

- The Apostle Paul (Saul in Hebrew) was the foremost evangelist of the early church and probably in all church history
  - He was appointed by Christ to bring the Gospel to the Gentiles, which was no small task
    - A Jewish Messiah held little attraction for a pagan, Greek society
    - And even Paul's own fellow apostles were opposed to the idea, at least at first
  - Nevertheless, Paul preached the Good News faithfully, and his ministry bore extraordinary fruit by the grace of Christ
    - Paul founded or grew major churches in numerous Gentile cities across the Roman empire, including Antioch, Troas, Berea, Philippi, Corinth, Thessalonica, Ephesus, Colossi and others
    - Paul made a total of 4 journeys including his final trip to Rome
    - And one of Paul's most loyal companions was a young convert named Timothy
  - Paul often worked alone, but not because he was a loner
    - In fact, Paul commonly sought other men to accompany him on his long journeys
    - Men like Luke, Barnabas, Mark and others worked with Paul, giving him support and encouragement in the face of many trials
    - Some of these men worked with Paul for a time but later departed from Paul
    - A few even turned against Paul and caused him much grief
- But only one of them has books of scripture named after him: Timothy
  - Paul met Timothy while on his second missionary journey as he ministered in Lystra
    - We read about that moment in Acts 16

**Acts 16:1** Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. And a disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek,

**Acts 16:2** and he was well spoken of by the brethren who were in Lystra and Iconium.

**Acts 16:3** Paul wanted this man to go with him; and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those parts, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.

- Lystra was located about 100 miles north of the Mediterranean Sea in modern-day Turkey
- When Paul arrived, the church was already present and growing
- And one of the up and coming converts was a young Timothy
- Timothy's background was of a mixed heritage

- He had a Greek father but a Jewish mother
- Mixed marriages were more common outside Judea
- Nevertheless, Timothy's mother and grandmother were devout Jews who raised Timothy in the faith
- Notably however, Timothy was not circumcised as a child
- This issue became a concern for Paul, who wanted Timothy to join him on his missionary journeys
  - Paul desired a companion who could move freely between Jewish and Gentile worlds acting as an ambassador for Christ
    - Timothy was an ideal candidate, since he was the son of a Greek father and was raised in Greek society
    - Yet Timothy was also raised with Jewish traditions and could operate within Jewish culture effortlessly
  - But Timothy's lack of circumcision rendered him unapproachable among the Jews
    - So for that reason, Paul asked that if Timothy were to accompany Paul, he must be circumcised
    - Timothy consented, which was no small thing in a time without anaesthesia
    - That was an early indication that Timothy was a special man
- Timothy proved himself to Paul over the course of several years
  - Timothy eventually assisted Paul on several journeys and in many places
    - Timothy was with Paul in Troas, Philippi, Berea, Thessalonica, Athens, and Corinth
    - He also accompanied Paul on his third missionary journey as well, where he ministered with Paul in Ephesus
    - While on that journey, Paul dispatched Timothy alone to Macedonia, where he proved himself an effective evangelist
  - Paul eventually joined Timothy in Macedonia before the two then traveled together to Corinth and eventually back to Ephesus and Troas
    - Elsewhere in Paul's letters we also hear of Timothy with Paul in Rome and Philippi
    - After his first imprisonment, Paul left Timothy in Ephesus permanently to lead the church
    - Paul did this likely knowing that his own ministry was coming to an end
- This letter along with Paul's second letter to Timothy and his letter to another church leader, Titus, have collectively been titled the Pastoral Epistles
  - But that term is misleading and even unhelpful
    - Paul's occasion for writing these letters was less about training up pastors and more about the Church's need for discipline and self-sacrifice
    - First and foremost, Paul is speaking to Timothy, who seemed uncomfortable

- and even unhappy in his role as pastor
- Paul asks Timothy to make personal sacrifices in service to Christ
- To forgo the life of a traveling evangelist that Timothy obviously sought after, so he could set an example of persistence, diligence and perseverance
- Secondly, Paul looks past the leader and speaks to the congregation as a whole about subjecting personal needs for the needs of the body
  - Paul addresses leaders, husbands, wives and children demanding godliness, submission to authority, and respect for others
  - In all these things Paul appeals to the church on the basis of Christ's example, so that we not think ourselves better than we ought
- Nevertheless, the three letters of 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus are very similar in theme
  - 1Timothy covers the demands of life in the body of Christ and the requirements for church leadership
  - Titus focuses only on the requirements for leadership
  - While 2Timothy focuses only on the life of the body
  - In that sense, 1Timothy is the most general of the three letters
- Most importantly, they all focus on something Paul calls the "mystery of godliness"
  - The term refers to the means of godliness, Christ, taught and lived out
  - Church leaders must teach the truth of Christ, defend the truth of Christ and model it in their lives
  - While the church body must receive the truth of godliness in Christ, obeying that truth and witnessing to it
- Moving to the letter itself, Paul begins his letter by establishing his prophetic authority as he usually did in his letters

**1Tim. 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus according to the commandment of God our Savior, and of Christ Jesus, who is our hope,**

**1Tim. 1:2 To Timothy, my true child in the faith: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.**

- Paul's opening is a familiar one to Bible students
  - Paul names himself and declares his title as an apostle of the Lord
    - An apostle is a special office limited to a handful of men who lived in the first century
    - Apostles were commissioned by a personal appearing of Jesus Christ, either before or after His death and resurrection
    - Obviously, Paul was commissioned after Jesus was resurrected when he encountered Jesus on the road to Damascus
  - We see the uniqueness of the apostolic office reflected in Paul's salutation when he

declares he is an apostle by the commandment of God

- God our Savior commanded that Paul be an apostle
- Paul goes further to name Christ Jesus separately
- So God the Father chose Paul as an apostle and God the Son appeared to reveal the news to Paul
- But the word “commandment” is particularly interesting
  - It reminds us of Jesus’ words in Acts when Paul was blinded

**Acts 9:15** But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel;

**Acts 9:16** for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name’s sake.”

- Paul didn’t apply to become an apostle
- Nor did Jesus send Paul an invitation
- It was a command of God that Paul serve and suffer in this way
- Paul addressed his letter to Timothy, who Paul calls his true child in the faith
  - In the early church, it was commonly to refer to someone being a “child in the faith” to another believer
    - To be a child in faith or a father in faith simply referred to someone we brought to faith or who brought us to faith
    - So in this case, Paul is saying that he led Timothy to faith, and therefore Timothy was his child in the faith
  - Paul extends his customary greeting of grace and peace to Timothy
    - But Paul adds mercy to his greeting in this letter and his second letter to Timothy
    - The traditional Jewish greeting was mercy and peace, so Paul includes the extra word for his Jewish friend
- Then Paul moves quickly to his first major point of the letter

**1Tim. 1:3** As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus so that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines,

**1Tim. 1:4** nor to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies, which give rise to mere speculation rather than furthering the administration of God which is by faith.

**1Tim. 1:5** But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.

**1Tim. 1:6** For some men, straying from these things, have turned aside to fruitless discussion,

**1Tim. 1:7** wanting to be teachers of the Law, even though they do not understand

**either what they are saying or the matters about which they make confident assertions.**

- After Paul left Timothy in Ephesus and continued his journey to Macedonia, it seems Timothy became anxious to return to the road with Paul
  - Paul had urged Timothy to stay behind, which may indicate Timothy was reluctant to assume a local pastoral role
    - Maybe Timothy didn't feel cut out for pastoral work
    - Maybe he just enjoyed Paul's company or liked itinerant ministry
    - Perhaps it was a bit of everything, but whatever the reason Paul had to convince Timothy to stay
  - Since then Timothy has written back to Paul it seems, asking if he can leave his post to rejoin Paul in Macedonia
    - This is Paul's response to Timothy
    - Paul refused Timothy's request
    - Then he gives Timothy encouragement and advice to stay the course in his new pastoral role in Ephesus
- Paul says he left Timothy behind because Paul knew bad men were coming to Ephesus
  - And these bad men (certain men) were going to teach strange doctrines
    - A single Greek word is translated "teach strange doctrines"
    - It means to advocate a different truth
    - Anything that departs from what is prescribed by the Spirit is strange or different than the truth
  - In Timothy's day the church in Ephesus was probably little more than an association of house churches meeting under humble circumstances
    - These churches were supervised by elders, older men who had some experience in the faith and the character to lead others
    - Timothy was not an elder; he seems to have been a pastor serving in one or more of these house churches
    - The role of pastor was not a position of leadership so much as one of service to the body in shepherding
  - Nevertheless, Paul clearly had high expectations for Timothy
    - Paul expected Timothy to defend the flock despite his youth and inexperience
    - Much like a young David was expected to defend the flock from wolves
- Here we find one of the major themes of this letter: guarding against false doctrine
  - Any teaching that departs from the true doctrines of the faith as revealed in scripture is false and should not be heard
    - Notice Paul asks Timothy to instruct those who are spreading false teaching to

cease doing so

- Paul doesn't tell Timothy to debate them nor to counsel them
- The first order of business was to silence the false teaching
- This is an very politically incorrect tactic today, since we try to avoid confrontation under any circumstances
  - Frankly, it's amazing how much contradictory teaching takes place in the church
  - Churches often tolerate teaching on multiple, contradictory perspectives within the body on major doctrines of the faith
- It's not uncommon to find various Bible studies taking place simultaneously in the same building teaching opposite views of eschatology, gifts of the Spirit, marriage, church leadership, etc.
  - This tolerance is usually explained either as an effort to "educate" the body on the spectrum of interpretive views in the church
  - Or especially in the case of prophecy, opposing views to share the pulpit because we assume that certainty is unattainable
- Paul doesn't seem to share these concerns, because his first concern was to silence strange doctrine in the church
  - And of course we apply this approach in every other academic pursuit
    - What would a history department chair say to a professor who taught his students that the Holocaust never happened because he preferred that viewpoint?
    - Or what would a science department chair say to a teacher to taught that the earth was flat because many people still held this view?
    - Would the department chairs set up a debate between the two positions in the spirit of fairness?
    - Would the chair agree that the truth can't be known with certainty?
    - Would the department tolerate the alternative perspectives just to avoid division?
  - Yet in the church, we often respond to false or strange teaching in these ways but Paul says we shouldn't
    - The sources for false teaching should be silenced by the church leadership
    - Of course, if the people teaching are teachable, then we should also educate them from scripture on the correct interpretations
    - But under no circumstances should we permit the body to be confused by contradictory teaching we know to be false
- In the case of Ephesus, the strange teaching was a common culprit in the early church
  - In v.4 Paul describes the false teaching as involving myths and endless genealogies
    - Myths could refer to almost anything, of course

- But Paul also mentions endless genealogies
- And in v.7 he mentioned the men teaching strange doctrines were men who wanted to be teachers of the Law
- Putting all these together, a picture comes into focus
  - Certain men, probably leaders and possibly elders in the church, were introducing Jewish heresy into their teaching
  - The myths may have been Jewish myth surrounding the Messiah or other prophecies
  - And genealogies were probably popular Jewish mythologies invented about obscure biblical characters
  - These were the ear-tickling teachings of Paul's day, and they had gained an audience in Ephesus through the influence of these men
- These men and their teaching were not furthering the administration of God which is by faith
  - The word administration in v.4 could also be translated plan
  - Paul's referring to the plan of salvation, which is by faith alone
  - But men in the church were teaching in a way that didn't further this plan
  - At best this teaching was a distraction from understanding the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ
  - And at worst these teachers were misrepresenting salvation, substituting a works salvation or salvation through Jewish roots
- Instead, Paul wants Timothy to ensure the church received better teaching by meeting three tests Paul gives in v.5
  - First, the teaching should come from a pure heart
    - A pure heart refers to our intentions toward our students
    - A pure heart is one that genuinely desires to share the truth for the benefit of the student
    - The teacher isn't attempting to manipulate his audience or hurt an opponent
    - A pure heart has the best interests of the students in mind
  - Secondly, the teaching comes from a good conscience
    - A good conscience refers to teacher's motives for teaching
    - A good conscience doesn't teach seeking fame and fortune
    - A good conscience seeks to serve God, to share knowledge and to further the kingdom
  - Finally, teaching must be accompanied by a sincere faith
    - Sincere faith refers to a genuine born-again relationship with Christ by His Spirit
    - It also refers to operating by faith in seeking to know scripture by the counsel of the Holy Spirit

- Teachers that lack sincerity of faith are either unbelievers
- Or they are believers working in their flesh, absent of God-given insight
- We can safely assume these qualities were lacking in the certain men Paul mentions
  - They were teaching with false motives, corrupt conscience and absent sincere faith
    - At best they were misguided, carnal Christians with egos inflated by positions of authority in the church
    - Or at worst they were unbelieving wolves in sheep's clothing deceiving the flock
    - Either way, they needed to be silenced
  - And we need to apply these same three tests against our teachers
    - If a teacher offers intriguing biblical insight but stirs up division and controversy, walk away
    - If a teacher is diligent and scholarly but ambitious for attention and wealth, steer clear
    - And if a teacher's life lacks sincerity of faith, beware
  - When these things are lacking, it's like a boat has lost its anchor in a storm as Paul says in vs.6-7
    - Paul says when men stray from these things, they turn aside
    - The Greek term for "turn aside" literally means to put something out of joint
    - Imagine a long distance runner whose hip suddenly pops out of joint
    - The runner couldn't move properly much less continue the course
    - They must turn aside, leave the path
- This is a serious moment in a spiritual life
  - Turning aside is much more than simply becoming confused or distracted
    - The idea in the New Testament always implies a wandering away from walking with the Lord
    - Not losing salvation, for that is not possible
    - But still a serious impediment to obtaining a good testimony as we'll see shortly
  - These men turned aside to fruitless discussion
    - We could also translate that phrase as empty talk
    - It's a complete waste of time, and if there is one thing Christians can't afford to waste, it's time
    - Our time is precious, since it's the most powerful resource we have to honor and serve the Lord
    - As Paul says in Romans 12

**Rom. 12:1 Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual**



**service of worship.**

- In v.7 we see where they went wrong...they didn't possess pure hearts or good consciences
  - They wanted to be teachers of the Law
  - A teacher of the Law is a term describing a position of authority and power
  - Among Jews, the term would be Rabbi
  - Today, we might say professor, except in that day the term was one of significant authority
- These men were motivated in their teaching by prestige and authority, which meant they didn't possess a pure heart or pure conscience
  - Their hearts were not directed at the good of their students
  - And their conscience was polluted by selfish desires
- Perhaps most importantly, they lacked sincere faith concerning the things they taught, as we see at the end of v.7
  - Paul says they didn't even understand the things they taught though they made confident assertions
    - A person working in sincerity of faith will be bound by the Spirit in his teaching
    - Sincere faith doesn't assure us perfect understanding of scripture
    - But it does guard us against making confident assertions about things we know we don't understand yet
  - But when your motives are corrupted and your conscience is compromised, you don't worry about such things
    - Which reminds us that sincerity is never a substitute for insight
    - Confidence and sincerity doesn't equal accuracy, and many false teachers are confident and sincere...sincerely wrong
    - Ironically, many good teachers take caution with their conclusions, not wishing to be arrogant or over confident in their interpretations
    - So if we judge teachers on sincerity or confidence, we're likely to follow the wrong person at times
    - Always inspect a teacher's motive, conscience and faith
- Having exposed the false motives of these men, Paul can't resist also taking a swipe at their teaching

**1Tim. 1:8 But we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully,**

**1Tim. 1:9 realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous person, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers**

**1Tim. 1:10 and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and**

**perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching,**  
**1Tim. 1:11 according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, with which I have been entrusted.**

- These teachers were teaching on the Law given to Israel, and Paul makes clear his problem with their teaching is not with the Law itself
  - The Law is good, meaning study of it is profitable, provided it is used lawfully, that is in the way God intended
    - The Law served a certain purpose for Israel as part of their Old Covenant
    - And it serves a different yet complimentary purpose for those in the New Covenant
    - For Israel, it defined and secured the nation as God intended
    - And for the NT believer, it explains the mission of our Messiah
  - But when we cross those purposes, we depart from a lawful use of the Law
    - Specifically, we err if we teach NT believers they must live as if they were under the Old Covenant instead
    - Requiring believers to observe the Law is using the Law unlawfully
  - To prove his point, Paul explains that the key function of the Law both for Israel and for the believer today was to expose sin
    - In v.9 Paul says the law was not made for the righteous person
    - He's referring to the essential quality of any Law
    - Laws exist to define and expose unrighteousness
    - There is no need for Law among the righteous, since they do nothing wrong
- Righteousness and unrighteousness are not terms that describe behavior so much as nature
  - Righteousness is the absence of sin while unrighteousness is the absence of perfection
    - We are unrighteous by nature, and this remains true whether we are currently engaged in any sin at the moment
    - Even at rest, we are unrighteous
    - When we sin, we are acting out of our unrighteous nature
  - Those who are unrighteousness benefit from living under Law, because by that Law we come to see how we live in unrighteous ways
    - We note that our behavior departs from the Law
    - And that departure is a measuring stick of our unrighteousness
    - Our unrighteousness was always there, but the Law helped us quantify it in a sense
  - So Paul takes this truth and turns it back upon the very men who desired to be

teachers of the Law

- Paul says the Law is meant for those who practice lawlessness
  - The Law acts as constraint on their evil
  - And Paul lists a number of particularly serious sins as example
  - But clearly, Paul chose the harshest examples to make an association with these men
- In effect, Paul was saying that if these men wanted to be associated with the Law, let that association be in the way God intended
  - Specifically, let the Law reveal the truth about these men's hearts
    - They are lawless and rebellious men
    - Though they desired to show themselves as better than others by their supposed expertise in the Law and their piety in keeping it...
    - Let the the Law show they are no better than other ungodly sinners
  - They are like the unholy and profane, the sexually immoral, the dishonest and violent
    - Ironically, Paul throws these teachers in with the worst of the law breakers
    - They used the Law to make themselves superior which was never the purpose of the Law
    - The chief purpose of the Law was to convict sin where it existed, and these men should have felt conviction, not pride, in what they taught
- Notice how Paul ends his rogues gallery with anything contrary to sound teaching
  - With that statement, Paul equates the work of these teachers with the other terrible sins
    - Do we need any further proof of how Paul viewed false teaching in the church?
    - And this perspective is not Paul's alone
  - Peter, Jude and Jesus Himself also criticized false teachers in equally harsh terms
    - While we've generally softened our criticism of teaching contrary to scripture, scripture itself roundly condemns it
    - Anything teaching of salvation that is contrary to the truth is an expression of unrighteousness equal to the other sins on that list
  - In v.11 Paul says what's at risk is the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ that he preached
    - The gospel of Jesus Christ is the only truth, the only message in the universe that carried the power to bring eternal life
    - So how dangerous is that thing that would undermine the message?
    - And so Paul has positioned himself on opposite sides from these men
  - In summary, Paul is commanding that teachers of scripture must endeavor to teach the word as God revealed it

- It must be taught from a motive of love and a sincere desire to communicate what God intended
- This is especially true when presenting portions of scripture by itself, including larger portions like the Law
- Every verse, passage, chapter and book of scripture must be taught in light of the overall message of scripture
- To do otherwise is to misuse scripture, misrepresent the truth and possibly join that rogue's gallery
- Now Paul had his own history of contrary teaching and behavior
  - Paul knew that history could be used against him by these false teachers in defending themselves from his charges
    - So Paul preempts those accusations in vs.12-17

**1Tim. 1:12** I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service,

**1Tim. 1:13** even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief;

**1Tim. 1:14** and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus.

**1Tim. 1:15** It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all.

**1Tim. 1:16** Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life.

**1Tim. 1:17** Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

- Paul acknowledges he too once taught wrongly against the very Gospel he now cherishes
  - He was formerly a blasphemer, speaking against Jesus
  - And he was a persecutor and violent aggressor
  - We remember in Acts 8 that Saul was an instigator of Stephen's death and probably many more
- Paul had to deal with this inconvenient truth during his ministry, and yet it was also his most powerful defense
  - Paul's history validated the earnestness of his confession
  - Paul gave up everything he valued to join the side he once persecuted
  - There was no earthly explanation for Paul's about-face except that the message of the Gospel was true
- At the same time, Paul's past was a frequently used tool of his critics to discredit him

- How could the church trust the teaching of a murderer, they would ask?
- Therefore, Paul was forced time and again to explain how the Lord could use one such as himself
- As we see in this passage, Paul was also honest and humble about his past
  - He admitted his crimes, for how could he deny them?
    - Nevertheless, the Lord forgave Paul and showed him mercy
    - Obviously, Paul was shown mercy on the same basis as all believers: by his faith in Christ
    - At the end of v.13 and into v.14, Paul states clearly that he was rescued by grace though he was a great sinner
  - So on the question of Paul's guilt, he acknowledges his past, but then so must his critics acknowledge that Paul has been made righteous by faith
    - Paul was saved like all people
    - Paul was a sinner needing God's grace
    - He's simply like the rest of us
  - But Paul is moving toward a larger question
    - Why did the Lord select someone who persecuted the church to receive such a position of honor in the church?
    - Paul's answer is he acted in ignorance
    - Paul is not suggesting his sins were forgiven because he was ignorant
    - He's saying his opportunity to assume high office was not jeopardized by his crimes, because those crimes were committed prior to faith
- Paul's role as persecutor and blasphemer predated his knowledge of God in faith, and therefore he couldn't have been expected to be any different
  - Paul blasphemed against Christ and he persecuted the Church out of unbelief, therefore, those past actions didn't disqualify him from serving God
    - How could anyone serve God if our resistance to God prior to faith were grounds for disqualification?
    - Our qualification for service to God is measured by who we are and what we do following faith
  - Paul is inferring something about the men he opposes in Ephesus
    - The false teachers can't rest on the same excuse for their false teaching
    - They understand the Gospel, and therefore they are not ignorant
    - Yet they continue to teach error
    - So ironically Paul's critics accuse him of having disqualified himself by what he did prior to faith even as they disqualify themselves after faith
- Finally, Paul explains why the Lord chose someone like him to serve the Church
  - Paul says so that God could use him as an example to other believers

- Breaking it down, Paul says “in me as the foremost”
- He’s referring back to his earlier comment about being the foremost sinner
- The word foremost doesn’t mean the greatest, for who can call themselves the greatest sinner?
- In a way, calling yourself the greatest sinner would be a sin in itself, since it would be a boastful statement
- The word in Greek means more prominent, as in the person standing first in line so that you can’t see who is behind that person
  - Paul was the most prominent sinner in the church
  - Imagine if Hitler had become Christian during WWII or if Stalin or some other famous evil person had converted to the faith?
  - That person’s crimes would probably hang over their head in the minds of the Church for sometime
  - They would be the most prominent sinner in the church, as Paul was in his day
- So Paul says he was shown mercy as the foremost sinner so that he could serve as Christ’s billboard
  - Forever more, Paul gave witness to how patient and forgiving the Lord is willing to be for those who believe in Him
    - If anyone thought themselves too evil, too far from God to receive forgiveness, Paul stood as God’s counter-argument
    - No one is out of reach
    - No sin is unforgivable in Christ Jesus
  - So though Paul’s critics pointed to Paul’s past as evidence he couldn’t be trusted, since he had too much baggage
    - Paul says his past is merely evidence of the depths of God’s mercy in Christ
    - And so Paul ends in a minor doxology, born out of personal gratitude
    - To the eternal, immortal invisible God belong all the honor, glory and praise forever and ever
    - Amen

- We're learning from Paul as he instructs a young man on how to teach, lead and defend the growing church in a Greek, pagan city of Ephesus
  - Last week Paul commanded Timothy to contend the false teachers disturbing the church
    - They were teaching the Law in wrong ways
    - They were taking a law intended to convict and expose the evil of unbelieving hearts, and imposing it on those saved by grace
    - These men had strayed from instruction born out of a pure heart, a good conscience and sincere faith
    - That is, they had strayed from the instruction Paul have given when he was with them
  - Instead, they turned aside from the apostle's teaching and into strange myths and empty talk
    - They were the original ear ticklers in the church
    - Filling the gathering with flowery or perhaps fiery speech
    - But it lacked weight or substance because it wasn't in keeping with the truth God revealed through Paul
    - Like all false teaching, it entertained the flesh but profited the soul nothing
  - So Paul told Timothy to silence these men
    - Because the church simply couldn't tolerate teaching that distorted or obscured the glorious Gospel of Christ
    - Obviously, we don't know how exactly Timothy went about obeying Paul's orders to stop these men
    - And if some of them were elders, as I suspect, then we might imagine Timothy had a fight on his hands
    - Add to the situation the fact that Timothy was a young man, and we can see how Paul's request could have led to confrontation
- Nevertheless, Paul obviously felt the confrontation was necessary
  - Moreover, Paul obviously thought Timothy was up to the challenge
    - And in the next part of his letter, we learn Paul's motivation for his instructions to Timothy

**1Tim. 1:18** This command I entrust to you, Timothy, my son, in accordance with the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you fight the good fight,

**1Tim. 1:19** keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith.

**1Tim. 1:20** Among these are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan, so that they will be taught not to blaspheme.

- Paul says he commanded Timothy “in accordance with previously made prophecies”
  - Paul had heard a prophetic word about this young man some time ago
    - That word was that Timothy would be gifted by the Spirit to serve as a pastor
    - We see indications of this moment elsewhere in the two letters Paul wrote to this young man
    - In 4:14 we find this comment:

**1Tim. 4:14 Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed on you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery.**

- And in the second letter we hear

**2Tim. 1:6 For this reason I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.**

- There was a moment when the Lord moved Paul and the other elders (presbytery) to lay on hands
  - This is the biblical way the Lord confirms His calling for men called into ministry
  - The Spirit gifts all believers in various ways to serve His people
- But certain gifts are given greater priority in the body of Christ because they hold special potential to equip the body in godliness
  - One of those special gifts is the pastoral gift
  - A pastoral gift is like any other spiritual gift in that it comes from the Spirit of God as God appoints
  - But it differs from other gifts in that it must be confirmed by other leaders in the church through laying on of hands
  - We will discuss laying on of hands in greater detail when we come to these other passages
- But the point for us this morning is that true pastoral leadership can't be gained merely by accepting a position at a church
  - It can't be gained with a diploma, degree or a certificate
    - It doesn't come because we desire for it
    - It comes because the Lord appoints it
  - And because it carries responsibility for shepherding the flock, it must be confirmed by other leaders over the flock
    - Men moved by the Spirit see the calling and feel they must confirm it publicly
    - They validate the calling by laying on hands and the Lord is pleased
    - This isn't a movement or decision of men...this is a work of God through men



- I experienced one such moment about 15 years ago
  - I was attending a church in San Antonio, and participating in a small group of leaders and teachers from the church
  - I had only been a Christian for a few years at that point and was still very early in my walk
  - Yet I was feeling stirred to serve as a teacher and perhaps more
- One night we were sharing and praying in that group, and suddenly following our prayer time, one of the men in the group made an announcement
  - He looked at me and said he felt the Lord telling him that this group of men should lay on hands on me
  - I was stunned and said nothing in response
  - The group quickly gathered around me and they prayed for the Lord to equip me to teach and lead His church
  - I had no idea this moment was coming but I knew in my spirit that it was a movement of God's Spirit and I had to obey
- I don't know if this experience is common to everyone called into pastoral ministry, but it was my experience
  - The Lord confirmed my spiritual gift to teach through that experience
  - And I also believe He set me on a path to pastor in His Church
  - Every spiritual gift has value to the body
  - Yet the Lord moves in this unique way when bestowing gifts that carry spiritual authority over His people
- Having spiritual authority brings responsibility to engage in confrontations when necessary for the benefit of God's people
  - A spiritual leader, whether pastor or teacher, can't hesitate to address dangers that threaten God's people
    - Confronting danger is their unique responsibility as under-shepherd
    - What would we think about a shepherd watching sheep in the field if he ran away or stood idly by when wolves came to consume the flock?
    - He would be condemned as worthless and unfaithful to his role as shepherd
  - So likewise, Paul tells Timothy that he must act in keeping with the prophetic declaration that he would be a pastor
    - The Lord said Timothy would pastor, so Timothy must pastor
    - And pastors have to fight the wolves from time to time
  - But Paul says it's a "good fight"
    - The Greek word for good also means beautiful or wise
    - It's the wise thing to do, and it's a beautiful thing when godliness battles ungodliness, when truth defeats lies

- It's no less a fight because it's good and wise
- In fact, it needs to be a fight all the more because it's wise
- The enemy doesn't avoid confrontation and he doesn't mind hurting feelings
- And so neither can a shepherd be afraid of these things in pursuit of what's good and wise for God's people
- Paul tells Timothy in v.19 that he must hold the line in Ephesus, remaining at his post to confront false teachers as a matter of personal faith and conscience
  - Simply put, Timothy had his own testimony to worry about
    - And if a pastor should worry about the consequences of performing his role, he should remember that the alternative is even more dangerous
    - A man truly called by God to serve in this way can't throw up his hands and claim he's not cut out for it
  - If the Spirit has moved and others laid on hands to confirm the Spirit's choice, then the person knows the Lord is prepared to work through him
    - Like when Moses declared he couldn't do the job because he didn't possess sufficient public speaking skills
    - To which the Lord asked, "Who made your mouth?"
    - He whom God calls, He also equips
  - So then without excuse, pastors called by God either obey or disobey their calling
    - Paul tells Timothy you had better stay the course in Ephesus and stop thinking about taking road trips
    - Timothy's own conscience and faithfulness to God was on the line
    - To abandon his post or to avoid confronting false teachers was disobedience
    - Which means Timothy's letter asking Paul if he could join him was essentially Timothy asking Paul if he could disobey the Lord
- Regrettably, many men in pastoral ministry have made this decision from time to time
  - They receiving a calling and step into the role, but when the going gets tough, they look for the nearest exit
    - In their conscience the Spirit is telling them to stay and serve the Lord, but they don't listen
    - Their faith is shaken and their testimony suffers
    - So they abandon their post
  - Paul mentions a couple of examples of such men in Ephesus to discourage Timothy from following their example
    - He mentions Hymenaeus and Alexander, two men that appear to have been teachers or even pastors in the church
    - They have rejected their conscience and their own faith
    - As a result they have suffered shipwrecked faith

- Paul's words are uncharacteristically hard, which tells us how serious Paul felt about leaders who abandoned their post or sound teaching
  - To do so is to reject the conscience
  - Conscience describes our heart's capacity to direct us into righteousness and to feel conviction over sin
  - To reject the conscience as Paul says means to overrule the leading of our heart
  - And then to suppress the guilty feelings that result from our sin
  - In short, these men knew better but chose to do wrong anyway
- And they rejected the faith
  - Obviously, you can't reject something you don't first possess
  - These men had faith, but they rejected (or the Greek word could be translated "pushed back against" their faith
  - Rather than do as their faith expected, they acted contrary to faith
  - And as a result they experienced shipwrecked faith Paul says
- In Paul's analogy, our faith in Christ is the name of a ship sailing the seas
  - We were placed in that ship by God's grace, and so we say we are "in faith"
    - As we go out into the world in faith, we must steer clear of temptations and schemes of the enemy
    - We must guard against our flesh and a world that wants to pull us down
    - These dangers are like reefs, some visible and some hidden
  - If we act carelessly or recklessly with regard to our faith, we may experience shipwreck
    - We may run aground against these threats
    - Our progress stops
    - And if the wreck is serious enough, it may prevent the ship from ever becoming sea worthy again
  - But notice that the ship is still there, faith hasn't departed
    - But that faith isn't moving forward, it's halted in progress
    - More than that, a ship run aground on rocks stands as a testimony to other passing ships to avoid these dangers
    - These men become examples to other believers not to follow in their footsteps
  - And that's exactly Paul's comment to Timothy
    - These men hit the rocks
    - And then because of their bad influence on the church, Paul says he "handed them over to Satan"
    - By this act of discipline, Paul desired they learn not to blaspheme
- As we try to understand what Paul is saying, let's start with their offense

- These men were blaspheming
  - We know from earlier in the chapter that false teachers in the church were misusing the Law of Moses
  - They were likely teaching other error as well
  - And collectively it was blasphemy
- Blasphemy is any speaking of sacred thing in contempt or absent the reverence they deserve
  - It covers a wide spectrum from false representations of the Godhead or His word or His actions
  - Somehow, these men had crossed a line in their teaching and had moved into blasphemy
  - We don't use this word often enough, I think
  - Many times people in the church, including pastors, open their mouths and speak irreverently about sacred things, which is blasphemy
- When these men did these things, Paul says he handed them over to Satan
  - This is one of two occasions in the New Testament when Paul describes this punishment
    - The other case is found in 1Corinthians 5 of a man who was involved in an incestuous relationship in the church

**1Cor. 5:5 I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.**

- Notice that Paul described the outcome differently in one situation compared to the other
- In the case of Hymenaeus and Alexander, the goal was to teach them not to blaspheme
  - In the case of the man in Corinth, Satan was permitted to end the man's physical life to the benefit of his soul on judgment day
  - Presumably, dying sooner reduced the man's opportunity to sin longer, and thus preserved him from even greater loss
- In both cases, God's instrument for discipline was Satan and his army
  - This is proof that God may use everything in His creation – including the enemy – to discipline His children
  - In extreme cases the Lord may turn a child of God over to Satan for harsh treatment which ultimately came to some good
  - Such treatment will either teach a rebellious believer to repent and return to a faithful walk
  - Or it may cut a rebellious life short to stop the spiritual bleeding
  - Either way the person's life serves as a warning sign to other believers

- With that sober reminder, Paul moves on in his letter to give Timothy specific instructions for how to continue the fight and serve the people of Ephesus

**1Tim. 2:1** First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men,

**1Tim. 2:2** for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity.

**1Tim. 2:3** This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior,

**1Tim. 2:4** who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

**1Tim. 2:5** For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,

**1Tim. 2:6** who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time.

- This chapter finds Paul moving away from his exhortation to Timothy to stay the course in Ephesus and into specific counsel on how Timothy must serve the flock
  - Paul's instructions run from chapter 2 into the beginning of chapter 4
    - Together with his words to Titus and in his second letter to Timothy, Paul's teaching is a manual for church life
    - Every church should attend to these words carefully
    - Because not only can they correct poor church teaching and practice
    - But it will also protect a church from such influence ever coming into the body
  - And Paul's first priority for the church was reaching the world with the Gospel
    - And successful evangelism begins with prayer
    - Because prayer is the most important service the body of Christ can offer to the Lord
    - It's the only spiritual discipline we can practice under all circumstances and at all times
    - And it's the necessary predecessor to any other work of the body
- As it relates to evangelism, Paul commands that Timothy teach prayers to be made on behalf of all men
  - Paul uses four synonyms to describe prayer, but they do convey subtly different shades of meaning
    - Entreaties are earnest, heartfelt appeals for personal needs
    - Prayers are the general word for communicating with God
    - Petitions are requests on made on behalf of others
    - Thanksgivings are just as the word suggests
  - Paul wants Timothy to train his congregation to engage in all manner of prayer for

all men

- Obviously, it's literally impossible to pray for every human being on earth
- And that's not what Paul meant as we can see by what he says next in v.2
- He clarifies in v.2 that by "all men" Paul meant "all kinds of men"
  - The church naturally prayed for members of the congregation and for family and friends and possibly neighbors
  - But Paul says he wants the congregation looking past their immediate world
  - He wants the church to pray for kings and all those in authority
- He wants the church body to seek for a worldwide movement of God up and down society, even reaching into the palace halls
  - This meant praying for the Caesar, for the procurator of Judea
  - Praying for even their enemies who sought to silence them and persecute the church
- For many in the body, such a request probably seemed repugnant
  - How could they pray for the Lord to save those who treated the church so poorly or stood in the way of the Gospel?
  - Certainly, this was not the world's way of prayer
  - Jews never prayed for God to extend mercy to their Gentile oppressors
  - Neither did Gentile pagans pray to their false gods for mercy for their enemies
- Yet here was Paul asking the church to pray in all ways for the good of all men, including men in authority over the church
  - But in reality, this practice could only serve to benefit the church as Paul explains in the later part of v.2
    - He says such prayer might allow the church to live a tranquil and quiet life
    - He probably means it in both practical and spiritual ways
  - First, practically speaking, this was a smart strategy for the church
    - If the church gained a reputation of offering up prayers of support for those in leadership, then the governing authorities might be less likely to persecute the church
    - Or at the very least, the government would conclude the church is not a threat to their power
  - Remember, the Caesar at this time was Nero, a man prone to rash thinking and persecution
    - He ultimately did much harm to the church
    - Which is why Paul tells the church to be smart and to pray for all men, not just the personal friends they knew
- But more importantly, there is a spiritual purpose in praying this way
  - Since we know God is the One Who moves hearts to faith in Christ, then we also

know He has the potential to bring salvation to anyone

- Therefore, we have sound theological reason to pray for everyone that comes to mind
- We need not “filter” who God is likely to save or who might be persuadable to the Gospel
- We pray indiscriminately, for every type of man or woman, in every walk of life and in every place for they are all potentially saveable
- And should men in authority come to faith under the leading of the Holy Spirit, then how much better will life be for the church?
  - I wonder if anyone in the early church was praying for Saul of Tarsus in this way?
  - As Saul was breathing threats against the church and persecuting believers even until death, were believers praying for his salvation?
  - Hopefully so, because we see how Saul’s conversion to the Apostle Paul became a way to tranquility and dignity and godliness
- And so it can be in every generation, and according to God’s Word, the Lord desires to work through our prayers to make these things happen
  - Paul says this is good and acceptable in the sight of our Lord, our Savior
    - It pleases the Lord when we pray in this way
    - It would seem it brings Him more glory to have his intentions concerning a ruler announced beforehand in our prayers
  - Paul says that God is our Savior, which is a not-too-subtle reminder that we too were saved by an act of God,
    - So why not suppose He will do the same thing for another?
    - Why exclude anyone from the prospect of Heaven?
    - Did we deserve God’s grace more than they do? Does anyone “deserve” grace?
  - Which is why Paul reminds us in v.4 that God has proven His desire to save all men by bringing them to a knowledge of the truth
    - As you read Paul’s words in v.4 remember that the phrase “all men” in v.4 is the same as that of v.1
    - Just as the Lord asks the church to pray for rich and poor, kings and peasants, so too does the Lord intend to bring salvation to all men
    - He will save rich at times, poor at times, He will save kings at times just as He saves peasants at times
- In light of this context, it’s clear that this verse does not teach that God has a desire for all humanity to receive salvation
  - First, the context of the verse doesn’t lead us to that conclusion as I already explained
    - Paul is talking about all kinds of men, not all humanity
    - Secondly, scripture elsewhere teaches that God saves some but not all

humanity

- Paul himself says in Romans 9 that God created some humanity for dishonorable use
- Finally, the Bible says that if God truly desires something, then it will always come to pass

**Job 23:13** “But He is unique and who can turn Him?  
And what His soul desires, that He does.

**Psa. 115:3** But our God is in the heavens;  
He does whatever He pleases.

**Psa. 135:6** Whatever the Lord pleases, He does,  
In heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps.

- Scripture says that if God desires something, it will always come to pass, and yet we know that not all human beings are saved
- Therefore, we must conclude that God does *not* desire that all human beings would receive salvation
- Rather, as the context indicates, Paul is saying that God desires for all kinds of men to receive salvation
- It's important to remember that Paul's asking for the church to pray concerning *salvation* for these leaders
  - While we are certainly free to pray for our leaders in other ways too, that is not a command in scripture
  - Scripture does however command us to submit to our leaders
- But when we pray for leaders, our prayer is specifically for their salvation, because nothing matters more anyway
  - Also, if we neglect to notice this detail, we risk turning prayer for our leaders into politically-motivated lobbying
  - We stop caring about the leaders because we're just praying for ourselves in asking God to direct certain political outcomes
- Then Paul offers up a final proof for his command, one that suggests even more what the false teachers in Ephesus were preaching

**1Tim. 2:5** For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,

**1Tim. 2:6** who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time.

**1Tim. 2:7** For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the



**truth, I am not lying) as a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.**

- Paul says there is one God the Father, and He has appointed One Mediator between God and Man, that is Jesus Christ
  - One God implies one plan of salvation and One Mediator means one way to the Father
    - Christ came as man to bring salvation which is the plan of the Father for all humanity
    - And then He returned to God to make possible conversation, as He intercedes for us
  - Christ as the one and only mediator to the Father has been a stumbling block for many unsaved
    - The Jews prayed for Moses or angels to intercede
    - Which explains the opening chapters of the letter of Hebrews showing Christ to be greater than Moses or angels
    - Roman Catholics seek intercession by praying to Mary or to dead Catholics they call “saints”
    - Buddhists and Taoist pray to ancestors to intercede
    - Pagans pray to various intermediators
  - But the word of God says there is only One who invites us into conversation with the Father, and that One is Christ
    - But by the same token, anyone who is praying through Jesus to the Father will be heard
    - No person is excluded from this opportunity merely because of their walk of life, their past or their position
- Moreover, at the proper time in history, Jesus gave Himself up as a ransom payment on the cross for the sins of all men (again, all *kinds* of men)
  - Jesus’ death payment came at a certain proper time in history, but it was intended to suffice for all time
    - Therefore, Paul is saying that Jesus is the One Savior for all mankind for all time
    - There is not a Plan “A” for Jews and a Plan “B” for Gentiles
  - That’s why God appointed an eminent Jew to serve as an apostle to the Gentiles, so that in the preaching of the one Gospel both groups would be united
    - Paul’s mention of his mission to Gentiles indicates that the false teachers in Ephesus were attempting to drive a wedge between Jew and Gentile
    - They taught the Law wrongly by suggesting, we assume, that Gentiles had to practice Jewish tradition and Law before they could be saved
    - Those who taught this heresy were called Judaizers
- In fact, reading between the lines regarding the false teachers in Ephesus is important as

we continue through Paul's teaching in this chapter and beyond

- Because it appears their false teaching went much farther than merely general teaching on Jewish law
  - It appears these men were teaching improper roles for men and women, stirring up dissension and confusion
  - So Paul spends time correcting the record and re-establishing proper order within the body
  - Beginning with the men

**1Tim. 2:8 Therefore I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension.**

- At first, Paul's comment about prayer in v.8 sounds like merely a repetition of his comments earlier in the chapter
  - But look closely and you see Paul is talking about something different
    - Earlier the concern was the content of the prayers
    - That the church would pray on behalf of all kinds of men not just Jews or not just those they knew
  - Now Paul is speaking about the demeanor of the men in prayer
    - They must pray in every place
    - They must pray lifting up holy hands
    - And they must pray without wrath or dissension
- If we can logically assume these instructions were intended to counter bad behavior to the contrary, then we can learn more about the false teaching in Ephesus
  - First, it appears that the men in the church were being discouraged from praying
    - Perhaps they were being discouraged from public prayer out of fear of persecution
    - Perhaps they were being taught they could only pray in synagogues or under supervision of rabbis
  - Whatever the teaching, Paul counters with a call for the men in the church to lead the entire body in public prayer in every place
    - The church was intended to be visible in its worship and in its prayer life
    - No one lights a lamp and places it under a blanket, and the Lord had lit the lamp of the church in Ephesus
    - So He expected it to be put on display
- Secondly, Paul wanted the men who prayed to be exuberant and yet holy, which seems to be a subtle dig on the unholy false teachers
  - We must imagine that the false teachers in Paul's day were much like the Pharisees

of Jesus' day

- Such men love to receive the praises of men
- So they often planned their religious activities so as to be seen by many people
- They sought the praises of men rather than of God
- And they often suppressed independent religious expressions apart from those they sanctioned (e.g., John the Baptist)
- Perhaps these men were doing similar things, praying in public displays of piety, raising their unholy hands, while suppressing others
  - They were reintroducing pharisaical hypocrisy into the church
  - And Paul wanted it stopped
- The key to the power of any false leader is in the way they place themselves between the people and God
  - Those under their spell come to believe they must come to the false teacher to get what they want from God
  - This is the essence of the prosperity heresy common today
- The secret to neutralizing this effect is to remind the people they may go directly to God
  - So Paul neutralizes these false teachers by telling the men to gather together, anytime and anywhere
  - Then raise their holy hands in prayer
  - No rabbi needed
- In doing so, there should be no wrath and no dissension
  - The church needed to act in one mind as they conduct themselves
  - Silence the false teachers and unite in the truth
- This was a command to men, since men are the spiritual leaders of the church as God appoints
  - Paul isn't specifically excluding women from public prayer
    - He's simply emphasizing that the men bear this burden for the sake of the body overall
    - The men needed to act in this way to lead the rest of the congregation to follow suit
  - And that's an important concept as we move forward in Paul's letter
    - Men lead the congregation but the church should follow
    - Conversely, when men aren't engaged to lead, it's almost impossible to move the rest of the body
- Then Paul turns to correcting distorted teaching on women's behavior in the church

**1Tim. 2:9 Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments,**

**1Tim. 2:10 but rather by means of good works, as is proper for women making a claim to godliness.**

- Paul starts with “likewise” (literally “similarly” in Greek), which means the situations were related in some way
  - The logical assumption is that false teachers had been stirring up women to assume improper roles within the body
    - This is a favorite tactic of the enemy...to distort and pervert the roles God has assigned to men and women
    - The enemy seeks to distort the roles of husband and wife, the sexual functions of men and women
    - And the roles of men and women in the church
  - So Paul’s instructions concerning women are specifically directed at countering this false teaching
    - He ended speaking of demeanor of men and so he starts in the same place with women, instructing them on proper godly demeanor
    - Paul says women in the church must adorn themselves modestly, discreetly
  - The words modestly and discreetly are words that emphasize our effect on others
    - When you are modest, you are diminishing others’ attention upon yourself
    - And when you are discreet, you are concealing something of yourself from public inspection
    - Both words imply an attitude focused on the needs of others
- Once again, based on Paul’s instructions we can assume something about the false instruction taking place in the church
  - It seems the women were taking opportunity to display their wealth or personal beauty within the body
    - Apparently women were coming to the church gathering dressed like young ladies ready for a night on the town
    - As if the more elaborate the display, the more important or honored they felt
  - Even worse it seemed as though their reputation and standing within the body turned on these superficial things
    - Paul says rather than making a claim to godliness on the basis of wealth or beauty, women should make their claim based on godliness
    - This seems obvious, doesn’t it?
    - Why would any Christian imagine that their standing in the body is on the basis of money or image?

- Well, have you ever encountered members of the church who expect special favors or privileges because they donate a lot of money?
  - Or maybe a woman who expects praise for her beautiful singing voice or fashion sense?
  - Or teenagers who wear revealing clothing with plunging necklines or tight jeans to church expecting to get noticed
- On the other hand, who should we hold up as examples in the body? Who should get the attention?
  - Shouldn't it be the most godly among us?
  - Those who love the most, pray the most, understand the most
  - Those who seek only glory for Christ
- This is Paul's point to the church...he's simply asking women to restrain themselves from seeking approval and attention in worldly ways
  - Men do the same thing, but they typically do it using piety like the Pharisee
  - Men want credit for being godly on the outside while still being ugly on the inside
  - While women want credit for being beautiful on the outside, instead of being godly on the inside
- This brings us to the final and most controversial part of Paul's advice

**1Tim. 2:11 A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness.**

**1Tim. 2:12 But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet.**

**1Tim. 2:13 For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve.**

**1Tim. 2:14 And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.**

**1Tim. 2:15 But women will be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint.**

- Once again, we're watching Paul counter false teaching by commanding the opposite
  - He says women must receive instruction quietly and with entire submissiveness
    - The Greek words translated entire submissiveness might also be translated "whole obedience"
    - I believe this is a better sense because it relates to the apparent problems in the church
  - It seems women were being encouraged to challenge and even ignore the teaching of men, probably men like Timothy
    - It makes sense to assume that the false teachers wanted to maintain their power

- So they worked to deflect criticism from others
- They told women they had freedom to ignore the instructions of their husbands or elders
- Later in the letter we'll see that women were being led astray by these false teachers into gossip, idleness and ultimately self-destruction
- So Paul commands that the women cease challenging the men who taught
  - They were to receive teaching quietly
  - It's hard to believe but it seems women had become bold enough to interrupt or challenge male teachers
- This is shocking but probably not for the reasons you might assume today
  - Today we're shocked to read someone telling a woman to be quiet
    - But in Paul's day it was shocking in two other ways
    - First, it was shocking to hear a male authority advocating for women to be included in the classroom
  - In Paul's day, the Jews rarely permitted women to attend Torah instruction
    - Learning the Law was exclusively the role of the men
    - So women were never present to challenge the male teachers in the first place
    - But instead of kicking women out of the meeting, Paul simply asks them to remain respectfully quiet without challenging the teacher
  - Secondly, it was shocking to hear that a woman in Paul's day even dared to challenge men in this way
    - It's a sign of just how far the false teachers had disrupted the church culture that women thought to take this step
    - So Paul steps in to correct it as he should for the sake of good order in the church
    - The congregational meeting is not the time nor place for a woman to express concern over a man's teaching
- And Paul's not done...next he says he does not allow a woman to teach nor exercise authority over a man but remain quiet
  - It's important to understand this context as we seek to interpret this passage
    - The context is still speaking of a classroom or other setting where teaching is taking place and the teacher is a male
    - In the audience are men and women (or perhaps only women)
    - And in that setting, you find a woman speaking up to challenge the teacher's authority
  - To teach would clearly refer to woman seeking to teach from her place in the audience
    - It was customary for those attending to ask questions of the teacher or raise new points from the teaching

- But a woman was not permitted to do this in keeping with Paul's earlier point that women remain silent
- Finally, Paul asks that women not exercise authority over men
  - But here again this is in the context of a classroom moment where women are in the audience
  - The Greek word translated authority is not the common word for authority
  - It carries the connotation of usurping or misappropriating authority as in to domineer
  - Paul is saying that a classroom with a male teacher is not the time or place for a woman to take charge or try to teach the men
- All of this does raise the question of how far we should take Paul's instructions today?
  - But before we can address that question, we need to look at Paul's proof which he takes from Genesis...which we will do next time

- Many times, a proper interpretation of scripture depends on our understanding of the author's times and circumstances
  - This is particularly true in the case of New Testament Epistles
    - These letters are scripture, so of course their message is timeless
    - And the truths they contain are applicable to all believers in all circumstances
    - But our application requires an appreciation for the specific situation concerning which the author was writing
    - Eternal truths don't turn on circumstance, but proper response to those truths often do
  - Last week Paul commanded Timothy to instruct the men and women in certain ways concerning their behavior
    - Paul's advice didn't come out of thin air
    - It wasn't as if the church in Ephesus had no idea how to conduct itself in the congregational meeting
    - Paul spent considerable time in the city during his journeys
    - And he left Timothy behind to lead the church
    - So clearly the church was aware of how to conduct a meeting
  - That's why I concluded last week saying Paul's instructions were intended as an antidote to specific false teaching that was disrupting the congregation
    - Based on Paul's instructions we can surmise what the false teachers were advocating
    - We can also sense the political maneuvering that was taking place in Ephesus in Paul's absence
- As we ended last week, we had reached the point of Paul's instructions to women within the congregational meeting
  - The meeting was a time of teaching for the benefit of the entire church
    - In traditional fashion, the teaching would have been conducted by male leaders in the church
    - Though a person may have been assigned to teach, it was also common for members of the congregation to stand to offer a teaching
    - There might also be discussion among the men in the audience, including questions put to the teacher
  - For example, look at Paul's approach as he entered a synagogue in Antioch

**Acts 13:13** Now Paul and his companions put out to sea from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia; but John left them and returned to Jerusalem.

**Acts 13:14** But going on from Perga, they arrived at Pisidian Antioch, and on the Sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down.

**Acts 13:15** After the reading of the Law and the Prophets the synagogue officials



**sent to them, saying, “Brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say it.”**

**Acts 13:16 Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said, “Men of Israel, and you who fear God, listen:**

- Notice Paul had just arrived in the city, and yet he was welcomed to teach in the synagogue
- So the traditional understanding of a religious gathering was less structured than we know today
- It followed form and decorum, but the entire body was expected to play a part in the teaching rather than just a select one or two
- With that in mind, we saw Paul instructing the men in the church to pray together for the salvation of all men within society
  - The goal was to make the church acceptable and dignified within the culture rather than a pariah
    - This was a departure from traditional Jewish thinking
    - Jews traditionally sought to be separate and haughty, and they gave little consideration to non-Jews
  - Therefore, we concluded last week that Paul’s advice was a direct assault against false teaching
    - The false teachers apparently tried to reimpose a sanctimonious attitude among the men in the church
    - It seems they taught that one must be a Jew or follow Jewish law in order to be a Christian
    - So Paul wanted to break up their monopoly on piety by directing the church to pray openly, in unity and for all peoples
  - Then Paul moved to countering the false teaching directed at the women in the church
    - Let’s pick up in the text again there

**1Tim. 2:11 A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness.**

**1Tim. 2:12 But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet.**

- We covered the first part of these verses last week, so let’s begin with a little reminder of what we learned
  - First, Paul is speaking about a specific situation in the church body
    - The context is the larger gathering of the church, when men and women were gathered together for teaching
    - As I noted last week, this was a departure from traditional Jewish meetings

- Usually, synagogues were segregated places, with men and women listening to the same teaching
- But the two groups were separated by a barrier, much like you see at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem today
- But in the church in Ephesus, men and women congregated together
  - Which was an important development, especially for the women
  - This detail helps us understand Paul's instructions
- He started by asking that women accept teaching with entire submissiveness which also could be translated "whole obedience"
  - Why did Paul single out women to obey the word?
    - Why didn't Paul say all must receive teaching in obedience?
    - Was he suggesting that only women need obey the teaching?
    - Clearly not, since all are supposed to submit to leaders and obey the word of God
  - Therefore, Paul singled out women in response to some failure among the women in Ephesus to obey their teachers
    - We might assume that the false teachers in the church had managed to gain an audience among the women
    - Perhaps some women in the church had come under the deceptive influence of these teachers
    - As a result, these women were rejecting sound teaching from the elders in the church
  - More than that, it appears these women were disrupting the congregational meeting by openly challenging the authority of the men
    - Perhaps they spoke up to defend the teaching of the false teachers
    - Or perhaps they sought to offer their own contrary opinions to the teaching
- In any case, Paul specifically orders that women not teach or exercise authority in the gathering
  - When Paul mentions teaching, he's referring to the normal practice of congregational members offering teaching from their place in the audience as we saw Paul do in Acts
    - It was acceptable for men to challenge male teachers in a respectful fashion from the audience
    - But Paul instructs the women not to do the same
    - A woman should not seek to compete with the male teachers over scripture
  - To do otherwise is to challenge the authority of the teacher and to exercise authority over male leadership
    - As we noted last week, the Greek word Paul uses here for "exercise authority over" is a unique Greek word

- It occurs only here in the Bible
  - It means to take take authority inappropriately or to domineer
- So Paul is directly that women may not domineer or usurp male authority by rising up to offer contrary teaching
  - Instead, women should remain seated and “quiet” Paul says
  - The Greek word for quiet does not mean complete silence
  - The word means to “settle down” or to remain still
  - Based on Paul’s word choice, I conclude that a woman could respectfully ask a question in the congregation
  - Or perhaps even participate in a group discussion about the teaching
- Nevertheless, the behavior of women in the congregation may not cross the line into disrupting the gathering or challenging male authority publicly
  - In fact, no one has the right to usurp authority in the church
    - We are all called to respect those appointed over us
    - Demonstrating submission may vary slightly from situation to situation
    - Generally, men or women have appropriate ways to challenge teaching, generally privately and under proper authority
    - The key in all cases is to maintain a heart attitude of submission and obedience to authority
- In Ephesus Paul encountered the opposite situation
  - We can safely assume women were openly challenging the men with an intent to undermine proper instruction
    - And knowing what we know about the activities of false teachers in the church, the women appear to have been deceived
    - Perhaps some women were prompted by the false teachers to challenge the teaching of the elders
    - Perhaps the false teachers enlisted willing women to defend their false teaching in front of the congregation
    - If so, it was ironic
    - Because had the women listened to the church’s teaching, they would have been known better
- I believe that’s why Paul cites the example of Adam and Eve in the Garden

**1Tim. 2:13 For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve.**

**1Tim. 2:14 And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.**

**1Tim. 2:15 But women will be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint.**

- In supporting his decision, Paul makes an appeal to the circumstances of the Fall in the Garden
  - Paul makes two separate but related arguments from the situation in the garden
    - First, Paul reminds us that Adam was created first
    - Following Adam, God made Eve to accompany the man
    - Paul says something similar in 1 Corinthians

**1Cor. 11:8 For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man;  
1Cor. 11:9 for indeed man was not created for the woman's sake, but woman for the man's sake.**

- This biblical principle is simple but profound: God made a purposeful choice in the way He went about the creation of mankind
  - God began with Man and later created Woman from Man
  - God's actions reflected a certain point of view
  - He intended that man have authority over woman in family relationships, both in marriage and in the family of God
- Consequently, Eve was not responsible to God for Adam in the same way that Adam was responsible for Eve
  - Man was expected to assume a leadership role in the family and church
  - Leadership includes a responsibility to teach God's Word within the family or at least ensure good teaching happens
- Paul cites a man's God-given leadership role to support his argument that women must take care not to usurp the authority of men in the church
  - To do so is rebellion against the order God Himself instituted
  - Perhaps Paul reminded the church of this principle because false teachers had sought to undermine it in Ephesus
  - And as a result of such teaching, women developed rebellious hearts and felt freedom to create disruption in the gathering
  - Worst of all, they permitted deception to gain a foothold in the church
- It's that last point that gives rise to Paul's second argument
  - In v14 Paul says that the Fall of mankind began in a similar way
    - Woman was deceived by the serpent, who we're told was Satan
    - She was misled by Satan's lies and so she followed after such teaching contrary to the Word of God
    - As a result of her mistake, she influenced her husband, who then made his own choice to sin
    - While woman isn't to blame for Adam's sin, her deception certainly played a

role in the outcome

- Paul cites the history of the Fall to illustrate the danger of the present situation in Ephesus
  - Women in the church were being deceived by the false teachers
  - These women had adopted wrong views of the Law and other things
  - And so Paul warns that these women were in danger of repeating the mistake of Woman in the Garden, by becoming a source of corruption
- Paul is not suggesting that women in general are congenitally predisposed to deception more so than men
  - He was simply using the Garden as an illustration
  - The church should remember the lesson of Woman in the Garden and avoid making the same mistake again
  - “Once before a woman fell under the deception of the enemy and by her deception the enemy led the man into sin...”
  - “...so let’s be on guard against the enemy pulling that trick on us again.”
- It’s interesting to consider why the false teachers targeted the women in this way
  - Perhaps the false teachers targeted specific women known to be impressionable and thus easily influenced
  - Perhaps the false teachers felt they were less likely to persuade the men since they felt more pressure to remain loyal to the elders
  - But then we could ask the same question of Satan in the Garden...why did he target the woman over the man?
  - It seems he knew that one could be a means to bring down the other
- Then Paul ends the chapter with instructions for women
  - Presumably, the church (including the women) did not want to repeat Eve’s mistake by becoming victims of Satan’s deception
    - So in v.15 Paul says “but women will be preserved...”
    - Paul was offering the church a way to avoid such a fate
  - The Greek word translated “preserved” means to be saved
    - Paul means “saved” in the sense of protected from such an outcome
    - He’s not speaking of being saved spiritual in an eternal sense, for that’s not the topic under discussion
    - Based on the context, we must conclude Paul’s speaking of women avoiding deception and corruption
- So turning to the solution, Paul says women should bear children continuing in faith, love and sanctity with self-restraint
  - Paul’s recipe is four parts, though it’s the first part that gets the most attention
    - First, Paul says a woman seeking to avoid the mistakes of Eve should bear

children

- At first reading, this solution seems both antiquated and illogical
- Women bear children by God's design (it's not as though there is another option), so how does it solve any problem?
- And what are we to say about women who don't marry or have children...are they sinning by acting contrary to Paul's command?
- Once again, the answer is found in an understanding of the context and circumstances of the letter
  - Paul was writing to contend with false teachers who were stirring up improper behavior among the women
  - Their corrupting influence led women to usurp male authority in the gathering
  - Later in the letter we learn that in some cases women young and old were also engaging in scandalous behavior outside the home
- So into that situation, Paul tells women to bear children, which is a euphemism for fulfilling their unique and God-appointed role
  - God endowed women with the privilege of bearing children
    - Women alone possess this ability
    - With childbearing comes certain associated roles in the home
    - So Paul's referring to the whole lifestyle of attending to a woman's unique responsibilities
    - Finding contentment and purpose in fulfilling this role was step one to avoiding the deceptions of the enemy
  - How would this preserve the woman?
    - The enemy's success in deceiving the women depended upon stirring up discontent
    - In the Garden, the enemy convinced Eve that by not eating of the tree, she was missing out on something she had right to know
    - And in Ephesus, the false teachers had convinced the women they should want for the role God gave men in church
    - Had the women been content serving in their God-given role, they wouldn't have been as susceptible to such schemes
  - Obviously, Paul's words don't require every woman to bear children or even that working outside the home wasn't godly
    - Remember, bearing children represents the unique, God-given role of a woman in contrast to the role God assigned men
    - So a woman without children or a woman working outside the home must still meet the same expectation of heart
    - She must find contentment in the role God assigned women both in the home and in the church while respecting the role God assigned men

- Don't let the world tell you that you must have something beyond what God assigned
- Because discontent is the devil's playground
- Paul adds finally that women should continue in faith, love and sanctity with self respect
  - Each of these expectations is mostly self-explanatory
    - Faith refers to trust in God's wisdom and judgment
    - God assigned the roles, and we do well to continue in faith that God got it right in the first place
    - Love (agape) means honoring others above ourself, including respecting the leadership of those in authority
  - Sanctity with self-respect refers to living in holiness and self-control
    - Because ultimately the problems in this church stem from a lack of these things
    - The enemy can come against us anytime and we can't do much about that except pray
    - But he can only gain a foot hold *inside* us if we decide to give him that ground
    - Paul was asking the women not to give the enemy a chance
- So what's the proper application of Paul's teaching in our circumstances today?
  - First, everything Paul says is broadly applicable today
    - Women may not publicly challenge the authority of men who lead
    - And since teaching is an implied expression of authority, women may not challenge the teaching of men in public
    - For the same reason, women may not teach men in a congregational gathering of any size
  - But we can also set reasonable limits on Paul's instructions
    - For example, a woman could challenge a teacher or even a leader of the church privately assuming she does so respectfully
    - And a woman could teach a man privately, as when a wife teaches her husband or when a woman author teaches a male student through a website or book
    - And women could teach young men who are not deemed of age to join the adult men
    - Perhaps other exceptions could be found as well
    - In all these cases, a woman is not usurping male leadership nor is she disrupting the church
- Now we move into chapter 3, and with it a different but related topic

**1Tim. 3:1 It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do.**

**1Tim. 3:2 An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife,**

temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach,

**1Tim. 3:3** not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money.

**1Tim. 3:4** He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity

**1Tim. 3:5** (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?),

**1Tim. 3:6** and not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil.

**1Tim. 3:7** And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

- Paul pivots off his discussion of women's roles in the assembly to that of the male leadership of the church
  - It's a logical progression
    - Paul taught the women to respect the role of men in leadership over the church
    - So now he's explaining the qualifications for men to fill those roles
    - But once more, Paul is positioning his teaching as a rebuke of the false teachers
  - In this passage, Paul describes the ideal overseer to guide the church properly, especially in the face of false teachers or other threats
    - Paul's list is long (a total of 16 requirements)
    - We'll touch on all of them in turn, though some items deserve a longer discussion
    - Following this list is another list describing the qualifications of a deacon
    - The list of deacon requirements is quite different and less stringent than that of overseer
- And the mere fact that two offices are mentioned in this chapter begs the question, how many offices exist in the church and how do they relate?
  - In our English Bibles, we find a variety of titles used, but in Greek there are only three words used for positions of authority in the church
    - The Greek word for overseer is *episkopos* (sometimes translated bishop)
    - The Greek word for deacon is *diakonos*
    - And a third word for leadership is that of elder, which is *presbuteros* in Greek, which is literally gray haired
    - In another of the pastoral epistles, Titus, Paul instructs Titus to appoint elders in every city
  - Analysis shows the way these three terms are used in the New Testament reveals their relationship
    - First, an *episkopos* (overseer) is anyone who leads the church in any capacity



- The word is never used to describe a specific title or position
  - Therefore, an overseer could be a pastor or an elder or even another position we invent in the future
  - Anyone who has oversight responsibilities in the church is an overseer
  - Therefore all elders meet Paul's requirements in this passage
- An elder (*presbuteros*) is a specific kind of overseer with responsibility to ensure proper teaching, order and discipline of God's people
  - In the absence of apostles, elders are the highest authority in the church
  - Churches should be led by a plurality of elders, not merely one
  - This serves to protect the many from the one and the one from himself
- Also, elder is a role that comes alongside whatever spiritual gift or function a person performs in the body otherwise
  - So an elder could also serve the body with a teaching or pastoral or service gift but not necessarily
  - Conversely, a certain spiritual gift does not automatically bestow authority upon a person
  - For example, someone with a pastoral gift or who operates in a pastoral (i.e., shepherding) role is *not* automatically an overseer
  - The only exception to this rule would be in cases where a church uses the term "pastor" to mean overseer or elder
- Finally, the word deacon (*diakonos*) "one who serves in ministry" or more generally, "servant"
  - The word appears 29 times in the New Testament
    - Of those 29 times, it is translated (by the NASB) as "deacon" three times, as "minister" seven times, and as "servant" 19 times
    - Consequently, the best definition of the duties of a *diakonos* is one who ministers to the church through their service
    - They are mature members of the body assigned certain service responsibilities by the elders or other overseers
  - Deacons, therefore, are not overseers themselves
    - They carry no authority over the body apart from managing their own service and that of those working under their direction
    - In some church traditions, however, the governing group over the church are called "deacons"
    - In such cases, the deacons are effectively operating as overseers and should be thought of as elders despite their title
    - We'll look at their qualifications later
- Turning back to the overseers, Paul opens in v.1 with an intriguing statement
  - Paul mentions those aspiring to the role probably because this was the desire of the

false teachers

- Or perhaps some of the false teachers were already in that role
- So Paul says such aspiration is good, because it leads to a fine work
- The fine work is the preparation of our character so that we might meet the tests of overseer
- For example, if someone aspires to be a Nobel Prize winner, they are desiring a good work
  - They are desiring to work hard, to pursue excellence
  - They are seeking to distinguish themselves among their peers, to advance the body of knowledge in their field
  - And this is a fine work
- Similarly, a person who desires to be an overseer is saying they desire to pursue godly character, a deep knowledge of scripture, and a testimony of faithfulness
  - These are the right things to pursue
  - And in fact, everyone in the body of Christ is supposed to pursue them
  - No one is excused from these goals, but only some make a point of pursuing them because they aspire to leadership
- On the other hand, if a person merely desires the power and prestige of overseer without desiring the character that must accompany the role, they do not do well
  - Such was the case of the false teachers it appears, which may explain why Paul opens with this comment
    - The false teachers were like Pharisees, trying to enter the fold by climbing over the wall instead of entering through the door
    - They were seeking control for selfish illegitimate reasons
  - Too often today the church makes the mistake of looking past these qualifications
    - We prematurely elevate men into oversight roles, whether elder or pastor or whatever title
    - We select men who haven't had time or opportunity to develop the proper knowledge, character or testimony
    - Or even worse, we may overlook disqualifying factors
  - This trend is obviously dangerous for the church
    - Our leaders guard all of us from ungodliness, deception and disunity
    - But if they are unable to guard even themselves from these things, then what will become of those under their care?
    - Furthermore, the role of overseer includes serving as a role model to the rest of the congregation
    - Our leaders should be men who we aspire to emulate
    - Just as Paul called the church to follow him as he followed Christ

- So clearly, the church should hold the role of overseer in high regard and assign such authority carefully
  - And in v.1 Paul gives the first requirement for overseer: the person must be a man
    - Notice Paul begins with the word man and throughout the passage he repeats male pronouns
    - We know this is more than simply a generalization, as in mankind, for two reasons
  - First, the previous passage made clear that women cannot exercise authority over men
    - Secondly, in the next passage on deacons Paul includes a specific discussion of women serving as deacons
    - Therefore, we must conclude that the absence of any discussion of women as overseers was intentional
- Then in v.2 Paul moves forward in his list of personal qualifications beginning with being above reproach
  - This one standard sounds impossibly high, but in reality it's Paul's concession to the fact that only Christ could meet this list perfectly
    - The word in Greek means to be blameless
    - Blamelessness is not sinlessness
    - Rather, it means that the person's life and words give no cause for public accusation
  - Paul is acknowledging that perfection is not the expectation
    - Nevertheless, we must seek men who are blameless
    - And we shouldn't elevate men into leadership if they come with moral baggage
  - A bad track record should give us reason for concern
    - It could mean they are not who they seem to be
    - And even if they have reformed their ways, their past mistakes may follow them in unhelpful ways
    - At the very least, their checkered past would be an unhealthy and unnecessary distraction for the church
    - We must select leaders whose life does not give cause for accusations
    - In the end, this is a judgment call
- Next, the final point for this lesson, Paul says the man must be husband of one wife
  - You could look at Paul's words in a variety of ways
    - First, we could conclude Paul was requiring overseers to be married
    - This was a Jewish requirement for rabbis in the synagogue
  - Secondly, we could conclude that an overseer must have been married only one time

- This argument takes Paul's words hyper-literally
- This is the most unlikely interpretation, since it doesn't relate to any other biblical standard
- For example, scripture clearly allows remarriage in cases of the death of a spouse
- So this interpretation is likely wrong
- Thirdly, Paul may have been insisting that overseers be monogamous (married to one woman at a time)
  - In some eastern cultures, polygamy was common
  - So as a man with multiple wives became a believer and entered the church, he entered with multiple wives
  - But he could never be an overseer, since his marriage was not the godly way to practice marriage
  - Therefore, this view says Paul was teaching that church leaders must model the correct form of marriage
- Finally, we could interpret Paul to be teaching that the man must operate morally in marriage
  - He must honor marriage as God intended in all respects
    - For example, if he is unmarried, he is morally upright and does not engage in fornication
    - If he is married he does not commit adultery or take multiple wives (which is adultery)
    - He does not divorce or marry a divorced person
  - This final view is my view, and therefore I believe Paul is teaching that as with all areas of life, we want overseers to model the ideal practices of the faith
    - We aren't saying that those men who fail this test are less godly necessarily
    - Nor are we saying that such men are stand guilty or condemned
    - Paul is simply saying we want our leaders to stand as models of what's best and true and right
    - Marriage is so important to the health of the family and the church that we shouldn't elevate men whose testimony does not exemplify the idea standard
  - This requirement also raises the question of how much accountability we place on someone prior to coming to faith
    - Some say life prior to faith is not relevant to the question of qualifications, since we all behaved in godless ways prior to faith
    - After all, Paul was a murderer before he took charge
    - Others would argue that certain sins follow us in unhelpful ways, which could compromise our ability to serve as a role model (divorce)
  - There is no simple answer on this question, so we must trust the Holy Spirit to lead

us in each church decision

- However, we know the present life of a man must comport with these expectations
- While we may excuse certain choices prior to faith, if those same behaviors continue after faith, they should be cause for alarm

- Last time we had just started examining the qualifications for overseers in the church in chapter 3, so we return to that list tonight
  - Remember, an overseer is a general term for anyone who exercises authority over the congregation
    - The word overseer implies the highest levels of authority
    - So we're talking about elders or pastors or any title of leadership that guards over the flock and makes decisions for the body
    - But we can't go wrong applying these same standards to lesser leaders
    - They represent the minimum qualifications for those who aspire to be an overseer
  - As we mentioned last week, these qualifications seem straightforward enough, but applying them can be a messy affair
    - No one (save Christ Himself) can meet these qualifications perfectly
    - So then we must apply these standards with a measure of grace and common sense
    - In the end, we want to elevate leaders who exemplify the best within the body
    - So that by their example, the rest of the congregation are inspired to imitate their godliness
- In our study last week, we examined the opening verses of chapter 3, but we didn't get very far
  - We covered Paul's opening statement in v.1 and the first three requirements of the 16 listed in vs.2-7
    - So for context, I'll reread the entire passage again
    - But we'll begin our discussion reviewing the first three briefly
    - And then we'll dive into the rest

**1Tim. 3:1** It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do.

**1Tim. 3:2** An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach,

**1Tim. 3:3** not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money.\

**1Tim. 3:4** He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity

**1Tim. 3:5** (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?),

**1Tim. 3:6** and not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil.

**1Tim. 3:7** And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

- The first requirement Paul gives is implied more than stated: an overseer must be a man
  - And as we saw last week, the reasons for this requirement were already addressed in chapter 2
    - So headship within the family and church requires that the body be led by male authorities
    - This is true for elders or any other overseer who has authority over men in the body of Christ
    - Basically, if an overseer has authority over men in the church, then that overseer must be a man as well
  - Secondly, the overseer must be above reproach
    - We explained that being above reproach means giving no cause for accusations within the church concerning character or conduct
    - We want our leaders to be above charges that might distract the church or sully the name of Christ
    - I said last week that this requirement includes both present and past behavior, including behavior committed prior to faith
    - But in applying this standard we must judge all past behaviors with grace, knowing that no one possesses a perfect testimony especially before faith
  - Thirdly, we studied Paul's command that an overseer be a man of one wife
    - I gave a variety of interpretations of Paul's words
    - But the best interpretation I believe, the one in keeping with the spirit of the entire list, is that an overseer must practice moral marriage
    - Moral marriage means modeling the one-flesh relationship given in scripture
    - This precludes polygamy, adultery, divorce, or fornication
- With that we're ready to move into the rest of Paul's list
  - The fourth requirement is that an overseer must temperate
    - Temperate means to be sober, measured, clear-headed, balanced
    - Just as we say a climate is temperate to mean it doesn't experience extremes in weather
    - So temperate means remaining in control and balanced in all things
  - The word in Greek for temperate is *nephalios*, and it carries the suggestion of sobriety
    - The root of the word is *nepho*, which means to abstain from alcohol
    - But the word *nephalios* doesn't mean to abstain, and unfortunately the word temperance has been misused this way
    - Paul will address the issue of drinking more specifically in a moment, so we'll wait to talk more about it then
  - For now, we should focus on the other aspects of this important quality of leaders

- Temperate means slow to anger, not prone to outbursts or rash behavior...
- Not easily thrown off track or manipulated...
- Even keeled
- The last thing we want is for the body of Christ to be led by men who are impulsive or emotionally charged
- Next Paul says we want our overseers to be prudent men
  - Prudence is the natural compliment to temperate
    - A temperate person remains calm and in control no matter what comes their way
    - While a prudent person responds in well-considered and measured ways, in every situation
  - The Greek word for prudent also means self-controlled, so you can clearly see a trend in Paul's thinking
    - He wants the church to select men who aren't going to say or do impulsive things
    - Because where leaders go, so goes the body of Christ
    - Our leaders are supposed to create a climate within the body where we can grow and mature
    - Unpredictable and rash leaders are not conducive to such an environment
  - Furthermore, Paul adds the man must be respectable
    - In Greek the word means orderly or proper
    - It describes someone with a sense of seriousness about their duty
    - They conduct themselves in a somewhat formal, dignified manner
    - Not stiff or humorless, but neither should they be silly
  - Take these three together (temperate, prudent and respectable), and you begin to imagine a man of distinction
    - A man who is reserved and always in control
    - A man with gravitas who commands respect
    - Men don't come out of the womb this way
    - We all start as children and must grow up
    - An overseer is that man who has outgrown the impulsive nature of his youth and has learned from his mistakes
    - So that now he has obtained the maturity to lead
- Now Paul moves to traits that serve others beginning with hospitable
  - The word in Greek is *philoxenos*, which means literally to love strangers
    - It's the counterpart to *philadelphia*, which is love for a brother
    - When we hear hospitable, we usually think of hospitality in our homes



- And certainly this is an important aspect of this requirement
  - We want our leaders to have an openness for serving others using everything they have at their disposal
- And that's really the full sense of this term
  - It describes a man's desire to meet the needs of others, including those with whom he has no relationship yet
  - It's more than simply being polite
- It's essential to the mission of the church that our leaders would have open hearts, open houses and open wallets for the needs of those they lead
  - Including for those they don't even know yet
  - Like Jesus demonstrated, our service to the Great Commission often turns on our willingness to extend kindness to the least of our society
- Next, Paul says the overseer must be able to teach, and of course Paul means implicitly to teach scripture
  - Therefore, a man seeking to be an overseer must demonstrate he is able to teach the Bible
    - And teaching involves two qualifications
    - First, the man must have an understanding of scripture sufficient to explain it and defend against error
  - In Titus, Paul provides a similar list for an overseer, and in that list he elaborates on this requirement

**Titus 1:9 holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.**

- Paul says the overseer must hold fast to the true teaching of the word according to the Apostle's teaching
  - In our day, the New Testament letters are the teaching of the Apostles
  - Therefore, an overseer must possess an abiding and orthodox understanding of scripture as revealed in the NT
  - And they will use that understanding to exhort the people and to refute the false claims that come against God's word
- Paul includes this requirement in the middle of the list, so we might think it of only average importance
  - But this isn't correct
  - Paul's instructions to Timothy later in the letter will make clear that the ability to teach is probably the highest trait of an overseer
  - Guarding the flock from false teaching is paramount, for the body of Christ is united

and empowered by its understanding of God's word

- Today, the average Christian in the world is biblically illiterate, knowing almost nothing about what's in the Bible or what it means
  - This situation is a direct result of overseers who do not understand or value the word themselves
  - And so they do not guard it nor teach it methodically
  - Paul will address this very trend later in his second letter to Timothy
- Paul's next requirement is that an overseer not be addicted to wine, which we can generalize to any alcohol beverage or other mind-altering substance
  - The issue isn't the alcohol itself, of course, for even Jesus drank wine
    - And He promised His disciples He would share a cup of wine with them in the Kingdom
    - Furthermore, Paul writing later in this letter under the leading of the Spirit prescribes medicinal wine for Timothy
  - Paul's focus is on the word addicted
    - Addiction is a loss of self-control over the desires of our flesh
    - Addiction is proof to us that our flesh has gained a victory over our spirit in an area of our life
    - All believers are engaged in a life-long struggle against the flesh and the sin it produces as Paul describes in Romans

**Rom. 7:19 For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want.**

**Rom. 7:20 But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.**

- Our fight against our flesh is a battle between our new perfect spirit and our fallen flesh
  - And this fight is tough enough as it is without giving our flesh an extra advantage
  - Alcohol or drug addictions are evidence that the flesh has gained a foothold, which means our spirit is less in control
- Obviously, we want our leaders to be under the Spirit's leading to the greatest extent possible
  - So a serious addiction to alcohol or drugs is a disqualifying character trait
  - And it matters not if a drug is legalized
- Certainly, the willingness to use illegal drugs is disqualifying by itself since it demonstrates dishonest character
  - But even the use of legal drugs will disqualify a man if they gain control over him
  - And certainly some drugs are so powerful they should be avoided even when legal since the danger of addiction is high

- The lesson here is to know your limits and weaknesses so you can avoid a misstep that may carry significant consequences
- Moving on, let's take the next three items together: "not pugnacious but gentle and peaceable"
  - We could lump these together as one requirement, since the first is the opposite of the others
    - But let's examine each independently, starting with not being pugnacious
    - The Greek word for pugnacious is *pletes*, which means a striker
    - The word appears only here and in Paul's similar list in Titus
  - We could just as easily translate the word to mean violent or prone to physical outbursts
    - So I assume it's self-evident you can see why we wouldn't want leaders who are pugnacious or violent
    - Men prone to violence are the literally the opposite of what we want
  - Which is why Paul says we want men who exhibit gentleness
    - The word in Greek translated gentleness is also interesting
    - It can be used to describe someone who quietly suffers an offense
    - I'm reminded of the way a larger, older dog will sit patiently while a young puppy grabs at his ears or bites his tale
    - That's the sense of what Paul says we want in our overseers
  - And speaking as a pastor, I can completely identify with this requirement
    - An overseer in the church (or a leader in any organization) walks around with a target on his back
    - Most of the time, the slings and arrows that come our way are thrown by the very flock we're supposed to feed and guard and care for
    - So if an overseer doesn't have a thick skin and a willingness to suffer slights and insults from time to time, he won't survive very long
  - He needs to be gentle in how he responds to the body he leads
    - When someone comes against him harshly, he needs to have a nature that assumes positive intent and doesn't take offense easily
    - He must be prepared to respond with a kind word when lessor men might have issued a sharp rebuke
    - He can't worry about defending his pride or ego because he knows there are more important objectives
- Finally, the man should be peaceable
  - The word in Greek is a bit humorous, especially for those of us who live in a Hispanic culture
    - The Greek word is *amachos*, pronounced am'-akh-os

- But it looks like a-machos, as in *not macho*, which is actually a good definition of the word
- It means to abstain from fighting or contentiousness
- It's an attitude opposite to that of a bully
- Here again it makes perfect sense that our leaders shouldn't be men who are prone to bullying people to get their way
  - Nor should their style of influence be based on intimidation or threats
  - Taken together with gentleness and not being pugnacious we can see clearly the kind of leader Paul is describing
- Perhaps he's like a grandfather, the strong but silent type
  - Our leaders should epitomize the man Rudyard Kipling describes in his immortal poem "If"
  - As part of the poem goes...

**If you can keep your head when all about you  
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,  
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,  
But make allowance for their doubting too;  
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,  
Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,  
Or being hated, don't give way to hating,  
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise:**

**If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,  
Or walk with Kings—nor lose the common touch,  
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,  
If all men count with you, but none too much;  
If you can fill the unforgiving minute  
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,  
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,  
And—which is more—you'll be AN OVERSEER, my son!**

- The next requirement is one many men struggle to meet, especially in our world today
  - An overseer must be free from the love of money
    - The Greek word translated love is actually the word for covet
    - So Paul's concern is for a man who covets material wealth
    - He desires money and the things money can buy
  - Paul's concern is for the man's attitude toward wealth, not necessarily with wealth itself

- An overseer may be rich or poor
- Yes, a rich man can have an unhealthy love of riches, but then again so can a poor man
- On the other hand, a godly rich man may be generous with his riches just as a poor man can find contentment in his poverty
- The question is whether a potential overseer is preoccupied with obtaining and retaining wealth such that it interferes with his ability to steward the church of God
  - For example, does he manipulate others or use his office to enrich himself?
  - The overseers of Israel in Jesus' day did exactly this thing
  - Which is why the scriptures report that the Pharisees were lovers of money but not of God
- As Jesus Himself said, you can't serve God and money at the same time
  - The desire for one will inevitably lead a person away from the other
  - The present waste land of prosperity teachers and the millions they've deceived are testimony to the truth of Christ's words
- Since both poor and rich men can be lovers of money, how can we judge this quality in a prospective overseer?
  - Amassing wealth or possessing nice things doesn't automatically mean a man is covetous
    - Ironically, a healthy savings account or a nice car could be evidence that the man is careful with his money
    - That's an admirable quality in a leader and it may be a skill the church needs
    - So we can't be too quick to judge on this issue
  - Like all character traits, a man's attitude toward wealth is something we come to understand by getting to know him
    - Everyone has a desire for money at least to some degree
    - But desire doesn't constitute a "love" of money
  - So here are some warnings signs to watch for in a prospect overseer
    - Is he generous to others?
    - Does he live a relatively modest lifestyle, one that's within their means?
    - Does he manage his own money well enough not to be a burden on others or is he always struggling to make ends meet?
    - It's worth the time required to understand a man's heart on this issue
    - So many church bodies have suffered grave damage from men who cared only about this world and what it offered
- In vs.4-5 Paul gives one of the more controversial qualifications for an overseer
  - He says an overseer must manage his own home well
    - Managing the home is a broad concept that includes many things

- But it begins with the basic idea of leading in the home
- The Bible teaches that men are the spiritual leaders in their families and in the church
  - Therefore, before a man may be judged ready to lead the church, he should already be leading in the home
  - Proper management in the home should look very much the same as in the church
  - A potential overseer ought to demonstrate all these same qualities before his family
- As Paul says in v.5, an overseer's approach to leading in his home is a good indication of what he will do in managing the church family
  - This principle holds true because the situations an overseer faces in the church are often very similar to those faced by a husband and father
  - Churches need order and structure, just like families
  - Churches need budgets and priorities, like families
  - Churches experience disputes that must be resolved without sacrificing relationships, just like families
  - Churches must make time to celebrate one another, to practice discipline in love, and to mourn without losing hope
  - In these ways and many more, the leader of a church must apply the same skills and sensibilities as a good father or husband
- Finally, Paul adds that this man must keep his children in control with all dignity
  - There are two parts to this requirement, one we usually see easily but another we often overlook
    - We could translate Paul's phrase as "maintaining obedient children without losing his dignity"
    - We want overseers who demonstrate they have the ability to maintain control over their children
  - This is an excellent test of their fitness for the job
    - Children are inherently undisciplined
    - They exit the womb lacking self-control
    - Therefore, self control must be learned, but unfortunately not every child receives training in maintaining self-control
  - So we want leaders who have an appreciation for self-control and submission to authority and train their children to share that attitude
    - Judging this qualification is subjective, since everyone has slightly different standards in the home
    - And every child makes bad choices and experiences rebellious moments
    - But generally his children should demonstrate love for their parents, a heart of

obedience and respect for authority

- They should respond appropriately when corrected and show a sincere desire to do the right thing
- Given the lax parenting standards in our culture today, it's getting increasingly difficult to find men who meet this standard
  - But it gets even harder when we apply the second part of Paul's requirement
    - The man must maintain control over his children without losing his dignity
    - If he gains his control through physical or verbal abuse...
    - Or if he must plead and bargain and negotiate to get his children to obey his word...then he has lost his dignity
  - Of course, we can see why such things would disqualify a leader over the church
    - Resorting to abuse or negotiation is proof that a person lacks an appreciation for authority
    - If a father must rely on inappropriate physical force or on unnecessary negotiation, then he won't have the respect of his children
  - A father's word should be sufficient to drive a child's behavior
    - Of course, discipline is a necessary part of training a child to respect a father's word
    - But applied correctly, it generally isn't necessary for long
    - That's the kind of leadership we want in the church
- The final two requirements are found in vs.6-7, where Paul says the man may not be a new convert to the faith, and needs possess a good reputation outside the church
  - To ignore these requirements brings the possibility of two similar pitfalls
    - Elevating a man into leadership too early could lead the man to follow in Satan's footsteps
    - Paul's referring to Satan's own fall, which Ezekiel says was the result of pride resulting from the the special position Satan held
    - Paul doesn't give a specific length of time since conversion because this qualification isn't merely a mathematical calculation
    - It's a matter of the heart
  - We don't want to elevate a man into a position of honor and authority in the church until he is wise and mature enough to handle the responsibility
    - We want a man who has pursued sanctification in his walk with Christ long enough to have gained the benefits of it
    - Specifically, he's gained the spiritual strength to resist any temptation to self-importance or conceit
    - The issue is partly one of physical age but more so of spiritual maturity
    - In situations where the pickings are slim like a new church in a remote location, an outside authority may select leaders closest to the goal

- Lastly an overseer must possess a good reputation outside the church
  - Earlier Paul said this man must be above reproach, which meant no one in the church could bring a charge against the man
    - Now Paul extends that to the unbelieving world
    - In the first case Paul wanted the church to be sensitive to accusations against the man that might have substance behind them
  - In this case Paul is concerned about public accusations regardless of whether they are true
    - He says he doesn't want the overseer to fall into reproach, or disgrace, or the snare of the devil
    - Paul's speaking of both fact and fiction
    - If an overseer has a bad reputation in the public eye, then either he has real character issues
    - Or there is substance and he may feel pressure to cover up the false accusations
  - In either case, the church can't afford to have leaders that cause a public sensation which may detract from the mission
    - So we should pass over men who are controversial or notorious whether justified or not
    - It may not be fair, especially in cases where they are falsely accused
    - But the mission of the church is more important than one man's opportunity to lead
  - By the way, this requirement argues against church leaders becoming prominent in politics or societal movements apart from the Gospel
    - We want leaders to remain quietly focused on leading the flock and reaching the world for Christ
    - Too much notoriety is unhelpful because the enemy will take advantage of any opportunity to bring church leaders to ruin
- So those sixteen requirements, when properly applied, will result in the strongest possible leaders for the church
  - But remember, these requirements are standards of godliness for all Christians
    - We want our leaders to model the highest possible standard
    - But all believers are expected to imitate their leaders in adopting these same attributes
    - So don't assume that only overseers need strive for these things
  - Keep that in mind as we look at the second list in this chapter, that of the position of deacon

**1Tim. 3:8 Deacons likewise must be men of dignity, not double-tongued, or addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain,**



**1Tim. 3:9** but holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience.

**1Tim. 3:10** These men must also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons if they are beyond reproach.

**1Tim. 3:11** Women must likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things.

**1Tim. 3:12** Deacons must be husbands of only one wife, and good managers of their children and their own households.

**1Tim. 3:13** For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a high standing and great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

- Last week I explained that the position of deacon is a title of service in the body of Christ, not a title of authority
  - A deacon is someone who leads by example in serving the body
    - And in that sense, they occupy a leadership position
    - But they do not exercise authority over the body overall
  - In many churches today, the position of deacon is either misapplied or is absent altogether
    - Deacons are sometimes assigned authority over the body, which is not in keeping with Paul's instructions
    - If they have authority over the body, they should be called overseers or perhaps elders
    - This would allow a true deacon position to emerge in the church
  - But in most churches, no one receives the title of deacon
    - Instead, we use other titles like "director" or committee chairman, etc.
    - These roles are service roles, where the person has responsibility to oversee the work of the church in some capacity
    - So overseers oversee people, while deacons oversee work
- Paul gives requirements for deacons, both men and women
  - He gives 8 qualifications for the men and 4 for the women
    - The two groups address similar ideas
    - The differences relate to the different roles of men and women in the church and family
  - Paul begins with men of dignity
    - Dignified refers to carrying oneself in a holy, serious or reverent way within the church
    - Deacons are not silly men
    - They are men worthy of respect in the body
  - Secondly they are no double-tongued

- The word in Greek can be translated insincere
- We don't want those leading the work of the church to be untrustworthy in what they report to the leaders
- They will be entrusted with resources and they will direct people in accomplishing work
- So they must be trustworthy
- The next two requirements are similar to two requirements for overseers
  - A deacon cannot be in addiction nor seeking for wealth in inappropriate ways
  - We don't need to explain those further except to note that even those who aren't in leadership over others need to guard against such things
- The next two requirements are test of maturity
  - Paul says deacons must hold to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience
    - This requirement is a lesser form of "able to teach"
    - It means to have a firm conviction that the doctrines of the church, as taught by the overseers, are true
  - The deacons aren't expected to have the same depth of understanding as an overseer
    - And therefore they aren't called to teach, since they aren't occupying an authority position
    - But they are expected to operate in harmony with their convictions on the doctrines of the faith
    - So we wouldn't elevate someone to deacon if they don't understand the core beliefs of Christianity or if they have doubts about the elder's teaching
  - Furthermore, they must be tested or approved to make sure they are beyond reproach
    - This requirement is a companion to the elder requirement
    - The difference is an overseers past is on the table
    - But for the deacon the issue is his present condition
    - So we test or approve a deacon to see if they are blameworthy or blameless in some way
- Next we move to qualifications for female deacons
  - Deacons can be men or women because the position is not a position of authority over the congregation
    - Not only does Paul describe qualifications for the position here
    - But he mentions a deaconess serving in the church in Cenchrea in Romans 16:1
  - Moving to the qualifications for women deacons, Paul expects them to meet the same basic character qualifications as men
    - First in v.11 they must also be dignified as the men

- Then Paul adds they must not be malicious gossips
- The phrase in Greek means to share inappropriate details about others in the church with an intent to do them harm
  - I find it curious that Paul didn't list mere gossiping as disqualifying for a woman (perhaps that would have ruled out too many?)
  - The ones Paul is concerned about are those who have engaged in the behavior with a desire to hurt someone
  - Obviously a woman so spiritually immature that she purposely hurts other in the church is in no position to lead works of faith
  - She needs time to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ first
- Lastly, a female deacon is to exhibit a temperate, faithful disposition
  - We talked already about temperance
    - And the word in Greek for faithful means literally stable and reliable
    - Both words together suggest a woman who isn't flighty or shrill but calm, measured and quiet
  - Remember, Paul is working in this letter to strengthen Timothy's church against false teachers who had led women astray
    - So it makes sense that Paul wanted women elevated into leadership positions of service to the body
    - But he wanted the right kind of woman serving to counter the negative influence of the women deceived by false teaching
- Returning to the men, Paul asks that the deacons be husbands of one wife and good managers of their homes
  - Once again, these qualifications mirror those of the overseers and for all the same reasons
    - It's interesting to wonder why women deacons didn't have the same requirements
    - And the answer is that women had little responsibility in these areas in the family
  - Women had no legal standing in marriage, so they couldn't initiate a marriage much less a divorce
    - So if a woman was to practice a godly marriage, it depended on the husband to ensure that outcome
    - Likewise, the father had authority over the household, so if the children were unruly, it was to the father's shame, not the mother's
- Paul ends this section with a statement that forms a bookend with v.1
  - In v.1 he said that a man who aspired to be an overseer was seeking a good work
    - That good work was the work of pursuing godliness in his life
    - And by that pursuit he could qualify himself to hold a position of authority

- Now in v.13 Paul says that those who have served well as deacons will gain a high standing and great confidence
  - High standing could also be translated high rank
  - Furthermore, great confidence could be phrased more boldness
- So for an overseer, the position itself is recognition of having obtained a superior testimony of godliness
  - But for a deacon, it is his or her years of service that will result in great honor
  - And that honor comes in two parts
- First, the deacon will have high rank in the faith that is in Christ Jesus
  - At the very least, high rank means accolades among those in the church
  - But Paul's choice of words seems to be a reference to the eternal rewards that come to those who serve Christ well
  - The "rank" could refer to the deacon's place in the kingdom
- Secondly, the deacon who serves well will gain greater boldness or confidence in the faith they enjoy in Christ Jesus
  - While they may have begun with only a moderate confidence in their faith, that is in the doctrines and assurances of Christ
    - But now after years of faithful service, they will find their confidence and boldness increased
    - They will have greater certainty in the faithfulness of Christ and in the promise of good things to come
  - How does this happen? This is a basic truth of scripture...that serving God is the surest way to strengthen your faith in Him and in His Word
    - Because as you serve God, you will inevitably confront difficulties and challenges that you can't solve yourself
    - But the Lord will show up and show Himself strong time and time again
    - And as He does, you gain great confidence in Him and His Word
  - It's like a child who works closely with his or her father in chores around the house or in chores or a family business
    - Working side by side with a parent is the best way to get to know them and to trust them
    - Serving the Lord is an opportunity to know the Master
    - Serving can't replace knowing Him in His Word, but it's a catalyst for sanctification
    - Those who serve as deacons will see a reward of sanctification leading to an eternal reward

- We spent the last chapter understanding the Bible's qualifications for those who lead us in the church
  - We learned about the qualifications for overseers and deacons
    - Looking at the details, we found requirements on marriage, family, temperament, biblical scholarship, and other character traits
    - Taken together, the requirements ensure that the church is led by men who exemplify the most godly among us
    - So not only will they serve Christ and us well, but they will also serve as models for our own pursuit of godliness
  - But buried in these details we find an even more important purpose for selecting the right kind of leaders
    - It's a purpose that's forward-looking, prophetic
    - Yet it's also an ever-present concern for the church
    - One that requires strong, biblically-grounded leaders to confront
  - So now we move into chapter 4 where Paul explains this reason for strong leaders who will hold the line in guarding the church

**1Tim. 4:1 But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons,**

**1Tim. 4:2 by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron,**

**1Tim. 4:3 men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth.**

**1Tim. 4:4 For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with gratitude;**

**1Tim. 4:5 for it is sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer.**

- Paul introduces a prophecy to explain the need for strong leadership
  - He prefaces his explanation by crediting this prophecy to the Holy Spirit
    - This letter was written in the middle of the first century
    - So it was probably written before many other New Testament works, including most of the Gospels and the book of Revelation
  - Therefore, when Paul says that the "Spirit" explicitly taught the church about these future events, he means a revelation Paul received himself
    - He says "the Spirit" to make clear this revelation was not delivered by Christ in His day
    - Furthermore, Paul uses the adverb "explicitly" ("clearly" in Greek) to emphasize that there was no doubt of confusion over the Spirit's revelation

- So the Spirit taught expressly about a coming situation for the church in the “later times”
  - Later times is a reference to the culminating events of the present age
  - Jesus Himself spoke in the Gospels about ages, long periods of history that serve certain purposes in God’s plan
  - And as one age comes to an end, it will lead us into a new age

**Mark 10:29** Jesus said, “Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel’s sake,  
**Mark 10:30** but that he will receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life.

- Furthermore, as the end of an age approaches, the Lord brings signs to the world announcing the coming end
  - Jesus spoke at length of the signs that will announce the coming end to this present age
  - You can learn those signs in Matthew 24 and Luke 21
- So in this passage, Paul is adding another event to the Bible’s list of signs that will announce the end of the age during later times
  - And the sign is that some will fall away from the faith
    - There are three key words in this prophecy we need to understand
    - The first word is “some”
  - I think it’s a bit misleading that my translation chose the word “some” to describe this group
    - In Greek the word means “certain ones”
    - The word does not imply a specific size of the group...it could be “some” but it could also be “most”
    - The point is that a significant number of a group is involved
- And the second word we need to understand is “faith”
  - The faith means the community of all believers
    - Specifically, the community of all those who have been born again by faith
    - Simply put, the faith means all true believers in the church
  - It’s important to understand that when Paul says “the faith,” he *isn’t* referring to all those who participate in church (i.e., the weekly corporate gathering)
    - Paul is speaking of the spiritual body of Christ, which is why he used the term “faith” rather than “church”

- So we have one group (certain ones) who are not part of the community of true believers (“the faith”)
- Which leads us to our final word of interest: fall away
  - The word in Greek translated “fall away” (*aphistemi*) means to depart or withdraw
    - When we put it together with the first two words, we find an interesting conclusion
    - At the end of this age, a group, perhaps many, will depart from the true faith
    - But they don’t necessarily withdraw or depart from the gathering
    - So what does this mean?
  - We know from other scripture that the one who has truly become born again by faith in Jesus Christ cannot be unborn again
    - They are forever a child of God, regardless of what comes or what they do
    - They may fall away from the gathering or even from their walk with Christ
    - But spiritually speaking, they cannot fall away from the faith
  - Therefore, those who fall away from the faith are those within a certain gathering that are not actually members of the body of Christ
    - The falling away or departing does not describe a removal of bodies from the room
    - Rather, it refers to an absence of the Holy Spirit within those bodies
    - It describes a growing presence of unbelievers within the gathering that meets and calls itself the Church
- Elsewhere, Paul calls this future falling away of true believers within the church as “the great apostasy”
  - In 2Thess 2 Paul explains that the final events of this age, events that usher in the next age, include an apostasy

**2Th. 2:1** Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him,

**2Th. 2:2** that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.

**2Th. 2:3** Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction,

- In addressing the fears of the church in Thessalonica, Paul reassured them that they were not enduring the Tribulation
- Paul says that the Tribulation, which he calls the day of the Lord, cannot begin until

several things take place

- Among those preceding events is the apostasy
  - This is a different Greek word (*apostasía*), but it carries a similar meaning
  - It refers to a rebellion against an authority or standard
  - Paul gives no explanation in 2Thess for what the apostasy will be
  - So we must assume Paul knew that his readers were already familiar with this concept
  - And since Paul says this truth was taught explicitly by the Spirit, we must assume he delivered the same teaching everywhere
- So the Spirit teaches that near the end of this age, the body of Christ will experience a falling away
  - The constitution of the gathering itself will change
  - Where once it held most or entirely true believers
  - At the end of the age the Spirit says explicitly that a number of those gathered will not actually be believers
  - The “church” gathering will consist of some (or many) who do not know the Lord
- Obviously, unbelievers have always hung around the edges of the true Church
  - Even in the first century, the church encountered “false confessors” who found something attractive about Christian life or experience
    - For example in Acts 8 we read about a man named Simon the Magician, who became fascinated in the movement of the Holy Spirit
    - When the Spirit came upon new believers in Samaria, Simon asked the apostles to sell him the same power
    - They rebuked him, calling him out for trying to obtain with money what comes only through a relationship with Christ
  - While the church has always dealt with this, the end times will bring something altogether different
    - Instead a few unbelievers, the last days church will become an apostate church
    - Though true believers will remain, the rise of unbelievers within the body will become a serious and persistent problem
  - Even worse, the apostate group within the gathering will perceive itself to be true Christianity
    - Even as they gather under a banner of Christ, they will remain unaware they lack the substance of what they claim
    - Like Simon, they will seek to obtain illegitimately what can only come by faith
- Jesus talks about this coming period of His church when He writes His letters to the seven churches of Asia Minor
  - In His letter to Laodicea, the city that pictures the last days church, Jesus describes the apostasy



**Rev. 3:14** “To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God, says this:

**Rev. 3:15** ‘I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot.

**Rev. 3:16** ‘So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth.

**Rev. 3:17** ‘Because you say, “I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,” and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked,

**Rev. 3:18** I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see.

- From Jesus’ comments we can clearly see the apostasy taking hold in this church
- The church is lukewarm, neither hot nor cold
- The church is straddling a line that cannot be straddled in reality
  - The community calls itself Christians, but in reality they do not have saving faith
  - They are lukewarm in the sense that they look like Christians (“hot”) but they are actually not Christians (cold)
- In reality, there is no “halfway” position to the question of saving faith
  - Which is why Jesus tells this church He will spit them out (literally “vomit” in Greek)
  - So this so-called church was self-deceived and in jeopardy of eternal judgment
  - They thought themselves spiritually rich and in need of nothing
  - In reality, they needed to receive what Christ alone could provide them
- The church in Laodicea represents the church in the last days, and it is the epitome of a falling away from the faith
  - A congregation is still meeting – and maybe even growing – but it lacks the very thing it claims to offer the world
  - We might ask how can such a thing even happen in the first place?
  - How does a group that began with true Christians turn into a group of unbelievers blissfully content to congregate under the banner of Christ?
- Paul explains how beginning in the second half of v.1
  - It begins with paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons
    - The problem begins where it always does: with the enemy
    - Specifically those who are the fallen are those who follow lying spirits, or demons
    - And furthermore, they follow the doctrines or teachings of these demons

- There are two elements at work here
  - First, the demons themselves are working to lead unbelievers away from the truth
  - They captivate the minds and hearts of unbelievers in a variety of ways, but always by appealing to the flesh
- In the last days, these deceitful spirits will enter into the church and draw people away into these deceitful schemes
  - Whether through signs and wonders, promises of material wealth or other earthly desires, the demons attract a following
  - They empower or even indwell certain men and women for the purpose of influencing others and obtaining a following
  - They will follow after these demons, not knowing they are demons of course
- Secondly, Paul says those who fall away will be paying attention to doctrines of demons
  - Even after the deceitful demon has moved on and the person they indwelled has past away, their doctrines live on
    - The false gospels, the false teachings on spiritual gifts or the purpose of the Law and the many other false doctrines that permeate the church today got their start somewhere in the past
    - They are doctrines invented by demons, which have captivated many over the years
  - These doctrines are perpetuated by men who themselves lack the truth, Paul says
    - In v.2 Paul says these false teachings will be carried forward by men who are hypocritical liars
    - They are liars because they preach false things
    - And they are hypocritical because they don't even believe what they preach
  - We might wonder how a person could deceive so many so freely and not experience some regret or shame, but Paul says these men won't
    - They are seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron
    - To be seared means to be marked with heat
    - And the idea is that of a permanent scarring
    - So a conscience permanently scarred is a conscience that feels nothing, regrets nothing, and cannot be made sensitive again
- I believe we are living in the time that Paul predicted and of that which the letter to Laodicea described
  - Demons with their false doctrines have gained a foothold in the church using false teachers under their control
    - By their influence, they are sowing seeds of apostasy
    - Left unchecked, these agents push out any message of the Gospel and the Christ Who saves

- And in its place, they offer false and useless teaching
- Such that if unbelievers enter the assembly, they find nothing to convict them much less guide them to the truth
- Unbelief soon flourishes in that environment
- We can already see the beginnings of this apostasy around us
  - In many places around the world, congregational gatherings are met by pastors offering no authentic Bible teaching
  - The Gospel itself is under assault in these places, because it's never taught
  - Instead, congregations encounter men peddling outright lies, including false promises of miracles, wealth, healing and other things
- As this trend grows, it captures more and more believers who will suffer a lack of spiritual growth and maturity as a result
  - But it also attracts more and more unbelievers who are never converted by the false teaching
  - As the believers slowly die off or leave in search of true teaching, the apostasy grows
  - The church body becomes increasingly a body of unbelievers
- This is happening today, and the Spirit explicitly says it will continue until the end of the age
  - This a clear indication to us today that we have reached the promised last days
    - Earlier periods of church history also encountered apostasy, of course
    - But those earlier periods were temporary
    - And they lacked some of the key markers that will accompany the later days trend Paul describes here
  - Specifically, Paul says these men of the last days will forbid marriage and call their followers to abstain from certain foods
    - These markers don't seem especially remarkable
    - But in reality they are unique to the last days
  - First, men will forbid marriage
    - The Greek word translated forbid is *kuluo*, which can also mean to hinder or stand in the way of
    - So these men will hinder godly marriage in one way or another
  - Secondly, these men will give a spiritual argument for abstaining from certain foods
    - Obviously, dietary restrictions were a favorite tactic of the Judaizers who pressured Christians to adhere to Mosaic dietary laws
    - But remember Paul told Timothy that the Spirit was speaking explicitly about the later times or last days
    - So Paul is looking past the struggles of Judaizers of his day and toward

something else

- How are we to recognize these signs as indications of the end?
  - First, the institution of marriage has always been universally understood to be the life-long union of a man and woman
    - Certainly people engaged in perverted sexual practices from man's early history
    - But society didn't debate the concept of marriage
    - They may have questioned the need for it or the sanctity of it, but never the definition of it
  - But in the past century, and especially in the past several decades, the institution itself has been assaulted in ways never seen before
    - The concept of marriage itself is being hindered
    - Men and women now declare that God's definition of marriage is no longer true
    - And so people are coming together in ways that are not truly marriage (in God's eyes), yet they use the word
    - This is hindering true marriage, and it's a trend unique in all human history
- Secondly, in the last days false teachers will advocate for abstaining from foods
  - Abstaining from a type of food is a common trend today
    - Many of us abstain as a matter of personal preference or for physical reasons of one kind or another
    - But there is no basis in scripture for a Christian to abstain from foods for spiritual reasons
  - Paul says in v.4 that all foods are to be gratefully enjoyed by those who believe and know the truth assuming we receive it thankfully
    - In this context, the truth refers to understanding that salvation in Christ brings liberty to the believer
    - When the church sees false teachers advocate for abstaining as a matter of spiritual health, we have entered the last days
  - Notice Paul adds a qualifier that these things become good for us because they are sanctified by the word and prayer
    - Paul is saying we come to appreciate the goodness of what God has created for us when we study scripture
    - In scripture we learn that He gave us every plant and every living thing as food
    - Furthermore, we acknowledge our thanks through prayer
    - This is a clear command in the New Testament for believers to engage in routine giving of thanks over our meals
- But in the last days, such thankfulness will be absent because the false teachers do not teach nor even understand the word of God
  - As a result of their seared consciences, they do not understand spiritual truth

- Therefore, they substitute false teachings on physical matters
- Denying oneself foods we used to enjoy is a false work of asceticism
- Asceticism is an attempt to make oneself holier through self-denial
- It's a work of the flesh, so it profits the person nothing spiritually
- But it will become a favorite tactic of false teachers in the last days
- For example, early teachings of the Seventh Day Adventist church advocated vegetarianism as a spiritual requirement
- So how does abstaining from foods come to mark the last days?
  - The opportunity for widespread abstaining is a relatively modern privilege
  - In ancient times and especially in poor cultures, life itself depended on eating what was available and affordable
  - Under those conditions, abstaining wasn't practical or possible
- Therefore, we can know we have entered the last days when teaching of abstaining from foods is common and practical
  - Only in the past century has such thinking become possible for most people
  - Only the wealth of the world and its ease of accessing food in the last days will allow abstaining to become common place
  - And in that way it becomes a sign of the last days
- Paul tells Timothy the last days church will face these problems, as motivation for Timothy to appoint proper leaders and maintain proper teaching
  - Timothy can't change the future
    - The apostasy is coming and certainly Paul isn't expecting Timothy to stop it
    - Instead, Paul is giving Timothy instruction intended to preserve the true believers in the midst of such things
    - At least believers may be preserved in their godly walk in the truth even as the rest of the crowd is taken away by lies
  - Which leads Paul to his next command to young Timothy

**1Tim. 4:6 In pointing out these things to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following.**

**1Tim. 4:7 But have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women. On the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness;**

**1Tim. 4:8 for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.**

**1Tim. 4:9 It is a trustworthy statement deserving full acceptance.**

- First, Paul asks Timothy to point these things out to the brethren
  - The things Timothy is to point out are the negative trends he just described
    - Just as I pointed them out to you today, Paul wants Timothy to point them out to the brethren
    - Many times believers won't recognize the signs of demons and their false teaching
    - They depend upon mature and learned elders and pastors to point out bad influences using scripture
    - The enemy is crafty, and his lies are often hard to spot
    - Only when we hold his claims up to the light of scripture will his lies become evident
  - Note Paul didn't say condemn or silence others
    - He simply said to point them out, which is a relatively mild response
    - Making note of the bad teaching or teacher is sufficient to protect the believer while avoiding slander or inciting unnecessary conflict
- Paul says that the pastor, teacher or elder who is vigilant and willing to point out false teaching will be a good servant of Christ
  - This is high praise indeed, since pleasing Christ is our highest goal
    - As we confront false teaching we must remember our goal is to please Christ
    - Because I assure you that pointing these things out will not please the enemy and usually isn't popular
    - And you expect the enemy will retaliate anytime we take a stand for truth
  - Nevertheless, this is the mission of church leaders, which is why the church must appoint strong, capable, godly leaders to protect the true believers
    - The task of protecting the flock from false teaching puts pressure on leadership like nothing else they will do
    - It will test our willingness to seek the praises of God over the praises of men
    - It will test our patience to endure the attacks of the enemy
    - It will test our commitment to the inerrancy and authority of the word of God
    - And it will test our egos as we watch our congregations shrink while the apostate congregations grow
  - That's why Paul says Timothy (and all leaders) must be constantly nourished on the words of the faith and sound doctrine
    - Words of the faith refers to the teaching of scripture
    - Our leaders must be constantly nourished by the word of God if they are to succeed in defending their flock against the coming apostasy
    - Constantly nourished means a daily emphasis on study for the purpose of growing in understanding

- And that daily practice leads to appreciation of sound doctrine
  - Doctrine is the assembling of scripture's teaching into principles that frame our thinking and practice
  - Doctrine must come out of the text of scripture if it is to be accurate
  - So Paul says leaders must study to learn and then bring that learning to the church body in doctrines to be followed
  - Paul isn't expecting a leader's study to take the place of individuals studying scripture as well
  - But leaders study and learn so they may teach doctrine in order to help guide their congregation's own study
- In contrast to feeding on scripture, Paul says Timothy should have nothing to do with fables
  - The Greek words say "reject profane and old women's fables"
    - A fable is any fictitious story
    - It's a story because it tried to acquit itself
    - Like the scams you get by email telling a story of some tragedy and asking for your financial help
    - The elaborate detail seems to give the fable credibility among those taken in by them
  - False teaching is usually presented in this way, as a fable or story that attempts to address doubts and prove itself
    - A common fable today is that man never walked on the moon
    - But the fable is often accompanied by explanations for the many objections we are bound to raise against it
    - We have no way to verify any of the claims...it's just a story but one artfully told
  - That's exactly the way Satan works...he's the original conspiracy theorist
    - In the Garden he told woman to eat of the tree
    - When she objected, he had a story ready for her
    - He said God didn't tell you the whole story...there was something more
- Paul says reject profane fables, which refers to blasphemous teaching, things that are offensive to the teaching of the word of God
  - So measure all teaching against scripture
    - Remain nourished by that word so that you will be prepared to see the flaws in Satan's stories
    - And then reject the stories
    - Don't play with them or allow others to entertain them
    - Reject them, silence them and move on
  - Secondly, Paul tells Timothy to reject women's fables

- The term “women’s fable” could mean a couple of things
- First, Paul could simply be using a colloquialism of his day
- Women often worked together in the chores of the home, so they passed their time talking and sharing stories
- Men, on the other hand, worked in the fields, and so they had to stop working to talk with one another
- Therefore, a “women’s fable” became a way of describing idle talk not worth serious attention
- But Paul might also be alluding to the influence of women in spreading false teaching in Ephesus
  - As we noted earlier, the women in the church seem to have been deceived by the false teachers
  - And then under their influence, they helped spread the false teaching
  - In that way, they were sharing women’s fables
- Interestingly, Paul counters such things with disciplining oneself for godliness
  - Discipline refers to the process of denying the flesh’s desires while building up our spiritual strength
    - The flesh is constantly warring against the will of God given to us by His Spirit
    - Since we know these fables and false teaching were instruments of the enemy to bring corruption into the church, Paul wanted Timothy to be ready to resist
  - In the same way that an athlete takes preparations to ensure his body is ready for the difficulties of the contest, so must spiritual leaders discipline themselves to prepare for spiritual battles
    - Timothy needed to be ready for the fights
    - Even if he had a firm grasp on doctrine, he could still be taken down through some sin or temptation left unchecked
    - Disciplining himself for godliness meant taking weapons out of the enemy’s hands
    - Why give the enemy or our flesh any more advantage than they already have?
  - Discipline means taking steps to constrain our flesh while strengthening our spirit
    - Constraining the flesh means setting up barriers to bad behavior
    - Avoiding sources of temptation
    - Taking proactive steps to contend with the flesh’s desires
  - And strengthening the spirit means taking up the habits of godliness
    - Praying regularly
    - Congregating with the body regularly
    - Fasting
    - Studying scripture



- Confessing sins to one another etc.
- In vs.8-9 Paul compares spiritual discipline to disciplining the body
  - Building up the body offers “little” profit, Paul says
    - It’s little profit because there is some value
    - A healthy body is a nice thing, and worth pursuing to a degree
  - But in the end the body dies, so any efforts to preserve it are fleeting at best
    - If we invest too much time in preserving or building up or disciplining the body, our efforts die when our body does
    - So it profits us, but it’s of little profit
  - But if you build up godliness, it profits you now and into eternity
    - The spiritual maturity we gain here will persist into our life and in our new body in the Kingdom
    - This is an important principle in scripture, that our pursuit of spiritual maturity and godliness now, profits us in the Kingdom also
  - First, it profits us in rewards, as Jesus teaches in many places
    - Our willingness to deny ourselves and serve Christ brings recognition and reward in the Kingdom
    - For Christ rewards us based on our faithfulness to Him now
  - Secondly, our degree of spiritual maturity follows us into the Kingdom
    - We will all live there without sin, which will render us a different person obviously
    - But the removal of sin from our body doesn’t change the nature of our spirit
    - And our spiritual maturity is developed here while we work to resist our sinful body
- So Paul tells us this is a trustworthy statement, that is you can bet on Paul being right
  - Make the sacrifices necessary today to defend the truth and resist sin and it will pay off in the Kingdom
    - Both for those you guard today
    - And for yourself



# 1 Timothy - Lesson 5A

Chapters 4:8-16; 5:1-7

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- Tonight we finish Chapter 4 and head into Chapter 5 of Paul's letter to Timothy
  - And in these chapters we find some of the most practical and timeless advice on church life
    - Paul directs his advice to Timothy as the leader who must carry out the instructions
    - And it begins with specific instructions for how a pastor must conduct himself in the face of opposition
    - But Paul quickly moves to addressing how every member of the body must conduct themselves
  - And in all cases, these commands serve to fulfill Paul's statement in vs.8-9
    - Let's briefly revisit that passage from last week

**1Tim. 4:8 for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.**

**1Tim. 4:9 It is a trustworthy statement deserving full acceptance.**

- Paul compared pursuing physical strength to pursuing spiritual strength
- And Paul noted that the pursuit of physical strength was of limited value, eternally speaking
- Because the body eventually dies, and with it all the strength we gained
- But the spirit is eternal, so the strength we obtain spiritually will persist into eternity
  - Therefore pursuit of spiritual strength, which Paul calls godliness, is a much greater call
  - It brings benefits now and into eternity
  - Pursuit of godliness is our highest goal and must take priority over any other pursuit
- Paul says in v.9 this is a trustworthy statement, meaning this is a biblical truth that we cannot deny and should not ignore
  - Today we might say this is "for sure" or "you can bet on it"
    - In the moments of life when we make an earthly sacrifice to obtain godliness, it may not feel like we're making the right choice
    - We may feel like we're being cheated out of something good
    - Like when we sacrifice income to serve in the church
    - Or when we drop bad habits or resist certain temptations to please the Lord
  - But the Bible says you can trust you made the right call
    - In eternity, the wisdom of your sacrifice in pursuit of godliness will become evident
    - The things you gave up, the persecutions you accepted, the mocking you endured, and the effort you made in service to Christ will bring a reward worthy of your sacrifice

- So now Paul gives specific ways the church makes sacrifices to reach an eternal goal

**1Tim. 4:10 For it is for this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers.**

**1Tim. 4:11 Prescribe and teach these things.**

- Paul says for “this” we labor and strive
  - “This” refers to Paul’s trustworthy statement concerning the eternal value of godliness
    - We labor and strive for godliness
    - The two Greek words for labor and strive carry subtle meaning lost in our English words
    - To labor means to grow weary
    - To work so long and hard that we reach a point we feel like quitting, when we’re exhausted from the effort
  - And to strive really means to fight and struggle
    - The fight is both against our own flesh and against a fallen world
    - We fight the enemy, we fight temptation, we fight opposition to the word of God
- This is the reality for anyone seeking godliness
  - We will work until we’re sick and tired of the struggle
    - We will get discouraged at times and we will grow weary
    - There will be many days we want to quit the fight
  - And at every turn, we face an enemy that opposes us
    - Attacks will come from every direction
    - And there will be casualties along the way
    - But Paul says we labor and strive in this way because it’s worth it in the end
  - But if we’re going to survive, it will only be because we fix our hope on the living God, Christ Himself
    - If you expect to come through this life with your testimony intact, then you had better be resting on Christ and not your own power
    - Practically speaking, you have to work with Him, not against Him
    - Talk less, pray more
    - Plan a little less, and seek God’s will more
  - Most of all, understand this pattern is in God’s will and good purposes for us
    - We can’t allow the difficulty of serving Christ and growing in godliness become our excuse for not pursuing the path
    - We know it’s going to be hard
    - And the difficulty serves God’s purpose in us

- As James explains

**James 1:2 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials,**

**James 1:3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.**

**James 1:4 And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.**

- James says we should consider trials to be a good thing
  - They are good because they produce changes in us
  - Changes like endurance, patience, humility, repentance
  - And these changes will bring about a perfect result
  - We will become perfect and complete, lacking nothing in eternity
  - That's our incentive for pressing ahead in this life, seeking to please and emulate Christ
- And then Paul adds that this Christ we serve is the Savior of all men, especially believers
  - This statement has driven some confusion and debate because of Paul's language
    - The phrase especially of believers could be rendered "exceedingly for those believing (or faithful)"
    - Understanding this statement depends on staying in context
  - Paul's context is that of fixing our hope on Jesus as we endure in our pursuit of godliness seeking eternal profit
    - His context is *not* salvation, so we can't stray into that topic
    - By the context we conclude Paul says Jesus is the savior for everyone (all believers)
    - But He's especially the Savior for those who live in a believing (or faithful) way
  - Obviously, the Lord remains Savior for all believers regardless of whether we pursue godliness or not
    - Even the most disobedient believer among us still has the assurance that Jesus is their Savior
    - Christ justifies His children from the moment of our faith, and nothing can separate us from the love of God
    - Simply put, salvation doesn't turn on our choice to pursue or not pursue godliness
- But for those believers who do pursue godliness, fixing their hope on Jesus, for these Jesus is *exceedingly* their Savior
  - For them, Jesus is even more a Savior, because they are not only saved in Him, but they are living for Him
    - Just as we could say that our country's president is the president of every citizen, yet he is especially the president of those who voted for him
    - Likewise, Christ is the Savior for every Christian, but He is exceedingly a Savior

for those who live in obedience to Him

- Moreover, Christ will be exceedingly a Savior to those pursuing godliness because He will be that much more real in their life
  - They will know Him better as they see Him at work in their lives
  - And in eternity Jesus will be an even greater Savior because they will receive a greater profit for having pursued godliness
  - In all these ways, He is exceedingly the Savior of those who are believing or faithful
- So with that introduction Paul asks Timothy to prescribe and teach these things
  - The “things” refers to everything in the letter, both those things before and after this statement
    - To prescribe means to set a requirement before the congregation
    - And to teach means to explain the reasoning behind the requirement so that the church will have good reason to obey
  - Paul is exhorting Timothy (and all teachers and preachers) not to shy away from sharing the difficult truths of our faith
    - Paul reminds us that we do not have the latitude to cherry pick what the church hears
    - We are under order to teach the whole counsel of God’s word
    - Including teaching about the need to pursue godliness
    - And the opportunity for eternal reward
    - And of course all the other details Paul covers in this letter
  - Paul seems to have known that bad times were coming for the church as he said at the outset of this chapter
    - Times when pastors would stop teaching these things to their congregations
    - Today, most believers, even mature ones, have little appreciation of these things
    - And if we don’t appreciate the need to labor and strive for godliness, how likely are we to pursue it?
- Paul’s first prescription is directed to Timothy and all leaders God raises up in the church

**1Tim. 4:12** Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe.

**1Tim. 4:13** Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching.

**1Tim. 4:14** Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed on you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery.

**1Tim. 4:15** Take pains with these things; be absorbed in them, so that your progress will be evident to all.

**1Tim. 4:16** Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you.

- Because most of us aren't preachers or pastors, I'm going to run through this list highlighting a few key principles
  - First, a pastor's or teacher's authority isn't found in physical qualities or earthly achievements
  - Paul says in v.12 that Timothy couldn't let his weaknesses in that respect cause him to shrink back from his mission
  - Others might accuse him of being too young or unqualified, but Timothy should know otherwise
- In v.14 Paul reminds Timothy that he was installed according to the Spirit, Who manifested God's approval of Timothy through the presbytery
  - The presbytery refers to the council of elders
  - God bestowed Timothy with a spiritual gift
  - And Timothy was ordained by laying on of hands, as we discussed in Chapter 1
  - And prophetic statements were made concerning his future in the church
  - These things alone were enough to validate Timothy
- Paul's first point is that if God is for you, who can be against you?
  - The carnal within the church will only respect a certain kind of leader
  - But God selects whoever He desires, and often the one you didn't see coming
  - Even Paul himself faced the same kind of resistance

**2Cor. 10:10** For they say, "His letters are weighty and strong, but his personal presence is unimpressive and his speech contemptible."

**2Cor. 10:11** Let such a person consider this, that what we are in word by letters when absent, such persons we are also in deed when present.

**2Cor. 10:12** For we are not bold to class or compare ourselves with some of those who commend themselves; but when they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are without understanding.

**2Cor. 10:13** But we will not boast beyond our measure, but within the measure of the sphere which God apportioned to us as a measure, to reach even as far as you.

- Secondly, Paul says that because Timothy will always be under attack and scrutiny, he must be diligent to serve properly in God's power
  - First, Timothy must continue in the ministry of God's word
    - Specifically, read the word publicly, exhort the church to obey and teach them why these things are right

- All three steps are part of the ministry of God's word
- A church that fosters personal Bible study but never reads and preaches God's word from the pulpit is not obeying this command
- Or a church that has readings of scripture during the service but never explains it, much less commands us to obey, is wrong also
- We must move in all three areas
- Reading the word publicly reminds the body of Christ that the authority for our gathering is found in God's word
  - By reading it out loud before the congregation, we ensure that all hear it as it was written, without editing
  - We can then judge the pastor's teaching against what was read
  - And we come to see that the pastor's instructions are the natural outworking of God's word
- Secondly, the pastor exhorts us to obey
  - We all receive many instructions from many directions
  - Don't run, no right turn on red, please recycle...
  - Please take out the trash, or do your homework...
  - But with each direction comes a choice of whether to obey, and we all know that our obedience isn't guaranteed
- But if we have someone who cares for us calling for our obedience, then the chances we will heed what we hear go way up
  - In this case, Paul says Timothy must exhort the word of God
  - Proper exhortation means emphasizing the intended response to the word of God
  - It requires the teacher explain the meaning of the text properly and then apply it in keeping with the author's intentions
  - When we do this, we speak with true authority, because we echo the intentions of God Himself as reflected in His word
  - Such exhortation works to elicit the correct and necessary response from the congregation
- But also, notice that reading and exhorting is not enough either
  - The body of Christ is called to obey Christ's commands, but not out of ignorance
    - In His grace, the Lord has equipped teachers and pastors in the church to ensure we have an understanding of why we should obey
    - So Paul asks Timothy to teach God's word
    - Teaching is making scripture understandable in a way that encourages our obedience
    - As God told Israel through the prophet Isaiah

**Is. 1:17 Learn to do good;  
Seek justice,**



**Reprove the ruthless,  
Defend the orphan,  
Plead for the widow.**

**Is. 1:18 “Come now, and let us reason together,”**

**Says the Lord,**

**“Though your sins are as scarlet,  
They will be as white as snow;  
Though they are red like crimson,  
They will be like wool.**

**Is. 1:19 “If you consent and obey,  
You will eat the best of the land;**

- That’s the Lord’s heart for His people
  - Just as we encourage our children’s obedience by giving them an understanding of why our rules are sensible, so does the Lord explain Himself in His word
  - The more we understand in His word, the easier obedience will become
  - It’s always a struggle, but -
- When a pastor commands his flocks to obey but withholds a biblical explanation for why, they will either misrepresent scripture or they will make obedience harder
  - Many false teachers make a living out of issuing exhortations without (proper) biblical explanation or support
  - And even in the best cases, a preacher who exhorts but doesn’t teach the Bible is speaking without authority
  - And he isn’t helping his congregation gain an appreciation for the authority of the word
- Likewise, Paul tells Timothy not to neglect his spiritual gift, which was likely evangelism or pastor-teacher
  - To neglect a spiritual gift means to set it aside, to refrain from operating in it
    - For example, if someone has the gift of evangelist but doesn’t spend time engaged in witnessing, they are neglecting their gift
    - On the other hand, it’s possible to pursue to use of a gift while still neglecting it
    - For example, if someone has the gift to teach but failed to spend the necessary time in study, they are neglecting their gift
    - They may still teach, but they come unprepared
    - Because the gift of teaching is a gift to understand and relate scripture, but like all gifts it depends on an exercise of effort in diligence
  - Paul’s warning Timothy not to get distracted
    - Don’t get so busy defending himself or building the church or accomplishing other mundane earthly tasks that he forgets the main thing
    - And the main thing is to serve God in the gift He assigned Timothy
    - And certainly this is an ever-present threat to pastors

- Many pastors today become mini-CEOs of their churches, wrapped up in everything except teaching the Bible
  - Many of them are neglecting their spiritual gift, I fear
- Instead, Paul tells Timothy and all pastors to take pains with these things
  - This verse is translated in a loose way owing to the difficulty of the original Greek language
  - It could be translated “study these things, give yourself over to them...”
  - “These things” refers to the proper duties of a pastor, teaching, exhorting, operating in his gift
- In other words, Timothy didn’t need a hobby or another job or any other distraction
  - He needed to be completely absorbed in becoming a man of God leading the flock by teaching God’s word
  - Here again, a sober reminder to pastors today that they should not lost focus on the one thing they are called to do
- Finally, Paul tells Timothy that he must conduct himself as an example to those who believe, that is to the church
  - This command is the lynchpin of everything Paul has said to Timothy
    - Timothy is already swimming upstream in his role as pastor
    - He’s young, inexperienced
    - Half Gentile, half Jew and untrained
  - Yet he’s going to have the burden of exhorting those under his charge to obey the word of God even as he explains it
    - So it’s vital that Timothy show himself to be an example to all who believe, to those he pastors
    - If he gives them any ammunition, they will surely take shots
  - And how can he expect his audience to listen to his counsel if he doesn’t comport himself in the right way?
    - He doesn’t have natural authority to stand on
    - He only has the word of God and his own integrity as a man serving God
    - So if he becomes known as a hypocrite, he’ll lose the credibility to exhort others
- First, Paul tells Timothy in v.12 to watch his speech, conduct, love, faith and purity
  - Speech refers to poorly chosen words, whether unkind, hurtful, coarse or indiscrete...
    - Everything a pastor says is being measured and observed
    - Even a single idle word can undermine a pastor’s ability to lead the flock
  - Conduct refers to the pastor’s lifestyle
    - A pastor’s lifestyle should comport with his teaching
    - His lifestyle should exhibit self-control and modesty

- A pastor should strive to lead a modest life, avoiding excess
- He need not adopt an austere life, but neither should flaunt his wealth (should he be especially blessed in that regard)
- And love refers to having a caring selfless attitude toward all people, especially those under his care
  - Love is an action, not an emotion
  - So it's about showing love to others, even when we don't feel it
  - That's an essential quality for a pastor and teacher
- And faith is demonstrating a life of courage and peace consistent with a faith in Christ and a hope in His eternal promises
  - A pastor easily rocked by life and unstable in his ways isn't the best person to encourage his flock to face life's trials with faith
  - We need pastors who are good examples of faith lived out
- Furthermore, Paul tells Timothy in v.16 that he must pay close attention to himself and to his teaching
  - To watch yourself means means to guard your personal life from giving cause for accusations, if even only the appearance of sin
    - Obviously, a pastor may take steps to protect himself against his own sinful tendencies, and so he should
    - But no one can truly guard himself without help
    - It's like putting the fox in charge of the hen house
    - So guarding oneself means also seeking outside counsel and accountability to ensure we are truly guarded
    - We need to do whatever is necessary to ensure that we remain above reproach for the sake of the mission
  - Furthermore, Timothy must guard his teaching Paul says
    - This is an equally important and even more difficult task in some ways
    - Guarding one's teaching means being careful to maintain a correct view of scripture while rejecting bad influences
    - Otherwise, we risk straying into false teaching
  - Guarding the teaching also means remaining humble and teachable in our heart
    - If we become proud and self-assured in what we think we understand, then we become unteachable
    - As a result our teaching will slowly or quickly drifting away from orthodoxy and become increasingly foolishness
  - Finally, guarding our teaching means the pastor maintains proper discipline in his preparation and delivery
    - Putting in the necessary time to properly prepare a teaching
    - And developing our craft to ensure we communicate properly
    - If a teacher fails to guard himself in this way, he will begin to "mail it in" each week

- Soon his teaching becomes little more than a collection of “greatest hits” because repetition replaces godly insight
- Taken together, Paul asks Timothy to be courageous, diligent, Spirit-led, and smart
  - He has a difficult job but one God has equipped him to accomplish
    - All that remains is for Timothy to work in his gift, without shrinking back knowing eternity is on the line
    - Paul says that doing so will ensure salvation both for himself and for those who hear him
  - Obviously, Timothy is already saved because of His faith in Christ
    - No further work was required to bring Timothy the salvation that comes by faith alone
    - Therefore, we know Paul isn’t talking about eternal salvation here, for if he were he would be suggesting a work is required to be saved
  - Instead, we must consider the word salvation in a different context
    - Based on the context of chapter 4, salvation means salvation from stumbling
    - Salvation from the troubles that might come if Timothy didn’t guard himself or his teaching
  - And more than just himself, Timothy is guarding the flock from stumbling as well
    - If a pastor fails in his duties, there is more on the line than simply his own testimony
    - If he fails to guard himself, his sin may embroil the congregation in controversy, lead to its division or even threaten its existence
  - And if Timothy doesn’t guard his teaching, the church will depart from the truth of God’s word as far as the pastor’s mistakes takes them
    - If our own disobedience will bring a consequence, imagine how much is on the line for pastors that fail in their duties?
    - That’s why Paul tells Timothy to take his responsibilities so seriously
- From here, Paul begins to move through a series of direct orders to the congregation, which Paul expected Timothy to prescribe and teach
  - The first group of instructions regulate the different socioeconomic groups within the church
    - Remember, Ephesus was a relatively wealthy city
    - And so the church had a mix of economic backgrounds
  - Normally, outside the church these groups would almost never mix
    - So when they came together inside the church, it could cause some awkward or disruptive patterns that needed to be addressed
    - Yet in the church we must find a way to balance love and charity with personal responsibility and duty
- So Paul begins with the most respected members of the church

**1Tim. 5:1 Do not sharply rebuke an older man, but rather appeal to him as a**

**father, to the younger men as brothers,**

**1Tim. 5:2 the older women as mothers, and the younger women as sisters, in all purity.**

- First, Paul explains how Timothy is to approach those deserving the greatest respect
  - This is the natural starting point, because as Timothy implements Paul's instructions, he must do so diplomatically and with respect
    - And the first order of business is how would Timothy work with someone who is his senior
    - In ancient cultures, age was inherently worthy of respect, certainly more so than today
    - Therefore, it was out of keeping with social norms for a younger man to rebuke or counsel an older man
  - And yet, as Paul just said, Timothy couldn't let physical age differences get in the way of doing the job called him to do
    - Obviously, God knew what He was doing when He called Timothy to pastor, so evidently age was not the highest rule
    - Nevertheless, Timothy had to act with respect and caution
  - My Bible says tells Timothy should not "sharply rebuke" an older man, but in Greek it simply reads "do not rebuke"
    - A rebuke was a public censure that brought a degree of shame
    - And there is a time and place for rebuking members of the body
  - But Paul says Timothy may never rebuke an older man in the church
    - Obviously, if an older man was wrong or needed correction in the church, Timothy couldn't ignore the situation
    - So Paul says Timothy needed to act with wisdom seeking to win that man over
    - Make an appeal to him like one would to his father, Paul says
  - Speaking to an older man like a father meant speaking with respect, patience and deference
    - And if that didn't work, Timothy would have to work through the counsel and support of other older men
    - Just as he couldn't censure his own father, neither could Timothy act unilateral to rebuke an older man
    - He needed to find the right way to get the job done, for that was the loving approach
- Likewise, Timothy needed to see every relationship in the body of Christ in familial terms
  - If he needed to counsel a younger man, then to not lord over him or talk down to him
    - Rather speak to him as an older brother might speak to a young brother he loves

- And older women should have the respect we show to our mother
  - And younger woman as to a sister
- If Timothy remembered these guidelines, he would speak in love showing charity, patience and kindness
  - And these qualities would greatly increase the chances of gaining a positive outcome
  - On the other hand, a young, untrained pastor who tries to bully older men and speak dismissively to others will typically have a very short career
- Paul's remarks on how to deal with older men and women now get applied in the next set of instructions
  - Paul tells Timothy how to regulate the behavior of two groups apparently causing trouble in the Ephesus church: widows and elders
    - First Paul deals with the widows 1Tim. 5:3 Honor widows who are widows indeed;

**1Tim. 5:4 but if any widow has children or grandchildren, they must first learn to practice piety in regard to their own family and to make some return to their parents; for this is acceptable in the sight of God.**

**1Tim. 5:5 Now she who is a widow indeed and who has been left alone, has fixed her hope on God and continues in entreaties and prayers night and day.**

**1Tim. 5:6 But she who gives herself to wanton pleasure is dead even while she lives.**

**1Tim. 5:7 Prescribe these things as well, so that they may be above reproach.**

- Widows in ancient times were among the most vulnerable members of society
  - A woman's ability to provide for herself was severely limited in ancient times
    - She generally couldn't own land or conduct business transactions on her own
    - So a woman without a husband was almost entirely dependent on others for care
    - And if her family couldn't or wouldn't step up to support her, she became dependent on charity
    - Often this meant a miserable life and an early death
  - Within the church, widows found an extended family willing to shoulder the burden as a demonstration of Christ's love for His children
    - But with such charity came the opportunity for abuse
    - Some widows and widow's families took advantage of the church's generosity
    - Freed from money concerns, some widows became party girls, so to speak, bringing shame upon the church
    - And some families with the means to support their own widows, withdrew their support in the expectation that the church would pick up the slack
- Obviously, such behavior was sin and risked tearing the church apart, as those stuck with the bill began to resent those living high on the church's resources

- So Paul tells Timothy to nip this in the bud
  - First he says that the family maintains the first position of responsibility for family members in need
  - A widow's children or grandchildren should learn piety, Paul says
  - Piety means literally to show God worship and respect
  - In this context Paul means the family should show respect to the widow as an act of obedience to God
- Furthermore, charity inside the family is “payback” to parents, Paul says in v.4
  - A child or grandchild has been given food, shelter and care for many years before they left the home
  - So when a parent or grandparent is in financial need, the child should feel an obligation to assist
  - This is a general rule, and we can certainly imagine exceptions (eg. a parent who gambles away money or is otherwise irresponsible)
- The point is that honoring your parents means financially as well, which is acceptable in the sight of God
  - Even though the church can be a safety net for the body of Christ in times of need...
  - It does not replace the family's responsibility to care for its own as far as it is able
- And in general, we need to be careful about extending charity merely because we see need
  - There will always be more need than the church can address
  - And any time we extend charity, we're taking money out of the pocket of our church family, whether directly or indirectly
  - Moreover, the church's charity is supposed to be directed to the needs of the body, primarily and above other needs
  - But only after the family's left with no other option
- But the charity the church gives its members comes with strings attached
  - Paul says a widow may receive support if she passes four tests
    - First, she must be a widow indeed
    - That is she must be alone, truly without support
  - Simply put, the church must be her last option
    - The reason the church is to be the last option is simply because charity places a burden on other members
    - So out of respect and love for all concerned, we don't extend charity within the body without justified need
  - Secondly, the woman must have fixed her hope on God
    - While this phrase could be understood in several ways, I believe it's best to understand this as a test of identity
    - In other words, Paul is referring to a believing widow as opposed to an

unbeliever

- So the second test is that the widow be truly Christian
- Church charity should be focused on the believer
  - The church is not an ATM
  - Nor is it a humanitarian relief organization
  - It exists to serve the spiritual needs of the world
  - And it provides limited support for the physical needs of those who have placed their hope in Christ
- Finally, she must serve the body in keeping with her confession of faith, which Paul describes as giving prayers night and day
  - The basic concern is that the widow is actively engaged in the life of the body in service to Christ
    - She doesn't simply show up to cash her checks and then disappears until the next Sunday
    - Rather we want someone who is supported by the church in this way to give back in spiritual ways to the limits of their ability
  - And for most widows, the only reasonable thing they could do would be to pray for the body of Christ
    - An older widow living on church support has little to offer – by definition
    - She would have no money, probably little strength or skills
    - But she has time, and prayer requires nothing but a heart for God and His people
  - It's the reverse principle of the one Paul gives for supporting teachers
    - Paul says teachers give to us spiritual things, so we should be willing to give them earthly things as an offering of thanks
    - Similarly, the church is giving the needy widow earthly things (ie. money, food, etc.)
    - So she should be willing to repay the congregation in spiritual things (prayer)
  - So if the church gives charity to widows or anyone, we should demand they meet these tests
    - They must be believers
    - They must seek to take the church's support only after exhausting all other avenues of support
    - And they must return the church's material support with spiritual support
    - If they meet these tests, then we can offer support
- Finally, Paul adds a fourth condition that continues to apply even after the support begins
  - He says in v.6 that if a widow happens to abuse her income, then she isn't to be viewed with the honor of a widow
    - Wanton pleasure means to live in luxury



- So should widows live in an excessive way, especially if she were seeking church support, then she is to be viewed entirely differently
- The wording at the end of v.6 is hard to translate
  - The most literal translation would be: “and she who is given to living in luxury — has died”
  - It’s a play on words
  - Paul means that she is to be left for dead, though obviously she isn’t in danger of dying physically
  - He means that she is living a spiritually dead lifestyle and therefore the church has no obligation to care for her
- We’ll end today with Paul’s words to Timothy

**1Tim. 5:7 Prescribe these things as well, so that they may be above reproach.**

- Once again, Timothy was counseled not to shy away from this teaching
- If Timothy shared this truth, then the whole body of Christ may be seen to be above reproach
- The needy would be helped, the self-sufficient would not become a burden and the reckless are left to their own
- In all these things, the name of Christ is glorified among the nations

- As we move forward today in chapter 5, Paul continues to give instruction on preserving the respect and dignity of the believers under Timothy's care
  - We left off in the middle of a discussion of widows in the church
    - This discussion continues tonight
    - But the themes and principles underlying Paul's teaching are universal and somewhat obvious
  - Paul wants Timothy to instill a culture of respect, consideration and honor for all in the body
    - Those in need should receive support without feeling shame
    - Those with means should shoulder the burden of supporting others
    - In short, everyone should operate in a loving manner
  - But it's not loving to place a burden on other believers when you have other options
    - And it's not loving to neglect the financial needs of a family member
    - And it's not loving to accept financial support from the body yet make no effort to thank or bless those who sacrificed for your sake
    - And it's not loving to act in selfish ways and ungodly ways while expecting others to support your selfish lifestyle
- It says a lot about the church in Ephesus that Paul even needed to explain these things to them, and even to Timothy himself
  - At hearing the summary of Paul's teaching, anyone should respond "Well, of course..."
    - The sensibility of Paul's advice seems entirely obvious
    - Yet Paul obviously felt the need to teach these things
  - So we must conclude that the church in Ephesus was immature and even carnal
    - Their weaknesses were different in some respect from those in Corinth
    - But the church seems to have struggled with attitudes toward wealth, honor and propriety
    - And this behavior persisted even after Paul spent years working and ministering in that city
- I suspect this explains why Paul repeated his comment in v.7 to Timothy to prescribe these things
  - It wasn't enough that Timothy know these truths or even that he shared them with the church
    - He needed to make them requirements, rules for behavior
    - Because once they are prescribed, they can be enforced
    - And in cases of violations, Timothy can apply discipline
  - There is a role in the church for prescribing correct behavior and appointing discipline in cases where behavior departs from the rule

- This isn't legalism; in that these rules aren't mandated as a means of maintaining fellowship with God
- Instead, we prescribe certain things to maintain good order and fellowship within the body of Christ
- And obviously, the church needed such guidance to avoid damaging fellowship
- So returning to v.8, we continue in Paul's instructions concerning widows

**1Tim. 5:8 But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.**

**1Tim. 5:9 A widow is to be put on the list only if she is not less than sixty years old, having been the wife of one man,**

**1Tim. 5:10 having a reputation for good works; and if she has brought up children, if she has shown hospitality to strangers, if she has washed the saints' feet, if she has assisted those in distress, and if she has devoted herself to every good work.**

- We remember from last week that some widows in the church were destitute because family members weren't providing for them
  - Paul said in v.4 that a widow with family to care for her should seek her support there first
    - He didn't distinguish between believing or unbelieving family members
    - Though I presume if a believing widow has been abandoned by an unbelieving family, then the church would provide support
  - The real problem came in cases where a believing widow has been abandoned by a believing family thinking the church would carry the burden
    - In such a case, Paul prescribed that the believing family should be called upon to do the right thing by their widow
    - And now in v.8 he adds a judgment upon those (believing) families that failed to obey this command
  - Paul admonishes the one who has responsibility over his "own household" which refers to immediate family members
    - And to "his own" which refers to extended family members under the authority and financial responsibility of the person
    - Obviously, caring for those in your immediate family is a natural expectation
  - And in Paul's day, it was also customary for a man to assume responsibility for widowed or orphaned relatives in his extended family
    - Much in the way that Boaz assumed responsibility to care for Naomi
    - So the fact that Paul had to mention this requirement is a bit of a shock and shows how far the church was slipping into unhealthy behaviors
- Paul says those who fail to provide this care are denying the faith and are worse than

unbelievers

- In the context of 1 Timothy and the context of scripture overall, we know Paul is speaking in terms of effect, not reality
  - That is, a person who behaves in such terrible ways are denying the effect of their faith
  - Their faith has a purpose in God's economy, and that purpose is ultimately directed to the glory of Christ
- Believers are lights intended to shine our righteousness before Christ, as Jesus said

**Matt. 5:16 “Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.**

- Our “light” is our life of faith lived out, but when we fail to live according to Christ's expectations, we deny faith's purpose
- We deny our own confession by failing to “walk the talk”
- We deny the Lord opportunity to be glorified through our lives
- Keep in mind an unbeliever has no opportunity to do these things
  - One who has no relationship with Christ cannot cast shame upon Him through bad behavior
    - No more than seeing someone else's child throwing a temper tantrum in the grocery store reflects shame upon you
    - A person must first be Christ's, before his or her behavior reflects on Christ
  - That's why Paul says that a believer failing to care for his own family is worse than an unbeliever
    - Paul is speaking of the case where a believer chooses to abdicate their responsibilities while expecting the church body to carry the burden
    - Such behavior was self-evidently unloving to the person's family and to his church family
  - Therefore his behavior was worse than an unbeliever's sins
    - Because unlike the unbeliever, the believer's bad behavior reflects shame on the name of Christ
    - The world will see the Christian's callous behavior toward his own family and may question the meaning and value of a relationship with Christ
    - They may wonder what it means that a devotee to this new religion can find reason to neglect even the most basic responsibilities
  - As Christians, we need to develop this same thought process to guide our choices and behaviors
    - Are we acting in ways worse than an unbeliever?
    - Even if we do the same things the unbelieving world does, we're worse than

unbelievers because our behavior has potential to cast shame on Christ

- When we apply this standard upon ourselves, we will find ourselves re-evaluating our choices and making different decisions
- So this leads Paul to expand on his earlier list of qualifications for widows receiving support
  - Earlier, Paul said a widow must pass four basic requirements:
    - She must be a believer
    - She must have no other means of support (be a widow indeed)
    - Be willing to serve the church in her spiritual gift
    - Not be living a life of wanton sin while living on support
  - Now in v.9-10 Paul adds three specific tests intended to prevent abuse
    - First, Paul sets an age threshold for being added to the list of dependent widows
    - The age of sixty in ancient times was the age of the elderly
    - It represented an age when men and women were slowing down and less able to provide for themselves
  - Secondly, she must have been the wife of one man
    - This phrase is written in a similar way to the requirement for elders
    - So it implies the same requirement...a woman who lived a moral married life before becoming a widow
  - Thirdly, the widow must have a reputation for good works and is willing to devote herself to performing good works on behalf of the church
    - Her reputation would be based on her work as a mother raising up children
    - And on her eagerness to open her home in hospitality to strangers
    - And in selfless works of service to the body of Christ
    - Now she would be called to devote herself to that work for the benefit of the body
- How would we apply these requirements today?
  - The answer is pretty much the way Paul expected
    - A widow in the church expecting support should be someone who is truly in a state of dependence
    - And she is a godly example to the church so that she is perceived as deserving of support
  - These tests are not requirements for individual charity or support
    - So any believer may choose to help a fellow believer without restrictions
    - And James says we should be charitable in that way
    - But when the time comes for the corporate body to support a single member,

we do want strict tests to prevent abuse

- So today we follow Paul's advice by applying his tests in principle, if not always in detail
  - We ask if the need is sincere and justified?
  - Is the recipient worthy in conduct and testimony?
  - And what are reasonable expectations for the recipient to repay the support in service to the body?
- It may feel harsh to set standards like this, since it means we have to say no to some who seek support
  - And if you're concerned that the church is being unloving or unkind under these circumstances, then you are forgetting the dangers involved
    - Love is not defined as giving people what they desire
    - Love is defined as doing what's best for someone
    - And giving someone charity they don't warrant is not loving in the least, because it gives opportunity for our sin nature
  - Paul mentions this concern in vs.11-13

**1Tim. 5:11 But refuse to put younger widows on the list, for when they feel sensual desires in disregard of Christ, they want to get married,**

**1Tim. 5:12 thus incurring condemnation, because they have set aside their previous pledge.**

**1Tim. 5:13 At the same time they also learn to be idle, as they go around from house to house; and not merely idle, but also gossips and busybodies, talking about things not proper to mention.**

- Paul specifically demands that younger widows (under 60) not be put on the list
  - His reason is that when they naturally develop desire for companionship, they would marry and turn aside from serving the church
  - We're coming to understand that the church wasn't truly offering widows charity after all
- In effect, the church was hiring widows as servants to the body of Christ
  - They pledged to serve the body as the body pledged to support them for the rest of their lives
  - But if the church extended this opportunity to younger women, they would be less likely to stick with the pledge
  - In effect, younger women would be pledging disingenuously to serve the church to get support only until a better offer came along
  - Paul said this kind of behavior would bring condemnation upon them from the congregation that pledged to support them

- Furthermore, in the years they wait for that husband to carry them away, they can sit back living a life of idleness knowing they had a church pension
  - And idle hands are the devil's worship, as the saying goes
    - Paul says such women will end up falling victim to their own weaknesses
    - They will fill their idle time in unhealthy ways
  - Paul's concerns for these women expose several important biblical principles for godliness
    - First, to extend charity absent legitimate need is harmful to the individual, not helpful
    - It encourages deception and selfishness born out of greed
  - Secondly, working to support oneself is a healthy and necessary contributor to godliness
    - Conversely, idleness and ease of living is recipe for encouraging the sinful flesh
    - These principles remain true independent of a person's wealth or age
  - Our lives should remain forever engaged in serving the Lord and providing for ourselves as a means of godliness
    - And when we reach later times of life, we simply redirect our time into serving the body of Christ
    - But we are always serving and never idle
- As Paul explains in suggesting the better course for younger widows

**1Tim. 5:14 Therefore, I want younger widows to get married, bear children, keep house, and give the enemy no occasion for reproach;**

**1Tim. 5:15 for some have already turned aside to follow Satan.**

**1Tim. 5:16 If any woman who is a believer has dependent widows, she must assist them and the church must not be burdened, so that it may assist those who are widows indeed.**

- Paul's prescription for younger believing widows may be portrayed as insensitive or even misogynistic by our "enlightened" culture
  - In reality, his advice is both sensible and timeless
    - First, he asks that young widows seek to remarry and return to the calling of wife and mother
    - These were not lesser roles in society but rather the highest honor of a woman
  - His point is that a young widow does not need to give up on her hope in life
    - She can still aspire to the same dreams that she did as a young girl
    - And this approach held the greatest possibility for helping avoid the schemes of the enemy

- Anytime we operate outside the course God has appointed for us, we are operating on the enemy's ground
  - Gender roles have always been flexible to a point, both now and in biblical days
  - But the Lord designed the family and marriage to operate in a certain way according to His purposes and wisdom
  - And the enemy would love nothing better than to see those assignments tossed out the window
- In this case, Paul expected young women to return to the normal aspirations for any woman, which is to marry and raise a family
  - In v.14 Paul adds "keep house"
  - But the term in Greek means to rule over a household
  - Paul is speaking about the duties associated with running the home, which was the woman's area of authority and responsibility
  - It's in keeping with the virtue of the Proverbs 31 woman
- If a young woman resisted remarriage yet continued to burn with desire, as Paul says, she was tempting fate
  - Can she live single without sinning?
    - Probably not, which is Paul's concern
    - In fact, Paul says some had turned aside to Satan, which was probably a reference to promiscuity
    - Or it may refer to the young women who broke their pledge to the church
  - Either way, it reminds us that charity extended under the wrong circumstances is hurtful, not helpful
    - In fact, reserving charity for the most needy and worthy is so important, that even a woman with dependent widows must take care of her own
    - This is the classic Ruth-Naomi situation
    - After Ruth remarried, she was a woman in care of her mother-in-law, Naomi
    - If this situation happened in the church, we would expect a younger woman to care for a widow before the church
    - Because as Paul said, the church must protect its resources to care for those truly in need
- With that, we leave behind the discussion of widows and move to the treatment of elders

**1Tim. 5:17** The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.

**1Tim. 5:18** For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing," and "The laborer is worthy of his wages."



- Based on Paul's comments about widows, it appears the church was too charitable in granting support to one class within the church, namely widows
  - On the other hand, the church was not charitable enough in support toward another class, namely elders
    - The elders in this case are those who rule the church
    - And those who rule well are worthy of double honor, Paul says
    - Paul isn't establishing a scale for judging elder worthiness
    - In Greek it literally reads the "well-ruling elders"
  - So Paul is saying that all faithful elders are deserving of double honor
    - The word double isn't a comparison among elders
    - It's between elders and non-elders
    - That is, the degree of honor we routinely show to brothers and sisters in the church should be "doubled" for our elders
  - Specifically, Paul says in v.18 that the honor we show these men should include financial support as needed
    - While the widows were getting unwarranted support, the elders in Ephesus weren't receiving enough support it seems
    - Supporting ministry leaders is a principle Paul echoes elsewhere in his writing, primarily in 1 Corinthians 9
    - Simply put, any man devoted to ruling and teaching the church is worthy of the "double honor" of our financial support
- In v.18 Paul quotes from both Old and New Testament scripture to prove his point, beginning with a quote about oxen taken from Deut 25
  - In Deuteronomy 25:4, we find it written that a farmer in Israel may not muzzle his ox while the ox is threshing
    - Threshing was a process of separating the grain seed from the husk that surrounded it
    - The best way to accomplish this was to lay stalks of grain on a flat hard floor
    - Then a large, heavy animal like an ox would be led to trample over the stalks of grain
    - The grain seeds were strong enough to remain intact under the pressure of the ox hooves
    - But the hooves would separate the chaff away from the grain seed.
  - So the ox would be tied to a pole and made to walk in a circle around the pole
    - The grain stalks would be thrown in the path of the ox
    - While the crushed grain would be swept out of the circle after the ox passed over it
    - This process would go on for hours at a time, with the ox moving in a circle around this pole the whole time

- Obviously, the ox would get hungry after working for so long
  - So occasionally the ox might stop and bend down to eat some of the grain under its feet
  - If a farmer wanted to prevent the ox from eating the grain, he could place a muzzle on the mouth of the ox
  - But in the Law, the Lord commanded that the sons of Israel not muzzle the ox while it was threshing
- The Lord's chief concern in Deut 25 wasn't for the welfare of oxen
  - It was for the sake of His people
    - First, it was beneficial to the farmer that his ox was well-fed and strong while it performed the work
    - The little bit of grain the animal might eat provided the energy needed for that animal to thresh the grain for the farmer
    - If the animal was weak, the grain wouldn't be harvested
    - So to starve the animal in the hope of saving a little grain was penny wise and pound foolish, as the saying goes
  - More importantly, Paul says in 1 Cor. 9 that this law was always intended to be a useful illustration concerning supporting ministers
    - Like the ox, a workman should expect to give his work in the hope of receiving something of benefit in return
    - Workmen share in what they work to produce, just as the ox shared in the grain it helped to glean
    - It's not a burden; it's their right
- Then Paul quotes a second scripture in saying a "laborer is worthy of his wages"
  - It's possible Paul was quoting Jesus directly, from His statement to the disciples in Matthew 10
    - If so, then this would be the earliest known verification of one New Testament book by another as scripture
    - Or it could have been a common saying in the day that both Jesus and Paul quoted
  - Either way, it verifies the same truth
    - When someone does labor on our behalf, we have a moral obligation to compensate them for that work
    - If we follow this rule without exception for the sake of day laborers and handymen who build things, that will perish one day
    - Then how much more so for the sake of those who serve us spiritually, with eternal things that will never perish?
- So those who rule and teach in the church should be given utmost respect and honor in keeping with the difficulty and importance of their role

- They have a tough job in guarding the souls in the church
  - They wrestle with our sin even when we don't
  - They clean up the messes we create in our lives, or in others'
  - They encourage us, guide us, counsel us
  - So we should honor them for doing the most important work in the church
- Moreover, those who work hard at teaching and preaching to the congregation are especially worthy of our honor
  - The reason simply reflects the importance of the word itself
  - Understanding scripture is the key that unlocks a life of godliness that pleases the Lord
  - It shows us how much the Lord values His word
- Of course, Paul adds that those deserving of our honor are those actually serving in their role as they should (i.e., "well" and "work hard")
  - A pastor or elder who operates beneath his office is not worthy of honor at all
  - A teacher who lacks diligence or care in handling God's word is not to be honored in the least
  - Or an elder who doesn't guard the flock or abuses his power is unworthy of any honor
- Speaking of misbehaving elders, Paul moves to that topic

**1Tim. 5:19 Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses.**

**1Tim. 5:20 Those who continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest also will be fearful of sinning.**

- In keeping with his teaching on showing "double honor," Paul begins by warning the congregation against undermining its leaders
  - The church is not like other institutions where leaders come and go at the whims of people
  - An elder is a person assigned responsibility by the Spirit of God, and as such we must take caution when entertaining accusations
  - In short, we don't act on them unless we have probable cause
- In the Law given to Israel, the basis for probable cause was a plurality of witnesses willing to testify to the same thing
  - So two or three witnesses were required
  - One witness wasn't probable cause because one person's testimony wasn't deemed trustworthy or conclusive
  - Yet more than three witnesses was seen as a conspiracy

- Today, our standards might differ, but the principle is the same
  - We want good evidence to support an accusation before we move forward
  - Because even an investigation brings the possibility of ruining a man's reputation
  - And we don't want to take that risk unless warranted
- Furthermore, an elder's role will necessitate making difficult decisions, including taking action against misbehaving church members
  - So it's a position likely to make enemies in the body of Christ
  - Furthermore, we expect the enemy to take shots at our leaders
  - So we must protect them from false accusations even as we hold them to high standards
- But of course, some will fall to temptation and sin, and those who do so must be corrected
  - Notice that Paul moves directly to elders who "continue" in sin
    - Naturally, Paul skips over what to do in the first case that an accusation of sin is verified
    - I say naturally because all elders sin
    - So the presence of sin in the lives of elders is not a surprise
    - Nor is it in itself cause for dismissal, though some forms of sin may be so serious as to warrant severe responses
  - But in general, we know our elders and teachers will err, but the test is how do they handle correction?
    - Jesus Himself gave us the proper pattern for correcting sinning brothers and sisters in Matthew 18
    - If we follow these steps with an elder and he repents, then the case is closed
  - But Paul says if an elder continues in sin, then he is to be rebuked publicly before the whole church
    - This step is the next-to-last response to sin that Jesus gave us in His graduated scale (Matt 18:17)
    - So Paul isn't inventing a new system of discipline
    - He's simply applying Jesus' teaching without exception
  - And that's Paul's point... an elder who serves properly (i.e., well) is worthy of great honor, but an unrepentant sinning elder gets the same rebuke as the rest of us
    - We don't hold back in our approach to sin no matter who is guilty
    - It's not inconsistent to honor some above others while holding everyone to the same standards
    - In fact, Paul adds that rebuking an elder just as we would any sinning member of the body works to promote godliness among all
    - It will cause the rest to become fearful of sinning

- We will see that no one is above rebuke if we choose to sin against the word of God
- Paul continues in the vein of partiality in v.21

**1Tim. 5:21 I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of His chosen angels, to maintain these principles without bias, doing nothing in a spirit of partiality.**

- Paul issues his strongest charge to Timothy; reinforcing the need for impartiality
  - Paul invokes the presence of God, Christ and the (elect) angels to support his charge
  - Elect angels refers to the non-fallen angels, those who did not follow Satan and become demons
- By invoking these in his charge, Paul was stressing that any failure to comply with this charge would be known in Heaven and judged there
  - In other words, a pastor or elder who rules with partiality is going to hear about it at his judgment
  - Partiality goes both ways
  - A pastor or elder can be partial in giving too much favor to some over others
  - And he can be partial by refraining from correcting some as strictly as he does others
- Having just asked Timothy to set rules for widows and elders, he emphasizes that Timothy can't apply these rules selectively
  - This kind of favoritism was a chief sin of the Pharisees in Jesus' day
  - They loved money, the Bible says, so they sold their favor to the highest bidder
  - You remember Jesus' reaction to men who placed money above God
  - He ran the money changers out of the temple with a whip
  - Imagine what He has in store for men who curry favor by showing bias in the church?
- And the fear of elders gone wild leads Paul into the next thought in v.22

**1Tim. 5:22 Do not lay hands upon anyone too hastily and thereby share responsibility for the sins of others; keep yourself free from sin.**

- To lay hands means to confirm the spiritual authority of a leader as determined by the Holy Spirit
  - Ultimately, the decision to assign leadership authority to a man in the church is not a decision made by men
  - It's a decision God makes

- So laying on hands is a human way of acknowledging something God has already done
- The trick of course is knowing that the Spirit is moving in this way in a particular man's life
  - And the best way to know this is simply to wait and watch
  - Time will reveal the will of God
- Therefore, Paul says don't lay on hands too hastily
  - The word translated hastily is simply the Greek word for "too soon"
  - If we move before God does, we are elevating men into a leadership position God Himself didn't intend
  - That elevation will lead to a man working outside the Spirit and therefore in weakness of his flesh
  - That's a recipe for all kinds of problems in the church, including poor instruction, poor direction and scandal
- If a leader makes this mistake, Paul says that leader will share responsibility for the sins of others
  - Sharing responsibility means taking on the consequences of that elder's sins
    - For example, when a man who has been prematurely raised into leadership teaches wrongly, those who ordained him share responsibility for the consequences of the false teaching
    - Or for the consequences of his poor counsel or ungodly direction
    - All these sins will have consequences in the lives of the church, and God will hold accountable those who raise up false leaders
    - And to an extent, they will share in the condemnation
  - Therefore, Timothy must be very careful in exercising this rite of the church
    - Better to delay an ordination than rush it
    - After all, a man seeking to be an overseer can still perform many acts of ministry to the body even without ordination
    - In fact, if he will only be satisfied by ordination, that's a warning sign in itself
    - For laying on of hands in the church comes with significant burdens no one should accept lightly
    - And true selfless dedication to serving God doesn't place undue emphasis on such things
- At this point, it's easy to imagine Timothy's reaction as he read Paul's letter for the first time
  - Here's a young pastor of questionable pedigree receiving instruction on how to say no to begging widows, discipline older elders and refuse to confirm others
    - He must have felt the ulcers forming even as he was reading
    - Ministering is difficult enough, but now Paul is asking Timothy to tackle some of

the most difficult challenges of church life

- The only topic more volatile would have been a discussion of worship music style
- So appropriately, Paul inserts a little helpful advice to Timothy in v.23

**1Tim. 5:23 No longer drink water exclusively, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.**

- I've long suspected that pastoral ministry can lead a man to drink, but now we have biblical support for that notion
  - Paul advises Timothy to strengthen himself for the difficult conversations ahead by including a little wine in his diet
    - To be clear, Paul is prescribing an alcoholic beverage, albeit in moderation and for health purposes
    - For any who might have heard that "wine" in the New Testament is not actually a fermented drink, let me assure you that is not correct
  - Throughout the Old and New Testament, references to wine are always references to the fermented drink, not to unfermented juice
    - In both Hebrew and Greek, the Bible uses different words for grape juice than for wine
    - For example, in Numbers we find both words used together in the same context:

**Num. 6:3 he shall abstain from wine and strong drink; he shall drink no vinegar, whether made from wine or strong drink, nor shall he drink any grape juice nor eat fresh or dried grapes.**

- In this verse we find the word "wine" used in the first half of the verse, while "grape juice" is used in the second half of the verse
  - The words "wine" and "grape juice" are different Hebrew words with different meanings
  - One refers to an alcoholic drink (wine), while the other refers to a nonalcoholic drink (grape juice)
  - Therefore, we can see that the Bible uses the word "wine" to mean something other than grape juice.
- Secondly, in the New Testament we find further proof that the word wine refers to an alcoholic beverage
  - In the story of the wedding in Cana, the headwaiter compliments the bridegroom on serving high quality wine near the end of the celebration:

**John 2:9 When the headwaiter tasted the water which had become wine, and did**

**not know where it came from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew), the headwaiter called the bridegroom,**  
[John 2:10](#) **and said to him, “Every man serves the good wine first, and when the people have drunk freely, then he serves the poorer wine; but you have kept the good wine until now.”**

- The tradition at parties is to serve the best wine first, when the drinkers are still thinking clearly and can discern the difference in quality
- Once the attendees have had a few drinks, the host brings out the poorer quality (i.e., less expensive) wine
- Because few will notice or remember the difference after the effects of the alcohol dull their judgment.
- In John 2, the headwaiter at the wedding was pleasantly surprised to discover that the new wine was the better wine (because it was the product of Jesus' miracle)
  - By the circumstances and the nature of his remark, we must conclude that the "wine" in this story was the alcoholic drink, not merely unfermented grape juice
  - No guest would have reason to notice differences in the quality of unfermented grape juice (all grape juice is the same)
  - Nor would a host have any reason to hold back "better" grape juice for later in the evening
  - Only alcoholic wine varies in quality in the way the story suggests
  - Undoubtedly, the headwaiter was impressed by Jesus' wine-making skills, not His juice-making skills.
- Furthermore, in ancient times it was virtually impossible to store unfermented grape juice
  - Without refrigeration or preservatives, grape juice quickly sours and becomes rancid
    - So in Jesus' day, the safe way to store grape juice was to ferment it
    - Because the alcohol in the wine prevented the juice from spoiling
    - This is why Jews often cut their wine with water to diminish the alcoholic effect, allowing them to drink more juice without becoming drunk.
  - Wide spread storage of unfermented grape juice did not become a reality until [Thomas Welch](#) invented the pasteurizing of grape juice in 1869
    - Ironically, Welch was a Methodist minister opposed to Christians drinking alcohol
    - Which motivated his research into ways of preserving unfermented grape juice
    - He was searching for a way to store nonalcoholic grape juice for use in the communion celebration
    - Until his invention, most churches had little choice but to use alcoholic wine in the Lord's Supper observance
- So, Paul is in fact telling Timothy to drink wine, which debunks legalistic views that



believe even moderate consumption of wine is a sin. (It isn't)

- Interestingly, Paul's instructions imply that Timothy drank nothing beforehand
  - In a time and culture when drinking wine was as common as drinking coffee today, it's odd that Timothy was a tee-totaler
  - It could have been merely personal preference
  - But if so, it's hard to think Paul would have recommended behavior contrary to Timothy's conscience
- So more likely Paul knew Timothy abstained for some spiritual benefit
  - Perhaps to set an example of moderation to a culture taken away by various excesses
  - But now apparently, that lesson has been learned and a higher priority took precedence
- Which brings us to the final and most intriguing part of Paul's recommendation
  - It appears Paul knew (by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit) that there were health benefits to be gained for Timothy by drinking a little wine
    - Paul refers to Timothy's stomach, which suggests digestive concerns
    - Perhaps the mild antiseptic effect of alcohol in the digestive tract would counteract pathogens in his water or food
    - Perhaps it was to settle and relax an overly anxious or nervous Timothy
  - But notice the effect required only a "little" wine
    - Paul's caution was to use the wine in moderation
    - Clearly, wine can be good for us, but like any good thing, it must be used appropriately
- Lastly, Paul gives Timothy a final piece of encouragement to be patient before choosing leaders

**1Tim. 5:24 The sins of some men are quite evident, going before them to judgment; for others, their sins follow after.**

**1Tim. 5:25 Likewise also, deeds that are good are quite evident, and those which are otherwise cannot be concealed.**

- Some men will wear their sins on their sleeves
  - Their preferred sins are more obvious, overt
    - They are impulsive, rude, carnal, etc.
    - These men are quite evident, so we have little fear of elevating them prematurely
    - They will disqualify themselves soon enough
    - And Paul says their sins "go before them" into judgment, meaning we all know

more or less what their judgment will be like

- Others' sinful deeds are concealed from our view, though God knows them
  - These men will only show their true nature to us given enough time and if we get to know them well enough
  - In the end, their sin cannot be concealed, either because time or the Spirit will make them known
- Similarly, good deeds will be seen for what they are in time
  - So as we evaluate men for eldership, study them from both angles
  - And in that way we come to appreciate where the Lord is at work so we may confirm His choices

- Tonight we wrap up Paul's first letter to Timothy as we enter the letter's final chapter
  - In Chapter 5 Paul gave Timothy direction on how to handle difficult political issues in the body of Christ:
    - How to handle caring for widows without letting charity become an opportunity for abuse
    - How to show proper respect and honor to the elders of the church so long as they are serving well
    - But also how to correct elders despite Timothy's young age
  - Paul asked Timothy to be fair-minded, unbiased and deliberate in applying these rules
    - In particular, Paul warned Timothy not to elevate leaders too quickly
    - Evidently the problems found in Ephesus were due, in part, to poor leaders and false teachers who gained authority
    - These men were causing havoc among impressionable Christians in Ephesus, leading Paul to write to his protégé
  - Paul knew the difficulties Timothy faced as a young, inexperienced pastor in a pagan city tackling these problems
    - So Paul encouraged Timothy to be strong and trust in the calling and anointing of the Spirit
    - He even suggested Timothy drink a little, for medicinal purposes
- So now we move forward to Paul's final instructions in this letter, which he presents in a similar fashion
  - Paul just taught Timothy concerning two groups in the church that stood at opposite ends of the social spectrum
    - Elders and widows were the greatest and least honored in the church
    - Paul used these extremes to emphasize that all deserve honor
    - And yet all are expected to act in keeping with Christ's commands
  - Therefore, Timothy wasn't to show bias in leading the church
    - He couldn't let his sympathy for widows lead him to extend charity when it wasn't justified
    - Nor could he allow misbehaving elders to escape proper judgment
  - Now Paul applies a similar contrast, but this time he's looking at opposite ends of the economic spectrum
    - He gives instructions to Timothy for the rich and the poor
    - Paul begins in vs.1-16 by addressing issues of misbehavior among the poor in the church

**1Tim. 6:1 All who are under the yoke as slaves are to regard their own masters as worthy of all honor so that the name of God and our doctrine will not be spoken**

against.

**1Tim. 6:2** Those who have believers as their masters must not be disrespectful to them because they are brethren, but must serve them all the more, because those who partake of the benefit are believers and beloved. Teach and preach these principles.

- In the first half of this chapter, Paul addresses the situation of the poor in the church
  - But at first glance you may not realize this is Paul's focus, since Paul speaks to "all who are under the yoke as slaves"
    - But look down the page to v.17 in this chapter
    - You will clearly see find Paul moving to address the rich in the church in the second half of the chapter
    - This is Paul's contrast in chapter 6: poor vs. rich
  - Paul addresses the poor as slaves because in the first century Roman Empire, that's what often happened to the very poor
    - Slavery in Paul's day was almost always indentured servitude
    - A man who fell on hard times and couldn't support himself or his family would be forced to sell himself into slavery
    - His slavery was voluntary, in the sense that no one compelled him to become a slave
    - His own debts forced his hand so that slavery was his last hope
- So a desperately poor man would sell himself to a master willing to take him on
  - The master would arrange to pay the man's debts and provide room and board to the man and his family
    - In return, the man and his family became slaves in the master's household or business for a period of time
    - The man and his family were not merely employees
    - They voluntarily gave up their liberty and therefore had few rights under law
    - They could be beaten or even killed for disobedience
  - A faithful slave was generally treated well
    - He and his family had food and board and were assured employment
    - Over time the slave worked to repay their debt to the master
    - In cases where they served faithfully and fully, the master might grant the servant freedom once the debt is repaid through labor
    - But freedom wasn't guaranteed...a cruel or greedy master might never grant it
    - In other cases, a slave might prefer to remain in service to a kind master and so commits to being a slave for life (a "bondservant")
  - Slavery of this kind was very common in Paul's day

- It's estimated that there were around 60 million slaves in the Roman Empire
- They represented the lowest financial class within Roman society
- They are similar to the "working poor" today: hard-working people enslaved to debt and without many options in life
- When Christianity began to sweep through the Roman Empire in the first century, the faith reached into all levels of society, including slaves
  - Men and women who were indentured servants in Ephesus heard the call of freedom in Christ, believed the word and became part of the Church
    - With a new identity in Christ, the question naturally followed what did their faith mean for their status as slaves?
    - And to that question, the Bible gives the same answer as to any other group: seek to honor Christ
  - In v.1 Paul describes these people as those "under the yoke as slaves"
    - The phrase describes someone under a burden
    - It's a veiled reference to the financial burdens that placed the person in slavery in the first place
    - Paul's reminding his audience they are slaves for reasons of their own making
    - They incurred debt or other financial burden, which necessitated their slavery
  - Therefore, their new-found relationship with Christ did not change their obligation
    - Just as if a person today with significant credit card debt or college loans comes to faith in Christ
    - We could say the person is under a yoke of indebtedness
    - Nevertheless, we don't assume he may use his faith as reason to walk away from his financial obligations
    - Our freedom in Christ is spiritual, not financial
- Therefore, Paul tells the poor (slaves) in the church to regard their master as worthy of all honor
  - Notice Paul doesn't say that all masters are deserving of all honor
    - On the contrary, many masters weren't worthy of any honor
    - Many were unkind, deceptive or neglectful of their slaves
  - Nevertheless, Paul says consider them worthy of honor (even if they aren't truly worthy)
    - He's calling the Christian slave to honor his master in the same way all Christians are called to honor Christ: through excellence
    - No matter what our station in life, we are called to excel in human terms to reflect honor upon the Lord
    - As Jesus commanded:

**Matt. 5:16** “Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

- So, a slave glorified Christ by being a good slave
  - And the worse treatment a slave endured at the hands of his master, the more opportunity he had to glorify Christ by showing his master honor
  - The world thinks in an opposite way
  - The world assumes that only worthy masters deserve honor
  - But when Christians slaves honored their unworthy masters, they brought praise upon the name of Christ, Paul says
- Furthermore, Paul tells slaves to not show disrespect to masters who were believers
  - This was a particularly difficult problem in the early church
    - Often a master would come to faith and by his influence many of the slaves in his household would also believe
    - Thereafter, the believing slaves began to expect their believing master to favor them on account of their shared faith
    - Perhaps they expected freedom or easier work
    - Perhaps they assumed they could neglect their duties without fear of retribution
  - Paul corrects this misconception in v.2
    - He orders believing slaves to serve their believing master “all the more”
    - The slaves should be even more hardworking and obedient knowing that the recipient of their labor is a fellow Christian
    - Knowing we are serving a fellow member of the body should motivate us to be better at our work, not to take liberties
  - Remember, the slave was usually made so by a financial agreement, not by force
    - So they had no reason to expect their master to forgo his reasonable service under the agreement
    - No more than you might expect your banker to forgive your mortgage merely because you both attend the same church
- Today, this kind of indentured servant relationship is much rarer, though it still exists in some cultures
  - Nevertheless, we do find other situations that closely match the one Paul is addressing
    - Beside the comparison to paying off debt I mentioned already, we have other ways in which Paul’s advice applies
    - For example, if we work for a harsh boss, we should regard him or her as worthy of honor for the same reason: to honor Christ
    - Remember, Christ himself submitted to undeserved harsh treatment to bring

you and me into Heaven

- So how can we complain if the Lord asks us to endure a little harsh treatment at work or school?
- Or if we work for a believing boss, we can't let our shared faith become opportunity to be less reliable or honorable in our work
  - On the contrary we must strive all the more to bless a fellow believer
  - Similarly, those in military service or under other constraints should not assume their faith gives cause to avoid their responsibilities
  - On the contrary, we are to be more faithful, more committed because of our faith
- Paul ends v.2 repeating his command to Timothy to teach and preach these principles in the church in Ephesus
  - He reiterates this command because it's evident that the church in Ephesus was struggling with a rebellion of believing slaves
    - We know Ephesus would have many slaves within the city
    - It was a very rich, prosperous city, which means it attracted many poor, looking to work in service to the wealthy
    - It was very much a city of the "haves" and the "have-nots"
  - And as Paul and Timothy worked to bring the Gospel to the city, many slaves entered the faith along with some of the wealthy
    - According to Paul's first letter to Corinth, the Lord intentionally drew poor believers into His church
    - In fact, Paul told Corinth that "not many" were noble or mighty in the church, instead most were of lesser status
    - Knowing the Lord works in similar ways, it's reasonable to assume that the church in Ephesus shared a similar demographic
  - And all these slaves (poor) entering the church had led some to think they could shed their shackles and expect the church to fund their lifestyle
    - Much like the younger widows from Chapter 5, these felt that faith was a means to escaping slavery and poverty
    - It was the ancient version of the prosperity gospel that deceives the church today
    - The slaves argued that God wants us to be free and wealthy
- This false doctrine has always been around the church
  - It confuses physical and financial gains for spiritual gains
    - False teachers point to verses in scripture that teach Christ promises us riches and freedom
    - Then they twist the intended meaning to say that God promised us earthly riches and earthly freedom

- When in reality the Bible is speaking of heavenly, eternal riches and freedom from sin and condemnation
- The tactics of false teachers may have changed over the centuries, but the underlying deception hasn't
  - So Paul tells Timothy how to deal with these "prosperity" teachers

**1Tim. 6:3 If anyone advocates a different doctrine and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness,**

**1Tim. 6:4 he is conceited and understands nothing; but he has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words, out of which arise envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions,**

**1Tim. 6:5 and constant friction between men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain.**

- Paul says if anyone advocates a different doctrine regarding slavery and poverty, they are acting against common sense, the commands of Jesus and the godliness
  - First, they are acting against sound words
    - Literally, the words in Greek mean a healthy message
    - Today we might say common sense
    - An understanding that is self-evidently proper and sensible
  - To teach that slaves should expect masters to release them because of faith was self-evident nonsense
    - Similarly, any teaching that states God plans to make every believer rich is also self-evident nonsense
    - We only need look around the world at the church to see this isn't true
    - Millions if not billions of believers are not rich
    - And it's never been that way in all the history of the church
    - Therefore, we should reject the message on that basis alone
- Furthermore, someone who advocates prosperity or the elimination of poverty is not agreeing with the words of Jesus Christ, the One they claim to represent
  - First, Jesus said we will always have the poor as recorded in Matthew, Mark and John
    - He meant that we cannot solve the problem of poverty for it is a condition God Himself permits, and for good reasons
    - Therefore, Jesus' words concerning poverty don't indicate that the Lord desires to eliminate it, in the world or in the Church
  - In fact, Jesus spoke more about money than any other single topic in all the Gospels
    - And in all that He said, He consistently argued for less attachment and desire for



wealth, not more

- Consider a few of His statements

**Matt. 19:23** And Jesus said to His disciples, “Truly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.

**Mark 4:18** “And others are the ones on whom seed was sown among the thorns; these are the ones who have heard the word,

**Mark 4:19** but the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.

**Luke 6:22** “Blessed are you when men hate you, and ostracize you, and insult you, and scorn your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man.

**Luke 6:23** “Be glad in that day and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven. For in the same way their fathers used to treat the prophets.

**Luke 6:24** “But woe to you who are rich, for you are receiving your comfort in full.

**Luke 12:19** ‘And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry.”’

**Luke 12:20** “But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?’

**Luke 12:21** “So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”

- So when we hear men advocating for the church to adopt an expectation of riches or freedom as they so desire, they are contradicting Christ
- Finally, they are not speaking a doctrine that conforms to godliness
  - In other words, if we acted in keeping with their teaching, the body of Christ becomes less godly, not more godly
    - This is a simple and important test to apply to any teaching you hear
    - Ask yourself, does this teaching lead to greater godliness or less?
  - In this case, it’s easy to see how any doctrine contrary to Paul’s teaching would increase ungodliness
    - The poor (slaves) would become less interested in serving their masters honorably
    - Instead, they would begin to abandon their duties in an expectation that the Lord was “freeing” them from their circumstances
  - Furthermore, they would adopt a greedy, materialistic heart seeking things of this world

- Obviously, we all have a degree of “want” which we must fight to control
  - But any teaching that gives license to that wanting is wrong and leads us further into ungodliness
- Remember these tests as you receive instruction
  - Does it pass a common sense test?
  - Does it agree with Jesus’ own teaching?
  - Does it promote godliness?
- Evidently, certain men in Ephesus were teaching a false view of poverty, and Paul says in v.4 these men were conceited and understood nothing
  - The Greek word for conceited can also be translated proud
    - Pride is seeking to be praised, respected, & honored above what’s proper
    - These vain, proud men were seeking to draw a crowd
    - And nothing gains an adoring audience better than a message that God is prepared to make you rich
    - It’s a fleshly message delivered by a conceited messenger to prideful hearts
  - Secondly, Paul says such men understand nothing
    - He means they have nothing of value to offer on this matter
    - It’s like taking medical advice from your postman
  - Because a teacher who advocates for something self-evidently wrong and obviously contradictory to scripture proves he is willfully deceptive
    - They are not merely mistaken or confused
    - They are purposely deceiving an audience for personal benefit
- Paul says they have a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words
  - The Greek word translated morbid interest means an unhealthy desire
    - In other words, they do not have others’ best interests at heart
    - Instead they have only their own interests in mind
    - Notice Paul says they are filled with envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions, and constant friction
  - Clearly these men have an ungodly interest in controversy, Paul says, because it draws attention
    - Like the way a fight on the school playground draws an audience: they seek the sensational and provocative
    - They raise evil suspicions against those who oppose them
    - They use abusive language to silence critics and shock their audience
    - And they are filled with the same envy they work to inspire in their audience
- Finally, Paul says these teachers seek to create friction between men of depraved minds

who are deprived of the truth

- They remind me of a story my father told me about his days in the U.S. Navy
  - He was a naval officer stationed on an aircraft carrier in the South Pacific, and his roommate was a Marine officer
  - When the ship docked in a foreign port, they would go ashore to visit bars in the city
  - After drinking a few beers, the Marine would intentionally pick a fight with a stranger in the bar
  - Once they had the entire bar embroiled in a fist fight, my dad and the Marine would crawl out on their hands and knees
  - Only to visit another bar and start the process over again
- That's an example of conceited men with a morbid interest in disputes creating friction between men depraved and deprived of the truth
  - Why would anyone do such a thing?
  - Because of the thrill of it
  - Because it feeds the pride and ego
  - Because it's the natural outworking of ungodly hearts
- And because they see godliness as a means to gain, Paul says
  - Godliness is used sarcastically here
  - Obviously, these men are far from godly, as Paul explained
  - But they seek the appearance of godliness to gain a following and profit personally
- In my father's case, he profited by avoiding paying his bar tab as he escaped the bar during the confusion of the fight
  - In the case of the teachers in Ephesus, they probably extracted money from their followers in much the same way that prosperity heretics do today
  - They encouraged their followers to show their appreciation for their message of riches with donations of support
  - As long as money has existed, evil men have sought ways to take it away from gullible people
- To contradict this wrong teaching, Paul then explains the proper perspective on wealth for the poor in the church

**1Tim. 6:6 But godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment.**

**1Tim. 6:7 For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either.**

**1Tim. 6:8 If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content.**

- We're still in the section of this chapter addressed to the slaves (or poor), but obviously Paul's advice would apply to all people
  - Remember, in Paul's day there was very little "middle class"
  - The majority of people were day laborers, soldiers or slaves
  - A few were small business owners or bureaucrats with a middle-class lifestyle
  - And even fewer were wealthy and privileged
  - And there was little opportunity for increasing one's economic place within Roman society
- So, Paul's advice is appropriate for anyone who isn't occupying the top echelon of society (like you and me)
  - For us, godliness can be means to a great gain
  - In this case, Paul has dropped his sarcasm and is speaking literally
  - If we pursue godliness according to God's word with true hearts and honest intentions, there is great gain
- Of course, that gain is first and foremost spiritual
  - We will gain the blessings of spiritual maturity which is freedom from sin and its consequences
    - Imagine the joy to be found in a life where we aren't victims of our own sin:
    - Where our desires are aligned with God's heart, and our time is filled in serving Him as He has called us to do.
    - That is truly great gain
  - But secondly, the Bible teaches that our pursuit of godliness here (on Earth), gives opportunity for great blessing in the Kingdom
    - That blessing far exceeds anything we gain here
    - The question is would we like to receive materials blessings here or in the kingdom?
    - Any student of scripture would know how to answer that question properly
  - And even common sense tells us that pursuing earthly wealth is folly
    - In v.6, Paul presents a saying of his day (and our day as well)
    - We have brought nothing into this world, and we take nothing out
    - This profound truth argues against spending all our time and energy building earthly wealth
  - For it will fail us in the most important moment of life
    - The moment we face the Creator at death, we come as we entered the world
    - With nothing but ourselves
    - So the question is how can we come to that moment with the most in hand?
    - Only by bringing spiritual things, for nothing physical will accompany us into

that moment

- The key to gaining that eternal focus is to find contentment, Paul says
  - Contentment is a funny word, really
    - It means recognizing what you have as sufficient for your needs
    - The word is funny because it is not related to the magnitude of our wealth nor the degree of our need
    - A person can have many possessions and lack contentment or have no possessions and still be content in what he has
    - Likewise, a man can live in need of nothing yet lack contentment, while another has great need yet remains content
  - Which means contentment isn't the result of what we acquire; it's the consequence of how we train our heart
    - That's why Paul says elsewhere that he *learned* to be content

**Phil. 4:11 Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am.**

- Contentment is a learned outlook on life's circumstances that understands God's will for our life
- Contentment results from not seeking an impossible goal, which is sufficient wealth
- Instead, we seek godliness
- Therefore, we see trials, tests, deprivations and the like merely as tools in God's hands to mold us into a mature follower of Christ
  - With contentment, we are free to profit spiritually from what God is doing in our lives
  - That gain can be great, indeed
  - On the other hand, if we're busy chasing after the things of the world or bemoaning our circumstances, we will miss the opportunity to gain
  - The lesson here is that those who pursue wealth instead of godliness gained neither
  - While those pursuing godliness instead of wealth gain both
- Obviously, we all have needs, so we can't completely ignore a pursuit of material things
  - Well, obviously God knows this too, and so He defines what the minimum is
    - Paul says in v.8 that if we have food and covering, we have the minimum for contentment
    - The Greek word for covering simply means clothing
    - So food and clothing are minimums
  - Paul's saying that if we lack food and clothing, then naturally we are not expected to be content

- God does not ask that we be content without food
- And certainly, we need not be content without clothing
- Ladies, that isn't biblical support for shopping sprees at the outlet mall...
- Paul's speaking about someone who lacks the ability to cover their nakedness
- But if we have these things, then contentment is possible
  - Does that standard surprise you?
  - Maybe you might have expected the minimum to include shelter? Employment? Medical care? The latest iPhone?
- The Lord isn't saying we can't have these other things
  - He's saying that we must learn contentment even without them
  - Because if we learn contentment we find less motivation to seek for even more
  - And by setting aside the pursuit of more, we leave time and energy to pursue godliness instead, which is always the better pursuit
  - As Jesus said:

**Matt. 6:31** “Do not worry then, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear for clothing?’

**Matt. 6:32** “For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.

**Matt. 6:33** “But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

- Notice that Jesus also emphasized that food and clothing are the bare minimums
  - God will provide those for His children
  - But everything else we may receive is icing on the proverbial cake
  - Meanwhile, we spend our time seeking for His kingdom and His righteousness
  - Which means seeking godliness while serving Christ
- If we fail to move in this direction, we risk a disastrous end to our life, as Paul warns

**1Tim. 6:9** But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction.

**1Tim. 6:10** For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

- The opposite of contentment is wanting to get rich
  - Desire for riches is a seductive mistress that pulls us into an embrace that's hard to

escape once we've become entangled

- That desire prepares us to jump at any chance we see
- And so we fall into temptation or the snares set by the enemy
- Perhaps we take opportunity to steal or defraud
- Or as was the case in Ephesus, slaves succumb to false teaching telling them they can leave their master or abscond on their commitments
  - These are foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin
  - This leads Paul to issue one of the most quoted (and often misquoted) verses in the Bible
- He says the love of money is the root of all sorts of evil
  - Sometimes Paul's thought is truncated to simply "money is the root of all evil"
  - Obviously, the context is a discussion of loving money instead of finding contentment
  - And it's that desire, that love, that leads to the problems
- Money in the hands of the content and godly is a power and a positive tool
  - So money itself isn't evil
  - Like anything else in the world, it can be put to use in godly or ungodly ways
  - But when the desire for it eclipses our desire to be content, it leads men into ruin
- Paul emphasizes the truth of his statement by reminding his audience that many in the church have fallen in this way
  - Their longing for money caused them to wander away from the faith
    - The word wander invokes an image of a child led off a forest path by a butterfly
    - They chase something they desire, oblivious to the dangers involved
    - Before long, they find themselves lost and unable to find their way back
  - Christians who wander away from walking with Christ will inevitably suffer as a result
    - Paul says they pierce themselves with many griefs
    - In keeping with my forest path analogy, piercing suggests that wandering child caught in a thorn bush
  - But in light of Paul speaking about the poor slaves in the church, he may have been alluding to literal piercings
    - Disobedient slaves could be disciplined in a variety of ways including physical discipline of course
    - So Paul may be suggesting that those slaves who have wandered off following the false teachers of their day have suffered piercings
    - And in that sense, they pierced themselves by loving money more than Christ

- Before turning to instruct the rich, Paul warns Timothy not to follow in the footsteps of these greedy slaves

**1Tim. 6:11 But flee from these things, you man of God, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness.**

**1Tim. 6:12 Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.**

- Timothy must flee from such teaching and its effects in the church
  - Have nothing to do with it, Paul tells Timothy
    - This instruction suggests that Timothy was poor himself
    - And as such, he may have been vulnerable to such teaching were he not counseled properly to avoid it
  - In place of pursuing money, Paul calls his protégé to pursue six spiritual goals
    - Righteousness, which is the pursuit of Christ's righteousness found in His word by His grace
    - Devoting ourselves to knowing Christ more so we can walk more closely with Him
  - This leads to the second goal, godliness
    - Godliness is the life of obedience made possible by putting away sin at every opportunity
    - A pursuit of righteousness leads us into a pursuit of godliness
    - Just pursuing these two steps are a life-long challenge by themselves
  - Next Paul says seek faith and love
    - Faith is a pursuit of the life of the body of Christ, as in THE faith
    - From a pursuit of righteousness and godliness comes a natural desire to share those pursuits with others in the community of faith
    - And then within that community, we pursue love, both from and for others in the family of God
  - Finally, we seek perseverance and gentleness
    - We seek to persevere in our life of following Christ among our brothers and sisters
    - When our flesh, the world or the enemy stumbles us, we get back up and continue
    - And when others fall in their walk, we respond in gentleness remembering we all have weaknesses
    - Together these are pursuits that bring eternal gain, the kind that cannot perish



- And as pastor in the church, Paul asks Timothy to “fight the good fight”
  - The fight Paul’s describing was the fight inside every believer
    - So often we are ready to fight against those we see as enemies of the Church
    - Yet meanwhile we’re unwilling to fight sin and temptation in our own lives
    - Yet that’s precisely the fight Paul was calling Timothy to wage
  - It’s a fight against the flesh and the schemes of the enemy which conspire to pull us off course
    - It will always be a fight because the flesh is powerful and ever-present in each of us
    - Our sinful flesh never rests, it never gives up trying to corrupt our walk
    - So when we decide to take a holiday from pursuing godliness, we give the enemy opportunity to gain yardage
  - Paul calls this fight the good fight because it yields good outcomes
    - The fight against sin produces godliness, which brings blessing
    - And the fight against false teachers helps prevent others from wandering off the path to godliness
  - This is taking hold of the eternal life, Paul says
    - Timothy was called into faith in front of many witnesses, Paul says
    - So now Paul is asking Timothy to live up to (or take hold of) this faith he professed publicly
  - He’s appealing to Timothy’s honor to act according to his profession and not to let others down
    - This is a strong appeal to every pastor everywhere
    - Don’t let down those who look up to you and are depending on you
    - Take hold of your eternal life, make it your life now
- Paul ends this section with a beautiful doxology

**1Tim. 6:13** I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate,  
**1Tim. 6:14** that you keep the commandment without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
**1Tim. 6:15** which He will bring about at the proper time — He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords,  
**1Tim. 6:16** who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see. To Him be honor and eternal dominion! Amen.

- A charge is a formal exhortation under the authority of a higher power

- Paul charges Timothy according to the Father and Son to keep a good confession
  - Notice Paul's description of each member of the Godhead
  - The Father is the one who gives life to all things
  - While Christ is the One who made the good confession before His death
- Paul is reminding Timothy that if he is tempted to chase after earthly things, remember that the Father gives true life to all things
  - That is, Timothy can stand firm in his walk of faith knowing that God will grant him true life
  - And he should follow Christ's example to keep his confession unstained by the world even in the face of persecution
- Which is why Paul calls Timothy to keep his testimony unstained until the appearing of Christ
  - You can't run well and then fail in the end
  - The test is a life of testimony
  - Not a sinless life, not a life without failings
  - But a life that never gives up trying to please Christ, seeking godliness rather than the world's pleasures
- Paul ends praising the Father who is the King above all: Who alone possesses the eternal life we seek and Who dwells in unapproachable light
  - This is further proof that no man has entered the presence of the Father, not even those who have entered the throne room
  - The only member of the Godhead ever to be seen is Christ
- With that Paul moves to instructions to the final group in this letter: the rich

**1Tim. 6:17** Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy.

**1Tim. 6:18** Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share,

**1Tim. 6:19** storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed.

- Paul tells Timothy to instruct those rich Christians on how to see their riches
  - And quite pointedly Paul refers to them as "rich in this present world"
    - The statement reminds the rich that their riches won't necessarily follow them into eternity
    - In fact, it suggests that they won't, unless the rich adopt the right attitude concerning their wealth
  - This truth is in keeping with Jesus' words I read earlier

- The problem with wealth is the way it influences our hearts
- A rich Christian will have a stern test in life
- Will they live in such a way that they protect their wealth or will they share it?
- Protecting it in a miserly way may bring condemnation
  - Ironically, the richer a Christian is today, the more likely they will give cause for God to deny them wealth in the kingdom because of their love of their money
  - So Paul reminds the wealthy not to take their position of wealth for granted
  - They may soon find themselves in the kingdom on the opposite end of the economic spectrum
- To avoid that fate, Paul tells them not to act in the conceited, prideful way of the false teachers
  - They must retain humility and a disaffection for their own wealth
    - They aren't required to give it all away or live as if they don't possess it
    - But they must see it as a tool, something given to them to the benefit of the kingdom
    - Not as a private reserve to be hoarded and used selfishly
    - In this way, wealth is a severe test of any heart
  - Furthermore, they may not place their hope in their riches
    - Even a believer can make this mistake
    - Though they are saved by grace through a true faith in Jesus Christ, nevertheless they live as if their hope is in their wealth
    - They make every decision in life based on how it impacts their wealth or the use of it
  - This is placing hope in the uncertainties of wealth
    - There is a reason we say "easy come, easy go"
    - One day we may wake up to find we've become wealthy and are in need of nothing
    - If on that day we begin to fix our hope for the future on that wealth, then what will we do when the wealth is gone
    - The world is filled with stories of wealth made and lost, and none of those ever thought they would lose their wealth until it happened
  - The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away, Paul says
    - He supplies us richly with all good things
    - So place your hope in the One who supplies, not in the supply He may give you
    - For if you come to worship the provision instead of the provider, you can expect Him to remove that provision to make the point
- So what are the rich to do with their riches?

- Paul says in v. 18 Timothy should first instruct the rich to be rich in good works
  - If you have plenty of money, then use the freedom it offers to spend your time serving the body of Christ
  - Don't let wealth make you aloof, unapproachable
  - Instead, be known as a servant to the needy
- Secondly, be generous and ready to share
  - Isn't it obvious that if God has given someone an excess of wealth, that person should share it liberally?
  - And not just with the church through tax-deductible donations
  - But with others in the body of Christ directly, as gifts, preferably without drawing attention to yourself
  - Do these things as service to Christ and in a thankful heart for what you've received
- A rich person who lives in these ways, seeking to please Christ, will be storing up for themselves treasure for the future, even as they take hold of life indeed
  - Again, the one who seeks to gain his life here will lose it, as Jesus said
    - But the one willing to lose it, will gain life eternal
    - The rich person who hoards wealth, will know regret when they see the result counted in their eternal blessings
    - While the rich person who is generous, sharing and rich in good work will store up a treasure that cannot perish
  - This lifestyle requires a life of faith: willing to fix hope in the promises of God over the false security offered in material wealth
    - It's a test that many can't pass
    - It's a reason to wish not to be rich
    - But for those Christians with wealth, it's a tremendous opportunity to glorify Christ
  - Which Paul says will result in the rich Christian taking hold of life indeed
    - He means that the Christian who embraces this principle will discover what it truly means to live for Christ
    - Whatever joy you may find with fancy houses and big cars, yachts, vacation homes, gold and silver...it isn't truly joy
    - It's an imitation that disappoints
  - Taking hold of life, indeed of meaning and joy, is found in knowing Christ, pursuing Christ, serving Christ
    - Put everything you have to work in that regard
    - Setting your eyes on eternity
- With that Paul ends the letter with a benediction and final charge

**1Tim. 6:20 O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you, avoiding worldly and empty chatter and the opposing arguments of what is falsely called “knowledge” —**

**1Tim. 6:21 which some have professed and thus gone astray from the faith.**

**Grace be with you.**

- This is one of only two Pauline letters that don't end with a final greeting
  - It stay “all business” to the very end
    - Still, Paul adds an endearing, personal touch by saying “O Timothy”
    - Clearly Paul was concerned about the pressures Timothy faced
    - He dearly wants Timothy to succeed and to avoid the traps around him
  - To do that, Paul gives Timothy two final pieces of advice
    - First, guard what has been entrusted to him
    - Guard the flock, guard his spiritual gift, guard his testimony
    - Guarding implies vigilance, that is Timothy has to stay alert, aware of the threats
  - Secondly, he must avoid getting sucked into the empty chatter and opposing arguments of the false teachers
    - Remember, these false teachers were not merely ignorant or uninformed
    - They were willfully misleading others
    - So there was no point in engaging them in a debate
    - Instead, Timothy must just avoid them altogether
  - Unfortunately, many apologetic teachers overlook this advice
    - They become embroiled in unhelpful debates with men who are not sincerely seeking the truth
    - I follow Paul's principle and so does our ministry
    - We will not engage in debates nor will we answer challenges from those who demonstrate an unteachable heart, or who ignore scripture
  - Those who fail in this regard may find themselves entrapped by the very false doctrines they attempted to refute
    - Which is why Paul says some who have professed the truth have thus gone astray
    - This was Paul's concern for Timothy, which explains his strong charge to guard himself
    - And by God's grace, Timothy stood in this way