In the four Gospels. To me it is a shocking thing when Christian teachers seem to relegate to a former dispensation the practical instruction given by the Lord while He was on earth as though it had no weight for Christians today. What the Lord Jesus Christ taught when He was here in person ought to guide us in our behavior one toward another and in our attitude toward God. I have often heard it said that the Sermon on the Mount is not for Christians. Undoubtedly, it was given primarily to the remnant of Israel, God's earthly people. It is instruction for the Jewish disciples of Christ while waiting for the setting up of the kingdom. But on the other hand we should not overlook the fact that the Lord Jesus said that "every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it" (Matt. 7:26-27). But, "whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: and the rain

descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock” (Matt. 7:24-25). The *whosoever* here is just as universal as the *whosoever* in **John 3:16**. Our Lord was speaking to His people throughout all the years while waiting for His return from heaven.

If a man denies the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, “he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions [sick about questions].” Have you ever met any of these people who were sick about questions? They take one or two little points and are always hammering away on them. No matter what text they start with when they attempt to preach they always come back to their favorite theme. They get their minds fixed on some peculiar views and cannot seem to consider anything else.

I remember an old man when I was a lad who would rise to speak at every opportunity. He had only one topic, and that was that Judas was not present at the Lord’s Supper. No matter what the subject under discussion might be he would break in with: “Brethren, I want to show you that Judas was not present at the Lord’s Supper.” We got so tired of it that we dreaded to see or hear him. I do not believe that Judas was at the Lord’s Supper, but I would hate to have no other topic except that about which to talk.

Notice this expression: “Doting [or sick] about questions.” It is a great mistake to get one or two things in the mind and constantly dwell upon them. As a result of this there comes “envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings [quarrellings] of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself.”

If these malcontents can show that they have a number of

adherents they are convinced that the Lord is with them: “From such,” the Apostle says, “withdraw thyself.”

“But godliness with contentment is great gain.” We have already seen in going through this epistle that *godliness* is literally “godlikeness”—that is, *true piety*. Godliness is great gain. We have received blessings, temporal and spiritual, from God, and our hearts should be going out to Him in gratitude. We should not be characterized by a spirit of restlessness. It is this spirit that dominates men of the world. You have heard of the Quaker who wanted to teach a lesson to his neighbors. So he had a large sign put up on a vacant lot next to his house, and on the sign he had these words painted: “I will give the deed to this lot to anyone who is absolutely contented.” Any applicant was directed to apply next door. There was a man living in that community who had great wealth, and he drove by, saw the sign, stopped, and said to himself, “My old Quaker friend wants to give away his lot to anyone who is absolutely contented. If there is anyone in the community that ought to be contented it is I. I have everything I could wish for.” So he went to the Quaker’s house and knocked on the door.

The Quaker came to the door, and the man said, “I see you want to give that lot to anyone who is contented.”

“Yes,” said the Quaker.

“I think I can say that I am absolutely contented,” the man said. “I will be glad if you will make the deed out to me.”

“Friend, if thee is contented, what does thee want with my lot?” the Quaker asked.

This spirit of covetousness is noticeable in men of the

world. The Jewish Talmud says that man is born with his hands clenched, but he dies with his hands wide open. Coming into the world he is trying to grasp everything, but going out he has to give up everything.

“For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich [they that are characterized by covetousness, who are determined to be rich, who make that their one great object in life] fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil.” It should read, “a root of all evil.”

There are some men who do not love money and yet are the victims of many other evil passions. But what the Apostle is telling us here is that once the love of money finds lodgment in the heart of man every known evil may be grafted on to it.

Years ago when I was in California I was setting out a small orchard, and the nurseryman who sold me some fruit trees said to me, “You have a great many gophers. It is going to be hard to keep the ground clear of them. But,” he said, “I’ll give you some trees that are grafted on bitter peach roots. The gophers will not touch these.”

So he brought the trees grafted onto the bitter peach roots. I had quite a little orchard: cherries, several kinds of plums, two or three kinds of apricots, several kinds of peaches, almonds, and so forth, but they were all grafted onto the bitter peach roots. As I saw them being planted I thought of this text, “The love of money is *a* root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many

sorrows.”

So let us thank God for the grace that He has given us through Jesus Christ our Lord and has put within our hearts the desire to glorify Him. “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” (**Rom. 8:32**). God gladly gives to the one who has already received His Son. Just as the love of money in the heart is a root of all evil, so when the love of Christ comes into the heart, everything good may be grafted onto that.

Chapter 14 The Life That Really Counts

1 Timothy

Henry Allen Ironside

1 Timothy 6:11-21

But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. 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. 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; that thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: which in his times he shall show, who 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: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen. 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; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life. O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: which some professing have erred concerning the faith. Grace be with thee. Amen. (vv. 11-21)

In this particular section we have three definite charges

given to Timothy personally, and one which he is to pass on to others. But we may well take to ourselves the charges given to him as well as the less particular one. We read, "But thou, O man of God, flee these things." This naturally leads us to ask what things are referred to. So we have to go back in our thoughts to that verse where we were warned against ignoring the words of our Lord Jesus Christ as set forth in the four Gospels and where we were urged not to give way to perverse disputings, and the verses that follow in which we are warned above all else to avoid covetousness because the love of money is a root of every evil.

Paul says to Timothy, "O man of God, flee these things." This expression "man of God" is used on a number of occasions in both the Old and New Testaments, and it always seems to mean the man who stands for God in a day of declension. Some of the prophets of old are so designated. Timothy here is spoken of as "man of God." And I am sure that you and I who know and love the Lord long to merit that appellation, to be men and women who honor God in a day when so many ignore or rebel against Him.

The man of God is told to flee covetousness, selfishness, and perverse disputings. He is to "follow after righteousness," which has to do with our attitude toward our fellow men. It is a vain thing to profess to be justified before God and made the righteousness of God in Christ while acting unrighteously toward others. The Christian is to be characterized by righteousness in all his dealings. "Godliness" has to do with our attitude toward God. "Faith" is that confidence in God which enables us ever to count on Him. "Love"—that love which goes out first to the One who loved us and gave His Son to die for us and then to all for whom He died. "Patience"—that patience

which enables one to endure as seeing Him who is invisible. Then “meekness,” which is the very opposite of the pride, vanity, and self-satisfaction that are so common to the natural heart. Meekness is a plant of great rarity. Even in many who have a reputation for godliness and for expounding the Word there is very little evidence of meekness. May God give us to become increasingly like Him who said, “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” (Matt. 11:29).

“Fight the good fight of faith.” We are to be good soldiers. Timothy primarily, but all believers are called upon to fight the good fight of faith. It is interesting to note that in the next epistle when we come to the last chapter which was written by Paul in a prison cell while waiting for martyrdom, he says, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith” (**2 Tim. 4:7**). He did not ask others to do that which he himself had not done.

“Lay hold on eternal life.” Does not every believer possess eternal life? Yes. The moment we put our trust in the Lord Jesus Christ we have eternal life. There are many Scripture passages to support this, but a few will suffice:

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

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. (**John 3:14-15**)

He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he

that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him. (**John 3:36**)

So eternal life is the present portion of all believers. What does the Apostle mean, then, when he says, “Lay hold on eternal life”? It is an exhortation to make it a practical thing as we go through this scene. It is quite possible to trust in Christ and thus to have eternal life in the soul, and yet to drop down to a low spiritual level where one is not living in the reality of eternal life. He exhorts everyone of us to enter into that life which is unworldly and heavenly in character. When in this scene, Christ Himself was the manifestation of eternal life. It is a poor thing to talk about having eternal life while living for the things of the world. “Lay hold on eternal life!” As I realize that my life is hid with Christ in God I will look very lightly upon the things of this world. Its pleasures will not attract me; its treasures will not possess my soul. I can go through this world as using without abusing the things God gives me. Knowing Him, who to know is life eternal, everything else is of little importance. Thus one may lay hold on eternal life.

“Whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.” That was a nice thing for the older preacher to say to the younger. Paul took Timothy with him when he was a mere lad and instructed him in the work of the gospel. As he looks back over the years of service he can say, “You have confessed [for in place of the word *professed* we should read *confessed*] a good confession before many witnesses.” It was a nice thing to be able to say to a younger servant of Christ. May it be true of every one of us!

A very definite charge was committed to Timothy in verses 13-14. “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; that thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.” This is a very solemn charge indeed, and it should come home to everyone of us. We are commanded to keep the truth of God: “That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Our Savior Himself was a Confessor when here on earth, and we are called to follow Him in confessing His name.

Observe how the name of Pontius Pilate is brought in here. Have you ever noticed that Pontius Pilate is mentioned in the greatest of the Christian creeds, so that in thousands of churches all over this world every Lord’s Day, and on many other occasions, the name of the governor of Judea, who condemned our Savior to death, is linked with our Lord’s name? He had the power to free the Lord Jesus Christ, and he said, “I find no fault in this man” (**Luke 23:4**). But instead of freeing Him, Pilate turned Him over to the multitude to be crucified. So professing Christians recite the creed, “Jesus Christ crucified under Pontius Pilate.” Pilate will face that for all eternity. Oh, my friends, see that your confession is real in regard to the Lord Jesus Christ, that thus your name will never be held up to eternal infamy because of your unfaithfulness.

Our blessed Lord made a good confession before Pontius Pilate. He did not hold back the truth even though He knew it meant the cross because He was going there for your salvation and for mine. We, too, are called upon to maintain a good confession. “That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.” This will be the great

climax for believers when everything will be manifested, and they will be rewarded according to the results of their faithfulness down here. There is no discharge in this war (**Eccl. 8:8**). We are enlisted for life, or until we meet our Lord when He returns in power and glory. Then each one will be rewarded according to the measure of his devotedness to Christ and subjection to His Word.

Notice what is said in connection with His second coming: “Which in his times he shall show, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords.” That is a striking expression. He is going to be manifested in His own times—those times we believe are drawing very, very near. It seems to many of us as we read Scripture carefully and then notice what is going on in the church, in the world, and in connection with Israel, God’s earthly people, that the times of the Gentiles are near the close, and these will be followed by “his times” when He Himself will be the blessed and only Potentate.

That word *blessed* might just as well be rendered *happy*. When the Lord reigns, the earth will see a happy Ruler. I do not think there is any happy potentate now. I am sure the kings of Europe and in other lands are far from happy, nor are presidents of republics in any more cheerful state. No, there are no happy potentates today. They are so hampered by conflicting principles and contesting political parties that they find themselves almost helpless to carry out the things which they believe are for the betterment of the nations. But when the Lord Jesus Christ reigns He will be a happy Potentate, because in Him the world will see One who not only has the desire to do good, but also the power to enforce His authority everywhere; He will rule the nations with the iron rod of righteousness. When He reigns there will be no one to dispute His Word, for He will be the only Potentate. All the

kingdoms of this world will become the kingdom of God and of His Christ.

In the next verse we read that He “only hath immortality.” That is, He is the source or fount of immortality. All others derive it from Him. He dwells “in the light which no man can approach unto,” in the full blaze of Deity, for “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all” (**1 John 1:5**). No mortal eye can stand that light. Only they who are in Christ can abide in its presence in peace. “Honour and power everlasting” are His, and it is He who in grace has opened up to sinners the gates of life.

Immortality in Scripture is connected with the body. Our blessed Lord Jesus Christ had a body that was not subject to death. It was possible for Him to die only by divine authority. He said concerning His life, “No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father” (**John 10:18**). And so in that body which came back from the dead at His own command, He sits at the right hand of the Father. He only has immortality, but at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ all believers will be raised or changed and will be gathered together unto Himself. “Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see.” Deity is invisible to creatures.

Then we have the charge which Timothy was to lay upon those to whom he ministered, and which comes home very definitely to any today who are in such circumstances that these words really apply to them: “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.”

This is a message to all those to whom God has entrusted wealth. You have nothing you did not receive. You are not a superior people because you have a few more dollars than some others, or because you are able to buy a few more stocks and bonds. Everything you have is by the mercy of God. Do not forget that riches may be here today and gone tomorrow. During the great depression of 1929 I met people every day who were rich one day and poor the next. People went to bed in those days thinking they were well-off for the rest of their lives, but they woke up the next morning to find that the bottom had dropped out of the market, and they had lost everything.

Even if riches are gotten rightly they may be lost overnight, but if they are riches ill-gotten—well, Scripture says, “As the partridge sitteth on eggs, and hatcheth them not; so he that getteth riches, and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a fool” (**Jer. 17:11**). So if I am addressing anybody today who is piling up riches obtained unrighteously, I would suggest that you straighten things up as soon as you can. Take the place of Zacchaeus when he said, “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold” (**Luke 19:8**). We are told to “trust... in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.” It is wonderful how happy one can be with very little if he has the Lord. Like the dear old lady who, when someone came to see her in her little attic, was found sitting down to a lunch of an onion, a piece of bread, and a glass of water. The visitor started to commiserate, “Oh,” she said, “I have all this and heaven too.” We are immensely wealthy if we have Christ.

Observe Paul’s advice to the rich: “That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to

communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.” As we have it here, the expression “eternal life” is just the same as that in verse 12. That is, “Lay hold on eternal life,” which we have already received. But in the Greek text a different word is used, and why the translators did not indicate this I do not know. But the exact rendering should be “that they may lay hold on that which is *really* life.”

You see, the rich man imagines, when he enjoys all the pleasures that his wealth can give him that he is seeing life, that he is having a good time. As he passes his hours in pleasure, he says, “This is life!” The Apostle says that is not life at all; that is just death. If you want to see life, if you want to enjoy life at its very best, then use what God has committed to your trust for the blessing of others. If you really want to be happy, and you are sure you know the Lord, if you have come to Him and taken your place before Him as a lost, guilty sinner, and trusted Him as your Savior, if you have passed from death unto life, then I can tell you what to do, not on my own authority, but as it is given here in the Word of God: begin today and use what God has given you for the blessing of others. Try to think of people in need who could be benefited by what you have hoarded away. Ask God to guide you as to using your money to the good of others that you may be rich in good works.

If a man is rich only in stocks, bonds, and real estate, when he dies he will have to leave it all behind. But if he is rich in good works, when he dies he will take these with him—that is treasure laid up in heaven. Be ready to distribute when opportunity is given, to use of your means for furthering the work of the Lord, assisting the needy, helping the lepers, relieving the blind, and caring

for the orphans. Be ready to give. Do not hold back or say, “Oh, well, I suppose I ought to do it.” Be glad that God has enabled you to help, and be willing to give. If you use your money in that way you will be laying up in store a good foundation against the time to come, for this is real life.

It is a terrible thing to be in the grip of covetousness. If you are afraid that perhaps the love of money is getting a hold on your soul, start giving some of it away and see how you feel! If you feel really glad, then you are still safe, but if it almost breaks your heart, then it is time to get down on your knees and pray to be freed from this sin of covetousness! It is going to ruin you unless you are delivered from it.

In closing we have another charge to Timothy—and it is one for us all—against being taken up with false theories. Many of these are being promulgated today, and we need to be guarded against them. “O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called.” Science is knowledge arranged in an orderly way. It is not mere theory unsupported by facts. When people talk about the science of evolution, they misuse the word, for evolution is not a science because it is contrary to fact. When they talk of certain other sciences which deny the truth of the Bible, they are using the word in a wrong way. A hypothesis is one thing; science is another.

“Keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: which some professing have erred concerning the faith.” These false theories turn people away from the simplicity of the gospel of Christ and leave

important to give heed to such admonitions than in this day when science is glorified and revelation is denied.
