

**The Letters to  
Timothy, Titus and Philemon**



THE LETTERS TO  
TIMOTHY, TITUS  
AND PHILEMON

**An Explanation of these Four Letters  
Especially for You**

Rock Solid #8

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uitgeverij  
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## Contents

<b>Foreword</b>	9
<b>Abbreviations of the Names of the Books of the Bible</b>	11
Old Testament	11
New Testament	12
<b>Explanation of general format</b>	13
<b>The First Letter to Timothy</b>	15
Introduction	15
<b>1 Timothy 1</b>	19
Blessing and Exhortation   <i>verses 1-4</i>	19
The Purpose of the Commandment   <i>verses 5-7</i>	24
The Law and the Gospel   <i>verses 8-11</i>	28
The Past and Now   <i>verses 12-14</i>	33
Honor and Glory To God   <i>verses 15-17</i>	37
Prophecies and the Good Fight   <i>verses 18-20</i>	42
<b>1 Timothy 2</b>	47
A House of Prayer   <i>verses 1-4</i>	47
The Mediator – The Praying of Men   <i>verses 5-8</i>	52
Women   <i>verses 9-15</i>	56
<b>1 Timothy 3</b>	61
The Overseer   <i>verses 1-5</i>	61
Overseers (continuation) and Deacons   <i>verses 6-11</i>	67
The House of God   <i>verses 12-16</i>	71
<b>1 Timothy 4</b>	76
Apostasy In Later Times   <i>verses 1-5</i>	76
Discipline For the Purpose of Godliness   <i>verses 6-11</i>	81
Exhortations For the Servant   <i>verses 12-16</i>	86

<b>1 Timothy 5</b>	<b>91</b>
Obligations Towards Others   <i>verses 1-6</i>	91
Several Groups of Widows   <i>verses 7-13</i>	96
Sins, Sickness and Infirmities   <i>verses 20-25</i>	105
<b>1 Timothy 6</b>	<b>110</b>
Workers and Sound Words   <i>verses 1-5</i>	110
Want To Get Rich and the Man of God   <i>verses 6-11a</i>	115
Pursue, Fight, Take Hold Of, Confess   <i>verses 11b-13</i>	120
Worship and Final Exhortations   <i>verses 14-21</i>	124
<b>The Second Letter to Timothy</b>	<b>129</b>
Introduction	129
<b>2 Timothy 1</b>	<b>132</b>
The Promise of Life and Blessing   <i>verses 1-2</i>	132
Thanks, Power, Love and Discipline   <i>verses 3-8</i>	135
God's Own Purpose   <i>verses 9-12</i>	140
Word, Spirit and Mercy   <i>verses 13-18</i>	145
<b>2 Timothy 2</b>	<b>151</b>
A Good Servant   <i>verses 1-6</i>	151
Understanding In Everything   <i>verses 7-12a</i>	157
The Solid Foundation of God   <i>verses 12b-19</i>	162
A Vessel For Honor   <i>verses 20-21</i>	168
Flee, Pursue, Correct   <i>verses 22-26</i>	173
<b>2 Timothy 3</b>	<b>177</b>
Last Days and Difficult Times   <i>verses 1-7</i>	177
You, However   <i>verses 8-15</i>	181
All Scripture   <i>verses 16-17</i>	187
<b>2 Timothy 4</b>	<b>192</b>
Preach the Word   <i>verses 1-6</i>	192
Personal Circumstances   <i>verses 7-15</i>	198
Assistance from the Lord and Salutations   <i>verses 16-22</i>	203

<b>The Letter to Titus</b>	<b>209</b>
Introduction	209
<b>Titus 1</b>	<b>211</b>
Sender, Faith and Knowledge   <i>verse 1</i>	211
The Promise of Eternal Life   <i>verses 2-4</i>	214
Elders   <i>verses 5-9</i>	218
False Teachers   <i>verses 10-16</i>	224
<b>Titus 2</b>	<b>229</b>
Older Men, Older Women   <i>verses 1-3</i>	229
Young Women, Young Men, Bondslaves   <i>verses 4-10</i>	234
A People For His Own Possession   <i>verses 11-15</i>	239
<b>Titus 3</b>	<b>244</b>
Once and Now   <i>verses 1-6</i>	244
Heirs, Instructions and Greetings   <i>verses 7-15</i>	249
<b>The Letter to Philemon</b>	<b>255</b>
Introduction	255
Senders, Recipients and Blessing   <i>verses 1-3</i>	260
Love and Faith and a Plea   <i>verses 4-10</i>	265
Put That On My Account   <i>verses 11-25</i>	271
<b>Other Publications</b>	<b>277</b>





## Foreword

Dear friend,

I am glad to present this new volume of the 'Rock Solid series'. These studies are meant for your spiritual edification. If you have read the previous parts of this series, I trust that you have become fascinated by the riches of God's Word.

In this book I want to read four letters with you that Paul wrote. These four letters have in common that they are written to individual believers, namely Timothy (two letters), Titus and Philemon. I will try to tell you why he wrote these letters and what is the benefit for you.

You will find that God's Spirit has inspired these letters, which means that He is their Author. That is the guarantee that they are fully up to date for you, believer of the twenty-first century. Therefore they are in the Bible.

I would like to repeat the practical tips that I suggested in my previous books:

1. Provide yourself with a good translation of the Bible. Some good translations are the *New American Standard Bible* (NASB), the *New King James Version* (NKJV), the *New Translation* by J.N. Darby (JND) and the *King James Version* (KJV), preferably with the New Scofield word updates. I will be using the NASB, with permission granted by The Lockman Foundation on February 10, 2016 when referencing and quoting Scripture unless I note otherwise.
2. I tried to write this book in a way that encourages you to use the Bible. At the beginning and end of each section, I have listed the Bible verses pertaining to that section. I encourage you to read those verses before and after reading the section. It

would be a good idea to keep your Bible open to those verses so you can easily refer to them.

3. Self-discipline is very important. You have to be willing to discipline yourself to take time to understand the Bible better. I suggest that you read the Bible at a set time that's best for you.

To help you with this, I have divided this book into fifty-one sections. I also noted with a 'V' which verse is explained. Read every day one section. If you do that, over a bit more than seven weeks you have got a good impression of four appealing letters from the Bible.

The whole Bible indeed is a great book. It is my prayer that you will be convinced of that more and more.

I wish you God's blessing!

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## Abbreviations of the Names of the Books of the Bible

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### Old Testament

Gen	-	Genesis
Exo	-	Exodus
Lev	-	Leviticus
Num	-	Numbers
Deu	-	Deuteronomy
Jos	-	Joshua
Jdg	-	Judges
Rth	-	Ruth
1Sam	-	First Samuel
2Sam	-	Second Samuel
1Kgs	-	First Kings
2Kgs	-	Second Kings
1Chr	-	First Chronicles
2Chr	-	Second Chronicles
Ezra	-	Ezra
Neh	-	Nehemiah
Est	-	Esther
Job	-	Job
Psa	-	Psalms
Pro	-	Proverbs
Ecc	-	Ecclesiastes
Song	-	Song of Songs
Isa	-	Isaiah
Jer	-	Jeremiah
Lam	-	Lamentations
Eze	-	Ezekiel
Dan	-	Daniel
Hos	-	Hosea
Joel	-	Joel
Amos	-	Amos
Oba	-	Obadiah
Jona	-	Jonah

Mic - Micah  
Nah - Nahum  
Hab - Habakkuk  
Zep - Zephaniah  
Hag - Haggai  
Zec - Zechariah  
Mal - Malachi

## **New Testament**

Mt - Gospel of Matthew  
Mk - Gospel of Mark  
Lk - Gospel of Luke  
Jn - Gospel of John  
Acts - Acts of the Apostles  
Rom - Letter to the Romans  
1Cor - First Letter to the Corinthians  
2Cor - Second Letter to the Corinthians  
Gal - Letter to the Galatians  
Eph - Letter to the Ephesians  
Phil - Letter to the Philippians  
Col - Letter to the Colossians  
1Thes - First Letter to the Thessalonians  
2Thes - Second Letter to the Thessalonians  
1Tim - First Letter to Timothy  
2Tim - Second Letter to Timothy  
Tit - Letter to Titus  
Phlm - Letter to Philemon  
Heb - Letter to the Hebrews  
Jam - Letter of James  
1Pet - First Letter of Peter  
2Pet - Second Letter of Peter  
1Jn - First Letter of John  
2Jn - Second Letter of John  
3Jn - Third Letter of John  
Jude - Letter of Jude  
Rev - Revelation

## Explanation of general format

**PERSONAL PRONOUNS** are capitalized when pertaining to Deity.

**BRACKETS** [ ] are used in this commentary in the Bible text to indicate words which are not found in the original Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek but implied by it.

**SHARP BRACKETS** <> are used in this commentary in the Bible text to indicate words possibly not in the original writings.

**ALL CAPS** in the New Testament are used in the text to indicate Old Testament quotations or obvious references to Old Testament texts.



## The First Letter to Timothy

### Introduction

First carefully read this letter to the end and try to imagine that it is personally addressed to you. I suggest you to ask the Lord, while reading it, what His intention is with it for your life. Open yourself for His directions whether or not to do something or what to change.

Read also *Acts 16:1-3; Philippians 2:19-23; 2 Timothy 1:5*

Up till now we have dealt with letters that were addressed to churches. The *first letter to Timothy* is addressed to one single person. That means that you, even more than in other letters, will find directions for your personal life of faith. You will be able to identify yourself with Timothy, with quite some exceptions. At least, that's the intention. When you notice that you deviate at certain points, you may correct them. In this letter you have a model in front of you that helps you to live to God's honor.

We will first look at the person to whom Paul addresses this letter. By examining the 'personal details' of Timothy (his name means 'God's fear' or 'honored by God') we get a picture of this young believer.

### Relatives:

- Father > Greek (*Acts 16:1*)
- Mother > a believing Jewish woman with a "sincere faith"  
(*Acts 16:1; 2Tim 1:5*)
- Grandmother > had a sincere faith (*2Tim 1:5*)

### Was brought up in the faith:

- Grandmother > mother > Timothy (*2Tim 1:5*).

He knows the Holy Scriptures from his earliest childhood (*2Tim 1:5*). Compare: Jochebed > Moses (*Exo 2:1-10*) and Hannah > Samuel (*1Sam 1:21-28*).

Conversion:

Timothy possibly became a 'child' of Paul in a spiritual sense, during his first visit to Lystra (*Acts 14:6-20*) on his first mission trip. On his second mission trip Paul comes there again and takes Timothy, who is then a follower of the Lord Jesus, with him (*Acts 16:1-3*).

Aspects of his call:

- He has a good testimony (*Acts 16:2*)
- Paul wants to take him along (*Acts 16:3*)
- There were prophecies made concerning him (*1Tim 1:18*)
- Paul has laid hands on him (*2Tim 1:6*)
- The eldership laid hands on him (*1Tim 4:14*)

Personal identity:

- He is young (*1Tim 4:12*)
- He is shy, timid (*1Cor 16:10; 2Tim 1:6-8*)
- He has a good mind (*Phil 2:20*)

Now you have some idea of who he is you can possibly relate better to the addressee.

Paul clearly indicates his motivation to write this letter: *"I am writing these things to you, hoping to come to you before long; but in case I am delayed, [I write] so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth"* (*1Tim 3:14-15*). I quote these verses in full, because here you find the key to understand this letter. So Paul writes the letter that Timothy can give the right teaching on the conduct of the believers in God's house.



Of course this house of God is not a stone building. The house of God consists of all believers who live at this moment on earth. You have already received teaching on the building of God's house, for example in the *letter to the Ephesians* (Eph 2:19-22) and in the *first letter to the Corinthians* (1Cor 3:9-17). That teaching certainly contains important aspects already for the way you're supposed to behave yourself, but this *first letter to Timothy* is specifically focused on it.

There is another important issue you should know. Timothy is addressed as "*man of God*" (1Tim 6:11). I will comment later on this beautiful expression when we are there. Here it is already a good thing to remark that it is a title of honor that is not used for every believer just like that. The Holy Spirit uses this title only for a believer who shows Who God is in a time that the mass of Christianity is unfaithful to Him. In a time of general deviation it is important that the individual is faithful. Timothy was such an individual. You also can be such an individual.

Paul is demonstrating to Timothy which line of conduct he has to teach the believers. To Timothy, as a relatively young believer, that is not an easy job to do. Therefore this letter to his young fellow servant also has an encouraging character. Therefore the contents of the letter is also applicable to us, because the line of conduct Timothy has to teach, must always be followed by believers. To obey those instructions of conduct is certainly not an easy job, certainly not in the time we live. The resistance to obey is increasing on the contrary. But if you are willing to listen you will particularly be encouraged by this letter.

In this context it is important to notice the distinction between what is addressed to Timothy personally and what is addressed to believers in general. As it is said, the *first letter to Timothy* is addressed to one person, just like the second letter and also the one to Titus. (These letters are also called the 'pastoral letters'). You cannot identify yourself with them in everything that is said to them, for they are persons who are sent by the apostle to act in his name or to take care of the churches during his absence. If we carefully pay further attention to the letter, the distinction will become clear.

The letter contains teaching for those who belong to the church. The church is presented here in the order according to God's thoughts and not to what people have made of it. This order is important concerning the conduct of the church members in the world, where they represent God as Savior (*1Tim 1:1*). Your conduct in God's house is being observed by people of the world around you. The man of the world goes on abandoning God as Creator. Consider the evolution theory for example. When God is being put aside as Creator it is of great importance that you represent God as Savior. This letter hands you the instructions for it.

When you take these instructions at heart, your life will be a reference to "*God, our Savior*". Then this letter will achieve its goal in your life. In your walk in the world, in your relation to the people around you it will become visible that you represent a God of love "*Who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth*" (*1Tim 2:3-4*).

I would like to close this introduction by pointing to the word "*Godliness*". This word characterizes this letter; it runs like a common thread through it (*1Tim 2:2; 3:16; 4:7-8; 6:3,5-6,11*). You haven't come across this word yet in the letters of Paul. Here he uses it for the first time. Godliness means pious and indicates an attitude that is focused on God and therefore pleasing to God. When the spiritual life is generally decreasing, this Godliness will be of greater need and therefore more appreciative to God.

I would suggest you to read again *Acts 16:1-3; Philippians 2:19-23; 2 Timothy 1:5*

Reflection: In which view would you be more like Timothy?

## 1 Timothy 1

### Blessing and Exhortation | *verses 1-4*

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

*1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus according to the commandment of God our Savior, and of Christ Jesus, [who is] our hope, 2 to Timothy, [my] true child in [the] faith: Grace, mercy [and] peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. 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, 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.*

V1. Paul is the sender. He points at his apostleship. “Apostle” means one who is sent. He is sent by “Christ Jesus”. The name of his Sender makes clear Who the Lord Jesus is as He is now in heaven (‘Christ’) and as He once was in humiliation on earth (‘Jesus’). The Lord Jesus is made ‘Christ’ by God, after He had been despised as ‘Jesus’ by men, and fulfilled the work on the cross (Acts 2:36). What surely will happen someday, is that every being in the universe will bow his knee to Jesus and confess Him to be Lord (Phil 2:10-11).

Paul has already bowed his knees. He submitted himself to the Lord Jesus. Paul’s apostleship is not something he himself chose. He didn’t apply for it. He is an apostle, because he received a “commandment”, an order for it from authoritative Persons. It is not possible to avoid such an order. He neither desires to do that (cf. 1Cor 9:17b). He pursued with tenacity and strength to accomplish his task (cf. 1Cor 9:19-21).

His Commanders are two Divine Persons. The names of these Persons are most telling. They indicate that God's people are in degradation. God called Himself "Savior" in *Isaiah 45:15* when the end of Israel is near. A Savior or Redeemer is needed when the end of the existence of a nation or a man has come into view. How great is God that He right then is also willing to present Himself like that (see also *Lk 1:47; 1Tim 2:3; 4:10; Tit 1:3; 2:10; 3:4; Jude :25*).

Paul also draws Timothy's attention to "Christ Jesus, [who is] our hope". When all hope seems to be gone for God's people in general that everything will turn out well, you may know that for you personally the situation is really not hopeless. When the Person of Christ Jesus is your only hope in this time of degradation, you will surely be able to manage in a special way to the honor of God and the Lord Jesus in the midst of degradation.

Summarizing you could say that when everything has failed, the faithful believers will not put their trust in churches, elders or whosoever, but will be occupied with God their Savior and with Christ Jesus their Hope. Such faithful believers you come across for example in the book of *Malachi* and in *Luke 1* and *2*. There you find a situation that God's people do not think of God anymore, but only of themselves. There are just a few who take account of God and expect their redemption from Him and who put their hope on Him.

V2. The letter is addressed to Timothy. I already said some things about him in the introduction. Paul calls him his "true son in the faith". Timothy is his spiritual son. He has conceived him through the gospel (cf. *1Cor 4:15; Gal 4:19*). But also in his life as a believer Timothy is his son. Timothy has seen and learnt so much of 'father' Paul (*2Tim 3:10*) that Paul sees a lot of himself in Timothy. He has the same mind (*Phil 2:20*) and his ministry is fully in line with the ministry of Paul (*1Cor 4:17; Phil 2:19-22*).

Then the blessing follows. In the salutation of all the letters to the churches it is always 'grace and peace', but here the blessing is "grace, mercy [and] peace". "Mercy" is added to the common blessing. That's actually very characteristic for a letter to a person. You

also see that in the *second letter to Timothy*, in the *letter to Titus* and in the *second letter of John*, which are all addressed to a person.

‘Grace’ makes clear that you are totally dependent on God, in order to live to His honor. There is nothing present in you that could be pleasing to God. It is important to be aware of that, for only then you are in the right attitude to make use of the grace that God wants to give you abundantly.

You can expect ‘mercy’ from God with a view to the miserable situation you find yourself in. He wants to help you when you are in need and to get up when you have stumbled.

‘Peace’ is the inner rest you have when you trust on God (*Isa 26:3-4*).

For receiving these three blessings Paul draws Timothy’s attention to the source of them. They come “*from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord*”. In *verse 1* God is presented as Savior. Now you hear about God the Father. This is to encourage you while you have to fight against so many things around you. You are always welcome to the Father to tell Him about your difficulties, worries, struggles and desires.

In *verse 1* you read about Christ Jesus as your Hope. Now you hear that He is ‘Lord’. He has authority over your life. If you want to live up to that you go to Him for grace, mercy and peace.

V3. Timothy receives from Paul the order to stay in Ephesus, while he himself travels further to Macedonia. The way Paul is saying this to Timothy makes clear that he has to insist softly to keep him there. The order was not quite that simple after all for a timid young man like Timothy. The reason for this order is that the enemy is trying to introduce several forms of evil in the church of Ephesus. And let me warn you that the enemy knows how to use cunning speakers, people who are not easily brought to order. Against those speakers Timothy had to act.

You might think: ‘Ephesus was such a great church where nothing was wrong, wasn’t it? They knew the teachings, didn’t they?’

Had not Paul taught the highest truths of Christendom there? Nevertheless, you see here that having the knowledge of the highest truths is no guarantee to be kept from false doctrines. If you don't remain in the grace of God, you will go astray. Only by being aware of the grace of God for knowing what you know you are kept from that.

Therefore Timothy has to stop the wrong doctrines that "*certain men*" are teaching in Ephesus. He was not to ask those 'some' kindly to stop their unedifying occupations. There should absolutely be no tolerance towards another doctrine that is contrary "*to sound teaching*" (*verse 10*). People who are guilty of such things are to be ordered "*not to teach strange doctrines*".

V4. You can see the effects of that 'other doctrine' in several ways. The ways these effects appear are described in *verses 4-11*. In all cases it is about a doctrine that is contrary the doctrine of the Scripture (*cf. Gal 1:7; Acts 20:30*). There is mention of "*myths*", "*endless genealogies*" and "*the law*". The teachings that are related to these issues subsequently have their origins in human fantasy, human curiosity and human religiosity. They all stand against the truth that has only one purpose: to present Christ to us.

In *verse 4* Paul first deals with the myths and genealogies. 'Myths' come forth from the corrupted spirit of man. They are products from human fantasy (*2Pet 1:16*). They are ideas from the world of pagans, although they may contain nice theories from Greek philosophy schools. There should absolutely be no room for that in the church. The command sounds simply: 'Do not give heed to that.'

The 'endless genealogies' is another product of the corrupt spirit of man. Regarding this the command is also: not to give heed to it. Those are teachings of Jews about the descendants of different powers and idols. They serve to make man great and to exclude God. The man who takes heed to that, arrogates himself to be able to explain that all blessing we have received is the result of a process (consider the evolution theory).

By the way, you should not connect this kind of genealogies with the genealogies you find in the Word of God (e.g. 1Chr 1-9; Mt 1:1-17). Those are inspired by God's Spirit and they therefore serve God's purpose.

You are to judge a doctrine by its result, the fruits it produces. When disputes are the result the doctrine is corrupt (Tit 3:9). The religious arena is full of doubters and it echoes only hot air. Sound teachings do not cause disputes, but a sound spiritual growth. Disputes leave the soul in darkness and doubt. They do not give security to the searching soul.

Disputes stand against "*the administration of God*". This means: commandments and responsibilities given by God and which are to be fulfilled (Lk 16:2-13; 1Cor 4:1-2; 1Pet 4:10; 1Cor 9:17; Eph 3:2,9; Col 1:25). Each child of God, so you too, has a commandment and is responsible to carry that out. And that should happen "*by faith*", which means in complete trust in Him.

Now read 1 Timothy 1:1-4 again.

Reflection: Do you know your commandment?

## The Purpose of the Commandment | verses 5-7

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully

*5 But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. 6 For some men, straying from these things, have turned aside to fruitless discussion, 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.*

V5. Paul gives a detailed explanation on the commandment that Timothy should give to 'certain men' (verse 3). When God commands something it always has a purpose. The commandment here is to stop the wrong. The wrong holds up God's blessing and when it is taken away the blessing can freely flow again. That also includes your personal life. This explanation shows Timothy why he had to directly silence those 'certain men' and without any hesitation. Then the way of love is made free again.

Love is the great feature of God. "God is love" (1Jn 4:8,16). The love of God is poured out in our hearts (Rom 5:5). Wrong teachings block the outflow of that love, while it should freely outflow to God, to the fellow believers and to the fellow men. A wrong teaching always causes corruption, while the love of God always seeks the good for the other person. This love has three sources in the believer. Only when love comes from those sources the purpose of the commandment will be achieved.

The first source is "a pure heart". Out of your heart spring the issues of life (Pro 4:23). Your heart is supposed to be pure. When your heart is not pure, pure love cannot come out of it. If you desire for worldly pleasure, if you enjoy sin, if you are after your own honor, your heart is not pure. In a pure heart there is no place for sin. A pure heart is a heart that lives in communion with God. The ones with a pure heart will see God (Mat 5:8).



The second source is important for the right effectiveness of love and that is “*a good conscience*”. A good conscience is not a conscience that is not aware of any evil, but more a conscience that functions well. It is a conscience that is trained to make known what is good and what is evil, according to how God judges that, so that you may live up to that. You do not get a bad conscience because of the fact that sin still is in you, but only when the flesh is active in you and you don’t want to judge it.

Through baptism you receive a good conscience (1Pet 3:21). After all, you yourself have been baptized because you acknowledge the judgment of God about everything that doesn’t agree with Him, including yourself in your old nature. By being baptized you admit that you chose the side of the rejected Jesus. You want to follow Him. That is only possible from a good conscience that is connected to your baptism. Then it cannot be the case that you still want to have anything to do with sin (Rom 6:2-3). In that case you would deny what you have confessed with your baptism and by doing so you would defile your conscience (Tit 1:15).

Besides, your conscience is in itself not a measure of good and evil. It should be formed by the Word of God. Just look at Paul. He was not accused in his conscience when he persecuted the church (Acts 23:1). But what he did made him the chief of the sinners (1Tim 1:15).

The third source where love should freely flow from is “*a sincere faith*”. ‘Sincere’ means upright, without feigning. The point is that regarding your faith you should not pretend, that your faith is not an empty confession, but that you trust in God about everything.

V6. When your heart and conscience do not remain in the light of God and when your faith is only keeping up appearances you will deviate from the way of love. Here it is still limited to “*some men*” (see also verse 3). With those the sources, just mentioned, are not to be found. Love is missing and God’s work is not being done. Then the contrary will happen: you hear only “*idle talk*”. This is how you should value all gibberish and empty talk. That’s quite different from being impressed by it.

V7. And mind you that these folks will try to impress you. They come with nice reasoning and they emphatically appeal to the Bible. Their purpose is not less than to be “*the teachers of the Law*”. That is what they ‘want’. They act as if they know God’s law and declare themselves to be the only ones who are allowed to teach that. These false teachers consciously take that attitude and have a firm purpose, to which all other things has to be brought into subjection.

He who deviates from love, because the condition of his *heart, conscience* and *faith* is not right anymore, becomes liberal or legalistic. The liberal Christian believes only what he can see or reason. In the days of the Lord Jesus the sadducees were like that (*Mat 22:23; Acts 23:8*). Liberal Christians lead their lives entirely according to their own view. Those who fall into legalism regulate for themselves and especially for others all kinds of laws that are supposed to guide their lives. In the days of the Lord Jesus the pharisees were like that (*Mat 23:4*). Legalistic people have regulated a standard of outward characteristics to measure the life of faith for everyone.

By saying these things in this way we run the risk to put ourselves out of firing line. We must be careful not to look at others only to see if they have either of these evil features in their faith lives. We all have something of both principles in ourselves, for we still have the flesh in ourselves. It would be well for us to consider that.

These teachers must have felt very insulted when they heard how Paul described their qualifications as teachers. Just imagine if that happened to you: highly esteeming yourself and boasting about your qualities and then someone comes and wipes that out without any respect. He disqualifies them before Timothy to prevent that he would carefully listen to them even for just a minute. Don’t waste your precious time on people who “*do not understand either what they are saying or the matters about which they make confident assertions*”, and want to entertain you with the imaginations of their own mind.

Such people who want to reintroduce the law do not know Who God really is. They are also ignorant about the real condition of man. They do not know the purpose of the law and even less the true character of Christendom. Those are people who support

their self-assured notions with a lot of hot air and recommend them as truth. Their rich use of words only publicly exposes their ignorance to everyone who wants to be taught by the Spirit on the basis of the Word.

Each use of the law as an addition to faith, in order to be saved, is a false use of it. This form of misuse is to be found in the roman catholic church. Through the reformation God brought liberation from that false doctrine. God has shown that only by faith a man can be justified. But due to the unfaithfulness of man the devil succeeded to introduce another error within the reformation, namely to make the law a rule of life for the believer. They say it then very beautifully: to do that out of gratitude.

But in both cases people ignore totally the purpose of the law. It is a serious error to assume that some work of man has to be added to the faith in the Lord Jesus, in order to be saved. Just as serious is the error to assume that a child of God is called to keep the law. In both cases the working of the law is being ignored.

I would suggest you to read the *letter to the Galatians* once more. That letter is a unique explanation about the meaning of the law. The incompatibility of the law and faith and the gospel is shown crystal clear. It is clearly written in that letter that he who puts himself on the foundation of the works of the law puts himself under the curse (*Gal 3:10*). That is a general valid rule that doesn't allow any exception. It makes no difference whether you misuse the law as a supplement to be saved or as a supplement for your faith to express your gratitude in such a way. In both cases you ignore that you cannot keep the law and that the inevitable result is the curse of the law.

How the law should be used in the right way we shall see in the following section.

Now read 1 Timothy 1:5-7 again.

Reflection: Is your heart pure, your conscience good and your faith sincere?

The Law and the Gospel | verses 8-11

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

*8 But we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully, 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 10 and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching, 11 according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, with which I have been entrusted.*

V8. Opposite to the ignorance of the so-called ‘teachers of the law’ Paul puts the “*we know*” of the Christian faith. This is the Christian knowledge that you may possess through good teaching, in contradiction to the false teachers. Only a person who is informed of the truth of God can put everything in the right place.

You do not need to have any doubt regarding the law and the use of it. From *verse 8* Paul impressively explains how to understand the law. These verses are of huge importance for the Christian. In general terms, the reformed part of Christianity holds on to the law ‘out of gratitude’. But also regarding the evangelic part of Christianity the stream that makes a plea to reinstate the law, or some parts of it, by keeping them again, is getting broader.

Paul judges both those who engage themselves with fables and genealogies and the teachers of the law. Though there is a huge distinction. The fables and genealogies come forth from the imagination of man, while the law comes from God. Therefore the law is also good (*Rom 7:12*). The point in this is how you *use* the law.

You ought to use the law “*lawfully*” which means in accordance with the intention of it. So you should know the intention. It is important to bear in mind that the law is given:

- at Mount Sinai, approximately 2500 years after Adam or 1500 years before Christ, so it was not from creation (*Rom 5:20; Gal 3: 19*);
- to Israel, that is to only one nation (*Rom 9:4*);
- in order to separate this nation from the other nations (*Eph 2:14-15*);
- as a tutor until Christ (*Gal 3:24*), which indicates its temporal character.

Furthermore, the power of the law lies in the judgment. The law brings about wrath (*Rom 4:15*) and is the ministry of death (*2Cor 3:7,9*). The law cannot give the power to fulfill God's holy demands. It clearly puts sin as a transgression in the light (*Rom 3:20*) and judges without mercy though righteously (*Heb 10:28*).

V9. Therefore Paul wants you to realize first “*that law is not made for a righteous person*”. Just like in the previous verse this ‘knowing’ is the knowing of the Christian truth in contradiction to Judaism. It is the ‘knowing’ that all possess who live by faith and who live in the era of faith.

A righteous person is somebody who by faith in Christ is declared righteous before God (*Rom 4:5; 5:1,9*). The law of God cannot possibly be applied to such a person anymore, because Christ has already freed him from all his sins by bearing the judgment Himself over these sins. The demand of the law has had its full effect. Christ went into death. He who believes in Him has gone into death with Him. It is foolishness to apply the law to somebody who is dead.

In addition to that, it is so that the law cannot possibly be fulfilled by anyone. The law is not to blame for that, but man. Every man, whether he is a Christian or not, who puts himself under the law, even if it is out of gratitude, puts himself under the curse by doing that (*Gal 3:10*). The believer is not under the law (*Rom 6:14; 7:4,6; Gal 3:23,25*), for he is in Christ (*2Cor 5:17*) and Christ is the

end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes (*Rom 10:4*).

I hope that this is enough to convince you that you, 'a righteous person', have got nothing to do with the law as a means to put your relationship with God in order. Whom are you supposed to apply the law to? The law is from God and can be used lawfully (in contradiction to the 'fables' of *verse 4*) as a sword for the conscience of the sinner. In that way the sinner can be convinced that he is a sinner. Paul highlights a number of categories, in order to conclude with an all comprehending category.

He starts with some categories which he combines with the word "and". The first couple consists of the "lawless and rebellious". A 'lawless' person is somebody who refuses to recognize any form of authority. A 'rebellious' person refuses to obey a command. The law should be presented to such people to make clear to them that they bring God's wrath upon themselves.

"The ungodly and sinners" form the second couple. An 'ungodly man' doesn't consider God; he doesn't care about God at all. A 'sinner' misses the purpose of God for his life.

With the next couple, the "unholy and profane", not only is something missing, but it has a negative meaning. An 'unholy person' lives in connection with corruption. A 'profane person' is not only ungodly, but treats God disrespectfully; he provokes Him by his life style.

The previous couples clearly show the inner corruptness of man and his alienation from God. In the next categories it is about the deeds that come forth from the man who lives in such a condition. These deeds form a direct violation of a command.

Those "who kill their fathers or mothers" violates the fifth commandment (*Exo 20:12*). "Murderers" violate the sixth commandment (*Exo 20:13*).

V10. “Immoral men and homosexuals” violate the seventh commandment (*Exo 20:14*). This commandment regards all sins of sexual nature, regardless of heterosexual sins or homosexuality.

“Kidnappers” violate the eighth commandment (*Exo 20:13*); *21:16*; *Deu 24:7*).

“Liars” and “perjurers” violate the ninth commandment (*Exo 20:16*).

After this summary Paul doesn’t conclude the list with ‘every other thing that contradicts *the law*’. That is important to notice. Instead of that he concludes with a higher measure to determine what sin is. It is “*whatever else is contrary to sound teaching*”, that is the healthy making doctrine. In that doctrine the holiness of God is fully maintained. That doctrine is pure and without the fusion of strange, human thoughts.

The sins mentioned in the previous verses are not only judged by the law. They are also in contrast with the sound doctrine of the New Testament.

V11. That sound doctrine is fully in accordance with “*the glorious gospel of the blessed God*”. God is the blessed God Who finds all blessing in Himself, but Who also wants men to partake of His blessing through the gospel.

This gospel goes far beyond the law. In the gospel God doesn’t speak by thunder and lightning from Mount Sinai, but therein He speaks in the fullness of His grace and truth in Christ, in order to show mercy to lost sinners. At Mount Sinai His fullness was not seen. There God revealed Himself in His demands, that means in what suits His holiness and righteousness. The ‘glory of God’ on the contrary is the totality of all His perfections that above all became visible in Christ on the cross.

In ‘the glorious gospel’ the glory of God is revealed in Christ (*2Cor 4:4*). Your eyes have been opened for the glory of God. The sublime effect of this gospel is that you can be more and more

changed according to Christ. Therefore you should be occupied with the glory of Christ (2Cor 3:18).

This gospel has been “*entrusted*” to Paul. He met that gospel when he was on his way to Damascus (Acts 22:6,11). The glory that he then saw is the starting point of his ministry. When Paul speaks about the gospel he mentions full of vivacity that it was entrusted to him. He takes it as a matter of honor that he can proclaim the gospel. Is that also the case with you?

Now read 1 Timothy 1:8-11 again.

Reflection: Mention some differences between the gospel and the law.



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The Past and Now | verses 12-14

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

*12 I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service, 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; 14 and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are [found] in Christ Jesus.*

V12. The section of *verses 12-17* shows the contrast between what is entrusted to Paul and the law. Paul had already said in *verse 11* what was entrusted to him and it impresses him again. Therefore he turns to the Source, the Origin of his service and thanks “*Christ Jesus our Lord*” for the service that He had entrusted to him. He doesn’t thank Him for the redemption here, but for what the Lord wants to do with him on that basis. Do you also do that?

For that service you are – as Paul is – not dependent on your own strength. If you try that you will surely fail in your service. But the Lord gives strength. Paul is aware of that and it is important that you too are aware. On the one hand you should not work in your own strength. On the other hand there is one thing that indeed has to be present in you, in order to do your service rightly, and that is “*faithfulness*”.

Because the Lord knew that Paul would be faithful He entrusted him with that service. In his life before his conversion Paul had already shown a high degree of faithfulness and zeal. His deeds were condemnable, but his faithfulness and zeal were exemplary. His conversion has caused that those qualities could be used by the Lord in the service for Him. With what he formerly served to his own honor he now glorifies his Lord.

Paul was not put “*into service*” by people, but by the Lord (*Acts 20:24; Gal 1:15-16*). Human institution is an illegitimate intervention in the rights that the Lord exclusively reserved for Himself.

Therefore you should not wait for an official confirmation by people before you start to do something for the Lord. Older and more mature believers could indeed encourage and advise you in your service. It would be a proof of willfulness if you do not care about that. Nevertheless, the Lord remains your Commanding Officer. He has employed you and you owe responsibility to Him for what you do and for the way you do it.

V13. When Paul remembers his past he becomes more grateful that the Lord wants to use him in His service. According to human standards he is the most inappropriate person for a ministry as the one of *verse 11*, but according to God's standards there is no one suitable for that ministry except him (*see verse 16*). He remembers very well that he *"formerly was a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor"* (*see also Gal 1:13*).

Do you remember who you were before your conversion? Or if you haven't experienced such a radical conversion, have you discovered how much sinfulness is hidden in your heart? If you think about your past or about the malice of the thoughts that you can have, doesn't the grace of God amaze you from time to time? Doesn't that impress you deeply that He saved you and now wants to use you?

Without pride or loftiness Paul mentions that he was formerly 'a blasphemer', which means that he spoke out curses. His deeds were in line with that. He was 'a persecutor' of the saints, he chased them and hunted for them. His whole attitude was that of a brutal and criminal man, 'an insolent man'. He rampaged as a lunatic. From several quotes of Luke or of himself regarding that in *Acts* you can understand that nothing would give him more pleasure than exterminating all Christians (*e.g. Acts 7:58; 8:3; 9:1,13-14,21; 22:20; 26:9-11*).

Then, initiated by the word *"yet"*, the big contrast appears between what he deserved and what he received. Paul acknowledges the mercy that was shown to him, while he rampaged like a mad man against the Lord Jesus. To him *"was shown mercy"*. He was not familiar to this word formerly. Without any mercy he per-

secuted the Christians. At that time he was a minister of the law and the law knows no mercy (*Heb 10:28*). Now he had obtained it he wishes others to obtain it also (*1Tim 1:2; 2Tim 1:2,16,18; Tit 1:4*).

God could show mercy to Paul, because he didn't know what he was doing when he persecuted the church (*cf. Lk 23:34; Acts 3:17*). He did it "*ignorantly*". That doesn't mean that he was not guilty. He surely was. He had sinned, but with ignorance. He had not willfully resisted against God's will. He had sinned 'unintentionally' and not 'defiantly' (*Lev 22:14; Num 15:22-31*). What he did was done with a good conscience (*Acts 23:1; 2Tim 1:3*).

He intended to serve God by that, he thought that he had to do 'many things' contrary to the Name of the Lord Jesus (*Acts 26:9; Jn 16:2*). His opinion was formed according to the religion of his fathers. Through them he had learnt to know the true God. Therefore the only conclusion could be that the Christian faith and the Old Testament faith in the Lord (*Yahweh*) were opposites. By killing Christians he intended to defend the honor of God. He showed zeal, but without knowledge (*Rom 10:2; Acts 22:3*). His intensions made him blind for God's revelation in Christ and it made him the chief of sinners.

Isn't it perplexing that a man who was taught in the Scriptures in such a way and who had received the best education (at the feet of Gamaliel, *Acts 22:3*), has to say that he did something 'ignorantly'? Here you have a proof that the best theological education is no guarantee to understand the sound doctrine (*cf. 1Cor 2:14*). On the contrary, it may lead to a practice that fully contrasts the Word of God.

He was acting "*in unbelief*". In his former deeds there was no trust in God. They were all performances of the sinful flesh, the own 'I'. Just like God's stewardship moves within the realm of faith ('in faith', *verse 4*), just like that the former life of Paul happened in the realm of unbelief. "*And whatever is not from faith is sin*" (*Rom 14:23*).

V14. Deeply impressed by the mercy he obtained Paul then speaks about a “grace” that “was more than abundant” (see also Rom 5:20). He does that, because that grace was given to him as the chief of all sinners. By showing grace to him, it exceeded beyond each limitation a man could think of. His conversion is the proof that the grace of the Lord is greater than the greatest sin. He is the prime example to prove that the patience of God is bigger than the perseverance of His most embittered enemy.

And it is “our Lord” Who gave that grace to him. He doesn’t say ‘my’ Lord, but “our Lord”. In that way he puts Timothy, to whom he addresses in this letter, in the same relation with the Lord like he has, and in the same grace which has become his part. Grace always stands against wage (Rom 4:4). Grace means fully undeserved merit. A right consciousness of the grace granted will make us dedicated servants.

Together with the grace the Lord gave to him he also gave “faith and love”. That ‘faith’ and that ‘love’ become visible in his life. He lives in full confidence of faith in the Lord and serves Him with all the love from his heart. “In Christ Jesus” his life finds its object and purpose. Ever since Christ Jesus has shown Paul His more than abundant grace, He is the whole atmosphere of his life. Everything that expresses his faith and his love happens from the fellowship with Him.

Now read 1 Timothy 1:12-14 again.

Reflection: Consider what you were formerly and what you have become through the grace of God. In what way is the difference seen in your case?

## Honor and Glory To God | verses 15-17

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

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

V15. “It is a trustworthy statement.” This beautiful and encouraging expression only appears in the pastoral letters (1Tim 3:1; 4:9; 2Tim 2:11; Tit 3:8). When every support has fallen away and you seem to stand alone, the statement of the Word of God will never fail you. You can always count on it. Whether it is about the salvation of sinners (here) or in *chapter 3:1* about the ministry in the house of God or in *chapter 4:9* about Godliness or in *2 Timothy 2:11* about our future or in *Titus 3:8* about our inheritance, the statement of the Word of God always gives security and something to hold on to.

Because the Word of God is that faithful it is therefore “*deserving full acceptance*”. This addition is also to be found in *chapter 4:9*. And why is it worthy of all acceptance here? Because “*Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners*” (cf. *Lk 19:10*). This truth has not the slightest effect when it is not accepted in faith. There is salvation only for him who believes this undeniable truth (*Rom 1:16*).

“*The world*” indicates the atmosphere the Lord Jesus entered as Man. He not only exchanged heaven for a place on earth, but He entered a world where sin and death rule, the territory where sinners dwell. He came from the wonderful realm of heaven into a realm of darkness, hatred and death, in order to save sinners from that world.

Sinners feel at home in the world as fish in the water. But where the world lies in evil and is ripening for the judgment, the love that God our Savior has for man in Christ Jesus has appeared in the world to save men from this judgment. Before the Lord Jesus came into the world God used all means to enable man to come into connection with Him. However, man failed hopelessly. Then God gave His Son. This is what exactly fully revealed the desperate situation of man, for then his hatred towards God became apparent. At the same time on the contrary, God's love was also fully revealed.

Paul is better than anyone aware of that. When he thinks of himself as a sinner he could only say "*among whom I am foremost [of all]*" (cf. 1Cor 15:9; Eph 3:8). He wanted to be the active enemy of the faith everywhere, in order to eradicate the Name of the Lord Jesus. He even went to foreign cities to do that (Acts 26:11). He stood at the front of the line of those who were filled with hatred towards Christ.

When Paul says that it is without exaggeration, but it is a profoundly conscious experience of his own unworthiness. He neither says 'of whom I *was* chief', but "*am*". This consciousness becomes bigger the more he sees the grace of the Lord Jesus.

You see his consciousness grow bigger when he tells about his conversion history. In his conversion there is mention of "*a light from heaven*" (Acts 9:3). The first time that he testifies to this he tells that "*a very bright light ... from heaven*" shone around him (Acts 22:6). The second time he speaks about "*a light from heaven, brighter than the sun*" (Acts 26:13). Are you more and more impressed daily by what God has done with you in your conversion?

V16. In *verse 13* Paul mentions the cause of God's mercy towards him: he did it ignorantly. Here Paul explains what the purpose is of the mercy shown to him: God wanted to make him a pattern of the expression of grace to all. That is embedded in the words "*so that*", which indicates the purpose. The mercy he obtained was therefore not for himself alone, but it also has a meaning to others.

When there is salvation for the chief of sinners there is salvation for everyone. You can compare it to a sluice gate. When the largest ship can go through the sluice gate every other ship is able to go through it also. In his former life Paul is, as it were, the embodiment of all enemies of Christ. Now he has converted to God and believes in the Lord Jesus he is also the representative of those “*who would believe in Him*”.

God has shown him “*perfect patience*”. ‘Patience’ indicates how God responds to the kicking and bashing of the rebellious man whom Paul was. God tolerated him when he was fiercely bashing the disciples of the Lord Jesus. The conversion of Paul is the proof that in the battle for the salvation of a sinner God has the longest breath. His patience is perfect.

The salvation of Paul as the chief of sinners is a pattern for every other salvation. Was God’s patience shown to him? Then God’s patience is there for everyone. Paul was the chief, the most zealous and most embittered enemy. And he was saved. Then he is the best and most powerful witness that grace is abundant over sin and that the work of Christ is perfectly capable to remove that sin.

The example of what happened to Paul is not intended to indicate that each conversion should be like that. It is intended to show what God can do. Each conversion happens differently, because the life course of each person is different. God will not judge a person earlier than when His patience is fully shown to that person and because that person doesn’t respond to that. Concerning Paul, His patience has the desired result, a result that God wishes for every sinner (*2Pet 3:9*).

The eternal life is the part of everyone who believes (*Jn 3:16*). That regards to what a person inwardly receives. The Lord Jesus is the eternal life. He who believes, receives Him as his life. But there is also a future aspect. Paul’s view of the eternal life here is something that lies in the future (*cf. Tit 3:7*). When the believer will be with the Lord Jesus in glory he will fully enjoy the eternal life

till eternity: the uninterrupted fellowship with the Father and the Son (*Jn 17:3*).

V17. The gratitude of *verse 12* swells in a praise in *verse 17*. Paul is overwhelmed by everything that the Lord has done for him as a sinner and what He did to him by putting him into the service. Praise arises from him for the grace of God. In *Romans 11:33-35* the wisdom of God is the cause of a praise and in *Ephesians 3:14-21* he shouts out because of the love of God.

He praises God as “*the King eternal*”. As ‘King eternal’ God will achieve His aim with all things through the ages. In that way he directs the course of the world history, but also the history of every man. In His great majesty and sovereignty He is exalted above the time and turbulence of the world and people. He has the ages at His disposal. He accomplishes His plan of salvation with creation and with men. Paul has personally experienced that God is ‘the King eternal’.

He honors Him as the “*immortal, invisible, ... only God*”. Immortal means not to be decreased by death and stands against all things that are mortal and corruptible, especially the idols (*Rom 1:23*). The same word is used for the bodies of the saints in the resurrection (*1Cor 15:52*), for the inheritance of the saints (*1Pet 1:4*) and for the gentle and quiet spirit of the Godly woman (*1Pet 3:4*).

God is also “*invisible*”, which means not to be observed by the eye of man (*1Tim 6:16; Rom 1:20; Col 1:15; Heb 11:27*). In Christ He has revealed Himself. That means He made Himself visible (*Jn 1:18; 14:9; Col 1:15*). He also is “*the only God*” (*Jn 5:44; 17:3; Jude :25*). All other gods are idols, the work of men’s hands. God is absolutely unique in His Being and worthiness.

He is worthy of all “*honor and glory forever and ever*”. All His dignities that He has revealed, His glory that became visible, are a reason to sing Him praises forever and ever. We are allowed to start with that now already and continue that endlessly.



With a wholehearted “*amen*”, which means ‘so be it’, Paul concludes his praise. Of course we heartily agree to that.

Now read 1 Timothy 1:15-17 again.

Reflection: Praise God for Who He is, for what He has done for you and what He has made of you. Use the names of God that you have been made familiar with. Tell Him what these names mean to you.

**Prophecies and the Good Fight** | *verses 18-20*

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

*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, 19 keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith. 20 Among these are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan, so that they will be taught not to blaspheme.*

V18. You may say that *verses 6-17* are an interruption in the argument of Paul. He clearly showed the difference between law and grace in that section. The command he is speaking of in *verse 18* therefore connects to what he said about that in *verse 5*. Now to Timothy he explains what the basis is of the command. Besides, he initiates that explanation with the words out of which confidence and fatherly love appear: *“This command I entrust to you, Timothy, [my] son.”*

It must have been an encouragement for the young Timothy from the elder Paul to be entrusted with a command. Paul doesn't do that out of favoritism or sentimentality, but because he 'believes' in Timothy and he tells him that too. That is very meaningful for Timothy. The Lord has called him, but it is also nice that Paul underlines that. Older believers who are spiritually minded may declare themselves united with the calling and the ministry of a younger believer.

Timothy is reminded of *“the prophecies previously made concerning”* him for the execution of the command. The command that Paul is giving him is in accordance to that. The issue here is not about exceptional revelations of others concerning Timothy. It is simply about prophecies concerning Timothy by believers who recognize a work of God's Spirit in him. Timothy has a good testimony for miles around (*Acts 16:2*). When something like that is being

noticed then it can be prophesied that he will certainly be used by the Lord.

When you look at the preparation of Timothy regarding his ministry then you can discover four aspects that have played a role:

1. The prophecies previously made (1Tim 1:18).
2. The gift of God (1Tim 4:14; 2Tim 1:6).
3. The laying on of the hands of Paul (2Tim 1:6).
4. The laying on of the hands of the eldership (1Tim 4:14).

We shall pay attention to the aspects 2, 3 and 4 when we will be studying the verses regarding to those aspects. Here Timothy is reminded by Paul of the 'prophecies previously made' in order to encourage him again. It is an exceptional support in the fulfillment of the responsibility that goes together with the ministry he has to achieve.

He did not accidentally run into this position. Therefore it doesn't have to be a surprise to others that he is carrying out a command of the apostle. Everyone who knows him has noticed his spiritual growth. Some already saw that in an early stage and must have said: 'That boy will be very useful to the Lord.' Others may have only noticed it when his ministry touched them personally. Do you have any idea of what the case is concerning yourself?

With the support of what others have seen in him he can start "*the good fight*". Considering the command of *verse 3* the good fight (or: struggle) Paul is appealing for here will happen particularly in the house of God with a view to false teachings. The fight against it is a good, honorable and a God pleasing fight.

There are more kinds of struggle you are appealed for after a struggle you have already fought. The latter struggle is that of a sinner to be saved (*Lk 13:24; Mat 7:13-14*). It was particularly a warfare against yourself, against everything that wanted to keep

you from confessing your sins to God and to accept the Lord Jesus in faith.

Your fight or struggle as a believer is against things *outside* yourself. This warfare has different aspects. In this sense you read about

- the struggle in the gospel (*Phil 4:3*);
- the struggle against the evil powers etc. (*Eph 6:12-18*);
- the striving against sin as a power *outside* us (*Heb 12:4-5*);
- the content for the faith which is the truth of the faith (*Jude :4*);
- the strive in prayers (*Rom 15:30*);
- the good faith (that includes all the several kinds of struggles or fights previously mentioned (*1Tim 1:18; 6:12; 2Tim 4:7*)).

You have to do with fight because you find yourself in a hostile area. You are standing before the Lord and you defend His interests and those of your fellow believers. It should never be a fight for your own interests. Another danger is that you avoid the fight. But that is really inappropriate for someone who owes everything to the Lord. I want to believe that you, like I do, want to look like Timothy and that you therefore will not avoid the fight. Therefore you should care about everything that Paul says to Timothy as an encouragement in this context.

V19. In this fight your personal "*faith*" is absolutely essential. The point here is your inner confidence of faith, the perseverance in God's faithfulness, even when the fight is very fierce. Hold on to your confidence of faith in the fight. Don't give up on your perseverance in God, how great the pressure may be that the enemy is exerting on you.

An equally important condition to fight the good fight is the possession and preservation of “*a good conscience*”. The conscience works like a compass that indicates every deviation from the right course. But it is therefore necessary that the needle of the compass points to the Word of God. If the conscience is not pure it will influence the ministry, the fight. The essential power is not fully there and therefore the Holy Spirit cannot work freely.

There is also the possibility that you ‘reject’ a good conscience. That is when you ignore the warnings of the Spirit. These are the warnings that He gives when you want to go or are going the wrong way, or when you make plans according to your own will. This ‘rejecting’ of these warnings is a conscious action; you are doing it yourself. Therefore you yourself are to blame for the “*shipwreck*”.

When you, despite the warnings you received through your conscience, persevere in your own will it will damage your view upon the content of the truth of the faith. This is what is meant here by “*the faith*”. It refers to *what* you believe: the *content* of your faith, the *truth of the faith* that is handed to you in God’s Word. ‘Faith’ here actually has a different meaning than ‘faith’ at the beginning of this verse. There it means ‘confidence of faith’ and here it means ‘the truth of the faith’ or ‘the content of the faith’.

When you do not judge the first wrong step before God you will deviate further. The enemy has an easy entrance when there is mention of a bad conscience, because you have allowed evil to enter and you have not judged it. The result is that you will also fail concerning the doctrine of the Scripture. You will distort Scripture quotes and explain and maneuver them in such a way, in order to ease your conscience and to continue your misguided path.

V20. Paul gives names of those, whose faith has suffered shipwreck, in particular “*Hymenaeus and Alexander*”. These people must have been familiar in Ephesus, otherwise naming them wouldn’t be that meaningful. Paul “*handed*” them “*over to Satan*”. He was able to do this as an apostle. This he does also at Corinth

(1Cor 5:5). Because the issue there was a matter of discipline and chastisement that the church at Corinth had to exert, he expects that the church will agree to that. The obligation of the church is mentioned there (1Cor 5:13b).

The persons mentioned by name have listened to satan. They have been his instruments and they had let themselves to be used by him. They now have to feel who he is whom they had listened to. In this way God makes use of satan himself as a stick to chasten His rebellious children for their own good. Satan becomes their teacher by the means of the pains that he makes them suffer. He gets free reign with such a person, although it is within the limits determined by God (*see and cf. Job 1:12; 2:6*).

Satan is always seeking someone's destruction, while God always seeks salvation for a person. God uses satan to accomplish His plan. The purpose of each chastisement is the restoration of the soul that has deviated.

These people "*blasphemed*", something that Paul did before his conversion (*verse 13*). 'Blaspheming' is to speak despicably about God, His Word and His people. They must learn not to do that by the chastisement Paul brought upon them by handing them over to satan.

Now read again 1 Timothy 1:18-20.

Reflection: How can you prevent suffering shipwreck concerning the faith?

## 1 Timothy 2

### A House of Prayer | verses 1-4

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

*1 First of all, then, I urge that entreaties [and] prayers, petitions [and] thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, 2 for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. 3 This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.*

*Introduction.* This chapter consists of two issues. The first issue is that of prayer and the particular responsibility it has for men, regarding praying in public. The second issue is the exterior and the conduct of the woman and her place in public. Both issues are particularly important and can hardly be overestimated.

They therefore rightfully belong in this letter. The great aim of the letter is after all to give instructions in the conduct of the believers in the house of God. This conduct concerns the right attitude both towards the unbelievers who are outside the house of God and towards the fellow believers who are also in the house of God. This conduct ought to reflect the characteristic that God shows in this letter, namely as God our Savior.

V1. Isn't it most telling that Paul "*first of all*" urges with a view to prayer? There will be more admonitions or exhortations, but the one that is now the issue is the most significant. As a believer you ought to start with this one. It is absolutely essential to heed this exhortation and take it to heart. Praying is one of the basic characteristics of a spiritual life. In any case it is a fact for the newly converted Saul (*Acts 9:11*). The first believers of the church contin-

ued steadfastly in prayer; they gathered together in prayers (*Acts 1:14; 2:42; 4:24; 12:12*).

In the action of prayer the conduct that ought to characterize the family members of God's house, comes to clearest expression. God's house is above all a house of prayer (*Isa 56:7; Mk 11:17*).

The four different forms of prayer that Paul mentions here applies for both the personal and the collective prayer.

1. "*Entreaties*" emphasize the need of a steadfastly, fervent praying for a concrete need. There is an extra urge in it.
2. In the "*prayers*" you draw near to God to speak out your desires in the broadest sense of the word. You can share the most trivial matters with Him without any formality.
3. You make "*petitions*" when you draw near to Him in an intimate and free access to ask something concrete on behalf of others.
4. "*Thanksgivings*" are the support of the previous activities. You draw near to God and thank Him in advance for whatever He will give or not, for He gives or does only what is good (*Phil 4:6*).

That Paul exhorts us to make intercessions "*on behalf of all men*", underlines the intention of God that we represent Him as the God-Savior. This is how He wants to be made known to all men (*Mat 5:45; Acts 14:16-17; 1Tim 4:10*). When you become fully aware of that then its first effect will be that you start to pray. You do not only pray for the believers, but also for the unbelievers and you will exclude nobody in that. The circle of your prayer ought not to be more limited than the circle of God's interest.

V2. It goes without saying that among 'all people' "*kings and all who are in authority*" are included. Still Paul separately encourages us to certainly make intercessions for these persons. In fact, we are inclined to forget them or even deliberately not mention them



in our prayers, because of the usually ungodly nature they reveal. The latter was surely the case in the days of Paul. In those days the cruel, lawless emperor Nero was reigning. Paul therefore exhorts the Roman believers to make intercession for him. See also *Ezra 6:10*. Also the Lord Jesus tells His disciples to make intercessions for those who persecute them (*Mat 5:44*).

It is not about the authorities in themselves. We ought to obey them and submit ourselves to them (*Rom 13:1-7; Tit 3:1; 1Pet 2:13-14*; however, see also *Acts 5:29*). It is about people who form the government. All who are in authority, are those who have a lofty office. It not only concerns the rulers of the own city or the own country, but also outside those. There is mention of 'kings and all who are in authority'.

The public prayer will prove to an ungodly government that the believers are not rebels. God can move the heart of rulers that they allow the believers to lead their lives without having them involved with the politics of the world (*Jer 29:7*). The point is not so much that the government will be grateful to the believers, but that the believer himself is inwardly kept from feelings of hatred and bitterness. Through prayer the Christian exceeds beyond the current situation. It makes the heart "*tranquil and quiet*" in the midst of persecutions.

This inward rest and peace become visible in "*godliness and dignity*". It is "*all*" Godliness and dignity, which means that they are seen in all areas of life. 'Godliness' means to live in the fear of God. That doesn't mean scare, but respect, taking His will into account. 'Dignity' is quite the same as reverence and honesty. You see that your conduct is largely determined by your prayer life.

V3. That attitude of prayer and its effect upon your way of life are "*good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior*". God sees your prayer as something beautiful and worthy to accept. He wants to use it to save people. Your prayer may be a contribution to the proclamation of the gospel.

V4. In fact, God "*desires all men to be saved*". This is the first part of God's desire (*Tit 2:11; 2Pet 3:9*). There is no man whom God

doesn't want to grant salvation to. God wants to save sinners (1Tim 1:15) and that is all men. To God there is no distinction: all have sinned and all can be saved (Rom 3:22b-25; 10:11-13).

Therefore God is not to be blamed when a man perishes. That man owes that to his own obstinacy, he doesn't want to. Here it is not about the will of God's counsel (Eph 1:5), for that will always be executed. It is about the desiring will of God, about His desire (Mat 23:37), that can be resisted by man in his responsibility.

The second part of God's desire is that all men "*come to the knowledge of the truth*". Salvation is no aim in itself. God's old people Israel was redeemed with an aim. That aim was that God should dwell in their midst. In that way the New Testament people of God are liberated from the power of the world in order to be a dwelling place to God in the Spirit (Eph 2:22). That becomes visible when believers gather together as a church with the Lord in the midst of them (Mat 18:20).

The "*truth*" is the truth about the Person of the Lord Jesus. He is the truth (Jn 14:6). We find everything about Him in the Bible, the Word that is the truth (Jn 17:17). The knowledge of the truth is to be received in the church of the living God. The church is in fact the pillar and support of the truth (1Tim 3:15). In practice it means that a newly converted should be added to a local church. The local church is to be recognized there where the characteristics are present that the whole church has.

Some characteristics are:

1. The body of Christ is seen there (1Cor 12:27).
2. The order in the church as the house of God is being maintained there by the acknowledgment of the authority of the Lord Jesus that He exerts by His Word and Spirit (Mat 18:20).
3. There is a diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph 4:2-3).

4. Sin is being judged in the local church and in the believer's own life (*1Cor 5:13; 11:31*).

Now read 1 Timothy 2:1-4 again.

Reflection: What place does prayer take in your life?

## The Mediator – The Praying of Men | verses 5-8

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

*5 For there is one God, [and] one mediator also between God and men, [the] man Christ Jesus, 6 who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony [given] at the proper time. 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. 8 Therefore I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension.*

V5. Verse 5 is connected by the word “for” with what is previously said. What follows now is how men can be saved and what the truth is which they ought to get to know. It is clear that all men are sinners. It is also clear that there is one God. This truth is not new. It is the confession of faith of the Israelites in the Old Testament (*Deu 6:4; Isa 43:10-11; Zec 14:9*). They were called to testify to that truth in the world with its polytheism around them. You encounter that unchangeable truth in the New Testament (*Rom 3:29; 1Cor 8:4-6; Gal 3:20; Jam 2:19*).

But the New Testament shows something that is not known in the Old Testament. That new truth is that the only God reveals Himself in three Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit (*Mat 28:19*). That happened when the Lord Jesus came to earth (*Jn 1:14; Col 1:19*). In this new truth you also see the means that God gave to save sinners. The Lord Jesus is actually the Mediator between God and men. A mediator was necessary, because God could not in His holiness tolerate in His presence man in his sinfulness (*cf. Job 9:33*).

Three significant facts about the mediator are mentioned:

1. There is “one Mediator”. Therefore there is only one way to salvation (“the way”, *Jn 14:6*), only one Person by Whom we must be saved (*Acts 4:12*). Each alternative to be saved is to be rejected as a lie and deception. It is the foolishness

of unbelief to ascribe the place of mediator to Mary or certain saints.

2. The Mediator is a Man, the “*Man Christ Jesus*”. In order for us to know God’s holiness and to have a satisfactory outcome the Mediator has to be God. Christ is God (*Rom 9:5*). But to fulfill this necessary work of propitiation in the place of men, He had to become like men (*Heb 2:14*). Only as Man He was able to be Mediator, not as the eternal Son.
3. V6. The Mediator “*gave Himself*” (*Gal 1:4; 2:20; Eph 5:2; 5:25; Tit 2:14*). More than that was not possible and less would not have been satisfactory. By giving Himself He paid the necessary ransom. No one (*Psa 49:8*) but He was able to pay the ransom, because He Himself was without sin.

He paid the ransom “*for all*”. The word ‘for’ here doesn’t mean ‘instead of’, but ‘for the sake of’ or ‘stretched out to’ (*2Cor 5:15*). The ransom is that big that all can be saved; but only those who accept Him in faith are saved (*Mat 20:28*).

To this awesome event a testimony was given “*at the proper time*”, which means at the right time, not too early and not too late. When Christ ascended to heaven and the Holy Spirit came to earth the time for this testimony had come. This testimony could not be given earlier, for Christ had not died yet and the ransom had not been paid yet. He died at the right time (*Rom 5:6*). Therefore the preaching also entered the world at the right time to proclaim the only means that appeared to be fully appropriate to meet the needs of man.

V7. To be able to give this testimony God had prepared and appointed an exceptional instrument. That is Paul (*Acts 26:16-18*). He is a “*preacher*” or herald. A herald is somebody who makes official statements in the name of a ruler. In that way the message of salvation has been preached. Paul is also an “*apostle*”. He is a special ambassador who comes with the authorization of his Lord. In the case of ‘preacher’ the people to whom he was sent are at the forefront. In the case of ‘apostle’ his Sender is at the fore front-

front. Because his apostleship was sometimes called into question he emphasizes this by saying “*I am telling the truth I am not lying*”.

Finally he is also “*a teacher of the Gentiles*”. He teaches them about what the Lord has entrusted him. His ministry was not limited to Israel, but exceeds the national borders. There is no nation that can claim his ministry for itself exclusively. God not only made a preacher and apostle of this zealous Jewish nationalist, but also gave an exceptional revelation of His grace in him to the Gentiles.

His ministry happens “*in [that is: in the realm of] faith and truth*” and not in the realm of social improvement or a theological discussion. He fulfills his task in faith and truth. He preaches, exerts his apostleship and teaches in the confidence of faith. All his statements are in accordance to the truth. Therefore it is important to accept his ministry without any resistance.

It goes without saying that concerning Timothy there is no mention of resistance. But because he is quite timid Paul strongly presents his ministry again, in order to encourage him. For Timothy shouldn't be afraid when opponents will try to attack Paul's ministry. This empowerment you also need, for also today there are people who want to tell you that even Paul didn't clearly understand all of it.

V8. Against the background of the authority that is given to Paul you hear in *verse 8 “I want”*. You must not take that as a friendly request, but as an apostolic commandment. The commandment is: Pray! This commandment is addressed to “*the men*”, because it is about praying in public. That appears from the indication of place “*everywhere*”. This means every place wherever believers gather together, regardless the building or purpose (*cf. 1Cor 1:2; 2Cor 2:14; 1Thes 1:8*).

The Scripture speaks more than once of praying women (*1Sam 2:1; Lk 1:46; 2:37*). But women are not allowed to lead in prayer on behalf of all in a public gathering where also men are present. You should read also *1 Corinthians 11:5-10* and *14:34-35* in this context.

In Christianity you encounter an unbiblical restriction and an unbiblical extension of this commandment. The restriction is that

only one man prays in the public gathering. The extension is that both men and women pray in the public gathering. The danger for those who reject both of these unbiblical practices is that this important ministry is left to only a few and that not all men pray. Men are addressed as a group apart from women as a group. It regards the total of men, all men, and not a special group among them. Praying demands no gift or a particular feeling.

It actually demands something different and that is “*holy hands*”. Those who pray in public are to be holy in their deeds (‘hands’). Their practical life has to be in accordance with Him to Whom they pray. The “*lifting up*” of the hands indicates the prayer position that was usual in those days. In the Scripture there is also mention of other prayer positions, as kneeling down (*Dan 6:10; Acts 20:36; Eph 3:14*), standing (*Gen 18:22-23*), lying on the face (*Jos 5:14*), sitting (*2Sam 7:18*). In fact the apostle doesn’t give one specific prayer position.

Not only the deeds, but also the inward man and the words must fit in seeking God’s face. “*Wrath and dissension*” hinder the way to God. The word ‘wrath’ with regard to men, describes an inward passion that explodes in an uncontrolled temperament. None of these elements are allowed to penetrate the holy realm of prayer. ‘Dissension’ is discussion, to be in a conflict or an argument with another believer. The prayer is certainly not supposed to deteriorate in a flood of words to heaven to blame or rebuke the other. He who leads others in such a holy practice ought to be pure in his motivation and attitude.

In case you’re a woman you ought to have ‘holy hands’ as well to be heard and your prayer should also be ‘without wrath and doubting’ not to experience any hindrances. But the ‘prayer commandment’ is addressed to the man. If you’re a man, then you know what is expected from you, with regard to prayer.

Now read 1 Timothy 2:5-8 again.

Reflection: What are the characteristics of the Lord Jesus as the Mediator? What are the characteristics of one who is a praying man?

**Women** | verses 9-15

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

*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, 10 but rather by means of good works, as is proper for women making a claim to godliness. 11 A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness. 12 But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet. 13 For it was Adam who was first created, [and] then Eve. 14 And [it was] not Adam [who] was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. 15 But [women] will be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint.*

V9. After the particular commandment for the men as a group a particular commandment for the women follows now, also as a group. The word “*likewise*” with which Paul starts to address the women, refers to ‘I want’ in *verse 8*. The phrase is therefore: ‘In like manner I desire that ...’ He doesn’t mean that the women ‘should pray in like manner’. No, he wants that the women also deliver a contribution to the testimony to God in the world. The men are to deliver an audible contribution. Regarding the woman Paul says that her appearance ought to be a visible contribution.

When Paul goes into detail concerning the appearance of the woman, he doesn’t present her any fashion instruction. He wants to tell her that the power of her testimony lies in her appearance and her conduct. The point here is that there should be a consistency between her apparel and her Christian character and testimony. This concerns the radiance she has not only in the gatherings, but also in public life.

In that context there are two significant characteristics: “*modestly*” and “*discreetly*”. The Christian woman ought not to want to draw attention to herself. She may do that “*with braided hair and gold or*



pearls or costly garments". You do not read a prohibition on braiding of the hair or wearing gold or pearls or costly clothing. What she must not do is draw attention to herself through these things. The long hair is her glory (1Cor 11:15) and it is shameful when she has her hair cut off (1Cor 11:6), but it is just as much an anti-testimony when she spends a lot of money and time on braiding her long hair in all kinds of artful hair braiding, in order to show off with it.

V10. After having dealt with the things that should not characterize her appearance we hear about the things that are proper for her, namely "good works". These are works that come forth from faith. They are a fruit of the new man (Eph 2:10). They are beneficial to their character and others experience the benefit of it. Examples of women who have done good works you find in Mary (Mat 26:7-10), Phoebe (Rom 16:1-2), Lydia (Acts 16:14-15) and Dorcas (Acts 9:36-39). You also read about women who served the Lord with their goods (Lk 8:2-3).

Paul is addressing "women making a claim to godliness". He can expect them to have a conduct that suits to their confession. Doctrine and life should be in harmony, otherwise false notes will be heard in life. When you as a Christian woman confess to be Godly, when you say that your heart is filled with reverence for God, it ought to be seen in your clothing and deeds.

V11. After the general conduct of the woman in public as a testimony to God, Paul then says something about her conduct towards the man. He starts by saying that she should be 'quiet'. You should also see this in the context of performing in public (see also 1Cor 14:34) and not in the context of personal conversations or in the domestic environment. By nature women will not seek to predominate. But the spirit of the world certainly doesn't pass by the Christian woman, by which she is stimulated to be more involved and to be of influence.

Also the attitude and mind "with entire submissiveness" will not find approval in the world. However, the point is not how the world values, but how God values. Through her submissiveness

it becomes clear that her being 'quiet' is not a sign of bitterness or slavishness, but that it comes from a willingness to accept living from and in an atmosphere that is given to women by the Scripture. It is not about subjection to the man but to the truth of the Scripture. That's what will make her want "to receive instruction". She will want to listen and pay attention to take in everything that serves her spiritual growth and blessing.

V12. Then a new apostolic commandment is to be heard in the words "I do not allow" with regard to the behavior of the woman at public occasions. The commandment implies that the woman is not supposed to have the role of a teacher and she is not supposed to have authority over a man. The prohibition on teaching is general and applies also in situations where there are only women. She is certainly allowed to prophesy (as long as she covers her head, *1Cor 11:5*), for that is the application of the truth of God's Word in daily life. She is also allowed to teach good things (*Tit 2:3-5*).

The woman is also not permitted to dominate or to exercise authority over the man. When a woman exercises authority over the man, then the roles that God has established, are being reversed. Teaching and exercising authority are not permitted to her.

The power of her testimony lies in her remaining "quiet" (cf. *1Pet 3:1-6*). The phrase started in *verse 11* with 'quiet' and ends here in *verse 12* with 'quiet'. Therefore it is particularly emphasized. In addition, men may ask themselves why women ultimately want to teach and exercise authority. Is it because men do not take up their responsibilities?

V13-14. In *verses 13-14* Paul gives two reasons for the command of *verse 12*. He finds those two reasons at the very beginning of the Bible. Then God ordained things and things happened that He ordered to write in His Word, so that it is always possible that they can be referred to. The Lord Jesus also refers to the beginning when He is questioned about the man-wife relationship (*Mat 19:4*).

The first reason that Paul gives for his commandment is the rank order in which Adam and Eve are created (*verse 13*). Adam, the man, was the first independent living creature with a specific commandment. Only when God had everything in order, with regard to creation and the task of Adam, He created Eve. This is how He ordained the feminine to be dependent on the masculine.

As second reason Paul mentions the fall of man (*verse 14*). The order of creation shows how God has ordained it. The fall of man shows the character of the man and the character of the woman. The woman is easily to be tempted. Ahead of the fall of man Adam did not play the main role. Satan did not address him. He certainly was dragged into the tragic event, but not as a result of temptation. The man considers things in a more rational way than the woman and is therefore more fitted to teach.

That the woman is not to teach is not because she would be more credulous than the man. The point is that when she teaches she abandons her place and the consequences are then disastrous, as it appeared at the fall of man. The fall of man doesn't show her credulity, but her abandoning her place as woman. This is how she distorted the Divine order and Adam accepted with open eyes her leadership with the disastrous consequences.

God has determined the woman to be dependent on the man. Her attitude towards the man is that of "*someone weaker*" (1Pet 3:7). The devil found an access to deceive her by appealing to her emotion and "*the woman was deceived*" (see 2Cor 11:3). It is for a good reason that John addresses a woman in his second letter that is about false teachers (2Jn :1). She has to be careful not to be deceived.

Eve crossed the border that God had drawn around her. She "*fell into transgression*" literally means that she 'crossed a border'. Man and woman are under God's protection as long as they remain within the borders that God has destined for them.

V15. The section of the woman ends with an exceptional expression of God's grace that can only be experienced by the believing

woman. Since the fall of man, which happened due to her, God connected pain and sorrow to the giving birth to children (*Gen 3:16*). Nevertheless there is a way for her to be saved in childbearing. However, there is the condition “*if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint*”. This refers to the atmosphere she entered when she came to faith. Her ‘self-restraint’ means that she continues to think healthy about this atmosphere and that she doesn’t allow to be tempted to take again a place that is not fitted to her.

This is not all that is to be said about this last verse. It has been noted that this verse is one of the most difficult verses of the New Testament to explain. This verse causes to raise questions which cannot be simply responded to. Consider a lot of Godly women who were not saved at giving birth to a child, but died. And what about women who cannot bear children or who remain unmarried.

I therefore believe that Paul is giving a general instruction here, with a view to the particular place that is given to woman by God in creation. As a counter balance to what is previously said, Paul wants to make the woman realize why God has created her. She finds the meaning of her life in the fulfillment of God’s destination for her: her role as woman and mother. Therein she is supposed to find her greatest satisfaction and not in taking over the role of the man.

It is certainly true that God also has a plan for the childless woman (*cf. Isa 54:1*) and for the unmarried woman (*1Cor 7:34*), but that is not the point here.

Now read 1 Timothy 2:9-15 again.

Reflection: Where do you recognize the power of the woman’s testimony?

## 1 Timothy 3

### The Overseer | verses 1-5

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

*1 It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires [to do]. 2 An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, 3 not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money. 4 [He must be] one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity 5 (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?), ...*

*Introduction.* As an introduction on this chapter I would like to give a brief repetition. You know that this letter is meant firstly for Timothy personally. As a messenger of the apostle he needs to know which guidelines he ought to present to the believers. Secondly – and we will pay particular attention to this in this chapter – Timothy gets instructions in this letter about those who want to minister as an overseer, i.e. an elder, and as a deacon. Thirdly, all believers get practical teachings on their walk of life in this letter.

None of us takes the position like Timothy. Therefore none of us is supposed to have the right to appoint elders. For this reason we are neither able to impose regulations on the church, which we would have heard directly from an apostle. But the prescriptions that Paul passes on to Timothy are certainly essential to you, because they have regard to the life of believers. And even though you are not called to minister as an elder or deacon, this third chapter is still very meaningful to you. The *conditions* that are prescribed for an elder and a deacon are the *rules of conduct* for all believers.

V1. What Paul is going to say now about the “office of overseer” and the “overseer” originates in a “statement” that is “trustworthy”, because it comes from God. This starting point is important. It should be a motivation for the exertion of a heavy duty, for the ministry of an overseer is certainly not light. It is not something you just do as a kind of side-occupation. This work is definitely accompanied by disappointments. How encouraging the trustworthy Word of God then can be to keep on going when that happens.

Someone may aspire the office of overseer just as someone may pursue the spiritual gifts (1Cor 12:31; 14:1). (For the difference between positions and gifts I refer to the comparison below.) ‘Aspire’ indicates the effort, to reach out to be able to function as an overseer. It is not a reaching out to an authoritative position, but to a task of a servant. Surrender to and love for the Lord and the desire to serve Him in dependence and obedience should be the only motivation of this pursuit.

**Differences between positions and gifts**

Positions	Gifts
Related to the church as the house of God (1Tim 3:15).	Related to the church as the body of Christ (Rom 12; 1Cor 12; Eph 4).
Goal: Oversight on the conduct of the believers in the house of God (Acts 20:28).	Goal: Edification of the body of Christ (Eph 4:12).
When appointment takes place, is by a higher authority: an apostle or his direct messenger under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (Acts 14:23; 20:28; Tit 1:5).	Appointment never takes place. Gifts are given by the glorified Lord without any human intervention.
The elder or overseer is connected to the local church (Acts 14:23; Tit 1:5).	Gifts are not limited to a location. The working territory is the whole body.
Not everyone who is a member of God’s house is an elder or servant.	Each member of the body of Christ has a gift, whatever it may be. There are many gifts.

The work that the overseer does is serving in the ‘position of an overseer’, which means that he takes care of the souls and the walk of the believers. It means further that he commits himself to make the members of Christ respond to His love and that they do not lose any Christian privileges. God values this as “*a fine work*”, for it consists of nothing less than shepherding His flock (*Acts 20:28; cf. 1Pet 5:1-4*).

Note that Timothy doesn’t get the order to appoint overseers. Paul gives him a list of qualifications. These qualification are about certain spiritual characteristics (‘temperate’, ‘not quarrelsome’), about the condition in circumstances (‘husband of one wife’) and about experience (‘not a novice’). The list is not only useful to Timothy, but also to us. Each church that responds to God’s thought will desire that the men with these characteristics amongst them will be revealed. We ought to acknowledge these men (*1Thes 5:12*).

An overseer is the same as an elder. The proof of that you find by comparing *Acts 20 verse 17* with *verse 28* and *Titus 1 verse 5* with *verse 7*. The word ‘overseer’ characterizes more the nature of the work, it is a guiding and leading task. The word ‘elder’ characterizes more the office bearer, the person who executes the task, it is a person with a matured life experience.

1. V2. The overseer “*must be above reproach*”. There should be no objections against him. No fault ought to be found concerning his character or conduct, for that could be used as a weapon against him by people with a negative attitude. The issues for which he definitely ought to be blameless are indicated in details in the following characteristics.
2. The first is that he must be “*the husband of one wife*”. Needless to say that an overseer ought to be married. How could he otherwise be able to say anything on marital problems? The significance of a pure marriage, wherein the absolute faithfulness of the overseer to his wife is the most important pillar, is uppermost.

3. He must also be "*temperate*". This should be understood in a spiritual sense. It means that he abstains from everything that fuddles him. He ought to keep himself far away from all exaggeration and ought not to allow himself to be dragged by emotions, whether his own emotions or other people's emotions. He should not allow himself to be influenced by all kinds of false teachings. He should always have a clear mind.
4. He must also be "*prudent*", which refers more to his inward being. He is in control in his performance and is not quickly agitated.
5. "*Respectable*" refers more to the outward. His appearance and language use renders dignity. He shall not easily burst out and will not act or speak chaotically.
6. That he is "*hospitable*" means that he is willing to listen to others, that he is inviting and hearty.
7. That makes him able for the next quality and that is "*able to teach*". He knows the Word of God and knows how to apply it in the right way.

V3. You have learnt now about seven positive characteristics. Now some negative characteristics follow.

1. He must not be "*addicted to wine*". Not only that he is not drunk, but he is also in control of himself, with a view to the use of alcohol.
2. He must neither be "*pugnacious*". He must remain in control in whatever way he may be provoked. He ought not to become violent. He neither fights verbally for his own right.
3. Instead of fighting for his own right, if needed with violence, he is "*gentle*", he complies.



4. He must be “*peaceable*”. A quarrelsome person grasps every dispute to quarrel about. But an overseer doesn’t quarrel, is not on a path of war. He strives for everything that serves peace.
5. He is known as someone who is “*free from the love of money*”. He does not seek financial profit and will not be bribed.

V4. After mentioning the personal qualifications, as from *verse 4* some qualifications are mentioned that have to do with his dealings in his house (family) and in the world. The family is the first circle of responsibility. A person can only be an overseer when “*he manages his own household well*”. His family life makes clear whether he is suited for a broader circle of responsibility in the church. ‘Me and my house’ (see *Jos 24:15*) applies especially for the overseer. His house ought to be a reflection of the house of God. When an overseer fails in that first area, it will have a major impact on the service in the second area (see Eli, *1Sam 2:11-36*).

In the ‘profile’ of the overseer it is also recorded that he is “*keeping his children under control with all dignaty*” (cf. *Gen 18:18-19; Jer 35*). He is not a feeble father like Eli who did not even rebuke his sons (*1Sam 3:13*). Neither is he a bully who bashes around his children in blind anger. He applies chastisement like God chastises His children: in love and with a good purpose (*Eph 6:4; Heb 12:5-12; Pro 23:13; 29:15*).

The overseer deals with his children

- with a steadfastness that it becomes recommendable to obey;
- with a wisdom that makes it natural to obey and
- with a love that makes them love to obey.

V5. It will be clear that ‘when a person doesn’t know how to rule his own house’, he will neither be able to “*take care of the church of God*”. If he doesn’t know how to deal with his children how

could he be able to deal with those who are in need of care in the church? It is the church of *God* (*Acts 20:28*). That makes the task extraordinarily important.

In 'taking care of' you notice the loving attention of the overseer for the well-being of each member of God's church. That care can only be found when it is in line with the loving interest that he has as a father for his own children.

Now read 1 Timothy 3:1-5 again.

Reflection: Are there men in the local church where you belong, whom you recognize as overseers, because they meet the qualifications that God's Word shows up here?

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**Overseers (continuation) and Deacons** | *verses 6-11*

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

*..., 6 [and] not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil. 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. 8 Deacons likewise [must be] men of dignity, not double-tongued, or addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain, 9 [but] holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. 10 These men must also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons if they are beyond reproach. 11 Women [must] likewise [be] dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things.*

V6. An overseer may not be “a new convert” (literally: ‘newly planted’). A new convert is not able to approach spiritual problems on the basis of God’s Word. He simply doesn’t have the knowledge yet. He is neither able to sense a person who is in spiritual distress. He himself has not yet experienced a spiritual growth with the exercises that go together with that (*cf. 1Jn 2:12-27*). Much too often he is occupied with himself and with learning to deal with the temptations of the world.

Therefore an overseer can only be someone who has already been converted for a longer time. Such a person is estimated to be spiritually grown and who also has learnt in practice that in him – that is in his flesh – nothing good dwells (*Rom 7:18*). You may believe with your heart and know with your mind that you are crucified with Christ (*Rom 6:6*), but it is something quite different to keep yourself dead for sin in practice (*Rom 6:11*). It is of the greatest importance that you also experience the truths. A new convert cannot possibly have experience in the life of faith yet. That is not a shame, it is simply impossible.

Therefore it is highly dangerous when a young believer wants to acquire this task for himself or when people give him that task. Then he comes in the hazard area of pride or puffiness. Then the impor-

tance of his own person is number one. This often leads to arrogance and in that way to reproach (or pride) and the snare of the devil.

A local church is doing itself a disservice when it allows a young believer to bear such a responsibility. It opens the door for the pride of the devil. Pride is the original sin and was first found in the devil. He was the first creature who came up with the thought of his own interest (*Isa 14:12-15; Eze 28:12-19*). That led to his fall. His judgment is sure. Let this be a serious warning for everyone who desires a task or gives a task to someone who is not (yet) suitable for it.

V7. The 'profile' of the overseer ends with the recognition he has outside the church – that is in society. *"He must have a good reputation with those outside [the church]."* It is also important how the world views such a person. Not that people should make a questionnaire in the neighborhood for that, but the overseer must be well-known as an image bearer of Christ.

That doesn't mean that everybody speaks well of him, for that may contrarily mean that that it is not well at all (*Lk 6:26*). The point is that he *"must not fall into reproach"*. That happens when he has double reputation. On the one hand he wants to be a good Christian in church. He meets all his financial obligations and responsibilities in church and he faithfully attends the gatherings of the church. On the other hand, in the world he shows a character, a language use, a dishonesty and uncleanness that make him an object of mockery and ridicule.

This ambiguous attitude will certainly make him fall into *"the snare of the devil"*. That means that he becomes a prey to the devil. It is about a snare, the trap that the devil has prepared to catch the saints, and especially the leaders and to eliminate him (*cf. 2Tim 2:26*).

V8. After his interesting description of the qualifications of the overseer, Paul tells Timothy something about another particular group. It's about the *"deacons"*. The overseers take care of the inward, spiritual order of the church. The deacons take care of the outward wellbeing of the church, of what is materially needed.

In *Acts 6:1-6* they appear for the first time. They are not called that there, but it is about the service they do. There it appears that this service – the distribution of money – originally was done by the twelve apostles. There we also see the general qualifications (*Acts 6:3*) and that they are chosen by the church (in contrast to the elders or overseers).

Although the deacon works on another area than the overseer, “*likewise*” he needs to have certain spiritual characteristics to be able to do that work. It is not ‘just a job’ that is appropriate for the pragmatic and businesslike believers. Also this material work has to be done in a spiritual way. Spiritual consideration must be made, concerning the distribution of money or goods. It must happen without favoritism.

To be a man “*of dignity*” is the first characteristic of the deacon. His conduct renders a dignity that shows what a deacon is occupied with, according to his inward man, his thoughts.

Also when he says something you don’t need to worry that he means something else. He is “*not double-tongued*”. He is no speaker who adapts himself to the audience before him, or who says things with sneaky thoughts or intentions.

It is of great importance that a deacon always has self-control. Therefore he must not be “*addicted to much wine*”. Being drunk is almost the quickest way for a believer to lose his dignity.

Directly connected to wine follows prosperity gained by “*sordid gain*”, in other words ‘dirty profit’. It is indeed very dirty to deal with the matters of God in a way to make yourself become wealthy. It is scandalous to deal from a greed for money. The deacon must spend the money, that is entrusted to him, to the needy and he must not misuse it for example by trying to speculate. He must neither seek spiritual benefits by, for instance, giving preference to certain people in order to be esteemed by them.

V9. To be occupied with outward, material matters may never be seen as a side issue. Also these matters have to do with “*the mys-*

tery of the faith". The outer deeds originate from it. The mystery of the faith is the total of the truth that is made known by Divine revelation and that is summarized in Christ. Only when the deacon clings to Christ he is able to do his work according to what is expected from him. With Christ at heart he is saved from wrong decisions and his conscience remains pure.

V10. Like the overseer ought not to be a new convert the deacon must also have proved to be faithful and reliable. You are not supposed to just ask anybody to this work. He must "*first be tested*". This has got nothing to do with an experimental time or an exam. It is about a judgment of the whole person in his walk in the world and in the midst of the believers (2Cor 8:22; cf. 1Thes 2:4). When after an investigation the 'candidate deacon' is not found accountable for anything, when he appears to be "*found blameless*", he is allowed to do his service.

V11. The wives of the deacons are involved in this work, often because of their practical view on the necessities in a household. (Regarding the work of the overseer, which is a work of the exertion of spiritual authority, their wives are not mentioned.) Likewise their husbands they ought to be "*dignified*" (verse 8). They must not speak out "*malicious gossips*". They ought to keep the bad things they hear to themselves and are not supposed to tell these things further.

In their judgment about believers who are eligible for support they ought to be "*temperate*". They are not to be influenced by all kinds of matters that can hinder them to get a right judgment.

The last feature that is mentioned is that they must be "*faithful in all things*". They shall not misuse anything that is entrusted to them, both material and spiritual matters. They are reliable, you can count on them.

Now read 1 Timothy 3:6-11 again.

Reflection: Are there characteristics in this section that do not apply to you? Why not?

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**The House of God** | verses 12-16

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

*12 Deacons must be husbands of [only] one wife, [and] good managers of [their] children and their own households. 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. 14 I am writing these things to you, hoping to come to you before long; 15 but in case I am delayed, [I write] so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth. 16 By common confession, great is the mystery of godliness: He who was revealed in the flesh, was vindicated in the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.*

V12. As it applies to the overseers, marital faithfulness is an absolute condition for the deacons. They ought to reflect God's thoughts of faithfulness in their marriage. They must also be "good managers of [their] children and their own households". The way they rule their own children and houses shows whether they can be considered to be capable of alleviating the financial burden of others.

Managing and distributing money where it is needed is a form of ruling. The deacons get access to and transparency in many houses and domestic issues. To be able to estimate what is needed, it is essential that their own marriage and family are in good order. A person who has debts himself could be tempted to clear his own deficiencies with the money that comes from collections.

V13. A particular reward is connected to this service when it is well performed. Deacons can "obtain" something. This word indicates that they have committed themselves to this service. God rewards that commitment with "a high standing". A standing is something similar like a basis, a foundation. Those who have served well have laid a good basis.

This basis doesn't serve to be promoted to a higher spiritual service, but it is the basis for another task. That task is not on material ground, but refers more to spiritual work. This position has to do with the place in the service of the Lord. Stephen and Philip are the examples of that. They were deacons and they obtained later a spiritual ministry (*Acts 6:8; 8:4-13,26-40*). God deals here according to the principle that 'everyone who has, will be given' (*Mat 25:29*).

This 'high standing' goes together with "*great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus*". "Confidence" means that there is an inward freedom to say everything that occupies someone. There is nothing that limits him, there is no wrong conduct or sin. There is courage to do something for the Lord. That boldness has nothing to do with human courage. It is the mind of someone whose trust is completely anchored in Christ Jesus alone. It is the boldness that one has learnt to know this confidence through experience, a confidence that never fails.

V14. Paul has not informed Timothy "*these things*" orally, but in writing. In that way his instructions for his dealings have been fixed which also enables you to profit from this insight. After all it is also necessary for you to know how to behave and deal in the house of God as it was to Timothy.

Paul traveled to Macedonia (*1Tim 1:3*), but hopes to return soon to Ephesus. He has sent his letter in advance, but that doesn't decrease his desire to come personally. Timothy's desire for the coming of Paul must have been like that too. I believe that the speedy coming of Paul must have therefore motivated Timothy more to carry out what Paul has written.

V15. Although he was hoping to come soon he considered the possibility that his visit was not possibly to be soon. Because he always had Timothy and the church of Ephesus on his mind, he wants to tell Timothy some significant issues with a view to the conduct in God's house.



It is about a conduct that is in accordance with the Inhabitant and the Owner of the house. Therefore the house rules that you ought to know must be made known. Without knowing them it is not possible to behave properly in God's house, according to His will. You cannot behave yourself in God's house the way you want. You cannot make up your own rules in that house.

The rules of conduct are presented to Timothy, but they apply to everyone who is in this house. God also determined the rules for His house in the Old Testament. Then He dwelled in the tabernacle and later in the temple. He provided His people with comprehensive prescriptions about how He wanted to be approached and how to be with Him. Then the main characteristic was: holiness (*Psa 93:5*).

That is not different from His house in the New Testament. The holy God of the Old Testament is the same holy God in the New Testament. The condition on which He dwelled in His Old Testament house is the same as He dwells in His New Testament house. His New Testament house is "*the church of the living God*". This house is built on Christ, the Son of the living God (*Mat 16:16-18*). God dwells in His house through the Holy Spirit (*1Cor 3:16; Eph2:21-22*).

The church is on earth to testify to "*the truth*". The truth is Christ and everything that is in Christ (*Jn 14:6*). The church is not the truth itself, but the bearer of the truth. It doesn't proclaim or preach the truth, but it shows the truth and it holds that up. A "*pillar*" holds something up and at the same time it supports it. The church is also the "*ground*". She is the basis, the certainty and assurance of the truth. The existence of the church is the proof of the truth. Outside the church there is no truth to be found.

V16. The content of the truth is "*by common confession, ... the mystery of godliness*". Each doubt about it is excluded. All God's children agree with this and there is nobody who disagrees. Each believer in the church openly testifies to this mystery. The truth in Christ is hidden from the world, but is known and confessed

by the believer. Isn't it impressively "great" that you know and confess Christ, while it is still hidden to the world?

It is God's intention that His house is inhabited by people who are characterized by "godliness". Godliness indicates a God centered attitude that pleases God. The 'nourishment' of Godliness is 'the mystery'. The more you learn to know about the mystery, the more you grow in Godliness.

Therefore Paul gives a wonderful description of the 'mystery of Godliness'. Without mentioning the Name of Christ, it appears from the whole description that it is about Him.

Who else can that be "*who was revealed in the flesh*" than Christ? See also *John 1:14; Colossians 1:15* and *Hebrews 1:1*. He is the truly, everlasting God (*Psa 90:2; Col 1:17*), Who became truly Man in (the fullness of) time (*Rom 8:3; Gal 4:4; Heb 2:14*). He is the living Center of the truth. It is Him alone to Whom the church ought to testify in the world.

He is "*vindicated in the Spirit*". To Him the Holy Spirit testified perfectly. The Holy Spirit perfectly agreed with everything He was and did on earth, He could relate to that. The Holy Spirit declared everything righteous, there was nothing that He had to withdraw Himself from. The Holy Spirit was there when He was born (*Lk 1:35*), He was there in His life (*Acts 10:38*), when He died (*Heb 9:14*) and when He resurrected (*Rom 1:4*) and when He was glorified (*Jn 16:13-14*).

He was "*seen by the angels*". The angels saw their Creator for the first time when He was born (*Lk 2:9-14*). Afterwards they saw Him also in His life (*Mat 4:11; Lk 22:43*), when He was arrested (*Mat 26:53*), when He resurrected from the dead (*Mat 28:2*) and when He ascended to heaven (*Acts 1:10*).

Afterwards He is "*proclaimed among the nations*", which indicates that His Person and what was given in Him by God, did not stop with Israel.

The result of the preaching is that He is “*believed on in the world*”. He is the object of faith on the territory where He still doesn’t openly rule, but where satan is still the ruler.

Paul closes his impressive description with “*taken up in glory*”. This refers to the ascension to heaven of the Lord Jesus. When He was taken up, there was ‘the cloud’, the symbol of God’s glory that hid Him from the sight of the disciples (*Acts 1:9*).

When we see a historical order in this description, then with ‘taken up in glory’ can be meant the moment that the church is also taken up and the Lord Jesus is, as it were, complete (*1Thes 4:17*).

Now read 1 Timothy 3:12-16 again.

Reflection: What is meant with ‘the truth’ of which the church is the pillar and ground?

## 1 Timothy 4

### Apostasy In Later Times | *verses 1-5*

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

*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, 2 by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron, 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. 4 For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with gratitude; 5 for it is sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer.*

V1. The last verses of the previous chapter form the introduction of this chapter. There you saw that everything in God's house is about the Lord Jesus. When people abandon or ignore what is being informed there, there is apostasy. Apostasy means that the Person of Christ is not sufficient anymore. Then people still need to have something to be more 'Christian'. That is a violation of His Person and that is what the first verses of this chapter are about. You may say briefly that in case people do not hold on to the truth of *chapter 3:15-16* then *chapter 4:1* will be the result.

In the days of Paul we see the characteristics of apostasy appear. That's why the apostle could pass on admonishments that are of practical use in his time. Those admonishments have become more and more urgent as the time has moved on. It is possible that Paul has received a special message from the Spirit regarding the "later times". Because "the Spirit" says it, it is sure that it will happen like that. The word "explicitly" emphasizes especially what 'the Spirit says' about those 'later times' and that it is particularly advisable to take His words to heart.

The expression “*the Spirit ... says*” is one of the proofs that the Spirit is a (Divine) Person and not just a power or influence. It is the Spirit that makes us hear these vehement admonishments, so that the saints will not be surprised. He speaks about times that were to come in those days, but now have come fully. That is what makes it a present-day issue for us.

These ‘later days’ are being marked by a certain character, that enables you to recognize those times. What particularly characterizes those times is “*that some will fall away from the faith*”. Here there is still mention of ‘some’. The evil has still not generally spread, what will surely be the case in “*the last days*” (2Tim 3:1; 2Pet 3:3; Jude :18), where we live now.

‘Fall away from the faith’ can only happen to those who are not true believers. The certainty of salvation is the part of all who have been converted to God, who have confessed their sins sincerely and who have accepted Christ as Lord and Savior (Jn 10:27-30; Rom 8:38, 39; Heb 10:14; Jn 5:24). ‘Fall away’ is taking distance of an original position. People who fall away from the faith consciously turn their back on what they first believed. This faith was only based on rational considerations (cf. Jn 2:23-25).

While the Spirit leads in all truth (Jn 16:13), these people deviate from the truth and deliver themselves to the influence of “*deceitful spirits*” and their doctrines, “*doctrines of demons*”. That’s what they are occupied with; they seek their assurance there and they cling to their ‘truths’. They are blind to the fact that they entrust themselves to demons; those are evil spirits, instruments of satan.

V2. Demons can present themselves in a very pious way, but it is just appearances that deceive. They play an acting role in piety, while what they say comes from the father of lies. “*Hypocrisy*” is a word that has to do with playing an act. Someone plays a role and pretends to be somebody else than himself. It is as the wearing of a mask that keeps the real identity to be hidden. In that way these deceivers wear the mask of piety as it is seen in the abstention of marriage and food (*verse 3*).

Such people have “*seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron*”. It is as if it were that they put an ineradicable mark on their conscience with a hot branding iron that made them totally to be cut off from the gospel. They unscrupulously distort things that are given by God and give them another meaning. They present their doctrines as if those can lead people to a higher level of holiness, in order to honor God more.

V3. Paul mentions two of these doctrines, namely about marriage and food. Both are given by God as a blessing when He created man. In contrast to that demons present marriage and food as things that ‘only’ belong to the old creation, something that is from a lower order. They can indicate that a Christian doesn’t belong to the old creation anymore, but to the new creation. And there, according to their doctrines, things are of course different.

But there is nothing that can devalue the order of God’s creation. Marriage and food were already a part of the creation before sin entered. Devaluing these gifts means devaluing the Creator. On the contrary, God expects us as new men, to do justice in Christendom to the things He has given. Devaluing the gifts is also an attack on Christ. Celibacy (the obligation in the roman catholic church to a priest to renounce marriage) is a doctrine of demons. It is an attack on the truth of Christ and the church.

Regarding the second error, ‘to abstain from food’, the deceivers can appeal to the food laws of the Old Testament (e.g. *Lev 11*). The error is the commandment (they made up themselves) to abstain from certain food. In that way a person who becomes a vegetarian out of conviction and eats only vegetable food, because he doesn’t *want* to eat meat, is caught up in the doctrine of demons. Also this error is an attack on Christ, this time regarding His work. He who fundamentally refuses to eat meat, refuses to nourish himself with the death of someone else. The death of the animal with which man is allowed to nourish himself is a picture of the death of Christ through which a man can receive life.

Paul returns to the beginning. Everything that “*God has created*”, He has created with a purpose. That purpose is that man enjoys

it and honors Him for it. False doctrines deprive people of this privilege and therefore hinder the giving of thanks that ought to be normal for the believer. By giving Him thanks for it you acknowledge that you have received it from Him.

Also unbelievers receive food (*Acts 14:17*), but they do not thank God for it. Only children of God are able to eat food as a gift from God. They are those “*who believe and know the truth*”, through which they will be kept safe from these lies of abstention. [The Scripture indicates that there can be reasons for a temporary abstention in marriage (*1Cor 7:5*) and with regard to food (fasting, e.g. *Acts 13:2-3*). But that’s another issue.]

V4. What comes from the good Creator-God cannot be otherwise than good. The limitations that the law had determined have disappeared by the light of the gospel (*Acts 10:9-16*). Still there is one exception in Christendom: the prohibition to eat blood (*Acts 15:28-29*).

While false teachers reject the good things from God with their doctrines, Paul contradicts that “*nothing is to be rejected if it is received with gratitude*”. The only condition to enjoy the good things created by God is that it goes together “*with gratitude*” to God Who has given the good things.

V5. Besides, that the food “*is sanctified by the word of God and prayer*” doesn’t refer to the custom (which is good of course) of giving thanks before or after the meal and to read a portion from God’s Word before or after a meal. The Lord Jesus always gave thanks also before the meal (*Mat 15:36; Jn 6:11; Lk 22:19*). Paul uses that as a general rule (*Rom 14:6*) and also lives up to that himself (*Acts 27:35*).

The point is that when you ‘sanctify’ food, you separate a portion from all food and eat and enjoy it in fellowship with God. That is what you do, because the Word of God has made clear to you what is the true relationship of the created things towards the Creator. You also enjoy in the ordinary things like food and drink

fellowship with God. This fellowship with God you particularly enjoy also in prayer.

Now read again 1 Timothy 4:1-5.

Reflection: Why does Paul speak about doctrines of demons when it concerns everyday matters like marriage and food?



## Discipline For the Purpose of Godliness | verses 6-11

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

*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. 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; 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. 9 It is a trustworthy statement deserving full acceptance. 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. 11 Prescribe and teach these things.*

V6. Paul orders Timothy to present “these things” he just mentioned, to the believers. He doesn’t give this order as a command. He appeals to Timothy as somebody who wants to be “a good servant of Christ Jesus”. He neither says that Timothy must command the believers to consider what he has said regarding marriage and the consumption of food. He has to ‘point out’ them.

He ought to tell them with sensitivity about what God has meant with marriage and food and drink. It is not only about passing them on in words, but that he also makes it effective for the listeners. In that way he will lay a foundation under the teaching of Paul which in this letter is particularly about the conduct in God’s house. It also concerns about everyday matters like weddings and the consumption of food.

When he performs his duty in that way he ‘will be a good servant’, in whom Christ Jesus is being glorified. ‘Servant’ is not an official function, but it indicates an action. It is simply about a person who serves Christ. You can be that also. A good servant takes care of the saints.

He also takes care of his own spiritual health by feeding himself with the Word. *"The words of faith"* have *"nourished"* him; he has been and he is being nourished and formed by it. The words of faith are the words that the faith needs, words that strengthens the faith. Those are the words of God's Word and those are the daily nourishment of the servant. I hope that God's Word is also your daily nourishment.

By the *"sound doctrine"*, which implies the truths that are revealed in the Scripture, the servant is being kept alive spiritually. Timothy has, after a careful study of the good doctrine, appropriated this doctrine for himself and has *"been following"* it (2Tim 3:10; cf. Acts 17:11). That has become visible in his ministry. Only then is a person able to instruct others what he has learnt. It is also important for you to take in the doctrine of the Scripture first and to practice it before you instruct anything to others (see Ezra 7:10).

V7. What contradicts the words of the faith and the sound doctrine are *"worldly fables fit only for old women"*. Paul orders to always reject and condemn this empty talk of silly old chatterboxes. It is in no way in accordance with the things from God and can therefore not nourish the believers. These foolish imaginations are nourishment for the gullible people who turn away from God and His Word. They nourish themselves with things that are no food.

After the order to reject something Timothy receives the order to exercise himself in something. Paul calls out to him: *"Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness."* That means to exercise or train yourself in what pleases God. You concentrate to ask yourself in everything you do whether it is the will of God. With this exercise (literally: gymnastics) is not meant intellectual gymnastics to increase your memory, but how your heart and conscience are being exercised in God's presence in learning to know His will.

V8. This is a learning process where the point is to bring everything, including the small details, to God and to make Him guide you step by step. This exercise will never come to an end on earth. That is different from the *"bodily discipline"*, which is *"only of little*

*profit*". The profit of bodily exercise is measurable and limited to a certain time. It in no way affects eternal life, the life after this life. Neither is it of any use there. However, the exercise in Godliness is not only profitable for the body, but also for the spirit and soul.

Paul doesn't plea for an abstention of everything regarding the body. He only wants to put it in the true perspective. In the comparison between bodily exercise and the exercise in Godliness the balance must be completely tipped to the side of the commitment to get exercised in Godliness. His target is to show that the spiritual training has an immeasurable value, while the bodily training has only a very limited profit.

When there is Godliness things are seen in the light of God. Exercise in Godliness brings spirit, soul and body in God's presence. God promises to show the true meaning of life to those who exercise in it and to give strength to implement this. The value of such a life on earth is already great to God and to the believer himself and this value will also remain in the future. If you focus on God and on doing His will He will fulfill His promise to you. Then you will already enjoy fellowship with God in "*the present life*" and you will continue to do so in "*the [life] to come*". You take it along with you out of this life into eternity.

V9. You can be sure that it is like that. With the assertion "*it is a trustworthy statement*" and the encouragement "*deserving full acceptance*" the importance of the exercise in Godliness is underlined. Because this saying is that trustworthy (God has said it after all) it deserves full acceptance. He who doesn't accept it, deficits himself tremendously. You can be sure that this saying is really profitable.

V10. It is in any case a saying that means everything to Paul. He has a right view of that promise. He knows that that promise ought to be the center in the life of each believer. Therefore he points out to Timothy his commitment "*for this*". With the efforts of all his strength, right up to the edge of exhaustion (that is what the word "*labor*" means) he wants to convince the believers, including you, to excise themselves in Godliness.

It is really a tough job to 'keep the minds' of believers on this, because we all easily forget what our life is all about. When you occupy yourself with it, it will also cause battle. You will definitely face powers that want to guide believers the other way. Paul does not avoid the battle that goes together with it. I hope you don't either.

Bodily exercise is often about the honor of men. In order to persevere in the spiritual labor and battle you should not focus on that, but on the honor of God. Paul puts his trust in "*the living God*". That's where he draws his strength from to be able to do his heavy duty and to fight the battle that goes together with it. Paul focuses on Him alone. There lies also the strength for the ministry that Timothy has to achieve and also for you and your ministry.

Of that ministry people are the object. God Himself gives the example of that ministry by being the "*Savior of all men*" as 'the living God'. The purpose is that they will respond to what God asks of them: to live a Godly life. Only in a life with that quality man finds his true destination and satisfaction. Every other fulfillment of his life dishonors God and is damaging to man himself.

God is 'the living God'. He, Who has always existed, is the source of life. All life originates from Him. Real life is the life He gives and that is lived for Him. There is no life outside of Him. People who live outside of Him are dead.

In a way all people do enjoy what the believers enjoy unlimited. Although unbelievers do not give thanks to Him for it, He feeds their bodies. He is the 'Savior' or 'Sustainer' of it. He is not the Savior of the unbelievers in the sense that they are eternally saved, but in the sense that He takes care of them by giving them food (*Acts 14:17*). God doesn't despise anything of His creation, not the food nor marriage and nor also man.

Paul, who has no guarantees for a livelihood, knows for sure that God Who is the Savior of all men, is this "*especially of believers*" (*cf. Phil 4:19; Rom 8:32; 1Pet 3:12*). The assurance of the apostle applies also for you, whatever the test is that you may experience now. It

is a good thing to look at the immeasurable privileges you may enjoy as a saved sinner and to be grateful to have eternal life and a heavenly hope. But also never forget the continual and loving care of God that He shows you in everyday matters.

V11. Timothy has to “*prescribe*” the previous matters. ‘Prescribe’ is a stronger word than ‘point out’ in *verse 6*. He ought to bring forward authoritatively that the negative things quoted, should be omitted and that the positive things should be done. He also ought to “*teach these things*”, which means that he has to explain what is being prescribed.

Now read 1 Timothy 4:6-11 again.

Reflection: How do you exercise yourself in Godliness?

Exhortations For the Servant | verses 12-16

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

*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. 13 Until I come, give attention to the [public] reading [of Scripture], to exhortation and teaching. 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. 15 Take pains with these things; be [absorbed] in them, so that your progress will be evident to all. 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.*

*Introduction.* Verses 12-16 are filled with exhortations. In a direct sense they apply to Timothy, but at the same time they apply to each servant in all times. Therefore also to you now. You also find in it the secret of the personal testimony. You will also find in it the power that you need in your service towards people. In these verses you read how the minister lives in the awareness of grace (*verse 12*), how he ministers with his spiritual gift (*verses 13-14*) and how he develops himself spiritually (*verses 15-16*).

V12. The first remark has to do with his age. Each age goes together with a certain pattern of conduct. As a young believer it is not appropriate to behave yourself as if you already know a lot of the Bible or as if you already have had a lot of experiences with the Lord. From an older believer a certain knowledge and maturity can be expected.

Now Timothy was, according to our conception, not that young anymore. Suppose he was about twenty years old when Paul took him along with him somewhere around the year 50 on his second mission trip (*Acts 16:3*). Then here he must have been thirty three years old, which was according to the standards of that time, still

young. If Luke calls Saul a young man (*Acts 7:58*), he must also have been in his thirties.

Timothy ought to behave himself in a way that matches with his age, so that he doesn't cause despise. This remark is also intended for those who were going to read this letter. His relatively few years of age could possibly cause a feeling of despise to the old class of believers when he would speak authoritatively. Because of his natural timidity (*1Cor 16:11*) he could be inclined to behave a little bit reticent. That would be damaging for the spiritual welfare of the believers.

But Timothy ought not to think that he could expect his commands to be obeyed purely on the ground of his authority. Paul points out to him that he also had the responsibility to be "*an example*". His example will be of help for the believers. They could then see how they can manage to bring the commands into practice.

He ought to be an example "*in speech*" and "*conduct*". Speech and conduct (or walk) encompasses the whole life. In his words there should not be found unsincerity and no recklessness to be heard. That regards both the personal and the public speech. He must choose his words carefully and be careful with it. His conduct covers the whole way of his living. Wherever he goes or finds himself his conduct always ought to be that of a faithful disciple of the Lord Jesus.

His contacts with the fellow believers must be "*in love, faith [and] purity*". He must not deal out of an emotional impulse. His sincere interest in the wellbeing of the other person must be the result of his love for God that is poured out in his heart by the Holy Spirit (*Rom 5:5*). Thereby he can trust in God and in His Word. Others will be able to see the results of his faith in his life.

What is rooted in love and faith is also pure. It disgusts everything what is unclean. His contacts with others, especially with somebody from the other sex, must take place in purity. It is in the time we live not an unnecessary luxury to emphasize that.

Keep yourself in purity in all aspects of your life. It doesn't matter whether it is at school or on the working floor or with a certain service for the Lord, or whatever it is.

V13. The exhortation in *verse 13* refers particularly to what Timothy has to do in the meeting and that persistently. He had to “*give attention to the [public] reading*” again and again. In those days not everyone owns the Holy Scriptures themselves. Therefore the attention to reading aloud was very important. The Lord Jesus also read aloud or public (*Lk 4:16-27; see also Acts 13:15a; 2Cor 3:14*).

The attention to reading aloud the Holy Scripture is the foundation of all Christian teaching. It was then the means of passing on the truth. The attention to reading aloud already gives, when it happens and is heard in a spirit of subordination, abundant fruit.

After the attention to reading aloud comes “*exhortation and teaching*”. The ‘exhortation’ is the application to the heart and conscience of what has been read (*Acts 13:15b*). That should lead to a certain conduct which is in accordance with that Scripture. It can be a correction of wrong behavior. It can also be an encouragement to continue in some way and not to change the conduct. The ‘teaching’ is the explanation of what has been read aloud so that it is understood. In a gathering where the reading of God’s Word is in the center both aspects are of great importance. As long as Paul has not come Timothy must continue with it.

V14. To encourage this service Paul points to the gift in him. It is not said which gift it is precisely. To have a gift, and each believer has one (so do you), implies the responsibility to use it. Here you read about the danger to neglect it. That can happen in different ways, for example by being indifferent, slackness or by considering other things to be more important.

Regarding Timothy, there is a danger in his timidity. Therefore Paul reminds him that according to the prophecies previously made, he was to be called for a special service (*see 1Tim 1:18*). Then he reminds him of another peculiarity: the laying on of the hands of the presbytery (or eldership) as a proof of their approv-



al with his ministry. The laying on of the hands doesn't mean a consecration or calling, but to identify oneself, to have fellowship (1Tim 5:22; Acts 6:6; 13:3; Lev 1:4; 4:4).

V15. By reminding him of these things Paul intended to encourage Timothy. Therefore when Paul afterwards says *"take pains with these things; be [absorbed] in them"*, that exhortation will receive a positive response. Prescribing these things (*verse 11*) to others is only effective when he takes them to heart himself. The heart must be involved. To do things as an obligation is not enough if you want your message to be received. It is essential to give yourself entirely to it, to immerse yourself in the message. All your thoughts, time and abilities must be focused on these things.

A walk in the Lord cannot remain unnoticed. It makes a profound impression and it radiates authority. Every criticism on your ministry or age will therefore fall silent. The progress you make in knowing the will of the Lord, in order to practice it in your own life and in the life of the listeners, is a matter that *"will be evident to all"*.

Making progress is not without exertion. The word 'progress' describes a vanguard that leads a way through a difficult terrain or jungle. But through these exertions you will gain more and more capacity to judge things according to the Scripture and to speak spiritually to the benefit of souls.

V16. Before you are able to serve others you will have to make sure that your own life is in accordance with the truth (*Acts 20:28*). Only then you are suited and able to make sure that only the sound doctrine is taught and to detect and reject every deviation. Therefore all that matters is perseverance not to deviate yourself on the one hand and on the other hand to uninterruptedly continue to teach the sound doctrine.

When you are spiritually active in such a way, it will have beneficial consequences for both yourself and others. You and those who hear you will then achieve the final goal safely. The salvation mentioned here is to remain safe through the many dangers

on the road to glory. These dangers consist of evil doctrines and practices for which you are warned at the beginning of this chapter. You see that your responsibility as a servant is major, but there is also a major blessing attached to faithfulness.

Now read 1 Timothy 4:12-16 again.

Reflection: How many and which exhortations are there in these verses?

## 1 Timothy 5

### Obligations Towards Others | *verses 1-6*

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

*1 Do not sharply rebuke an older man, but [rather] appeal to [him] as a father, [to] the younger men as brothers, 2 the older women as mothers, [and] the younger women as sisters, in all purity. 3 Honor widows who are widows indeed; 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. 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. 6 But she who gives herself to wanton pleasure is dead even while she lives.*

*Introduction.* The exhortations in the previous verses concern the personal walk of both Timothy's and yours. In this chapter the apostle points Timothy at his attitude towards different groups of people in the church:

- in *verses 1-2* different age groups;
- in *verses 3-16* the widows;
- in *verses 17-20* the elders.

The *verses 21-25* closes the chapter with the exhortation to have nothing to do with partiality and to deal responsibly with others and with his own body.

*V1.* Like in a family the distinction of age and sex must also be recognized in the house of God. The first indication concerns the

“older man” who needs exhortation. Sometimes it is necessary to rebuke an older person. Age doesn’t make a person immune for failures. When rebuke is necessary caution is appropriate for the way it happens (*Lev 19:32*).

An older brother should not be rebuked sharply. ‘Sharply rebuke’ literally means ‘to hit’, what indicates here ‘to hit with words’. You ought not to raise your voice to such a person. When an older brother should be admonished, it must happen with the sensitivity of a son towards his father. When younger brothers would consider this instruction more in their dealings then a lot of deep-rooted and long lasting conflicts could have been prevented.

The second category you have to deal with are your peers, “*the younger men*”. When you notice something there that is in contrast to God’s Word, you should approach them with the sensitivity of true brotherly love. Together with them you participate in the family of God. In that relation it is not appropriate to rebuke them high-handedly as a superior (*cf. Job 33:6*).

V2. The third category is that of “*older women*”. Like the older men here also the sensitivity of a son towards his mother has to be present. Like the other groups the point is that Timothy should express a family-oriented affection in his conduct and above all respect for the individual.

The fourth category is the most sensitive one. Timothy must really watch out how he approaches “*the younger women*” in case they need to be corrected. He should deal with them “*as sisters, in all purity*”. The brotherly love should not deteriorate into feelings of the flesh. He must be careful to be inwardly pure of his mind in order to expose a fully upright and transparent behavior. Unclean thoughts, words or deeds must be avoided. If this word was taken to heart by younger believers (and not only by them) then many tragedies that have occurred within the pastoral care in this area, would not have happened.

V3. The fifth category is that of the “*widows*”. Paul extensively pays attention to them. The word ‘widow’ implies ‘bereft, ‘hav-

ing suffered loss'. A 'real widow' is somebody who is really left alone, 'bereft' of her husband. That caused her to be in need. She has no family either to whom she can appeal to.

The Holy Spirit accords much room for the widows (no fewer than fourteen verses), because they are being easily forgotten. That was already the case at the beginning of the church (*Acts 6:1*), when the believers shared everything together in those days. How much more then this appeal of James has to be heeded to "*visit orphans and widows in their distress*" (*Jam 1:27*).

Widows and their children are the objects of the special care of God (*Psa 68:6; 146:9*). He who takes care of them can count on the blessing of God (*Deu 14:29; 24:19*). Considering this it should not be difficult to 'honor' or to respect and esteem them. This appropriate respect and esteem will be exposed in the financial support and in surrounding them with serving and caring love. Then the financial support will not have the side-thought of an act of charity to a poor.

In this care of the widow you can see an example of the functioning of the church in other forms of care. One of the aspects to which you can recognize a church according to God's thoughts, is the care that is spent to those who need it. Is there care for those who have spiritual difficulties, for those who risk to give in to certain temptations, for believers who face difficulties in raising their children, for older people?

V4. There can be an inclination to withdraw yourself from caring while it clearly appears on your way. In the case of the widows there can be 'children or grandchildren'. Paul points them to their obligations towards their mother or grandmother if she is a widow. They must "*first learn to practice piety in regard to their own family*". In that way they show respect to God, they deal according to His will. They are not allowed to withdraw themselves from that responsibility by saying that it is a matter the government or the church should be taking care of. The Lord Jesus also condemns sharply the pious motives to withdraw from this obligation (*Mat 15:3-6*).

He who supports his mother or grandmother who is a widow, doesn't do that only because the Lord desires that. It also ought to happen out of gratitude for what the parents and grandparents have done to them. It is a recognition of the love and care that the parents and grandparents have spent on them. The word "*repay*" means to meet a responsibility. It has to do with repayment, to give something back. If you find yourself in such a situation you may know that by doing so you are "*acceptable before God*". You please God by doing that. That's a wonderful exhortation, isn't it?

V5. Not every widow finds herself in the same circumstances. You have seen that there are widows who can rely on their children and grandchildren. But what happens when that's not the case? If it has to be said of a widow that she "*is a widow indeed and who has been left alone*"? 'Left alone' emphasizes that this widow really has no one to rely on. She is permanently alone and left.

Then God remains her reliance. While she has no one to rely on, God remains her great refuge. She can put her trust and hope in Him. Constantly she may go to Him, incessantly draw near to Him and ask whatever she needs. In Anna you find a beautiful example of that (*Lk 2:36-38*). She was not occupied with her own need. She was occupied with the need God's people were in.

Don't you think that such widows are a blessing to the church? They do not expect their help to come from the church, but from God. Right in the middle of their vulnerable condition of dependency they feel how much they need to have fellowship with God. "*Night and day*" doesn't mean unceasingly, but without having anything between her and God. It shows that she has a continual fellowship with God.

V6. Such an attitude is in sharp contrast to that of her "*who gives herself to wanton pleasure*". Then there is no mention of being focused on God and expecting all help from Him. That widow "*is dead even while she lives*". Not every real widow is needy. There are those who are in a financially strong position and who use that to live "*in wanton pleasure*". She who lives like that, lacks the blessing of dependency on God. The spiritual life of such a person is

not visible. She lives indeed, but without involving God in her life. You may say that she is actually dead.

To live 'in luxury and pleasure' (*Jam 5:5*) indicates a wasteful way of life. There is no room for God. It is the mentality of "*let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die*" (*1Cor 15:32*).

Now read 1 Timothy 5:1-6 again.

Reflection: How is your relation towards the different groups that are mentioned here? Do you see a particular category to which you may spend some care?

Several Groups of Widows | verses 7-13

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

*7 Prescribe these things as well, so that they may be above reproach. 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. 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, 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. 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, 12 [thus] incurring condemnation, because they have set aside their previous pledge. 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].*

V7. Timothy had to pass on the previous instructions as a prescription to the church. He has to imprint that on their mind. By obeying this prescription the church will be “above reproach” in this aspect. Outsiders will then have no reason to raise any objection to the way of caring or something like that.

V8. It is damaging to the testimony of the church “if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household”. In this way Paul refers to what he said in verse 4, but now in a negative sense. He who doesn't care about his mother or grandmother, shows a lack of respect for God's truth. Such a person underestimates what God has said in His Word and will not take notice of it. With an attitude like that “he has denied the faith”. Such a person may have a nice confession, but if the deeds show the opposite then one can speak of denial.



In that case the believer acts *“worse than an unbeliever”*. Unbelievers sometimes can sense better what is appropriate towards their parents and grandparents than believers do. It is a bad testimony when a believer neglects to practice the simplest and clearest principles of Christian mercy towards his closest fellow man.

V9. Now Paul is going to say something about the care of the church for the widows. Widows who are considered for support must be registered. To be registered it is necessary that certain requirements are met. First of all there is an age limit. A widow should be only registered *“if she is not less than sixty years old”*. The age of sixty was the age in the Roman empire that women were considered as being old and not to get married again.

The next conditions also have to do with the time that she was married. She has been *“the wife of one man”*, which proves her marital faithfulness.

V10. Beside the testimony of her marriage she must be well reported *“for good works”*. By doing these works she has glorified the Lord and has given a testimony in the world.

These good works have been expressed in several ways, for example *“if she has brought up children”*. We may not only consider her own children, but it may also refer to children in general sense, children of others who were entrusted to her care.

Another requirement is that *“she has shown hospitality to strangers”*. This is a particular feature of the woman. She makes efforts for those who come into her house. It also applies to men. It is mentioned as a qualification of the overseer (1Tim 3:2). It even has to characterize each believer (Heb 13:2; Rom 12:13). By expressing her hospitality she has shown that washing the saints' feet was not something below her dignity. She has freshened the weary feet of her fellow believer. In this work she has been a faithful follower of the Lord Jesus (Jn 13:1-17).

She also *“has assisted those in distress”*. In this way she showed pity and mercy to those who were standing under a certain pressure.

That might be because of the circumstances (e.g. sickness or unemployment) or because of resistance of people (hostility because of faith). Many believers lost their possessions (*Heb 10:34*) and were in need of help. These widows have helped them.

Paul closes the list of good works with “*devoted herself to every good work*” as a summary of the rest of all work. The good work here is also to be described as benevolent. It is each work in which the desire to do good to others comes into expression. The commitment to do that indicates her mind and attitude. Although it is about widows, this is certainly a mind and conduct that we all may desire, in order to be of service in that way.

V11. When there is a good arrangement, like this one for the widows of sixty years and older, there is always the danger of misuse. In those days of Paul there were also widows who thought to be considered for support, but they had to be refused. It regards the “*younger widows*”.

Paul motivates his refusal. These widows are not personally refused, but only their request to be placed on the list mentioned, is. Financial independency can result that the young widows forget their dependence on God. That could lead them to adopt a conduct and attitude that are explained further.

In fact there is the danger that “*they feel sensual desires in disregard of Christ*” when they subscribe for support. This doesn’t apply in general, but a wrong spirit could possibly take control of them. They know what it is to be married; they know what it consisted of. They have the age to get remarried. By being independent there is a danger that they do not judge a potentially new marriage in God’s light, but to their own desire, including the impulses of sexual lust.

The desire to marry is not wrong. Further on Paul even says that he *wants* young widows to get married (*verse 14*). But here Paul speaks about wrong motives that may underlie that desire. God is speaking by taking away the husband. He has got something to say.

V12. He has a plan with all His dealings. Young widows can possibly forget that. Then “*they want to get married [thus] incurring condemnation*” because they heed to the desires of the flesh. By behaving like that they show that “*they have set aside their previous pledge*”. When they were still married and also at the beginning of them becoming widows, these women showed confidence in God. Now, however, they want to determine independently of God their own way.

V13. Another danger of financial independency is that they do not have to work and therefore have much leisure time. Who no longer lives in confidence in God, will spend her time in a wrong way. Instead of doing her duties in her own house she neglects it and stirs up some turmoil and calamity in other families. In that way she adopts a wrong conduct and becomes a ‘professional lazybones’.

And not only her presence causes turmoil, she also talks too much. Her talk is nonsense and has a slandering character. She meddles unasked in other people’s business, while it is none of her business (2Thes 3:11), and keeps other people from their work. A person who is occupied with others in such a way always neglects her own responsibilities. The world observes that and will mock such a person (1Pet 4:15).

Now read 1 Timothy 5:7-13 again.

Reflection: Explore which instructions that in the first place apply to widows, could also apply to you.

**Younger Widows and Elders** | *verses 14-19*

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

*14 Therefore, I want younger [widows] to get married, bear children, keep house, [and] give the enemy no occasion for reproach; 15 for some have already turned aside to follow Satan. 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. 17 The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. 18 For the Scripture says, "YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING," and "The laborer is worthy of his wages." 19 Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses.*

V14. After his remarks about refusing young widows Paul offers an alternative: *"I want younger [widows] to get married."* This alternative way is not only being allowed, but it is also recommended. See also *1 Corinthians 7:1-11,25-40*, where it is written amongst other things that most people are not given to be alone, like Paul. Therefore the younger widow is at liberty to whom she marries, only in the Lord (*1Cor 7:39*).

To remarry also means the acceptance of the normal consequence of a marriage and that is *"bear children"*. Another consequence is that the remarried younger widow *"keep house"* instead of wandering about from house to house. Especially when she has children she will have enough things to do at home. For the ruling of the house of course the father is primarily responsible, but the practical implementation surely is in the hands of the mother. Here the Word of God gives an example of the significant position that the wives have received through the gospel: not a slave of the husband, but equipollent.

If she is faithful to her own house then the adversary will have no clue to speak reproachfully about the house of God. The word *"occasion"* is used in the army to indicate a basis from where the

enemy attacks. Unfortunately the adversary often succeeds to create such a basis in Christian marriages and families.

V15. Paul seems to be familiar with the circumstances and the individuals of the church at Ephesus. He had to conclude that some have already deviated from the way of faith and have turned aside after satan. For those his advice is too late, but hopefully for others it is on time.

V16. He once more returns to the issue that the church only in exceptional cases must take care of widows. The duty of care not only lies on the children and grandchildren (*verse 4*), but also on other family members, for example a sister of the widow. With the clear order "*she must assist them*", Paul points at the responsibility of close family members.

It appears to be necessary, also for us, to point this out, because there is always the inclination to pass on the responsibility to others. But faith never releases a person from his personal responsibility. When others are able to provide with 'first aid' "*the church must not be burdened*" with it. The church only has to come into action in cases where there are no other, primarily responsible, persons. Then the church will be free to relieve "*those who are widows indeed*".

V17. After these extensive instructions to Timothy how to deal with widows in the church, Paul yet has some more instructions regarding the elders (or overseers, see the explanation of *1Tim 3:2*). Elders rule the local churches (*1Tim 3:5*), they shepherd the flock of God and guard the doctrine (*1Pet 5:2; Acts 20:28-31*).

Believers must respect their work (*cf. 1Thes 5:13; Heb 13:17; 1Cor 16:16*). Timothy has to point out to the church that elders should be counted worthy of double honor. That has to do with the particular responsibility that accompanies their work. The fact that this exhortation is necessary, seems to indicate that also in those days people didn't take much notice of the elders.

Each elder must have that much knowledge of the Scripture that he is able to exhort and to correct somebody with it (*1Tim 3:2; Tit 1:9*). That doesn't mean that each elder also has to perform that work. His first duty is: to rule, to maintain the order in God's house.

Actually, there are also elders who preach and teach God's Word. It does not come automatically. Preaching and teaching mean preparative work. The work in itself demands continuous dependence on the Lord. Also the after-care that goes together with such work, demands commitment. Therefore there is mention of "work hard", which means to achieve heavy work, to the edge of exhaustion. Spiritual activities can be that heavy. The honor that "especially" those who work hard like that are supposed to get, may be expressed in the financial support of the church.

V18. To empower this recommendation Paul quotes two announcements of the Scripture. By saying "for the Scripture says" he underlines that the speaking of God and of the Scripture have the same authority.

The first quote is *Deuteronomy 25:4*. Paul already quoted this verse earlier in *1 Corinthians 9:9-10* (cf. *Gal 6:6*). God has ordained: "You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing." That speaks of God's care for the oxen. A threshing ox is allowed to eat of the grain while he is threshing. Still, God has not given this prescription for the oxen in the first place, but for His servants. This application of a verse from the Old Testament is fully permitted, as it also appears from *1 Corinthians 10:11* and *Romans 15:4*.

Paul quotes this verse by addressing the Corinthians to clarify his entitlement on their support. He doesn't do that to make use of it by himself. He himself relinquishes this entitlement, because he doesn't want to connect his work regarding the gospel in any way with money. In that way it is even more remarkable and also beautiful to see here how he applies this verse to others. This is quite a lesson for us. The things you relinquish, you don't begrudge someone else.

The second quote is a word of the Lord Jesus. When He sent out the seventy He said to them not to accept what they received as a charity, but as wages for their labor, “*for the laborer is worthy of his wages*” (Lk 10:7). They were supposed to wholeheartedly entrust themselves to the Messiah and receive everything they were offered. As true laborers of the Lord they were entitled to do that on His behalf.

Besides it becomes clear by the words “*the Scripture says*”, followed by the quote from the *gospel according to Luke*, that this gospel must already have existed. It also must have been accepted by the believers as a part of the Holy Scripture. You also see that the one quote comes from the Old Testament and the other quote comes from the New Testament. That proves the unity of both Testaments as both being perfectly inspired by God’s Spirit (cf. 2Pet 3:16).

V19. An elder can also fail. The consequences of a failure of a supervising brother are extremely serious. Such a person takes the most vulnerable place in the church, because of his prominent position. The enemy is especially out for him. When an accusation is being expressed against him, then it must be rejected, “*except on the basis of two or three witnesses*”.

When an elder is being accused of a certain sin, then that accusation must properly be investigated (Deu 13:14) and be dealt with extreme caution. There ought to be at least two and preferably three witnesses in a case of a possible sin, committed by an elder (Deu 19:15; Mat 18:16; 2Cor 13:1). The church must not rely on rumors. The church doesn’t deal with a rumor, but with a concrete and specific sin.

This instruction is important. The danger is realistic that a person who has been admonished by an elder, but doesn’t want to obey, will want to put the elder in a bad light. You may here remark like ‘a wrong approach’ and ‘an insensitive behavior’. Also suggestive statements are made as if the elder himself also secretly cherishes a certain sin. All of such slandering talk about leading servants has been a tested means of satan. It goes around very

quickly and it causes enormous damage. It is important to stay far away from that.

The way believers should be dealing with an elder who sins, will be paid attention to in the next section.

Now read 1 Timothy 5:14-19 again.

Reflection: In which way could you participate in relieving widows and how could you honor elders?



## Sins, Sickness and Infirmities | verses 20-25

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

**20** *Those who continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest also will be fearful [of sinning].* **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.* **22** *Do not lay hands upon anyone [too] hastily and thereby share [responsibility for] the sins of others; keep yourself free from sin.* **23** *No longer drink water [exclusively], but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.* **24** *The sins of some men are quite evident, going before them to judgment; for others, their [sins] follow after.* **25** *Likewise also, deeds that are good are quite evident, and those which are otherwise cannot be concealed.*

V20. When it has become evident that an elder has sinned, then he must be rebuked publicly. An example of this is what Paul does with Peter (*Gal 2:11*). ‘To rebuke’ here means that the sin should be exposed and in that way evidently proved. In that way any objection will not be possible.

The bad example of a leader could have the consequence that others are tempted not to deal too seriously with sin. Therefore the rebuke must take place in the presence of all in this case. The result is that “*the rest also will be fearful [of sinning]*” (*cf. 2Pet 2:6*). Such a public rebuke has a preventive effect on ‘the rest’.

It is not really clear whom are meant with “*the rest*”. Does that mean only the fellow elders or does that mean all members who form the local church? I tend to think that it implies the whole local church. It seems to me that a rebuke ‘in front of all’ implies that this happens in presence of the whole church. It doesn’t seem logical to me to speak of a rebuke ‘in front of all’ if that only happens in the circle of elders.

V21. By using the words “*I solemnly charge*” Paul places great emphasis on his words. He also underlines it by involving three witnesses in this case. They are, although invisible, always present with everything that happens in and through the church. The church is the house of “*God*”, “*Christ Jesus*” is the center there and “*[His] chosen angels*” are spectators of us as members of the church (1Cor 11:10; Eph 3:10).

The Divine Citizens of heaven – God and Christ Jesus – and also creatures that were saved from rebelling against God – the chosen angels –, continuously see how you behave in God’s house. In the world God’s rights are in no way taken into consideration. But that ought to happen in God’s house. Therefore, when sin happens there which is demonstrable, then it ought to be dealt with and be judged by the church in accordance with God’s holiness.

Paul warns of two dangers to which the church is exposed at the exertion of this necessary discipline. Those dangers are also great today. The one danger is “*bias*”, the other one is “*partiality*”. There is the temptation to overlook the evil of elders if people could possibly experience disadvantage when they rebuke them. If you have gained the favor of an influential leader, you might not want to lose it. To lose favor may absolutely have no role in the determination of sin.

Also the preference that someone may have towards an elder can cause a hindrance to name the sin of the elder. Then there is no mention anymore of impartiality. If somebody means a lot to you, it is difficult “*doing nothing in a [spirit of] partiality*”. Then your preference determines your judgment too much. Remember that God ‘shows no partiality’ (Deu 10:17) and deals without favoritism (Gal 2:6; Col 3:25).

V22. Therefore when a sin has been proved the whole local church is involved. But it is not always the case that a sin is that clearly present and demonstrable. It can happen that a person appears to achieve a service for the Lord, while he allows sins in his life that are not openly recognizable. Paul points out to Timothy that

he ought to consider that. By the warning “do not lay hands upon anyone [too] hastily”, he exhorts him to be cautious.

The laying on of hands means to identify yourself with another person. With the offering service of Israel the laying on of hands has an important role. When the one who offers, lays his hand on the burnt offering (*Lev 1:4*), the whole value the burnt offering has to God, as it were, transfers to him. Through that burnt offering he is made pleasing to God. With bringing the sin offering it is the other way around. By laying his hand on the sin offering (*Lev 4:4*) his sin transfers, as it were, to the sin offering that is being slaughtered in his stead. God judges the offering and the sinner can go out free.

Before Timothy identifies himself with the service of another person through the laying on of hands, he should be convinced that this person has really received that service from the Lord. According to *Acts 13:3* it is good to precede the laying on of hands with a period of praying and fasting (*see also Acts 6:6*).

By a too quick recognition of a person to achieve a service for the Lord, Timothy runs the risk to identify himself with sins. That is the case when it appears that a person is doing his own will and is serving the Lord only by name. By laying hands on such a person this person is being stimulated in a wrong way and he who lays hands on him follows him on that way. In that way he has fellowship with his sins.

Here it becomes clear that direct connection with evil defiles a person. By being careful with identifying himself with another person Timothy keeps himself in purity. The call “keep yourself free from sin” also applies in general sense (*2Cor 7:1*). You can only stay pure if you fear God. Then He will show you His will in all cases you doubt if you should connect yourself to them or whether you are to cooperate with them (*Psa 25:14*).

V23. As you know Timothy is a shy, even a timid person. He is someone who is very meticulous and strait-laced. Paul’s exhortation to be careful with the laying on of hands must have surely

connected to his cautious way of living. I think that we should place the advice of Paul in this context with regard to the health of Timothy.

Timothy must have done everything to prevent that God's work would be hindered by him. He wanted to avoid everything that could possibly be a stumbling block to others (*Rom 14:21*). Therefore he must have refused any drop of wine. And God's Word often warns us for misusing this stimulant, doesn't it? Still wine is not a prohibited beverage. The reason for using it, is of importance. Timothy then had a stomach problem and still other physical weaknesses. With a view to that Paul stimulates him to use a little wine.

Paul does not use his gift of healing (*Acts 28:8-9*) here, but stimulates him to use a little wine as medicine. There is no mention of a demon that hits the stomach of Timothy. You see that sickness and physical weakness do not have to be caused by a demon of sickness that ought to be exorcised. Here you also see that the use of medicine is not a sign of unbelief.

Still it is important to note that it is about "*a little wine*". Excessive use is out of the question. As it is said, the use of wine is permitted (*Jn 2:1-11; 1Cor 10:16*). It is the symbol of joy (*Psa 104:15*). Therefore you are allowed to use a little wine only if you do not use it to forget all the misery for a moment, like the world does (*cf. Pro 31:7*).

V24. In *verse 24* Paul continues the subject he was dealing with in *verse 22*, after the phrase concerning the health of Timothy and the advice what he should do. He points out that "*the sins of some men are quite evident*". Before the life of such people becomes revealed before the judgment seat of Christ (*2Cor 5:10*), it is already revealed on earth that they have lived in sin. Their sins are "*going before them to judgment*". In those cases the sins are totally clear and it will not be difficult to deal with it.

There are also men of whom it is not directly clear that they live in sin. Still there comes a moment, after their life wherein they

had hidden their sin, that everything will be revealed before the judgment seat.

V25. What applies to the sins “likewise” applies to “deeds that are good”. Also those will not remain hidden. There are good works which we already recognize as such on earth (*Mat 5:16*), like we see with Dorcas (*Acts 9:36,39*). There are also good works that were unnoticed for men. Those will be as much visible and will appropriately be rewarded.

Now read 1 Timothy 5:20-25 again.

Reflection: Which indications in this section can you take to heart?

## 1 Timothy 6

### Workers and Sound Words | verses 1-5

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

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

V1. Paul starts this chapter with instructions for believing slaves. They are part of the church in Ephesus. The fact that a slave is a believer doesn't change his position as slave. Slavery is not something that is given by God, but it is a result of sin. Nevertheless, it doesn't mean that a slave gets his freedom back when he converts. Christendom doesn't change (deplorable) situations, but hearts. The Lord Jesus did not come to deal with this wrong and other wrongs, but to save sinners.

A believing slave could have possibly come into such a position through several circumstances, for example by birth or by captivity or by running into debts. Especially a slave can show what it means to be a Christian (*Tit 2:10; 1Pet 2:18*). With that purpose in mind Paul even sent the runaway slave Onesimus back to his

master Philemon. Paul indeed hoped that Philemon would release his slave Onesimus, that he may assist the apostle in his ministry for the Lord (see the *letter to Philemon*).

In those days slaves had no privileges. They had no entitlements at all. According to Greek-Roman ideas slaves were no individuals but instruments. They were the unlimited property of their master and had not a single right. A private life is something that was not created for them, it didn't exist for them. As such a comparison with relationships as we know in the Western world is not possible. Of course we can apply these instructions to the relationships between an employer and an employee. The believing employee is not supposed to expect his help from a labor union, from means to exert pressure, like strikes, company occupation or slowdown actions. By not participating with those actions he may be slandered by his colleagues, but it surely delivers him an approval from the Lord.

Of the believing employee it is expected that he 'regards his own employer worthy of all honor'. In *verse 1* it is about an unbelieving employer. The believing employee ought to speak about him respectfully and to treat him respectfully. He will not participate (anymore) with rebellion or slacken in doing his work. Rebellion also doesn't fit to a Christian servant. When the believing servant would be rebellious, disobedient to his master, then others would have a reason to say: 'What a God is that Who allows such a disorder and what doctrine is it, that it tolerates rebellion and violence?'

Today also a believer exposes a positive or a negative testimony to His Lord in his working place. When he closely follows the orders of his boss in his work, then "*the name of God and [our] doctrine will not be spoken against*". After all, the point is that God is being made known as Savior in accordance with the Christian doctrine. The doctrine and practice go inextricably together.

V2. In *verse 2* it is about "*those who have believers as their masters*". Then there is mention of a double relation: that of a brother and of a boss. Then there is the risk of a mixture between spiritual

and social relationships. Then you may be tempted to deal too amicably with your boss or you may think you could afford more than is fitting because he is a brother of yours. In that way you are surely not respecting the relations and in fact you despise him as your boss. That is no testimony towards your unbelieving colleagues.

It should rather be the case that the fact that your boss is a believer it leads you to “serve” him even more. You may be aware to be “of ... benefit” to your believing boss (who, in his turn, is supposed to honor this and fully appreciate it). The quality of the service is better because this doesn’t happen out of fear but out of love.

The fact is that such a situation demands from both sides much wisdom and caution. The brotherly love could be easily affected, which can cause a tense working atmosphere. On top of that the roles in the church could be the other way around. Not in the sense that the one is superior to the other, but that the servant has a more prominent position than the master. Then it is important that both of them show a spiritual mind.

It is necessary that Timothy also teaches these things and urges that this teaching is applied in practice.

V3. “A different doctrine” undermines the relationship between the servant and master. That happens when a person teaches his own human thoughts after his flesh about the social relationships and ignores what the Lord has to say about it. In that way you could call the right to strike ‘another doctrine’. Then such a person “does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ”.

All words that the Lord has spoken when He was on earth, are sound words. We find them in the four gospels. The Lord heard them from the Father and has passed them on to His disciples (*Jn 17:8*). The teachings of the apostle Paul which you find in his letters, are completely in line with them. The words of the Lord and the teaching of the apostle induce to live a life in which God is being honored, whatever may be the social position of a believer.



V4. He who ignores that *"is conceited"*. Pride arises when a person is full of his own knowledge (1Cor 8:1). It is the arrogance of the ignorance that imagines to know everything. Paul speaks out God's judgment over such a person: he *"understands nothing"*. However, it doesn't stop there, but these people are obsessed with *"controversial questions and disputes about words"*. The proof that their spirit is sick appears from the fact that they are greedy to be right, which make them to debate endlessly and also lead them to unending pointless speculations. The politics, also the so-called Christian politics, are full of them.

The sick thinking of false teachers reveals in narrow-minded arguing and pseudo-intellectual theories, where everything is about ridiculous distinctions between words. Such people are sick and form a source of contamination. Every person that joins them also gets the same sickness. For what comes out from their thinking? *"Envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions."* The contrast between what makes sick and what is healthy and what makes healthy about words and doctrine is made sharp here.

In their fractiousness and arguments over words they envy the other who do better in the debate, and has more power of persuasion and gains more followers. They envy the other for what he has and want that for their own. Instead of settling their differences, distance and quarrels arise. In order to justify themselves they slander one another. Lies are being told and to the opponent even evil motives are presumed.

V5. This goes on and on. Without ceasing these people are continuing their quarrels. This corruption is in their thinking. They are not able to respond to the truth in a normal way. They have lost all sense of reality. It is said of them that they *"are destitute of the truth"*. They formerly had the knowledge of everything that God has revealed in Christ, but they lost it, because they do not consent any longer to the wholesome words and the sound doctrine. You see in which downward spiral you can end if you prefer human ideas to the Word of God.

In all their foolishness they even think that “*Godliness is a means of gain*”. They have every reason for that. They ask payment for their foolish ideas and people are eager to pay. Also today theologians are financially supported by churches to spread their foolish arguments in words and writings, aren’t they? People promptly pay for these monstrous fantasies. They love it. They do not mind whether it is true or not. The book ‘The Da Vinci Code’ is one of the latest examples.

What a privilege to have the unchangeable measure of God’s Word for verification. I like to emphasize that for you at the end of this section.

Now read 1 Timothy 6:1-5 again.

Reflection: How do you experience your place in society?

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**Want To Get Rich and the Man of God** | *verses 6-11a*

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

*6 But godliness [actually] is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment. 7 For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. 8 If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content. 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. 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. 11 But flee from these things, you man of God, ...*

V6. Paul doesn't deny that Godliness is a means of gain. Only he adds "contentment" to it. He knows what he's talking about (*Phil 4:11-15*). His contentment is the result of his dependence on God. When you are really content you are not focused on outward things, but on the Lord, Who provides you with everything you need. Contentment can also be a result of your own effort. In that way the Stoics didn't want to be influenced by anything and accepted everything the way it happened. That may seem like contentment, but that is harshness and the result of their own will.

That's why contentment should go together with Godliness. That doesn't just deliver gain, but indeed "great gain". That gain is not to be measured in hard currency, but refers to spiritual gain. Where things happen in fellowship with God and with a view to His honor it will make you richer spiritually.

V7. What did you take with you when you came into the world? Nothing. You may agree to Job, who said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb" (*Job 1:21; see also Ecc 5:15*). Is there something that you can take with you from the world when you leave it? Either nothing (*Psa 49:14-15*).

At the beginning and at the end of life you learn to estimate what the real value is of material things. The intention is that you understand the relativity of money and material things you could gain in this life. You can lose everything all of a sudden (*Pro 23:4-5*). You will have to leave everything of the world behind you any way. Maybe you know this saying: 'The last shirt has no pockets.'

V8. If you have "*food and covering*" you have the basic needs of life (*Deu 10:18; Mat 6:25-32*). If you are content with that (*Heb 13:5*) you are a happy man. It keeps you from being restlessly occupied with material things, as you see that with people of the world around you. This call for contentment you may certainly not misuse to justify laziness (*2Thes 3:10*). The point is that you should not frantically seek more and more luxury.

V9. What is previously said is not to condemn to be rich. When a person is rich it can be the result of the blessing of the Lord (*Gen 13:2; Pro 22:2; 1Sam 2:7*). However, it is certainly to be condemned to "*want to get rich*". It is also important to see that riches can be a danger for the practical life of faith (*Mat 13:22*). It may even be a hindrance to be saved (*Mat 19:23-24*).

If it is your desire to be rich you will certainly fall "*into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful lusts*". You will surely not be the first one who falls into temptation to desire to be rich through lotteries, gambling or through speculation on the stock market. Desiring to be rich means that you let yourself to be dragged by "*many foolish and harmful desires*". Then you also don't have to pray "*lead us not into temptation*", because you are decisively seeking to be rich.

After the 'temptation' and the 'snare' "*ruin and destruction*" are waiting for you at the end. You will drown in it. 'To plunge' here also means 'to lead (men) to sink'. The word 'plunge' refers to a ship that is overloaded, which causes it to sink. See *Luke 5:7*, the only time where the word 'sink' appears and where the literal sense is used in the New Testament. Here it is about a soul that is overwhelmed by the desire for wealth and is now plunging further and further in the sea of his lusts. Dealing unwisely with

money by desiring to gain more and more has already plunged many in destruction.

V10. “For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil.” You must become fully aware of what is meant in this verse. The love of money is a form of greediness which is idolatry in its essence (*Col 3:5; Eph 5:5*). It is not *the* root, but it is *a* root. And it is definitely a root from which all possible forms of evil can sprout. There are more roots from which evil sprouts, but there is no evil that cannot sprout from this root, called love of money.

The warning is serious and fundamental: if you strive for being rich, the risk is great that you deviate from the faith! Your confession that you are a Christian cannot go together with the love of money. Your love of money, in whatever form of luxury it is called, will close your eyes for everything that Christ has to offer you. All the truths of faith will mean nothing for you anymore.

If the love of money is a real danger for you, then take a look at people who were guided by it. There are cases of bitter experiences, broken family relationships, lawless and prodigal children, and a ceaseless fear for losses. This all goes together when getting rich is the target of your life. And finally think about the hereafter (*Lk 12:20-21*). How great the disillusionment must be to be dying and having to discover that you cannot take anything from all the earthly riches with you. These are some of the “*many griefs*” with which you have “*pierced*” yourself.

V11a. Paul offers an alternative with a totally different perspective of life. He introduces this with “*but ..., you man of God*”. A man of God is a person who shows the features of God in his life and walk in a world that is alienated from Him. This can be a man or a woman. This expression appears once more in the New Testament, in 2 *Timothy 3:17*. In the Old Testament this person is also called a ‘man of God’ (Moses, *Deu 33:1*; David, *2Chr 8:14*; Elisha, *1Kgs 17:18*; Elisha, *2Kgs 4:7*; see further *1Kgs 12:22; 13:1; 20:28; 2Chr 25:7; Jer 35:4*.)

A 'man of God' here is somebody with whom God connects His Name because this person defends His rights among His people that doesn't honor His rights (anymore). A man of God is an individual who takes care of God's interests in the midst of a whole that is deviated from Him. In such a person God exposes Himself.

Timothy is such a person. Does it make him a person who is above all temptation? Certainly not. The first order he receives is: "*Flee from these things.*" He is being warned not to think to be raised above the temptations just mentioned, any more than you should think.

Fleeing is not a proof of weakness, but it on the contrary proves character and self-knowledge. 'These things' is the love of money that goes together with it. For you as a young believer, the call to 'flee' is therefore important. You are not insensitive to the abundance of commercials that you weekly find in your letterbox and which are daily presented to you through the media like a flash flood. You ought to resist all that and ask the Lord what you need.

You should always flee things that go together with great temptations because your sinful flesh is being addressed. In those cases your spiritual life is at risk. Therefore it is also written that you should flee "*immorality*" (1Cor 6:18), "*idolatry*" (1Cor 10:14) and "*youthful lusts*" (2Tim 2:22). A clear example of somebody who fled sexual immorality is Joseph (Gen 39:12).

There are also cases that you should not flee but should resist. That is when the devil reveals himself as the adversary of the faith (Jam 4:7; 1Pet 5:9; Eph 6:12). In those cases it is about your testimony towards the world. The enemy wants you to shrink back to testify. If you flee in that case you make yourself a loser. These two different cases are not to be confused. Therefore it is important for you to know when to flee and when to resist, steadfast in the faith.

The command to flee is one side of your life as a Christian. And that side is very essential. Then comes the other side. Now you can and must show that your life as a Christian consists of striv-

ing for something and fight. We shall pay attention to that side in the following section.

Now read 1 Timothy 6:6-11a again.

Reflection: Which role does money have in your life?

**Pursue, Fight, Take Hold Of, Confess** | verses 11b-13

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

*..., and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance [and] gentleness. 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. 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, ...*

V11b. Timothy on the one hand is called to flee and on the other hand to pursue and fight. Here it is about an activity that continuously returns and proceeds. You are never finished with this. You cannot say that there will be a moment in your life that you will not have to flee, pursue and fight anymore.

After the negative, but essential, 'flee', comes now the positive. You may spend your energy on 'pursuing' something (see also Rom 14:19; Phil 3:14; 1Thes 5:15; Heb 12:14). This word includes an action, a speed and being purposely occupied. It is about giving substance in the practice of your life to the things that are being mentioned and which you should pursue.

"*Righteousness*" is firstly mentioned. This is not the righteousness of God that you have received on the ground of faith (Phil 3:9b) and through which you don't have to fear hell anymore. No, it is about what becomes visible in your life, that your speech and actions are righteous. And it is like that when it is in accordance to the rights of God. In that case you will never cheat anyone, but you will give anybody what is his or her right. That can be about money, but it can also be the way you do your work as an employee or the honor you give to another person.

The following purpose to pursue is "*godliness*". As I already said in the introduction: Godliness means reverence for God and it indicates an attitude that is focused on God which pleases Him. This implies that you adopt the right attitude towards God. You



honor Him when you live in fear of Him. That has nothing to do with being afraid of God, but with being afraid of yourself, that you may do something that dishonors Him.

What applies to “*faith*” is the same as what applies to righteousness. It is not about the saving faith, the faith through which you have the assurance to be a child of God, but it is about the confidence of faith in everyday life. It is a command to make efforts to have confidence in God concerning all things in your daily life, although you don’t see Him. A life in faith is the opposite of a life by what you see, the visible and tangible things. Hold on to the fact that the things you see are temporal and the things you don’t see are eternal (*see 2Cor 4:18*).

You may have expected that “*love*” would have the first place. That is not right. In a Christian world where many people are doing what is right for themselves, the main thing is to pursue righteousness. But that doesn’t mean that it can be done without love. If you pursue love, it means that you increase in love. Your love for God, for your brothers and sisters and for your fellow men in general should grow. Love is God’s nature (*1Jn 4:8,16*). He wants us to show love in practice.

“*Perseverance*” is necessary because you live in a world that seeks to make it impossible to live as a man of God. Living as a man of God means going out on a limb and not giving up. As long as you are not with the Lord you need perseverance. You have beautiful examples with Caleb (*Deu 1:36; Jos 14:8-9,14*) and the believers at the beginning of the church (*Acts 2:42*). If you persevere you can count on the help of God, Who is called “*the God who gives perseverance*” (*Rom 15:5*).

The characteristics of the man of God are closed with “*gentleness*”. That indicates the mind to be able to persevere. With any adversary you experience there is the risk to become bitter or rebellious, or pay one back in his own coin. But a man of God responds like the Lord Jesus did (*Mat 11:29*). Then you do not defend your own rights, but you forsake them, in favor of the other person, on the contrary.

V12. If you are in pursuit of these features, then you are well prepared to fight *“the good fight of faith”*. As it is said, it is not possible to live here as a man of God without experiencing any adversary. He who lives as a man of God, inevitably experiences fight.

The fight that is the issue here is not so much of a warfare. Of course you are facing an enemy who causes adversary, but you are not called to be concentrating on the adversary but on God. The issue here is not a struggle or fight against the enemy, but the fight in a match where the point is to fight according to the rules. Those rules were mentioned already. Then there is strength for the good fight and in that way the prize will be received.

The good fight is that of the faith. A man of God does everything to hold on to what the faith means and what it consists of, until the end of his life on earth. If you want to be a man of God you may not lose anything of the truth of faith. That means that you continue to give a fully biblical meaning to the biblical conceptions alone and you will definitely not allow any other meaning. Paul is able to say at the end of his life that he has fought the good fight (2Tim 4:7).

Then you are also able to carry out the next command, which will deliver you an awesome blessing if you heed to it: *“Take hold of eternal life”*. This is said to a person who already has eternal life. The command ‘take hold of’ is therefore not addressed to an unbeliever, but to a believer. The intention is that you enjoy what you possess, that you are guided by it and live up to it. You stretch out to what you will enjoy in heaven. The eternal life is the Lord Jesus (1Jn 5:20). To have fellowship with Him is the most beautiful thing on earth and will be perfectly enjoyed in heaven in all eternity.

That is *“to which you were called”*. Timothy heeded the call of God at his conversion. The ultimate purpose of that call is the full, uninterrupted joy of eternal life with Him. Timothy has *“made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses”* concerning the possession of eternal life. You can’t tell by a person’s outward appearance whether he has eternal life, for it goes together with a

confession. You may think of the baptism by faith. That is a public testimony to express that you have abandoned your old life and that you will henceforth walk 'in the newness of life' (*Rom 6:4*).

V13. The many witnesses to whom Timothy has confessed the good confession are not always in his direct environment. Those who certainly always observe his life are God and the Lord Jesus. Paul brings Timothy in the first place into the presence of God. He presents God as the One "*who gives life to all things*". God is the Savior of life (*1Tim 4:10*). He also is the Fountain of life (*Psa 36:9*). You may, like Timothy, be conscious that He gives you everything to function as His witness. You are allowed to testify of the real life.

Then Paul brings his child in the faith into the presence of the Lord Jesus, Who is also fully involved with the testimony His followers are confessing. In that way He is the perfect example of expressing the good confession. Of course you can say that of the whole life of the Lord Jesus. Still Paul points out a special moment from the life of the Lord to make clear what the main point is of the good confession. That moment is when He stands before Pontius Pilate.

Pilate asks the Lord whether He is a King. The Lord affirms that He is indeed, but He goes further. He declares that, although He is a King, His Kingdom *now* is not of this world (*Jn 18:36*). That makes Him to be a rejected King.

That is exactly the good confession that is being expected from you. You belong to a kingdom that is not of this world and to a King Who has been rejected. When you hold on to this and expresses it towards the world you are a worthy follower of the Lord Jesus to whom He looks with pleasure.

Now read 1 Timothy 6:11b-13 again.

Reflection: How do you testify the good confession?

**Worship and Final Exhortations** | verses 14-21

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

..., **14** that you keep the commandment without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, **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, **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. **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. **18** [Instruct them] to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, **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. **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” — **21** which some have professed and thus gone astray from the faith. Grace be with you.

V14. Paul says that Timothy should keep “the commandment [that is the commandment to fight the good fight] *without stain or reproach*”. “To keep the commandment’ means to obey the commandment (Jn 8:51; 14:21), but it should also be kept in its original state. It ought not to be defiled by human conceptions and must be passed on undistorted.

It seems like an almost impossible commandment. How could you persist with something like this? By keeping your eye on “the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ”. Up until that moment Timothy should, and you should, commit himself to the commandment given. The Lord Jesus has promised to come quickly and His reward is with Him (Rev 22:12). Here it is not about His coming to take the church with Him. No, reward doesn’t fit with that coming. When He has caught up the church (1Thes 4:15-18) He will afterwards come with all His saints to the earth (1Thes 4:14).

Then He will establish the millennial kingdom of peace. Then He will reward all those saints who have served Him to the measure of faithfulness with which they have served Him when He was rejected. Isn't that a beautiful motive to move on with the good fight?

V15. The thought of that awesome happening lifted the apostle to a praise. With that appearing "*the blessed and only Sovereign*" will openly manifest Himself. He, Who when He was on earth made Himself to be taken to slaughter as a lamb, will reveal Himself as Potentate.

He is no one else than 'the blessed God' (1Tim 1:11). He doesn't need anything beside Himself to be blessed. Nothing could ever disturb His perfect peace and His profound happiness (Job 35:5-7).

He is also 'the only God', Who has no equivalent. There is nothing and no one on an equal footing with Him.

He manages and rules everything Himself. He doesn't need anyone's help for that. He is sovereign in everything. He rules about life and death and controls everything to His pleasure and wisdom (Psa 89:11-13). In Him all power dwells. He is the "*King of kings and Lord of lords*" (see also Rev 17:14; 19:16). Under His universal dominion also all the leaders of the world are subjected (1Chr 29:11-12).

The time that the Lord will appear lies totally in God's hands alone (Zec 14:7; Mat 24:36; Acts 1:7). When He appears He will be outwardly perceivable for every eye as Potentate, King and Lord (Rev 1:7).

V16. There are also non-perceivable features. In his praise Paul also mentions the inner greatness of God, such as the fact the He is not subjected to death; He cannot die, "*He*" is the One "*Who alone possesses immortality*". Immortality is more than a life without end: it is something elusive to death.

It is also more than only not dying physically. At the moment Adam and Eve sinned they didn't die the physical death, but actually the spiritual death. To everyone who doesn't have life from God it applies that he is spiritually dead. He who converts, receives life from God and shall be clothed with immortality when the Lord Jesus comes (1Cor 15:53-54). In that way they have become elusive to death.

God, Who has made Himself visible in His Son (Jn 1:14; 14:9), is the God "Who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see" (see also Exo 33:20; Jn 1:18; 1Jn 4:12; Col 1:15). We will never be able to see something of God without the Son. Wherever God reveals Himself He does that through the Son.

Deeply impressed by the awesome greatness and majesty of God Paul praises Him: "To Him [be] honor and eternal dominion! Amen." Paul doesn't speak out a wish here, but declares with a solemn 'amen' that God is worthy of all homage and that He has a power that never diminishes. All His works, both from the old and the new creation, will honor Him. He will enable them for that through His eternal power.

V17. It would have been a wonderful end of the letter if he had stopped here. But Paul still adds two exhortations: one for the rich (verses 17-19) and one for Timothy (verses 20-21). There is nothing wrong with wealth in itself, but it is when you have the desire to become rich, as you have seen. The apostle doesn't appeal to sell properties and to give away all the money. It is indeed difficult for a rich person to be rich without putting his trust in that wealth. When that happens he will act independently of God. And that is essentially the haughtiness which Timothy has to warn the believers against.

The rich is, like his riches, so very relative (Jam 1:10-11). Earthly property is perishable and time is not on our side. Riches can just make itself wings (Pro 23:4-5). He who trusts in his riches will become a mockery (Psa 52:7). The rich must be taught what they should not and what they should be paying attention to and why.

They will hear “*not to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy*”.

You may enjoy what God gives you abundantly, if you only consider that God is the Source of true joy and that riches and wealth cannot give you that joy. It is not the intention to indulge in it and to live in luxury and pleasure (*Jam 5:5*). The money is not your property, but you are a steward of it. God has given it to you that you may manage it for Him.

V18. For that reason riches offers, in spite of its dangers, possibilities to serve God with it. That will give you spiritual joy and satisfaction. You will be able to deal with your riches in several ways. You can use it to do good to others. They will praise God for it. You can also be rich in good works. What you give away makes you richer in another way, indeed in good works (*Pro 11:25*).

You can also be “*generous and ready to share*”. When you are ‘ready to share’, you deal just like God has dealt with you. By the way, you ought to act with discretion and not blindly. To be ‘ready to share’ means that you allow others to share the material things you own. Are they for instance allowed to borrow your car in time of need or are you afraid for a scratch?

V19. If you look at your riches and deal with it in that way you are on the way as one of those who are “*storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future*”. When you reason this with common sense you lose what you give away. From a spiritual view you send forward what you give away. To give away is the best way to invest. By focusing in that way on the future you already lay hold on earth on “*eternal life*”. This actually is the real life when you live for the other. That is what the Lord Jesus did and still does and in that way you should follow Him.

V20. Calling him by his name gives more emphasis to the personal care of the apostle for his young friend Timothy. He convinces him to seriously guard “*what has been entrusted*” to him, that is the truth as it is written to Timothy in this letter. He is not

to be involved with “*worldly [and] empty chatter*”. That is a waste of time and effort.

He is also not to enter into discussion with “*arguments of what is falsely called knowledge*”. Here Paul means the fantasies of men who think to belong to a higher spiritual class and to possess higher knowledge. However, educational improvement and intelligence are not the keys for understanding the Scripture, but a mind submitted to God’s Spirit.

V21. He who puts the intellect above the Scripture will surely deviate from the truth of faith.

Finally Paul wishes Timothy and the believers at Ephesus, where Timothy is, grace. Only when they are truly aware of grace they will be able to remain saved in fellowship with the Lord and with each other, despite of being in the midst of all dangers of deviation. We also need that grace daily.

Now read 1 Timothy 6:14-21 again.

Reflection: What is committed to your trust to be guarded by you?



## The Second Letter to Timothy

First read the letter to the end. Imagine this letter to be addressed to you personally. During the reading ask the Lord what His purpose with this letter is for your personal life. Be open for His instructions to do something, to change something or not to do something anymore.

### Introduction

After Paul was released from his first imprisonment (*cf. Phil 1:23-26; 2:19-24; Phlm :22*), he wrote the *first letter to Timothy* and the *letter to Titus*. Paul has written this second letter to his young friend during his second imprisonment. His second imprisonment is much heavier than his first one. He also knows that he will not be released again, but that he will be sentenced and will suffer the martyr's death.

If you bear this background in mind you will experience the power of the letter while reading. The bold witness and the confidence in God in hard times come from a man who is willing to die for what has been entrusted to him by God. Therefore this letter is a warning and an encouragement for the man of God in the last days.

You may call this letter a farewell message of Paul (*see also Acts 20:17-38*), like the farewell (or last) words we have from Jacob (*Gen 49*), from Moses (*Deu 33*) and from Samuel (*1Sam 12*). Maybe it is still better to speak of the spiritual testament of the apostle. In a testament a person declares what he wants to be done with his properties after his death. Paul knows that his earthly life will soon end. He leaves a spiritual inheritance behind: the truth that God has committed to his trust. How are the believers supposed to deal with it when he is not there anymore? In this letter he will exhibit it.

Paul has established and built the church of God on earth through the gospel. His work is finished. But as it happened to everything that God has given into the hands of man, it will also happen to the church on earth. Paul foresees the deviation and decline of it. Thereby he sharply takes note of the condition the church will end up to after his death (*cf. Acts 20:29*). He sees the decline that will increase after his death. The instructions he writes down in this spiritual testament are therefore of great importance for the church through the time from the death of the great apostle.

You encounter much passion and emotion in the letter. Paul was a man of the same nature like us. He looks back at his life work and sees what has become of it. He doesn't do that like an emotionless analyst who looks at the cold statistics. He again experiences his work and he also has a presentiment of how things will develop. From those feelings he passes on guidelines for a time that all things will deteriorate even more and that the origin of the church will be hardly recognizable.

When you read the letter you hear him sharing the concerns of his heart with a (young) man who is concerned about that, just like him. He does that in a way that makes the letter important for all times. That's why it is evidently a letter that is inspired by the Holy Spirit and therefore it is a part of the Bible. Through this letter the Spirit teaches us about the deviation of the church from its original state.

The letter also informs what the way of security is for those who seek God and desire to live to His honor. That way of security rests on two principles from which everyone in the midst of mixture and confusion can find consolation, like the apostle did. These two principles are:

- the firm foundation of God and
- withdrawing from injustice.

What that means will become clear when we discuss *chapter 2*.

Beside the warning and encouraging character of this letter, it is also pugnacious, for in spite of all decay you should not despair. The greater the decay, the greater the challenge to be a man of God (m/f). A man of God is someone who shows Who God is in an environment that does not consider the rights of God. We do not have the power in ourselves to do that, but in the Spirit of God Who is operative in a man of God, even when Christianity is full of complacency. I hope you want to be a man of God.

## 2 Timothy 1

### The Promise of Life and Blessing | verses 1-2

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

*1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, according to the promise of life in Christ Jesus, 2 to Timothy, my beloved son: Grace, mercy [and] peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.*

V1. Although the tone of the letter is confidential and amicable Paul starts with determining his apostleship and in that way his apostolic authority. He connects his apostleship with some things that are of great importance for the authority with which he writes down the guidelines in this letter for the time of decay. In the first place the Person of “*Christ Jesus*” arises behind his apostleship. Christ Jesus has sent him and determines the content of his ministry. What Paul is saying is in His Name.

In the second place he has not arrogated this apostleship to himself nor has he received it from men. No, he is an apostle “*by the will of God*”. The apostleship is a part of the plan of God with his life.

In the third place his apostleship is connected with “*the promise of life in Christ Jesus*”. That makes the ministry he performs as an apostle inviolable to death. Although Paul has died, his ministry of his apostleship remains through this letter. His apostleship is in fact connected with spiritual, heavenly and eternal things. Those are things that exceed beyond the earth and the decline of the church. Therefore this letter continues to keep its full meaning for the church in each time.

The life that is in Christ Jesus, is from before the ages. The Father has promised in eternity to the Son to give this life (*Tit 1:2*). To whom? To all who believe in the Son (*Jn 3:36; 1Jn 5:11-12*). Do you believe in the Son? Then this is the anchor that will keep you standing through the storms you read about in this letter and that are threatening your life of faith.

V2. Therefore it is very wonderful and encouraging that Paul shows you first what remains unchangeably and eternally true for each child of God personally. Only then he speaks about the decay of the church. That must have cheered Timothy up. And Paul says more to cheer him up with. He calls him "*my beloved son*" to make him feel the warmth of the heart of a father towards his son.

In his first letter he calls Timothy 'a true son'. But now the spiritual climate is getting colder it is more necessary to emphasize the warm love to one another. Just in a time where many people resist or turn their back on you, the expressions of love are the best basis to encourage another person for doing a service. Not only in Timothy's direction is this expression of love important. You also notice in this expression that Paul in his nearing end even more realizes how precious Timothy is to him.

For the exertion of the tasks of Timothy there is no better wish to be thought of than what Paul speaks of here. Also in his first letter to him Paul wishes him these things. That shows that for your personal life you always need the "*grace, mercy [and] peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord*". It also proves that that is sufficient for all imaginable circumstances where you may find yourself in.

Just ponder on the rich content of the separate words 'grace', 'mercy' and 'peace' for a moment. 'Grace' is God's love for men who are not worthy of it because they are evil. 'Mercy' is God's love for men who are weak and incapable, who have no capability to do something good. With grace and mercy God has fulfilled in love what you as a weak and sinful man needed. Then you realized that He also granted you His 'peace'. Now you are a child

of God you need that same grace and mercy to live as a child of God. When you realize that, you will experience the peace of God in your heart.

Just also ponder on the origin of it, the Persons from Whom they come: 'God the Father' and 'Christ Jesus, our Lord'. I assume that you have learnt to know the Father and the Lord Jesus better since your conversion. You surely have found more and more reasons to thank the Father and the Lord Jesus for these rich gifts of grace, mercy and peace. It is also the first thing that Paul does here.

Now read 2 Timothy 1:1-2 again.

Reflection: Which encouragements have you found in these verses? Thank the Lord for that.

## Thanks, Power, Love and Discipline | verses 3-8

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

*3 I thank God, whom I serve with a clear conscience the way my forefathers did, as I constantly remember you in my prayers night and day, 4 longing to see you, even as I recall your tears, so that I may be filled with joy. 5 For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that [it is] in you as well. 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. 7 For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline. 8 Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with [me] in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God, ...*

V3. Paul doesn't give thanks to God because of the special ministry he was given and which he had now almost accomplished. No, he gives thanks to God because of Whom God is. Could the reason be that he had experienced much of the grace and mercy of God and that with the peace of God in his heart he was able to go through all hardships?

Of course he has known God for a long time now. Ever since the time of his forefathers he has been serving God. They enabled him to serve God. He doesn't make any judgment about their inward condition, he only writes down what characterized them. He acknowledges what was in them for God. With gratefulness he looks back at his relationship with his parents and forefathers at the end of his life. Those relationships are not shut off when we come to conversion. Also now it is of great importance that the Lord is being served in the families and generations.

Paul already knew and served God before he converted. He did that to the best of his knowledge and with a pure conscience. That doesn't mean that his service carried the consent or blessing of God. It only means that what he did, he did in ignorance (1Tim

1:12-14). He was sincerely convinced that with everything he was doing he was serving God (*cf. Jn 16:2-3*). That's why his conscience did not accuse him for anything he did. His conscience remained pure; he never fought against his conscience. Herein also lies an exhortation for Timothy to keep a pure conscience.

He always remembers Timothy in his prayers. Timothy may know that and that must have encouraged him. How nice it is when others tell you that they pray for you. It is also nice when you can tell others that you pray for them. Through prayer the remembrance you have of others for whom you pray, remains vivid. In that way you still feel the connection between you and them. Because of that you are not standing alone.

V4. That doesn't mean they don't need to see one another. Paul has a strong desire to see Timothy. He needs company, especially that of Timothy (*see also 2Tim 4:9*). He certainly has the company of the Lord (*2Tim 4:17*), but that doesn't mean that he despises the relationships given by God. On the contrary, he, the great apostle, needs them. He is being encouraged by them (*Acts 28:15; 1Thes 2:17; 3:10*). It is not a proof of a spiritual mind when believers experience their faith individually. That's not the intention of the Lord.

The tears of Timothy have moved the apostle. They are tears of sadness that he saw when Timothy said goodbye to him, his older friend. The tears are the proof of true friendship. That is precisely what makes it so precious for Paul when Timothy would come to him. The joy that it would give him will be a full joy, probably again with tears, but then of joy. The tears of Timothy remain, as it were, still fresh in his memory. He always remembers that.

V5. And there is something else that Paul calls to remembrance and that is the genuine faith of his young friend. The word 'genuine' or 'unfeigned' comes from the Greek word 'hypocrite'. A Greek actor was called 'hypocritis'. An actor always plays the role of another person. He is not himself, but he pretends to be somebody else (*cf. 2Sam 14:2*). Timothy certainly doesn't pretend, he is not characterized by counterfeit, but he is real. That's also the



reason why Paul wants to see him. You also love to be accompanied by sincere believers, by people who *really* live with the Lord, don't you?

The faith dwells in him, it has its home there. Faith is not a side matter to him, something for special occasions. Besides, he has had good examples of faith. Paul reminds him of his grandmother and mother. This is an example of the working grace of God in the generations. There are many changes, the apostasy is continuing, but there are also things that remain. There are always people who have a sincere faith in Him.

Paul doesn't remind him of heroes of faith from a far past, of long-ago-days but of very close examples, his mother and grandmother. That should mean to you: Look around and you will surely find examples in your neighborhood in whom the faith dwells. The touch stone is the faithfulness and obedience to God's Word.

V6. If a sincere faith dwells in you, then there is a reason to remind you that you have received a "*gift of God*" and which you therefore ought to use. Things may probably be quite difficult in the church, but that should be a challenge to your faith. Timothy has to be reminded of it. That may be the case with you. We all tend to avoid difficulties, don't we?

Paul gives Timothy an extra stimulus to 'kindle afresh' his gift. He reminds him of the way he received the gift. That's actually because Paul laid his hands on him. In his first letter Paul also encouraged him in his ministry. That encouragement is the reminder that others already had announced that there was a ministry ready for him (*1Tim 1:18*). Afterwards the elders also laid their hands on him (*1Tim 4:14*) and in that way they made themselves one with him in his ministry. When in a weak moment he thinks he just imagines all this, he can recall this again. And now he adds a third remembrance in order to encourage Timothy. Paul personally has granted him that gift. Timothy will undoubtedly remember that event.

V7. After all Paul has not acted at his own discretion, but by God's commission. Each gift comes from God; it is 'the gift of God'. What is said here to Timothy is therefore an encouragement for you too. Like Timothy you may know what God has given to you.

When you focus on the circumstances you might become afraid. All kinds of arguments may arise in you that can cause you not to use the gift given to you. You could probably think that it all makes no sense after all or you may fear for the adversary that your performance may stir up. This fear is a kind of cowardice, a fear of losing your face or to be ridiculed. Paul points out that this "*spirit of fear*" is not from God (cf. *Jn 14:27; 1Jn 4:18*).

What certainly is from God is His Holy Spirit, Who wants to prove Himself in you as a Spirit "*of power and love and discipline*". You may know that when God gives a gift He makes sure that for the exercise of it He in the first place gives through His Holy Spirit the necessary power and ability.

In the second place the exercise of a gift also demands self-sacrifice, for the gift is not meant to edify yourself but to serve others. Therefore the Holy Spirit will give you love as the true motive to serve.

Finally, it is also important that in the exercise of your gift you act with discipline or self-control. This happens when your spirit acts in harmony with the Holy Spirit, so that you know that He is guiding you and that you do not act uncontrolled impulsivity (cf. *1Cor 14:32*). The Holy Spirit leads you to well-balanced actions and thoughtful words. It doesn't show a work of the Spirit when a person says: 'I couldn't help, it was the Spirit Who urged me to.'

Still some note about the order of these three aspects in which the work of the Holy Spirit is to be recognized. 'Love' stands between 'power' and 'discipline'. Love actually stands in the center. It is about love. Love is the oil between power and discipline, through which both aspects 'run' well.

You see that also in *1 Corinthians 12-14*. *Chapter 12* summarizes the gifts and in *chapter 14* it is about the exercise of it. The chapter in between, *chapter 13*, is about love. The gifts of *chapter 12* can only be exercised as they are described in *chapter 14*, if the motive for the exercise is the love that is described in *chapter 13*.

V8. God has given us His Spirit to testify through the Spirit boldly of the Lord Jesus. Like Peter who was first ashamed for his Lord and denied Him (*Mk 14:66-72*), but witnessed through the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost with great boldness of his Lord (*Acts 2:14,36*). The power of the Holy Spirit has been given to us to testify of our Lord and not to perform all kinds of spectacular signs and miracles in order to stir up people's attention. That is precisely what happens when spectacular things happen and not when somebody speaks out a clear testimony about the Lord Jesus in simplicity.

We all need these words so that we will not be discouraged. Unfortunately it happens often that we as Christians testify in such a way that we should be ashamed of. When believers become lukewarm and worldly minded and when committed witnesses are being silenced, it requires a lot of courage to persevere.

Paul relates himself to the testimony of the Lord Jesus. That is not boasting, but reality. After all, he is imprisoned because of the testimony he gave of his Lord. As a matter of fact, he doesn't see himself as a prisoner of Nero, but of his Lord. His testimony has caused him tribulation.

Timothy is, as well as you are, called to consciously accept the tribulation that goes together with the gospel and not to avoid it. Preaching the gospel and tribulation go together. But it is the power of God that enables you to go through that tribulation, not as a fate, but as a privilege (*Acts 5:41*).

Now read 2 Timothy 1:3-8 again.

Reflection: In what way could you stir up your gift?

God's Own Purpose | verses 9-12

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

..., **9** who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity, **10** but now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, **11** for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher. **12** For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day.

V9. After the command that Paul gave his young friend Timothy and wherein he also exhorted you, two verses with a great content follow. What is written in these verses is great because its content is totally about what God has done to you in Christ Jesus. It is not about you and your feebleness or failures. Nor is it about the decay that could discourage you that much and neither about the hostility that may frighten you to testify. No, these verses lift you up above all hardships and tell you about the purpose that God already had before the world existed, "from all eternity". His purpose stands therefore apart from the whole problem of sin and its consequences that exist only after the worlds were created.

In His purpose He also thought of you. He had the purpose to "save" you. And it did not stop with a purpose. He also carried it out. When we plan to do something we often have to admit afterwards that it didn't stand or that something is still missing. That is impossible with God. He has saved you. This is a deed of God that was achieved perfectly (*Eph 2:5*) and cannot possibly be abolished (*see Jn 10:28-29*). He has performed that deed by calling you. By saving you God completely redeemed you from all your sins and the power of sin and from the power of the world (*Gal 1:4*).

He also has a goal with your life. He has given you a *“holy calling”*. He has called you to live holy before Him, separated from everything He has saved you from and to be fully consecrated to Him. Indeed a powerful change has happened in both your position and the goal of your life. Regarding your position, you have changed from somebody who was under the wrath of God into someone who is saved. You do not have to fear God’s judgment anymore. Regarding your life goal, you have changed from someone who lived only for himself and whose prospect was to end up in hell into someone who lives before God and who will live forever with Him.

You understand that this happened without any contribution from your side. God also didn’t ask you too actually, for you were absolutely not able to. Your works only asked for judgment on you. No, that great change you owe to God’s *“own purpose”* alone. And you have received part of it through *“the grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus”*. Grace reminds you that you couldn’t apply any right from your side on these blessings. It points at God’s sovereign plan. For the execution of His purpose and to make you able to be part of that grace, God has for His great joy a wonderful basis: Christ Jesus. In Him He could also realize His counsel to you.

The reason for each blessing that God gives to whomsoever, is in no way because of who that person is, but because of Who Christ Jesus is. In His purpose He was led by Whom Christ Jesus is. God values His Person so highly that He has related His whole purpose to Him. The only way that you could be a part of His purpose was because He saw you in Christ Jesus.

Can you understand that you have taken part in that? As for me, I cannot. But it doesn’t depend on your or my understanding whether it is true. It is true because God has done that and as it is said already, *“from all eternity”*. That at the same time guarantees that nothing that has happened since creation, can change anything, even the slightest thing, on this purpose of God.

V10. Still we would not have been able to know anything of God's plan if He had not revealed that through the appearance of our Savior Christ Jesus. The purpose of God was hidden in His counsel, but God revealed His purpose when Christ Jesus appeared in Whom He could give you that great grace to participate in His purpose. But take note! It was not without a reason that Paul precedes the name 'Christ Jesus' by the name 'Savior'. It is about His appearance at His first coming to earth. Then He came as 'Savior'.

Do you see through Whom God was able to save you? The name 'Savior' reminds us of His work on the cross. The work He achieved there was the way for God to execute His purpose, in order to save you and to call you with a holy calling. The only way for you to be able to partake of that was if the Savior would abolish death. Death, the wages of sin (*Rom 6:23*), formed the barrier against the execution of God's purpose. That hindrance was robbed from its power by our Savior by going into death Himself and rising from it again.

In His resurrection He *"brought life and immortality to light"*. The power of the 'life' that characterized Him was proven by His resurrection. His life has triumphed over death. Not death but life is conqueror. You wouldn't have known that if the Lord had not died and risen. You have received eternal life for the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, is eternal life. He who has the Son has life (*1Jn 5:12*). The Son is the true God and eternal life (*1Jn 5:20*). You believe in the Lord Jesus; you have the Son as your life.

Something else that was brought to light was 'immortality'. That refers to the body. The body you now have is not immortal. The older you get the more you notice how it is declining, how its power dilutes and how it loses its youthful beauty. But when the Lord Jesus comes you will receive a body that will not be affected by the test of time. That body remains in all its freshness and purity through all eternity. That is also the result of the victory that the Lord Jesus has achieved over death. You see that they all are truths, facts of the faith that has been established completely outside yourself. That goes for both the purpose of God and for what the Lord Jesus has done when He appeared on earth.

Now there is still a question that has to be answered and that is: What did God do to enable you to see His purpose and that you would accept the work of the Lord Jesus as being accomplished for you? He did that “*through the gospel*”. The gospel is the means through which you have heard about God and what the Lord Jesus has achieved and how necessary His work has been for you. When you accepted the gospel you got saved by it and you got part of all these awesome things.

V11. God has appointed Paul to preach this gospel. He not only preached this good news (that is the meaning of the word ‘gospel’) to the Jews. This purpose of God dates back from before the foundation of the world and stands apart from the distinction between Jews and Gentiles. The ministry of Paul in the gospel extends to all people from all nations.

For this ministry as “*a preacher*” he obtained an appointment from God. You can hereby think of a herald, a messenger who is clothed with a formal authority, in order to pass on formal messages from e.g. kings or city councils, without changing anything about the message. This is how Paul preaches the gospel.

God also appointed him as “*an apostle*”. That has got more to do with a certain position. God has sent him and he who rejects him rejects God, his Sender.

Finally he is also “*a teacher*”. He teaches the content of the gospel. That content is Christ Jesus. Paul explains Who He is and what He has done.

V12. Paul wholeheartedly believes in the gospel. When he preaches he puts his whole heart in it. That’s not what the people, and particularly the Jews, are waiting for. This zealotry of Paul in the gospel is the reason of the suffering he is going through. But that doesn’t cause any change in his conviction.

He has exhorted Timothy not to be ashamed (*verse 8*). He can do that because he himself is not ashamed. No adversity can confuse him. That’s because he doesn’t believe in a dogma, a doctrine, but

in a Person. He knows “*whom*” he has believed. He lives out of a living relationship with that Person.

He knows the power of that Person. He has already had so many experiences with that God that it caused him to now have a deeply rooted conviction pertaining Him. He has experienced many times what God is able to do. God has not been pushed away from the throne but He has all power. To Him Paul has entrusted what he had committed. That is the gospel that God has entrusted him (*cf. verse 14 and 1Tim 6:20*). He is imprisoned and is not able to freely travel around anymore and to work with that what was entrusted to him, but God remains and Paul knows that He will continue to work with what was entrusted to him.

In that way the gospel is still being preached and also his letter is still being read as you are now doing. Just like Paul is laying the results of his ministry in the hands of the Lord you can do that also. We do not have to keep the developments in our control. It is not our case, it is the church of *God*. We can be sure that whatever we give Him to keep will be safe with Him. Robbery or loss is impossible.

The certainty of this ‘preservation’ has a validity “*until that day*”, which is the day of the appearance of the Lord Jesus. It is the day that the Lord Jesus will reward everything. For the measurement of the reward the Lord doesn’t consider the success you have achieved, but whether you have been faithful to what He has ordered you to do. Then you will, like Paul, find back with Him everything that you have entrusted Him to keep for you. This is the attitude you can only develop by knowing in Whom you have believed.

Now read 2 Timothy 1:9-12 again.

Reflection: What do you learn in these verses about the purpose and the grace of God?



## Word, Spirit and Mercy | verses 13-18

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

*13 Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. 14 Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to [you]. 15 You are aware of the fact that all who are in Asia turned away from me, among whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes. 16 The Lord grant mercy to the house of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains; 17 but when he was in Rome, he eagerly searched for me and found me— 18 the Lord grant to him to find mercy from the Lord on that day—and you know very well what services he rendered at Ephesus.*

V13. In the previous verses Paul spoke out his absolute confidence in the Lord Jesus. That is for Timothy, and also for you, of course a great exhortation to do the same. But still there is another reliable hold in a time of decay. That hold you have in the “*sound words*”. Paul points Timothy out that he should “*retain*” the ‘sound words’ he heard from him as “*the standard*”.

The word ‘standard’ is a ‘concept’ or ‘model’ or ‘draft’ of a set-up, composition, design. Paul speaks about the inspired Word of God. That ought to be kept completely. You are not to neglect or drop anything of it. Not only the content of the message is important, but also the words and their rank order are given by God with the purpose for us to hold on to that.

With creeds people may try to explain God’s Word in human words, but they still remain to be words of men and therefore imperfect. They also cannot protect us against the most trivial false doctrine. Only God’s Word is perfect and gives a full guarantee against deviation when we keep it as standard. Each word of it stands on the right place where God intended it to be. God’s Word cannot to be improved. Don’t let yourself to be confused by

sayings as: 'It not about the word choice, but about the message.' It is certainly about the word choice too.

I think that a warning for modern translations of the Bible is justified. I do not mean that a translation in the most possible old English language is the most faithful. The use of nowadays English certainly doesn't exclude a good translation from the original text. No, the point is that only people with a living faith in the Lord Jesus and with great esteem for God's Word are able to faithfully translate the Bible.

The making of a faithful translation is not dependent on technology or science, but on skills connected with the right approach of God's Word. That right approach consists of the deep awareness of the holiness and authority of each word that God had let to be written down in His Word. If that is the mind you also have of reading God's Word you will experience the saving power the Word has. The chance that you fall prey to false teachings is then absolutely excluded.

The original word for 'sound' has to do with hygiene and can therefore also be translated with 'healthy making'. The words of Paul that were inspired have therefore the intention to improve the spiritual health. Still Paul adds something to it, namely that the example of the healthy words has to be retained "*in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus*". When God's Word is not connected to the Person of Christ, faith in the letter of the Scripture becomes a dead form. You can only retain the truth when you approach the word in faith and love. These are the two aspects or activities of the new life of which Christ is the source.

It is faith and love that are present and to be found in Him. It is only to be received from Him. From Him you learn how the daily confidence of faith focuses on God. You see that in His life on earth. From Him you also learn how the love of God focuses on men.

This addition is important because otherwise the standard would have become a template that causes the living faith life to sink

and to become a dead orthodoxy. When faith and love in Christ are the active elements to retain the standard you will experience the support of the Word. Even if you couldn't find any support in the church as a whole, due to the decline that has entered, you will, even if you're alone, surely find help in God's Word.

V14. There is still one more encouragement. After having pointed to the Lord Jesus and the Word of God, Paul speaks about *"the Holy Spirit who dwells in us"*. Paul is on the brink of dying the martyr's death and going to his Lord. Timothy still has to remain here and you also are still here. The circumstances will not become easier and you will surely agree with that. The decline has become even worse. The attacks on the ministry of Timothy will become tougher. If you want to serve the Lord you will experience that too. Everything will cause such an increasing pressure on him, and on you, that you may want to give up *"the treasure which has been entrusted to [you]"*. But listen: you are being exhorted to guard what has been entrusted to you.

Paul calls it a 'treasure', which means something beautiful, of Divine value. Also to you all the sound words of the Scripture have been committed as something of Divine value. That you must keep and not give up anything of it. You don't have to do that in your own strength. It even is impossible to do that. It is being pointed out to you that the Holy Spirit dwells in you. He gives you the necessary power to guard what has been entrusted to you.

Each part of the truth that you have learnt to see and for which you have thanked God will be criticized by the enemy. But He Who dwells in you is greater than he who is in the world (1Jn 4:4). He enables you to resist against each attack the enemy commits on the truth. The important thing is that you make sure that in no way you hinder the Holy Spirit to have total control over your life.

V15. You shouldn't count much on the support of others in your fight *"for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints"* (Jude :3). Paul points out to Timothy about the believers in Asia.

Timothy knew that all in Asia have turned away from the apostle, while he, as a matter of fact, has intensively preached the gospel in that area. It was he who taught God's thoughts to the many who had come to faith there.

You can for example read in the *letters to the Thessalonians* and in the *letter to the Ephesians* how he served the believers there. The elders of Ephesus were all in tears when he left them. What made them most sad was that they wouldn't see him ever again (*Acts 20:37-38*). Now some years have passed. And how is the situation there? The good memories of Paul have faded. They have even turned their back on him!

The man to whom they owe a lot is rejected by all of them and not only by an individual or a few. Why? They are possibly ashamed for him, the poor prisoner who fell into disgrace with the government. Of course they haven't given up Christendom, but as far as they are concerned, Paul's emphasis on being a Christian is too strong. You shouldn't make efforts to create enemies, should you? That is true, but a faithful witness cannot help but make enemies. He doesn't do that purposely, but actually, being faithful to the Lord and His truth exposes hostility.

Paul is imprisoned because he has witnessed the truth. Therefore turning away from Paul is in fact turning away from the truth that Paul preaches. That has made his imprisonment much heavier. He mentions two of those who have turned away from him by their names. It must have been necessary to mention these names. It is not unlikely that these are leading brothers with great influence who are misusing their influence and the exclusion of Paul to deceive the church. By mentioning their names Paul exposes them.

V16. He also mentions another name, but with joy. The faithfulness of Onesiphorus and his house has been a blessing to him in the midst of all the unfaithfulness that he had experienced. This faithful believer has not been ashamed for God's faithful servant. Onesiphorus has "*refreshed*", a word that literally means 'to cool', the apostle in the heat of the persecution. This refreshment Paul

experienced when in his imprisonment he unexpectedly saw the face of Onesiphorus appear.

V17. It must have done the lonesome prisoner well to be visited by someone who made an effort to come to him. It would not be easy to find Paul, but it must have made Onesiphorus tremendously grateful to the Lord when he could finally embrace Paul. His efforts were not in vain. And how enormously grateful Paul must have been to the Lord. Have you also ever experienced refreshment when believers told you that they were praying for you or supporting you when you were in trouble?

Onesiphorus had no address of where to find Paul, but he must have prayed to the Lord Who could lead him to Paul. And the Lord did it, yet, not by bringing him through the shortest and quickest way to Paul. No, Onesiphorus had to ask the Lord time after time if he was on the right track. When you ask the guidance of the Lord to achieve something of which you know that He wants it, it doesn't mean that you will easily accomplish that goal. The Lord wants you to commit yourself to it. In that way He wants to teach you to depend on Him at every step you make.

V18. Paul wishes that the Lord will reward the household of Onesiphorus because of the mercy he received from him (*see Mat 5:7*). His 'household' – it seems that he was married and had children and probably even his own domestic workers – fully supported the actions of Onesiphorus. They let him go and they must have sent their greetings and probably goods for Paul. What a great blessing it is when there are also households today of which all the family members want to remain faithful to the truth and make efforts for those who preach it.

Then Paul also wishes that the Lord will grant to Onesiphorus that he may find mercy from the Lord "*on that day*" (*cf. Jude :21*). In this way Paul adds to his earlier wishes that the Lord will reward Onesiphorus for his efforts before the judgment seat. 'That day' is also the day that the Lord will appear with His reward (*verse 12; Rev 22:12*).

Onesiphorus is not a stranger to Timothy. He made the acquaintance of him at Ephesus and could tell, even better than Paul, how this man has made it a habit to serve the Lord and His matters. It is wonderful when there are people in a local church of whom can be said that they have performed many services. Wouldn't it be a joy for the Lord and the church when this can also be said of you after some time?

Now read 2 Timothy 1:13-18 again.

Reflection: How do you manage to retain the standard of the sound words?

## 2 Timothy 2

### A Good Servant | verses 1-6

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

*1 You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. 2 The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. 3 Suffer hardship with [me], as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. 4 No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier. 5 Also if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not win the prize unless he competes according to the rules. 6 The hard-working farmer ought to be the first to receive his share of the crops.*

V1. It is not that it doesn't bother Paul that so many people have abandoned him. He is surely suffering because of that. Yet he is not discouraged. With the words "*you therefore*", by which the connection with the previous is indicated, Paul encourages his "*son*" Timothy not to be like the 'abandoners', but like Onesiphorus.

He doesn't say to Timothy that he shouldn't care at all about the circumstances and stoically perform his duty. He neither encourages him to introduce all kinds of commands or prohibitions for stopping the continuation of the decline. Legalistic prescriptions, rules and creeds give no power, but they on the contrary cause an increase of narrow-mindedness about being a Christian and do not prevent decline. No, he points out to Timothy what remains and where power is to be found.

Timothy doesn't need to be depressed or take his refuge in carnal remedies if he strengthens himself in the grace that is in Christ

Jesus. This is the grace of *chapter 1:9*. This implies that you are to look up to the other world that lies outside the visible one, which has to do with eternal life. Christ has not changed, whatever may happen to men. Also the power of His grace remains undiminished and great. You may also tap from that source of grace which always remains full. You can also go there to strengthen yourself in your spiritual fight. Only in the power of grace is it possible to resist evil.

V2. Then Paul points his spiritual child to the Word, the truth that he had passed on to him. The many testimonies that went together with it may confirm Timothy in his conviction about the truth. That gives him security about the truth. In that way he is able to recognize and reject everything as false teachings that deviates from the truth that he has heard. (Something you should beware of is: to hold fast the truth in a way that suits you best. If that is the case, then you risk, dependent on your character, falling into legalism or into liberalism.)

There are no new revelations. With the truths that God has revealed to Paul and which are passed on by him, God has said everything He wanted to make known in His Word (*Col 1:25*).

Timothy not only receives the confirmation that what he heard from Paul is the truth, he himself must also pass on that truth unchangeably. He has to make sure that the truth will be spread to others after him. That is the very normal way to let the truth proceed. You see that Paul doesn't give Timothy a certain authority or consecrate him in a special way. The Bible is not familiar with such a thing like an official right to preach, something that is only allowed to do by men with a theological training. It is about committing the truth of God's Word to "*faithful men*" who in their turn also teach others this truth.

Paul names two necessary characteristics that a person should have to be able to teach the truth. A person should be "*faithful*" and "*able*". 'Faithful' means reliable, trustworthy in the way of dealing with what is entrusted (*cf. 1Cor 4:1-2*). He who is faithful



has a good spiritual mind. All believers have to be faithful, but unfortunately, not all are (2Thes 3:2b).

In addition to that being 'able' is necessary to pass on what has been taught. Not all faithful believers have that ability. Herein you recognize the gift of being a teacher. To be able to practice this gift it is necessary for a person to be faithful himself, which means that he lives in accordance to the teaching he teaches to others (cf. 1Tim 4:12-16). The "others" are apparently also teachers that are taught about the truth.

This method of knowledge transfer differs from the manner knowledge is being transferred on theological faculties to which a diploma and an official degree are often connected. There it is (mainly) about intellect, here it goes through the line of faithful people:

Paul -> Timothy -> people who are faithful and able -> other people

It is about the transfer of the irreplaceable truths of the Word of God (definitely not about philosophies or ideas of men) to the next generations, that it may also characterize their lives. This ministry of teachers – and that goes for each ministry or gift of a believer – is not intended for the person himself, but always for others.

You may profit by their ministry, for example by reading the commentaries they have written, by attending the bible lectures they give or by attending conferences where God's Word is being explained by them. Of course listening to records of bible lectures and conferences is a wonderful possibility to obtain teachings by them from God's Word (e.g. the audio records of [www.oude-sporen.nl](http://www.oude-sporen.nl), 'Other languages'). And let's not forget the meetings of the local church. It is crucial for your spiritual growth to faithfully attend these meetings.

V3. From *verse 3* some characteristics follow that are of great importance for Timothy in passing on the truth. They are also es-

sential for you. These characteristics enable you to continue the work that the Lord has ordered you to do. They have to do with warfare and patience.

You find yourself on a hostile territory where powers are active that want to hinder you to pass on the truth. Therefore it is important that you endure and suffer (*verse 3*), that you are not engaged with the affairs of everyday life (*verse 4*), that you fight according to the rules (*verse 5*) and that you labor first before you enjoy the fruits (*verse 6*).

The first is “*suffer hardship*”. In connection to the previous verse Paul asks to suffer with him for the truth and the gospel. You are a good soldier when you are aware of the enemy and notice him before he notices you. The soldier here is in active service and not in the barracks or on leave. He is in the front line and finds himself continually in a war situation. He receives his orders from his Superior, “*Christ Jesus*”, and stands therefore continuously in contact with Him.

V4. He doesn't have to worry about anything. His life is not entangled with or engaged in “*the affairs of everyday life*”. The civilian matters are meant by that in contrast to the military obligations.

This attitude goes for all who serve the Lord and it is not only for the so-called ‘fulltime workers’. When you serve the Lord only one thing is important: how you could live to the satisfaction of the Lord. Demas lost sight of that and was attracted by the pleasure of the world (2Tim 4:10; cf. Lk 8:14). The Lord Jesus is the One Who has enlisted you as a soldier and into service and nobody else, no man or church. Be aware that if you want to satisfy men, you cannot be a soldier of Christ, let alone a good one (Gal 1:10).

V5. Another character you can't miss in your service is that of someone who “*competes as an athlete*”. It literally means ‘to fight as an athlete’. The fight of a soldier makes you think of a war situation. The fight of an athlete is about winning the prize, the medal or, as it is here, the crown. The picture of the athlete is derived from a person who participated in the national sports matches of

the Greeks. When a person won he received a crown (2Tim 4:8; 1Cor 9:25; 1Pet 5:4). This crown consisted of a garland, made of branches and leaves of possibly an olive tree. The material value of the crown was nil. But the other side was that the fame this crown represented was extraordinary great (Heb 2:7,9). If you wanted to receive that you had to win.

Yet, the victory could only be claimed when the athlete considered the rules connected to the match. One of the conditions was for example that the athletes had to be Greeks. They also had to have trained. They had to swear before Zeus that they had trained for ten months and that they would consider the rules of the branch of sports they had subscribed themselves for.

In the same way the servant of the Lord Jesus has to fight according to the rules. That means that he ought to know the rules and that he obeys them. This doesn't mean obedient to the law but to the Lord and His Word. He is not allowed to act to his own understanding.

V6. The last character that Paul mentions is that of a farmer, literally 'worker of the land or field' (cf. 1Cor 3:9; 9:7). A farmer is the whole year engaged in the production of the fruit. He is not able to accelerate the growth, but he is able to make sure that there are no hindrances for the growth. Therefore he will spud out weeds, trim, nourish, water and protect the plants. Only when that work has been done well and unceasingly, he will see the results of his labor. Then he will see that his efforts are being rewarded and he will be the first to enjoy the fruit. If he gets lazy and impatient and stops halfway he will destroy all the work he has done earlier and will stand with empty hands when the harvest time comes (Pro 20:4; 24:30-31).

Sometimes you get to see some results of your service already on earth. Though the real enjoyment of all fruits of your service will be only when you are with the Lord.

Therefore you should remember: the Lord takes care of you (verses 3-4), you are to make sure that you act according to God's Word

(verse 5) and you can look forward to the coming enjoyment of everything you have done here for the Lord (verse 6).

Now read 2 Timothy 2:1-6 again.

Reflection: What are the characteristics of a good servant? Which characteristics are not so evident with you? What could you do about that?

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 Understanding In Everything | verses 7-12a

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

*7 Consider what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything. 8 Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descendant of David, according to my gospel, 9 for which I suffer hardship even to imprisonment as a criminal; but the word of God is not imprisoned. 10 For this reason I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen, so that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus [and] with [it] eternal glory. 11 It is a trustworthy statement: For if we died with Him, we will also live with Him; 12 If we endure, we will also reign with Him; ...*

V7. It appears to me that the examples in the previous verses are in plain language. Nevertheless Paul points out emphatically to Timothy that he has to bear in mind what he just said. “Consider” means to grasp with the mind, to ponder on it, to think it over. Paul admonishes Timothy here in the sense of an order. He wants Timothy to understand the real meaning of the examples he used by considering them. This attitude is of course important when reading the whole Word of God. You obtain insight from the Lord when you consider His Word. You will learn to understand His thoughts.

Here you see, like often in the Scripture, the connection between what you should do and what the Lord does. The more you ponder on the Scripture and meditate it, the more the activity of the Holy Spirit grows to clarify the teaching of it. If you are restfully and peacefully engaged in His Word in God’s presence, the Lord will come to you and give you insight. Not by using your intellect – although it is not separated from it – but by the working of the Holy Spirit you dig into the Divine matters and understand them.

V8. With all meditation on the Scripture it is important that you “remember Jesus Christ”. It is all about Him, He is the center of all

God's thoughts. Understanding in everything is first of all understanding in Who Jesus Christ is and what He has done.

Paul also helps you on the way by mentioning two main points of the truth that relate to Christ (*see also Rom 1:3*). In the first place you ought to remember Him as "*risen from the dead*". What do you think of when you consider Him as the Resurrected from the dead? Then you think of God, Who is able to establish something completely new by His creating and life giving power. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus is the proof and the beginning of it. God has got nothing to do with the world, sin and death. He has to judge over those issues. What Christ has done opens a new world with new people where everything is in accordance with God and where Christ is the Center.

There is another thing that you should remember in relation to Jesus Christ and that is that He is "*descendant of David*". That determines you that God is faithful to the promises He made to His people Israel. He will fulfill all those promises. In the future Israel shall dwell again in the land that God has given them. In that land the Lord Jesus will be seated as the true Son of David, as the promised Messiah on the throne of His father David in the city of His father David. Then from Jerusalem He will rule the world in peace and righteousness.

Again, as '*risen from the dead*' He is now the living Lord in heaven. He lives there to always intercede for you before God (*Rom 8:34; Heb 7:25*). He knows how difficult it is to remain faithful to God's Word as a loner. Regarding the phrase '*descendant of David*' you may reflect that to the fact that the suffering will come to an end when He comes to reign. Then the things on earth will be like they are in heaven: totally in accordance with God. By remembering Him in this way it will strengthen you to live to His honor in these later days.

What Paul says doesn't deviate from what he calls "*my gospel*". That means that he has proclaimed this in his preaching of the gospel and he himself has kept it in remembrance. That is why he has persevered up till now and has not given up. Therefore he is

also still powerful in the faith and is able to encourage Timothy by that. What he writes now applies to all ages, also for now and also for you.

V9. On the basis of the preaching of the gospel and his commitment to it he endures these things. He is no evildoer, for he has not committed any legal offence. Paul receives the same treatment like the two crucified next to the Lord Jesus, who are also called evildoers (*Lk 23:32,39*). It makes clear what society thinks of them and of him. People bracket them in the same category as such people. Above all he is here in the footstep of his Master Who *“was numbered with the transgressors”* (*Isa 53:12*).

He was so impressed by the gospel that he would do anything for it. His hands may be chained, but the Word of God cannot possibly be chained. His faith in its power is maintained unbroken. The power of God’s Word cannot possibly be limited or abolished by anything from man. Its advancement will move on. It will convince hearts and consciences and will liberate people from spiritual chains. The Word of God will conquer any adversary.

Man is like grass that fades, but the Word of God lasts forever, it remains to eternity (*Isa 40:6-8; 1Pet 1:24-25*). When an instrument is being hindered to actively spread the gospel by imprisonment or death, God will deploy new instruments. Are you deployable?

V10. Despite the fact that Paul is deactivated regarding the preaching, he is not deactivated regarding his involvement. His imprisonment and suffering are a part of it. Paul knows that God is using his chains and hardships to reach and bless *“the elect”*. That’s why he puts everything on the line to make that happen. He doesn’t think of his own pain and hardships, but he thinks of the elect. For their sake he endures everything.

Also in this way he looks like his Lord. The Lord Jesus has also endured all things for the sake of the elect. In His atoning work for each of the elect He is of course unique. Regarding this no one is able to follow Him or share it with Him. You are indeed able to

share in His devotion and suffering that was caused by men. That is a privilege.

Paul's heart goes out to all who will be saved by the preaching of the gospel. The more who are saved the more the glory of the Lord Jesus will be multiplied (*Pro 14:28a*). God has people in mind who He wants to save. In His counsel He has also decided that they will be saved. You didn't know that before the gospel reached you and you came to faith. You have also no idea who God has taken into His counsel to be saved. That is totally God's business and not yours.

What you are to keep in mind is that God wants all people to be saved. Therefore the gospel is to be preached to all people. God's love goes out to all people (*Jn 3:16*). That's how it should also be with us (*2Cor 5:14*). That the elect will accept it is another encouragement to endure all adversary and rejection. It is because of them. It is presented here as if it depends on your dedication that the elect will indeed be saved. After that salvation an eternal glory follows. That is also the part of the elect. Paul is not satisfied with less than that. Are you?

V11. For the fourth time Paul points out that it is a trustworthy statement (*see 1Tim 1:15; 3:1; 4:9*). In the next letter he repeats it one more time (*Tit 3:8*). It refers to what he just has said; you can count on it. It also applies to what follows after that. He confirms again that the Word remains, although he is not able to continue his service. You find everything in it that you need to find out how God wants you to live and what His plans are with you, the church, Israel and the world.

The starting point is that you died with Christ. You ought not to take the word "if" as a doubt or insecurity, but in the sense of 'because it is so'. Because it is so that you have "died with Him", then living for yourself has ended, a life that you lived without considering God. You have acknowledged that you have lived in sin as a sinner and that God had to throw you into hell for that. The answer of God to that confession was His gospel. Therein He made known to you that Christ has gone through the judgment



and that He judged you in Him. When Christ died, you died with Him.

But Christ did not remain in death. He rose. And therefore you also rose and live. Only you do not live for yourself anymore, but for Him (*Gal 2:20*). If that would mean that you like Christ would have to die the martyr's death, then you will like Christ indeed live and also with Him.

*V12a.* Actually, to die the martyr's death is just not for everyone. Surely everyone who testifies of the Lord Jesus will experience a form of suffering. On the other hand the endurance of that means that you will reign with Him. The coming kingdom is related here with suffering (*cf. Acts 14:22; Rom 8:17; 2Thes 1:4-5*). Having some insight in that great future where you will reign together with the Lord Jesus, gives strength today to endure slander and rejection. Reigning soon with Him is a reward for enduring now.

You see that reigning with Him still doesn't occur yet. Our task now is not to reign but endure. Earlier Paul already told that to the Corinthians too, who also wanted to take some advance on reigning in the millennial kingdom of peace, because they didn't want to endure slander (*1Cor 4:8-13*). The Lord Jesus has given the perfect example when He was being abused and said to Pilate: "*But as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm*" (*Jn 18:36*).

Now read 2 Timothy 2:7-12a again.

Reflection: What do you learn here about the Lord Jesus and your relation to Him?

**The Solid Foundation of God** | *verses 12b-19*

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

*...; if we deny Him, He also will deny us; 13 If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself. 14 Remind [them] of these things, and solemnly charge [them] in the presence of God not to wrangle about words, which is useless [and leads] to the ruin of the hearers. 15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth. 16 But avoid worldly [and] empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness, 17 and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, 18 [men] who have gone astray from the truth saying that the resurrection has already taken place, and they upset the faith of some. 19 Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Everyone who names the name of the Lord is to abstain from wickedness."*

V12b. After having used several times a positive 'if' with the corresponding promise, now several times a negative 'if' follows with a corresponding result. To "deny" Christ means to deny against better judgment to know Him. That happens when people confess to be in relation with Christ but deny that relation before other people.

A clear example you have in the denial by Peter (*Mat 26:69-74*). Of Peter we know very well that he is a believer, for he has confessed this sin and the Lord has forgiven him. Therefore this sin can be committed by any believer. When that happens the Lord has to deny that believer, as He had to deny Peter too. From the moment that Peter denied the Lord Jesus, the Lord said to His Father that He did not know Peter.

That doesn't mean that the Lord did not keep an eye on Peter and didn't bring him to repentance (*Lk 22:61*). But until the moment of repentance the Lord denied before His Father that He knew Peter.

This denial by the Lord also implies that Peter lost the blessing and reward that he received if he had not denied the Lord. The denying of the Lord has therefore a consequence for today and for the future.

Also people who only confess with their lips that they know the Lord and address Him with “*Lord, Lord*” (*Mat 7:21*), will find themselves in situations that they deny Him. The Lord will deny them too, but the consequences will then be endlessly worse. They will be denied by Him forever (*Mat 10:33; 7:22-23*).

V13. With the denying you could speak about a denying that happens by men and a denying that happens by the Lord (even though it is with a difference in meaning). That is not possible regarding being faithless. We people can be faithless, but the Lord cannot possibly be faithless. He can deny people who deny Him, but He cannot deny Himself. He cannot possibly become faithless to Himself. He cannot act in contrast to Whom He is as the Holy and Righteous. He cannot join us when we are faithless.

When we are faithless He will encounter us with proper measures to bring us back on the way of obedience to Him. That can be painful measures. In any case they are measures that humble us, because God wants to bring us to repentance and confession. Then He can bless us again in that same faithfulness to Himself, for that is what He has in mind for us.

V14. What Paul said in the previous verses Timothy must remind the believers of. He has to impress these particular aspects of the truth unto his hearers and not only once, but again and again. Furthermore Timothy must strongly warn the believers to carefully pay attention to their words. He has to empower his warning further by pointing out to them that all of their words are indeed spoken out to one another, but also in the sight of God.

The consciousness that God is Witness of what we say, will make us cautious in our words. Then we will not be quickly tempted to strive about words. Words are important in clearly explaining the truth. But when it causes a strife about words the result will be

the ruin of the hearers. The goal of every service is that the hearers will benefit and profit by it and not that it will cause damage to them or even destroy their whole faith life.

V15. To maintain yourself and not to be dragged into a strife about words for example, you must be *“diligent to present yourself approved to God”*. The point is that God can see you as someone who despite continuous trials, has remained faithful to Him. That doesn't come naturally to you, but it demands of you that you discipline yourself and carefully make efforts for it.

When the only important thing for you is what the Lord thinks of you, you will be *“a workman who does not need to be ashamed”*. The word 'workman' doesn't indicate a particular position. It is about people who make efforts and great sacrifices to serve the believers. If you also want to make efforts for that you will have no reason to be ashamed of yourself, for your labor will not be in vain or worthless.

The *“accurately handling”* of *“the word of the truth”* (that is the total of the revelation given by God in His Word) means that in explaining the truth a right course has to be followed through the Scripture, that the explanation of the truth may be well-balanced. The expression 'accurately handling' was used for example by architects at designing a building. Each part was put in the right place whereby the ground parts had to stand in the right proportion towards the walls.

This shows how important it is that each part of the Word of God is given its right context and place. The highlighting of the one truth will not be at the expense of the other truths, but the harmony between the different parts of the truth will be proven. When law and grace are mixed together or when Jewish rituals are being introduced in the Christian worship service there is not an accurately handling of the word of truth.

V16. When you deal with God's Word in this way you will have no difficulty with recognizing *“worldly [and] empty chatter”* and with avoiding this. It is not expected of you that you try to make

them change their mind. That is wasted energy and you will also expose yourself to their depraved chatter. It is not unthinkable that you will be influenced by them.

V17. These people will not repent, but on the contrary, they will make things worse. They cannot be stopped. *"Their talk will spread like gangrene."* The word 'spread' literally means 'find pasture', like in *John 10:9*. Their message refers not only to their doctrine as a false doctrine, but their total speech reveals their evil thinking. What they say works like leaven: it affects everything that comes into contact with it. In that way this virus of their evil words spreads around them and extends itself unstopably. Therefore you are ordered to abstain from it and not to have anything to do with it.

Again Paul names two names. In *chapter 1:15* he named two names of persons who turned their back on him.

V18. The names he now mentions regards persons *"who have gone astray from the truth"*. Their error is that they say that the resurrection was already past. They actually do not deny the resurrection, but declare that as something that had happened already and therefore not something that is still to take place. That would mean that you are made perfect already, that you cannot sin anymore and that you can claim the world for yourself. It furthermore means that when you die everything stops there. The resurrection had taken place already after all, had it not?

To avoid any possibility to be caught in the snare of any error, it is essential for you to read and know God's Word. You are not to have anything to do with men who proclaim things that mutilate the work of the Lord Jesus and its results by relating their own arguments to it. They make themselves instruments of the devil who always seeks to distort God's Word and in that way deprive it from its true meaning. Those are people who *"upset the faith"* of unstable souls, people who do not read the Bible themselves in a praying attitude in order to experience in that way their fellowship with God.

V19. These servants of the devil who are among Christians are not always directly recognizable. Sometimes you may wonder: Is it a child of God whom I am dealing with, or not? Many things they say may sound so familiar, so biblical, that you love to accept it as an enrichment of your faith life. It often also sounds wonderful.

Still they also say things or teach things that make you sense that something is wrong or of which you must admit that they are not in accordance with the Bible. You observe a certain mixture. You hear beautiful things and you hear strange or even wrong things. This confusion has entered Christianity because Christians have not remained alert, which gave the devil the opportunity to introduce wrong elements (*Mat 13:24-25,37-39*).

How should you deal with that? You do not want to accuse anyone falsely, but you especially do not want to expose yourself to false doctrines. You want to learn from others, but you also want to be able to recognize the other person as a true child of God who is sound in teaching God's Word. You want to have fellowship with believers, but you do not want to have fellowship with the evil. Fellowship with the Lord means everything to you and therefore you want to be on your guard against doctrines that cause you to move from the Lord.

Paul uses the word "*nevertheless*" or 'however' in his response to all these arguments as an introductory to a holdfast for circumstances where everything is in confusion. There indeed is "*the firm foundation of God*" to which a seal is attached. This seal is a security with two aspects. The one aspect of this security is the side of God, what He sees. Even though it may sometimes be difficult or nearly impossible for you to discover whether a person is a true believer or not, that is no problem to the Lord. He knows exactly who belongs to Him. It is out of the question that He can be confused. He knows exactly who has new life, because He Himself has given it.

The other aspect of this security is the side of man, what you see. You can judge someone's life (just as others can judge yours, as a matter of fact). You see if a person "*who names the name of the Lord*",

he thus confesses to know Him and also shows that in his life. With someone who has new life you will notice that he doesn't want to participate in anything that gives a wrong presentation of the Lord Jesus or His work and that he willingly gives the Word of God full authority over his life.

Now read 2 Timothy 2:12b-19 again.

Reflection: Which contrasts do you encounter in this portion?

**A Vessel For Honor** | verses 20-21

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

*20 Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also vessels of wood and of earthenware, and some to honor and some to dishonor. 21 Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these [things], he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work.*

*Introduction.* You may say that the verses that appear to you in this portion are very up to date. The confusion in Christianity is increasing. How are you supposed to find your way there? Fortunately the Lord has foreseen the situation that the circumstances will not be any more like at the beginning of the church. In those days no one of the unbelievers dared to join the church (*Acts 5:12-14*). That is not the case anymore. Nowadays there is much chaff among the wheat.

You read in the previous portion that the Lord knows who belongs to Him (*Jn 10:14*), although you are not always able to see that. You also saw the side of your responsibility that you are to abstain from what is in contrast to God's holiness and righteousness. The measure of that is Christ, His Person and His work and the Word of God. When the perfection of Christ or His work or the Word of God is being questioned, or wrongly presented or when aspects of these issues are being denied, you do not need to ask yourself whether you have to do with a believer or not. You can leave that to the Lord. Your task is to abstain from everyone who does that and from every Christian congregation that tolerates that.

V20. To clarify the one and the other Paul uses the example of a great house. You may remember that he also spoke about a house in his first letter (*1Tim 3:15*). There he calls the church of the living God "*the house of God*". He means by that, that all true believers form that house. Here he doesn't speak about 'the house of God',



but about 'a great house'. To find out what he means by that you should look at the things that are in it, the 'vessels'.

Just like the great house represents something these vessels also represent something. First, a vessel is an indication for a person (cf. Acts 9:15; 1Thes 4:4). Furthermore two things are striking when you read the description of the vessels:

- a. there is a distinction in material: "*gold and silver ... , but also ... of wood and of earthenware*" and
- b. there is a distinction in use: "*some to honor and some to dishonor*".

We first look at the distinction in material. It is also important what these materials do represent. You learn more about that in 1 Corinthians 3:12-13. You read there that the fire makes the distinction clear. The fire doesn't change anything about the gold and silver, but it consumes the wood and earthenware. The fire represents the righteousness of God by which all things are tested and examined.

'Gold and silver vessels' represent the believers. When God puts them to the test and examines them in His righteousness, it will become clear that they possess God's righteousness in Christ.

'Vessels of wood and earthenware' represent the unbelievers. When God in His righteousness puts them to the test and examines them they will be consumed, for they do not have Christ as their righteousness. If you think again about the seal for a minute, then you have here the side of the seal that says that the Lord knows those who are His. To say it metaphorically like Paul does here: the Lord knows who the vessels of gold and silver are and who the vessels of wood and clay are, although we are not always able to see that.

But also your side is being dealt with in the metaphor. Often you are not able to judge the distinction in material because of the confusion that prevails in Christianity. What you certainly are

able to do and should do is judging whether a person is a vessel to honor or a vessel to dishonor. Here you have the other side of the seal. A vessel to honor is a person who names the Name of the Lord and demonstrates that by abstaining from wickedness.

V21. Up till now it seems that it is only about judging what others do, but the important question is of course whether *you* want to be a vessel for honor. The answer to that question can be 'yes'. But there is a condition attached to that. To be a vessel for honor you are to cleanse yourself from the vessels to dishonor. And who are the vessels to dishonor? People who do not abstain from wickedness.

What does that mean: to abstain from wickedness? This abstaining has two aspects. It means to abstain from people who bring the wrong doctrine. It also means abstaining from people who do not bring the wrong doctrine themselves, but still consciously remain in relation to those who bring the wrong doctrine. They don't do anything about it when things are being proclaimed that are directly in contrast with the Scripture. You have an example in Christian congregations where liberal theologians are allowed to freely bring their depraved doctrines or where unbiblical ways of life e.g. unmarried cohabitation or homosexual relationships are being accepted, while according to God's Word chastisement is to be practiced over it.

I would like to point out emphatically that in this portion it is about your personal faithfulness and your personal responsibility. It is important for you to keep seeing the context of this portion. Then you will see that abstaining from wickedness is something you do yourself. God's Word doesn't say here that you must demand that of others. Each person must deal for his own sake accordingly this Scriptural word. You are to cleanse yourself from sin in your own life and from sin in the congregation you are. When the congregation doesn't 'purge out' (1Cor 5:7,13) the leaven (a metaphor of sin), you have here the instruction to 'purge' yourself 'out'.

I would also like to point out emphatically that it is about doctrines or practices that violate the foundations of the Christian faith, namely Christ and His Word. Therefore it is not about a distinction of insight in certain truths of the Scripture. Unfortunately, there are a lot of differences among Christians about e.g. the future or about the church. But that's not the point here. I don't say that it is not important what the Scripture says about the future or about the church. Everything in the Scripture is important, for the Scripture is totally God's Word. Nevertheless you are not supposed to put the different *understanding* of a truth from the Scripture on the same level with the violation of the Person of the Lord Jesus or the violation of the foundation of our faith. And it is about the latter in this portion, for it is about Him and His work. Regarding that there must not be any difference of understanding.

The reason why I also separate from other believers when it is about how to be a local church, has nothing to do with the call to abstain from wickedness. I also do not join congregations where there is no evil in the sense of fundamentally false teachings, but where the *form* of being a church is not according to what I have discovered about it in God's Word. When I for example look at *Acts 2:42* or *1 Corinthians 14*, I really want to be there where people desire to practice that.

I have gone into more details regarding this issue, because many believers were caused and are still being caused much injustice on the occasion of this portion. That happens by speaking about them as 'vessels to dishonor', while those believers also reject everything that violate Christ and His work and Word. Even though their idea of fulfilling the conditions of 'being a church' is different from what my conviction is, they will stand up for the honor of the Lord. They resist against wrong teachings and do not tolerate living in sin. Such Christians also want, like I do, to "*be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master*".

Fortunately there are all over the world devoted Christians to be found who honor the Lord with their life. They are real vessels for honor. They live a holy life and they therefore often experience

slander and persecution by the world, more often than we do. They not only confess with their mouth the Lord Jesus to be their “*Master*”, a name that indicates the absolute authority of Christ over their life, but their whole life testifies of that.

I hope that it also applies to you. Then you are “*prepared for every good work*”, that means that you are ready to do a service that is ‘good’. That is also what you want and that is very plausible.

Now read 2 Timothy 2:20-21 again.

Reflection: How could you be a vessel for honor?

## Flee, Pursue, Correct | verses 22-26

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

*22 Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love [and] peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. 23 But refuse foolish and ignorant speculations, knowing that they produce quarrels. 24 The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, 25 with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, 26 and they may come to their senses [and escape] from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.*

V22. Before you rush out to “pursue ...”, it is being made clear to you what you should really be aware of. You actually have to deal with “youthful lusts”. You may think that this refers to sexual lusts. They surely have to do with that, but that is certainly not where it ends and I also do not think that that’s the main point. It is the lusts that are characteristic to youth. You should think of assertiveness, demanding people’s attention, desiring to be of importance.

One of the clear marks with young zealous believers is a sharp eye for other people’s faults, while they themselves have only a very limited knowledge of their own heart. When you notice that assertiveness determines your actions you are to flee, depart from the situation before you make mistakes (cf. Gen 39:12; see also 1Tim 6:11; 1Cor 6:18; 10:14). Acknowledge that you don’t know yourself very well and that you do not have the spiritual maturity to say or do something in certain cases, even if you would have had the right view in a situation.

With this mind you may do something positive. To abstain on the one hand is essential, but negative. Therefore you should on the other hand pursue what is in accordance with the Lord.

- In the first place that is “*righteousness*”, that is a way of doing what is right before God and men.
- Also “*faith*” or confidence of faith is a crucial characteristic when everything around you is in confusion and the only holdfast is the Lord and His Word.
- In addition to this is “*love*”. Without love in your heart righteousness and faith become expressions of a legalistic spirit.
- Finally it is said that you should pursue “*peace*”. You do not seek to quarrel, but you want to be a peace maker.

And in case you may think that you have to do all this by yourself alone, then you hear at the end of *verse* 22 that that is a mistake. You will never in Scripture find the command to be a Christian on your own. Abstaining from vessels to dishonor is essential. If you limit yourself to that, it will lead you to Pharisee-ism, an attitude like ‘I am holier than you are’. Therefore you should join them “*who call on the Lord from a pure heart*”.

With the help of the Lord you will be able to discern whether the other person has a pure heart, just like the other is to discern whether that is also the case with you. Therefore you should talk with one another. Let Christ and His work and Word be the issue and it will become clear whether He is being called on from a pure heart.

V23. After having spoken about the calling on the Lord from a pure heart you can certainly sense that “*foolish and ignorant speculations*” are clearly the opposite of that. Discussions and disputes are being organized for amusing of audiences that even chose a winner for that. Most of the time that doesn’t bring people closer together, but makes the gap even bigger. The disputes are not settled, division only increases more and more. These disputes are often about nothing. It is just useless, undisciplined squabbling.

Such questions do not come from a pure heart, but from someone who follows his own thoughts and will. Don’t expose yourself to

them, don't even listen to them, but "refuse" them. If you enter into disputes you will participate in producing quarrels.

V24. Producing quarrels and quarrelling yourself is just something you as a bond-servant of the Lord ought not to do. Instead of feeding an arguing spirit you ought to be "kind" and meek to all without distinction. When you are gentle you will not repulse people, but on the contrary attract them. Kindness is an attitude that arouses confidence.

It is also important that a bond-servant of the Lord in a position like that of Timothy is able to teach others. A bond-servant of the Lord gives clear teachings, it is not difficult to understand him and he doesn't use fuzzy or mysterious words. Another significant characteristic of a bond-servant of the Lord is his 'patience'. He endures the wrong that people cause him or speak about him, without becoming impatient or rebellious.

V25. That he rejects quarrels doesn't mean that he rejects the person. The opponent of the truth is a person that is to be won for the Lord. Therefore he will not want to correct the opponents in a snappy tone, but "with gentleness". This is a characteristic of the Lord Jesus (*Mat 11:29*) and therefore has nothing to do with softness or weakness, but on the contrary with steadfastness. The important means through which people come to conversion is definitely through this characteristic. He who is gentle looks like the Lord Jesus.

God brings people to conversion "leading to the knowledge of the truth", by bringing them into connection with His Son. Paul uses the expression "if perhaps" because he knows that only God can grant repentance and is sovereign about it. He leaves the result to God. Again you see that the responsibility of the servant and the sovereignty of God don't exclude one another.

In the Lord Jesus, Who is the truth (*Jn 14:6*), it is seen what the truth is about both God and man. He who gains insight into Him, gains insight into the truth.

V26. By being drawn to pay attention to Him the opponents may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil. Here it is not about unbelieving people in general, but about those who profess to know God, but have been taken captive in the snare of the devil. They participate in distorting God's Word and teach wrong things about the Lord Jesus. As captives of the devil they do his will. They seek to proclaim the lie. They are blinded by the devil in such a way that they think to be proclaiming the truth (cf. *Jn 16:2*).

Thus it is about the conversion of professing Christians. Only when they convert they will acknowledge the full truth and reject the verisimilitude that they have preached. Up till that moment they live in an infatuation, an illusion, while they think that they bring the right doctrine. Through conversion they will "*come to their senses*", that they may see and think clearly to do the will of God.

Now read 2 Timothy 2:22-26 again.

Reflection: Which positive and which negative orders do you receive here?



## 2 Timothy 3

### Last Days and Difficult Times | *verses 1-7*

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

*1 But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. 2 For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, 4 treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these. 6 For among them are those who enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses, 7 always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.*

V1. To do the will of God the circumstances are not particularly favorable. Paul wants you to know that we live in the “*last days*” and that the times in these days will be perilous. With ‘last days’ is indicated that we have come to the closing stages of the era of the church as a testimony on earth. With “*difficult times*” it is indicated that you often do not see any clear distinction anymore between true Christians and those who are that only by name. The devil will do everything to make as many Christians as possible to become unfaithful to the Lord. He will as he always did tempt Christians to sin, but he will make maximum efforts to introduce worldly elements in living the life of a Christian.

V2-4. That appears from the list of characteristics that Paul summarizes after this. When you compare this list with the list in *Romans 1:29-32* you see a major similarity. Only in *Romans 1* it is about characteristics of people who live without God, while here the characteristics are written of people who confess to be related to God. In that way you see that the devil seeks to undermine the

Christian testimony by introducing worldly elements in order to make it nothing more than an empty case. In that way the same degeneration that existed among the Gentiles will come out from under the cloak of Christendom. The result of this is that to the sins of *Romans 1* the sin of hypocrisy is added.

When we pass the list you see how numerous the forms are in which evil comes to expression with religious people. We don't need to dwell too long on each expression. Though try to be honest to yourself and confess the things you recognize in your own life before the Lord and not to do or be that anymore.

- The list starts very telling with "*lovers of self*".
- The next is "*lovers of money*", materialism.
- When they open their mouth they appear to be "*boastful*".
- What they say shows that they are "*arrogant*".
- "*Revilers*" speak evil, bad things about others to harm the other.
- They have no respect for their father and mother but are "*disobedient to parents*". It demonstrates the degeneration of the family life.
- These people are also "*ungrateful*", an attitude that takes everything for granted and demands to be served any time. It is the blown up feeling of being entitled to anything I want and don't need to thank anyone for it.
- Such people often live an "*unholy*" life, a life that is filled with uncleanness and ungodliness.
- They are "*unloving*". There is no mention of love with them. They even lack natural love, which can lead to homosexual relationships.

- They are also *“irreconcilable”*. They cannot tolerate anyone else and are not willing to forgive anybody.
- They love to put other people in a bad light which they show by *“malicious gossips”*.
- *“Self-control”* is a strange matter to them, there is no self-restraint,
- whereby they do not shun *“brutal”* behavior in words and deeds.
- That’s because in their life they show to be *“haters the good”*. They have no eye and no taste for the good. They act almost like robots. There is almost nothing really human in their performance.
- *“Treacherous”* are willing to commit treason. Judas is an example of that (*Lk 6:16; cf. Acts 7:52*).
- Without considering the consequences they speak and act *“reckless”*. It is no use to warn them.
- *“Conceited”* as they are, they themselves are the center of their thinking.
- It is therefore not surprising that the list concludes with the absolutely lowest point: *“lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God”*. The love for God has totally been driven out by the love for pleasure.

The whole list describes a life that only consists of the pursuit of selfish goals, whereby the rights of God are totally being ignored.

V5. It is all about instruments of the enemy that give the appearance that they live in fear for God. But it is only a form (*Mat 23:25*). Their life does not radiate the power of a life with God. They even deny that God is able to give them some strength. They keep the Word of God that is living and powerful closed. They have their own ideas about God. God is for them Somebody Who supplies

their need, while they count on themselves when it comes to the fulfillment of those needs. In fact they are God themselves. You cannot afford to remain in contact with such people. You are not to argue with them, but you ought to obey God and avoid them.

V6. Such a company is an ideal place for those who creep in, people who say and teach wrong things to undermine the testimony of God. It is often women by whom the false teachings are spread. Generally speaking, women are more emotional by nature than men. There is nothing wrong about that and that doesn't automatically have to lead to a way of acting as it is described here. It is not surprising that John writes his second letter, concerning false teachings, to a woman (2Jn :1). She is considered to recognize false doctrines.

But when emotion rules a women and when she also lives in sin – thereby driven by a depraved mind – she will be willing to be used by false teachers. The false teacher only needs to flatter her to win her for himself. Afterwards he can manipulate her in such a way that she becomes a propagator of his false teachings.

V7. They are women who indeed want to learn. They always hunger for new teachings. But instead of “*to come to the knowledge of truth*” they deviate further and further away from the truth. They are always searching, but never come to a firm conviction. Nowadays there are many new teachings that respond and adapt to the desire after a spiritual life. These teachings consist of a gospel without the cross, without a crucified and resurrected Christ.

The cause that a person does not come to the knowledge of truth often lies in the fact that he does not submit to the truth, but wants the truth to be submitted to him so that he can manage it after his own will and feelings. Then the emotion determines the standard of truth: When he feels good about it, it is good. To come to the knowledge of truth there must first be a living relation with the Lord Jesus.

Now read 2 Timothy 3:1-7 again.

Reflection: Which warnings do you find for yourself in this section?

## You, However | verses 8-15

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

*8 Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these [men] also oppose the truth, men of depraved mind, rejected in regard to the faith. 9 But they will not make further progress; for their folly will be obvious to all, just as Jannes's and Jambres's folly was also. 10 Now you followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance, 11 persecutions, [and] sufferings, such as happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium [and] at Lystra; what persecutions I endured, and out of them all the Lord rescued me! 12 Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. 13 But evil men and impostors will proceed [from bad] to worse, deceiving and being deceived. 14 You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned [them], 15 and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.*

V8. We are still in the portion that describes the time where many people act outwardly as if they are Christians, but they are not inwardly. This is the result of the distortion of the truth. The truth is being imitated, but there is no inward relation with Christ Who is the truth. Imitation is possibly the strongest weapon of the devil. Paul quotes the example of two Egyptian magicians, of whom he mentions the names, who were imitating Moses (*Exo 7:11,22; 8:7*). This performance of these magicians happened right before the departing of the people of God from Egypt.

That's what is happening now also. We live in the last days, right before the rapture of the church out of the world where imitation Christians are being manifest more and more. The Lord Jesus has also warned us for people who will say that they are the Christ (*Mat 24:5,23-24*). In the last times signs and wonders will happen that have the appearance that they come from God, but they come from the liar (*2Thes 2:9; cf. Acts 2:22*). John warns us:

*“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see, whether they are from God” (1Jn 4:1).* Testing the spirits is possible by taking Christ as touchstone. Ask them what they think about Him and test whether it is according to the Word.

The strategy of the devil is not new. Already in the time of Moses he used imitation. It even appeared as if he could claim some success. Indeed the magicians did imitate Moses, didn't they? They didn't fail, did they? No, but they practiced their magical acts out of resistance against Moses. Their goal was to keep the people of God in bondage. In the same way nowadays 'Jannesses and Jambresses' are resisting against the truth. They also respond with mockery to every reference of a soon rapture of the church out of the world (2Pet 3:2-3).

That they are *“men of depraved mind”* is the result of opening their hearts for the devil and his evil powers. What they preach as faith comes from this source. It is only worth to be rejected, thrown away, without paying any further attention to it. It doesn't offer any hope for today and no hope for the future.

V9. Sometimes it seems that these evil people can unstopably go their way. Then you read here that God has determined a limit to their wicked performance, in both their time and in their deeds. The magicians in the days of Moses were exposed at the crucial moment of bringing forth life out of death (Exo 8:18). Seeming Christians may boast on theological discoveries, but that has never made them able to give new life to a person. The scope of their deeds is limited. Therefore for faith the folly of these magicians is totally evident.

Also the end of their performance is approaching. You do not need to expect that the performance of 'Christian magicians' will slowly diminish. It will only become worse. But the end of the current age, the age of the church, is approaching. The folly of the deceivers and unbelievers will become completely clear when the Lord Jesus will be revealed in glory.

V10. As long as we are on earth the Lord Jesus provides us with remedies to remain saved with Him. How that works you see in the example that Paul presents to Timothy of himself. The contrast between the 'Christian magicians' and what you see in Paul is enormous.

Paul addresses Timothy and points him to his own example, like the old Elijah took Elisha with him along several places to teach him (2Kgs 2:1-10). Elijah took Elisha by the hand and gave him understanding in the situation of the people. Therefore Elisha was able to approach the people in the spirit and strength of Elijah, with a double part of that of Elijah's. Timothy is able to minister the church in the spirit and strength of Paul by observing how he did everything. Not that Paul says anything new to Timothy. He only reminds him of that, for Timothy has already explored it. He did not follow Paul for no reason.

- First of all Paul points at "*my teaching*". Only he, the apostle, can say that. The teaching is the basis. Without teaching there can be no practice.
- But Paul didn't only teach, he can also point at his "*conduct*". He consistently practiced what he was passing on through his teaching. His life is based on his teaching.
- Also in his "*purpose*" he was clear. He had no hidden intentions. He had a clear goal in mind which was not vague to Timothy. His intention was to glorify God in everything whatever the cost was.
- From what he taught, in how he did and out of his intention his "*faith*" in and his faithfulness to the Lord appeared. With full confidence in Him Paul fulfilled his ministry, where he met hostility and where he was put to the test.
- But precisely in that situation Timothy saw his "*patience*". He didn't respond irritated and didn't repay evil for evil.

- The hostility of the enemy revealed his “love” for the Lord and for those who are His.
- Also his “perseverance” was remarkable. All adversary and the fact that he was left alone didn’t make him to be depressed. He did not collapse because of the pressure, but he continued with what the Lord ordered him to do.
- V11. Everyone who opens his mouth with proclaiming the truth will suffer “persecutions”. That indicates the insecurity of freedom, having no place of rest because they are chasing you.
- He also lost his freedom several times. His enemies did not spare him, but made him “suffer” (2Cor 11:24-25a). He speaks particularly about three places he visited during his first mission trip (Acts 13:14-50; 13:51-14:5; 14:8-20).

Paul has suffered all those persecutions, but he doesn’t boast about that as if he has achieved something. The Lord receives the honor, for it was He Who delivered him “out of them all” (Psa 34:19). ‘Out of them all’ shows that nothing could stop Paul how violent the resistant was. ‘Out of them all’ also shows that Paul indeed endured it all and was not spared for it.

V12. What is mentioned previously does not only apply to Paul but to all Christians “*who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus*”. If you live your life with reverence for God in fellowship with Christ Jesus you will also have part in persecution. Persecution is not only literally being resisted and chased, but also not to be understood and to be despised. You experience that in any way you testify of the Lord. It doesn’t apply to all Christians. If you do not want to suffer reproach you simply should not make clear that you know the Lord. You should “*desire*” that. Persecution is only the part of faithful Christians.

V13. This persecution will not diminish, for “*evil men and imposters will proceed [from] bad to worse*”. The word ‘imposters’ is literally ‘magicians’. That may probably indicate the increase of occult-



ism. You may have heard of Christians who seek their luck with magnetizers. They say that these people claim to have received this gift from God. In that way they deceive even Christians, while these people are being deceived themselves by the devil.

Mind you that these are 'evil men'. They are instruments of the devil to whom they have delivered themselves. With all their nice talks they do not seek your luck, but your destruction.

V14. Then there comes a "*you, however*" (verse 14; see verse 10). This indicates the contrast with the previous verse. In that verse the environment where you find yourself is depicted, an environment that fully resists against God and His Word. To remain protected against that influence Paul gives Timothy an assurance. Timothy can trust in this assurance to remain steadfast in the truth and in the enjoyment of the salvation of God. He must continue in the things which he has learned and must not be involved with new teachings. There is nothing missing in what he has learned; for that reason there is also nothing to be improved.

Therefore he is fully convinced about that because he has learned it from somebody to whom it was directly made known through Divine inspiration and who has the authority of God to pass that on. Paul is a unique servant. What he has taught we have in God's Word.

The teachers whom the Lord has given as a gift to His church do not bring new truths. They explain the truths of the apostles: truths that are written in God's Word. Our source is not Calvin or Darby, but the Word of God. It is not necessary to empower your words by referring to certain teachers, however much you ought to appreciate them and however much they were and are blessed.

V15. The second reason for Timothy to remain in the things which he had learned, are the "*sacred writings*" that he had known "*from childhood*". The words of the apostle are in no way in contrast to the writings of the Old Testament (for those are 'holy Scriptures'), but fully accordingly. Timothy was taught by his mother and grandmother in that. This is an important instruction for parents

to make their children known and familiar with the Scripture as early as possible in their childhood.

The Word has been put in writings so in that way God can use it as a permanent authority. Everything that is permanently of profit for the church has been written down in the Scriptures. It is also permanently profitable for your personal life of faith. You find everything you need in the Scripture to 'make you wise for salvation'.

Without God's Word you lead a lost life. Through God's Word you have come to faith in Christ Jesus. You have been saved for eternity. If you as a Christian lead a life without consulting God's Word in everything, you will lead a lost life. Listening to the Scripture makes you wise to avoid all the traps of life and to arrive safely with the Lord.

Now read 2 Timothy 3:8-15 again.

Reflection: Which contrasts do you find in this portion?

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**All Scripture** | *verses 16-17*

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

*16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; 17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.*

*Introduction.* These two verses are worthy of paying attention to in a particular section. They deliver you a description that surpasses every expression concerning the importance of the Scripture. It is necessary to stress that, because the attacks on the inspiration and the content of the Scripture will ceaselessly go on and on in its intensity. One of these attacks is that we have God's Word *in* the Bible. This formulation opens the opportunity that we also have words in the Bible that do not come from God. It is of great importance to hold on to the literal inspiration of the Scripture.

V16. "*All*" means that there are no parts or portions that are less or more inspired than other ones. The inspiration does not focus on the bible authors, but it focuses on what is written in God's Word. God has inspired the Bible authors what they had to write down. "*Inspired*" does not refer to the *message*, as if the bible writers could phrase them afterwards in their own words, as if only the contents but not the form has been inspired.

The *words* were given by inspiration to them to write those words down, so that also the words of the unbelievers and even of the devil have been written down. God wanted to have those words of unbelievers and the devil in His Word that are important for us to know. That all Scripture is "*inspired by God*" means that each word that is written in the Bible has been written in it because God has inspired the Bible author to precisely write down that word. When Paul speaks here about "*Scripture*" (and not' *Scriptures*') it underlines the unity of all Bible books as one whole, "*and the Scripture cannot be broken*" (Jn 10:35).

In the original language in which the New Testament is written, the Greek language, 'inspired by God' is one word. Literally it says 'God breathed'. That may refer to 'breathed out by God', but also 'breathed in by God'. They are both true. When we say that God has 'breathed out' the words of the Scripture then that lays the emphasis on the fact that the words of the Scripture are *His* words. Those are words that come out of Him and are written down the way He wanted them to be written down. When we say that He has 'breathed in' them, then we emphasize the fact that He breathed them in people and that He had His words to be recorded in the Scripture by human instruments.

The fact that God inspired the books Himself gives Divine authority to the Bible books. The inspiration coheres with faithfulness, infallibility or inerrancy and the absolute authority of the Bible.

God has given His Word because of its profit for you. The word "*profitable*" has the meaning of 'support', 'help', 'profit'. The Word helps you, it supports you in your activities as a man of God. It makes you able to achieve all good work. All good work is each work in which the rights of God become visible in a Christianity that for a greater part does not consider those rights.

To do that correctly God's Word is given in the first place "*for teaching*". The Scripture teaches you Who God is, Who the Lord Jesus is and who man is. The Scripture teaches us about a lot of issues like sin, redemption, the value of the blood of Christ, the church, sanctification, the future. It is important to read the Scripture, in order to learn to know about these issues. Studying the Scripture in order to know 'the teaching', has the side-effect that you will not easily be dragged by your emotions. Within Christianity there are quite a lot of groups or movements that focus on emotions. These movements are focusing more on what you experience than on what you read in the Bible.

There is another danger that you should be beware of if you want to know the teaching of the Scripture. The danger is that you limit yourself to a doctrinal understanding of the Scripture without surrendering yourself to its living power. Then you are to be com-

pared with somebody who pours water from a flowing stream in a cistern, which makes the water stop from flowing. That can be the result of attending all kinds of gatherings and eagerly reading Bible commentaries without absorbing the Word in your heart. Then it remains limited to intellectual knowledge. The opposite danger is to say that those Bible studies are just nothing and that practical Christendom is the only important thing. But how is practical Christendom thinkable if you do not know what you are supposed to be practicing?

The first effect of sound Bible study will be that you thank God for everything that you were able to learn from the Scripture. Praise and worship Him for every teaching. Sound Bible study also implies that everything you were able to learn from the Scripture will have influence on the practice of your life.

The second profit of the Scripture is that it offers you a mighty weapon in your hand “for reproof” false allegations. You see in *Matthew 4:1-10* how the Lord Jesus reproves the allegations of the devil by quotations from the Scripture.

The devil may for example approach you in the image of your biblically critical Bible teacher or catechist teacher, or of a person who comes to your house, or of a prominent person in Christianity. They can, like the devil, also say: ‘It is written.’ Then you need to know how to reprove them. Pay attention to how the Lord Jesus goes to work when He is being tempted by the devil. He simply responds to each challenge by: “*It is written*” (*Mat 4:4,7,10*). After the Lord cited three times from the Scripture the devil runs off.

The way the Lord Jesus goes to work is an example for us to follow. He did not chase the devil away by Divine power, but by using the means that is also available to you. Therefore you need to have some Bible verses ready. You need to exercise in using them. Have you ever heard about ‘memorizing’? That means learning Bible verses by heart. Do that with as many Bible verses as you possibly can. It does not come down to win a dispute. You will always lose a dispute with the devil. You ought not to argue, but to let the Word speak itself.

Each Christian needs correction. That is the third profit of the Scripture, “*for correction*”. Sometimes you want to go a way that is not good or do things that are not well without being aware of that. By reading the Bible by praying you will discover that. You after all want to do the will of God, don’t you? God speaks to you in the Scripture and helps you in that way to find the right way or to do the right thing. It is hazardous to be content with yourself as if nothing is to be corrected. In the mirror of the Word you always see things that need to be corrected.

The exhortation for correction is not intended to discourage you, but on the contrary to encourage you. The intention is not to make you performance centered but ‘Christ centered’. And whom of all those who are focused on Him, dares to say that there is nothing to be corrected anymore?

The fourth profit is the “*training in righteousness*”. That does not imply the doctrine of the righteousness of God. Of course it connects to that and it coheres with that, but righteousness is seen here with a view to the practice. The point here is that you live in accordance to your position. Therefore you need to be taught. You ought to be ‘trained’ or ‘educated’ in righteousness.

You undergo that training or education when you read the Bible. Then you receive instruction on how your behavior is supposed to be towards God and men. You are being trained to give to God what He is entitled to. You also obtain instruction on how you suppose to give to your fellow man what he is entitled to. Actually in the word ‘righteousness’ the whole Christian life is embedded.

V17. God has given His Word, the Scripture, with a purpose. This purpose, indicated by the words “*so that*”, is that “*the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work*”. Less than that will not do when you read the Bible. The Scripture wants to shape you into a ‘man of God’. It is worthy to examine once who in the Bible are being called ‘man of God’. You will discover that those are all people who defended God’s interests in spiritually dark

times. They represented Him towards people who turned away from Him.

When reverence for God in the society and also in Christianity is diminishing, a 'man of God' shows in his or her life that God is there and how He is. In such a man the features of God become visible. God reveals Himself through him or her. God uses people who lean on nothing else than the Scripture alone for that purpose. 'Man of God' is an honorary title. The eternal, almighty God relates Himself to a weak, mortal human being when he is willing to be shaped by the Scripture.

The Scripture makes a 'man of God' "*adequate*", which means that he is brought to full maturity by the Scripture. That is regarding the person. The Scripture also gives 'the man of God' everything that is needed for him to be able to do "*every good work*". That is regarding his work. If you want to be a 'man of God' you will not be made equipped for your task by an academic education. You find the equipment for the work which you are ordered to do, in the Scripture.

I sincerely hope that you desire to be a 'man of God'. Then you will find everything in the Scripture that meets your desires.

The true man of God on earth was the Lord Jesus. As Man He showed all features of God in a perfect way in the midst of a nation that had turned its back on God. You will grow to look like Him the more the Scripture gains more foothold in your heart. The Scripture shapes you to His image.

Now read 2 Timothy 3:16-17 again.

Reflection: Do you want to be a man of God? What should you do for that?

## 2 Timothy 4

**Preach the Word** | *verses 1-6*

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

*1 I solemnly charge [you] in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: 2 preach the word; be ready in season [and] out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. 3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but [wanting] to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, 4 and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths. 5 But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. 6 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come.*

V1. In the previous verses Paul pointed out to Timothy the situation in Christianity where there is no improvement to be expected, but on the contrary deterioration. In the meantime, after many ages of church history that also appeared. But he also pointed out to Timothy resources for perilous times. He did that in a way from which you also may profit.

Now Timothy is able and has to get down to work. In a penetrating way Paul places Timothy “*in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus*”, a presence that is reality to Paul himself. He lives before the face of God and of Christ Jesus and not before the face of men. In that way he is like Elijah, who, while he stood before king Ahab, was able to say: “*As the LORD, the God of Israel lives, before whom I stand*” (1Kgs 17:1). He wants to give that awareness both to Timothy and also to you too.



The way Paul relates Christ Jesus and God with each other indicates that Christ is God. Then three things of Christ are said that have to do with the fact that He became Man. First of all He “*is to judge the living and the dead*”. That judgment is given to Him because He is the Son of Man (*Jn 5:27*). Then He will visibly appear as Man. Finally He will establish His kingdom.

He will execute the judgment over the living and the dead at different times and at different occasions. He will judge the living when He has appeared on earth and is seated on the throne of His glory. The nations living on earth will appear before Him and be judged by Him (*Mat 25:31-46*). He will judge the dead when He is seated on the great white throne, after His millennial kingdom (*Rev 20:11-12*).

Allow me to recapitulate the events that are written in this verse:

- First the Lord Jesus will appear on earth;
- then He will judge the living, while He is seated on the throne of His glory;
- then He will establish His kingdom and will reign for thousand years;
- after which He, being seated on the great white throne, will judge the dead.

For the sake of completeness I mention another judgment that takes place earlier than both these mentioned, namely directly after the rapture of the church (*2Cor 5:10*). There the reward is being paid to the believer according to the measure of faithfulness with which He served the Lord on earth.

As it is said, the charging before the face of two Divine Persons and the three events to come, underline the gravity of the order that must be fulfilled. But it also includes a great encouragement and that is that you may know that the hard times will come to an end when the Lord Jesus, Who is still being rejected, will return

in power and majesty. The thought of His coming to judge makes you free from people and delivers you from the fear of men.

V2. Against the background of *verse 1* the order follows in *verse 2*. The thought of His appearance will not paralyze you, but will actually make you more diligent. When Christ returns He will come with His reward that is determined before the judgment seat. That reward is to be gained by you on earth by using all your efforts and diligence in full devotion to the Lord and to do what He asks of you.

In measured terms Paul tells Timothy what is being expected of him. The whole point is: "*Preach the Word.*" After the Word of God has become apparent as the equipment of the man of God in the concluding verses of *chapter 3*, the next step is that it has to be preached. That is a great duty in all times, but certainly when the church has fallen into decay.

'Preach' here means openly proclaim, like the imperial herald did. The message to be brought was not made up by the herald himself. Not listening to the message of a herald was a serious matter.

Timothy must always "*be ready*". He is supposed to be inwardly always ready to transmit the Word, that is the whole revealed truth of God. He is supposed to be always ready (*cf. 1Pet 3:15*), "*in season [and] out of season*", which means whether it is convenient for him or not, or whether the circumstances are favorable or not. He is also supposed to 'reprove', that is to deliver the convincing proof of the wrong in doctrine or life (*cf. Jn 16:8*). When that proof has been delivered then 'rebuke' should follow. The rebuking or denouncing, the openly indicating, makes clear how wrong the person has spoken or acted.

Not only courage is needed for that, but also the right mindset. Acting against evil and "*exhort*" to prevent evil must happen "*with great patience*", that is with long-suffering and self-control and not with a quick temper. That must also be accompanied by "*instruction*" or education. Both with reproving and rebuking and

with teaching the doctrine of the Scripture has to be applied. All these actions are to be explained from the Scripture.

Acting on the basis of the Scripture has always been of the greatest importance. As time goes by the importance increases more and more. I hope you are well aware of that or become aware of that. In any case Paul is not to be blamed when you do not consider this.

V3. He warns us that a time will come that men, namely 'nominal confessing' Christians "*will not endure sound doctrine*". We have definitely arrived in that time right now. Just tell nominal Christians about 'the sound doctrine' of marriage for instance. There is a great chance that they will laugh at you and label you as old fashioned and that your ideas are no more adequate. In that way they reject the doctrine that is sound in itself and in its effect.

They choose for a free experience of sexuality. They do not want to realize that this has been the cause and the spread of a disease like aids. They prefer to hold a 'Day for aids' to focus the attention on the problem and they give money in order to overcome this disease themselves. But they have no ears for tackling the root of the problem by starting to live the healthy life in this view, meaning: in accordance with the sound doctrine.

On the contrary, they listen to teachers who say things they love to hear; who bring a message that smoothly enter into their ears. They know a lot of those. They have no lack of variation. A church may then chose or appoint a preacher who has a nice way of preaching. The truthfulness is not important to them, as long as it offers spiritual amusement and it caresses the spiritual emotions. The same happens with people who follow preachers whom they like, without asking themselves whether the preaching is biblical.

V4. The result of this all will be that such people will look the other way when they really come into contact with the truth. They don't want to hear the truth at all, but consciously turn their ear away from it time and time again.

The automatic consequence is that they turn themselves under the influence of “*myths*”. It is actually very ironic if you think that modern, liberal theologians are now trying to ‘demythologize’ the Bible, which means that they indicate the myths in the Bible in order to rob the Bible from its power. They label the miracles of the Bible as myths and they even consider them as fairy tales. But they take refuge in the myths themselves by turning away from the truth.

Paul dismisses all the expressions of modern thinkers and preachers, who base their allegations on science, with one word: fables. A quite recent example of a fable, a myth, is the Da Vinci Code, a book that is full of ridiculous religious mysteries, distortions of the truth and blasphemous allegations about the Lord Jesus. This book, out of which they also made a movie, has dragged millions into its grip. It has been sold more than thirty six million times and has already been translated into more than forty languages. Isn’t it shocking that such a huge number of people turn themselves to the fables? It is the preparation work for the embracement of the anti-Christ when he reveals himself.

V5. For the third time you hear “*but you*”. Paul is warning you not to let yourself be dragged down by this strong anti-Christian movement. “*Be sober in all things.*” Be sure to remain free from false influences, for those will hinder you to keep a sober, biblical view on all things. Don’t be gullible and don’t let people encourage you for ideas that have no basis in the truth. Make well-considered decisions. Submit your plans to the Lord in prayer and always consult His Word.

Be willing to carry the consequences of such a way of life and to “*endure hardship*”. People will not thank and welcome you for your witness to the truth. Remain merciful to the lost man and “*do the work of an evangelist*”. Don’t hide behind the thought that you possibly don’t have the gift of an evangelist. That is not the issue. The point is that whenever you have the opportunity to point to the Savior you must do that.

The ministry of Timothy is extensive. He is supposed to fully accomplish each aspect of it, that nothing will be left undone. The Lord also expects of you to fully fulfill what He has ordered you to do. Thereby you may be sure that when the Lord orders you to do something He also gives you the strength and the means to do it.

V6. Paul calls on Timothy's attention for all these things, because he himself will soon disappear from the earthly scene. His departure is another exhortation for Timothy to fully fulfill his ministry. Now he has to work hard himself. But he can build on the foundation that the apostle himself has laid.

Paul compares his departure with the outpouring of a "*drink offering*". In the offering service of Israel a drink offering was added to the burnt offering, which was the main offering (see *Num 28-29; Phil 2:17*). His whole life in service to the Lord has been a life of full devotion and in that sense a burnt offering. Now he is close to pass away he sees his "*departure*" as a drink offering. A drink offering consists of wine and speaks of joy. He knows that he will enter into the joy of his Lord (*Mat 25:21*).

The word 'depart' has the meaning of 'to unloose' (*Phil 1:23*) and sees upon the disconnection of an attachment. Paul doesn't see the execution, but the liberation! That that moment has come, means joy to him.

Now read 2 Timothy 4:1-6 again.

Reflection: Do you do the work of an evangelist?

Personal Circumstances | verses 7-15

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

*7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; 8 in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing. 9 Make every effort to come to me soon; 10 for Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica; Crescens [has gone] to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. 11 Only Luke is with me. Pick up Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for service. 12 But Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus. 13 When you come bring the cloak which I left at Troas with Carpus, and the books, especially the parchments. 14 Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds. 15 Be on guard against him yourself, for he vigorously opposed our teaching.*

V7. Paul looks back on his ministry. There is nothing that he regrets. What he did in the past still has its full value. He doesn't speak like a worn out warrior who is glad to have reached the finish. It is the acclamation of joy from a winner. When he says that he has fought the "good fight" he doesn't emphasize the hardships and efforts and the sufferings that went hand in hand with it. For him the emphasis lies on the privilege that he had by partaking of such an excellent fight. The fight here is the fight of a wrestler.

Also "the course" is a sports term. It is about a race here. The race has been finished. He has reached the finish with full conviction. In Acts 20:24 he also speaks about a 'race' (cf. Phil 3:13-14). There he looks forward, while here he looks back and sees the goal that he had set before him and which he indeed had reached. At the finish he notes that on his way he has defended and kept "the faith", that is the whole truth of faith, against the countless attacks on it. He did not lose anything of all that the Lord entrusted him with.

V8. The only thing that's left for him is to receive the crown. He looks like a wrestler here who has won and looks upon the victory platform where he is supposed to receive the prize. That will be given to him by the Lord, the perfectly righteous Judge, Who perfectly knows all his motives and efforts and Who is able to correctly recognize and reward everything.

The reward consists of a public recognition of the Lord Jesus that Paul has lived as a righteous one in the midst of so much unrighteousness. In his life he had, by following his Master, suffered as an unrighteous one.

*"That day"* is the day that the Lord Jesus will be seated on the judgment seat and will reveal all things (1Cor 4:4; 2Cor 5:10). This great perspective didn't only keep Paul going, but he eagerly looked forward to it.

And he also says that this doesn't apply to himself alone, but also to you if you at least love the appearance of the Lord Jesus and eagerly look forward to that. Don't you find it also wonderful that Paul, despite his miserable circumstances and the prospect of the martyr's death, thinks of other people?

When Christ appears He will be revealed to the world (*cf. verse 1*). It is absolutely great to know that He will come first to catch up the church. But the world will sink down further into godlessness. When He appears He will make an end to that by judging all godlessness. Afterwards He will execute His purpose with the earth, which is the territory of His kingdom. What a joy that will be to Him to reign on earth where He was rejected and killed and where He is still being rejected. He will then take the earth into possession for God, that God may be honored. You certainly look forward to that, don't you?

V9. The desire for the appearance of the Lord Jesus doesn't make Paul insensitive for the help of other people. He is looking forward to see Timothy and he asks him if he could come as soon as possible and if he could do everything in his power to indeed

come. He needed somebody whom he could share the feelings of his heart with and whom would surely understand him.

V10. Demas is the first of seventeen names Paul mentions in this chapter. Although his days are numbered he thinks of others. With pain in his heart he names Demas. In two earlier letters that he wrote during his first imprisonment, he also mentions Demas (*Col 4:14; Phlm :24*). There he appears to be somebody who is close to Paul and who helps him. Nevertheless his heart was apparently not undividedly focused on the Lord.

It is not said that Demas is no longer a Christian and that he openly rejected the Lord. But it was not in his heart to bear the cross with the apostle. He started to love the world and forsook Paul. If you are not willing to pay the price of hardship and suffering, you will forsake the work of the Lord in favor of the present world.

It doesn't directly mean that Demas submitted himself to lawlessness, but that he searched his future in the world. Probably he chose for an honorable job that absorbed all his attention, however. He traveled to Thessalonica. The church there was a sound church. However, he was not interested. He searched the world there and not the brothers and sisters. His love for the world was in sharp contrast to the love for the appearance of the Lord Jesus in *verse 8*.

What is said of Demas implies the warning not to let yourself be dragged down by the love for the present, but by the love for the coming. When the present world is perfectly fine for you, you will not look forward to the coming world of Christ' kingdom.

Especially young believers are highly attracted to the world. John particularly warns them not to love the world nor the things in the world (*1Jn 2:15*). The world is not only all kinds of lawlessness, lusts and desires. It is the world as it has become because of the fall of man, where men are in control, who live a life without reverence for God. It also includes hard working people, who pursue a career or who do researches and make discoveries that improve the quality of life. They receive a lot of respect. However, when there is no place for God then it is the world.



Paul mentions two other ones, Crescens and Titus. They also left him. Of those it is not said that they have forsaken him. Most probably they went to another place in order to serve the Lord there. Of Crescens we do not know more than what is written here. Of Titus we know more, because Paul wrote him a letter that directly follows after this *second letter to Timothy* in the Bible.

V11. Although these two have not forsaken him like Demas did, Paul feels very alone. Not only that he was left to his fate by most Christians (*2Tim 1:15*), but also his companions in the work have left. Fortunately there is somebody with him, Luke. Luke has made the departure of the others, for whatever reason, easier for him.

It would make Paul also happy if Timothy took Mark along with him. Probably Timothy could pick up Mark somewhere on his way. What Paul says about Mark indicates that he has seen a restoration with Mark in his relation to the Lord. Actually also Mark has left Paul once after he first went together with Paul (*Acts 12:25; 13:13*). The price for following the Lord together with Paul had become too high. Due to his attitude he even causes a distance between Paul and Barnabas (*Acts 15:36-39*).

Fortunately there has been a moment that Mark became aware of his wrong choice. He chose again for the Lord. In that way the disturbed relationship has been restored and therefore he became useful again for the service. The way Paul writes about him, suggests that Mark wants to be useful with more diligence and devotion. And isn't it an amazing proof of the grace of the Lord that this failed servant has been allowed to describe the service of the perfect Servant in the *gospel according to Mark*? The Lord always gives a failing servant the chance for a new start.

V12. The three brethren of *verse 10* have departed from the apostle on the basis of their own decision. It was different with Tychicus, who was sent to Ephesus by the apostle. This Tychicus is a wonderful brother who is called by Paul a "*beloved brother and faithful servant*" (*Col 4:7*). He has delivered some letters that Paul has

written during his first imprisonment: the *letter to the Ephesians* and the *letter to the Colossians* (Eph 6:21; Col 4:7-8).

V13. His request to bring his cloak and the books shows once more that Paul is an ordinary man. He cares for both his body and spirit. It is a pure human letter from someone who is just a man like we are with his needs and desires. In the place where he is imprisoned it could be cold and his cloak would be very useful. With winter approaching (*verse 21*) his desire for his coat is greater.

Paul would also be very grateful to have the books and the parchments. Those are not necessarily the inspired Scriptures. He may have asked for scrolls of books and parchments (made of animal skins) with data that are valuable to him. He wants to refresh his spirit with those. It cannot be novels like those, which today are often filled out from a vague memory of the Bible with unbiblical fantasies from the writer.

V14. Paul is also not indifferent about the harm that other people do to him, like Alexander the coppersmith. You can fight physical cold with a cloak, but from this man comes a spiritual cold that is not to be fought. It is not said in what way this man caused Paul harm. Any way it is "*much harm*". Nevertheless Paul doesn't call for revenge, but leaves the judgment to the Lord.

V15. While Paul puts this matter concerning himself into the hands of the Lord, he warns Timothy of this man. Timothy must keep on going; he is still in the midst of battle. We need to warn each other sometimes of people who resist against the Word. He is a dangerous man, who finds his own words more important than those of the Scripture. At the same time it is a test to ourselves how we stand and how we respond. Such people teach us lessons on patience.

Now read 2 Timothy 4:7-15 again.

Reflection: Do you love the appearance of the Lord?

## Assistance from the Lord and Salutations | verses 16-22

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

**16** *At my first defense no one supported me, but all deserted me; may it not be counted against them. 17 But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished, and that all the Gentiles might hear; and I was rescued out of the lion's mouth. 18 The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him [be] the glory forever and ever. Amen. 19 Greet Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus. 20 Erastus remained at Corinth, but Trophimus I left sick at Miletus. 21 Make every effort to come before winter. Eubulus greets you, also Pudens and Linus and Claudia and all the brethren. 22 The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.*

V16. This second and also last imprisonment of Paul has been extremely harsh. During his first imprisonment he had a certain liberty to receive people and he could preach and teach unhindered (*Acts 28:23,30-31*). Now he is alone, imprisoned in a place for which you had to make great efforts to find it (*2Tim 1:17*).

There was no one with him at his first interrogation, nobody who defended him and spoke in his favor. Of course he could defend himself, but still he was in need of some assistance. But everybody was afraid to be identified with him. That could be damaging, for then other people will know that you are also such a Christian. Paul felt it being forsaken by them, as Demas had.

Still he does not blame anybody for anything. He is not filled with resentment and doesn't ask Timothy what he had asked with regard to Alexander the coppersmith (*verse 15*). He doesn't see them as opponents, although neither could he recognize them as supporters. They have made his imprisonment more difficult by forsaking him. Nevertheless he follows the example of the Lord Jesus, Who prayed: "*Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing*" (*Lk 23:34*). Also like Stephen who also followed the

example of the Lord Jesus (*Acts 7:60*). Here you have examples of how to respond when people do not like you anymore, because you testify of the Lord Jesus.

V17. Even if you feel left alone, just like Paul here, you are not alone, just like Paul is not alone here. The Lord wants to assist you and strengthen you. That is what Paul is experiencing. Even though everybody has forsaken him, the Lord stands with him (*cf. Acts 18:9; 23:11*). The personal presence of the Lord is the special experience in situations when you lose everything around you because you want to remain faithful to Him. He has “*strengthened me*” literally means ‘He has poured out strength in me’ or ‘He has given me a power transfusion’ (*Phil 4:13*). You feel your power being renewed when His presence is a living reality to you, when you expect everything from Him (*Isa 40:31*).

The Lord does that to make His work to be fully achieved by His servant. As far as Paul is concerned, it refers to his testimony in the courtroom and down to the palace of Caesar. He appealed to Caesar and he was going there. That he was going to make himself to be heard in the palace, regarding his testimony of the Lord Jesus, is a symbol for a testimony towards the whole western world of which the palace of Caesar is the center.

Only when somebody’s duty has come to an end the Lord will allow His servant to be killed by the enemy (*cf. Lk 22:53; Jn 7:30; 8:20*). At Paul’s conversion the Lord announced his duty (*Acts 9:15*). Therefore He allowed that Paul was being imprisoned. Now he will bear the Name of the Lord Jesus before nations and kings. Everything that the enemy meant evil becomes a testimony, so that the rulers of the earth, they who otherwise would be unreachable, may hear the Word of truth.

That’s why for that moment he “*was rescued out of the lion’s mouth*”. We are reminded of Daniel in the den of lions (*Dan 6:23*). Satan who is rampaging as a roaring lion against Paul to devour him (*1Pet 5:8*), still does not get the opportunity for that. He is still being controlled by the Lord, through which Paul has been saved from a premature death.

V18. Paul is well aware of the tremendous threat of the lion and his anger to tear him up. But he looks beyond the lion to the Lord. He is assured that as the Lord delivered him from the mouth of the lion, He also will rescue him *“from every evil work”*.

Satan not only appears like a roaring lion. He can also transform himself into an angel of light (2Cor 11:14). With ‘every evil work’ you may also think of everything that satan wants to whisper in Paul’s ear, in order to bring him to deny what he has kept up so fearless till now. To achieve that satan may be giving those well intentioned advices through people who find themselves good Christians. Of course these people are sober and do not exacerbate matters like Paul does according to their ‘humble opinion’. Paul is more afraid for such whisperings than for death.

He knows that he is not resistant to that in his own power, but that the Lord will deliver him from it and will preserve him. ‘To deliver’ here means to remove out of the danger zone and ‘to preserve’ means to remove into safety. Actually on the one hand the Lord removes him out of an area that is full of dangers and on the other hand the Lord brings him into an area where he is fully safe. That area is *“His heavenly kingdom”*.

His strong and simple faith counts on the Lord until the end. Even if he would fall asleep instead of being changed, he will always continue to look forward to the appearance of the Lord. Paul is looking forward to the heavenly kingdom of the Lord Jesus. That is not the same as what the evangelist Matthew so often calls ‘the kingdom of heaven’. The kingdom of heaven concerns the government of the Lord Jesus over heaven and earth according to heavenly measures. Therefore that kingdom consists of a heavenly part and an earthly part. The ‘heavenly kingdom’ is the heavenly part.

Paul looks forward to come together with the Lord Jesus when He will appear to the world. Then he will be one of those saints in whom the Lord Jesus will be glorified and one of those believers in whom the Lord Jesus will be admired (2Thes 1:10). He will be like one of those righteous, who ‘will shine forth as the sun in the

kingdom of their Father' (*Mat 13:43*), another name for this 'heavenly kingdom'. To shine forth as the sun means to shine forth as the Lord Jesus, for He is the Sun (*Mal 4:2*). It is all about Him. Remembering Him a praise arises out of a cold and stinking prison cell in Rome to the honor of Him Who is worthy of "glory forever and ever". With a profound 'amen' (= that's true) Paul confirms his trust in the Lord and his praise.

V19. Paul wants Timothy to convey his greetings to Prisca and Aquila, his good friends whom he got acquainted with at Corinth (*Acts 18:2*). This faithful couple is now at Ephesus. Paul mentions them with feelings of particular gratitude, not only because they are faithful in the service of the Lord (*Acts 18:26; 1Cor 16:19*), but also because they had made great efforts for him, putting their own lives at risk (*Rom 16:3-4*). Timothy must also greet the household of Onesiphorus (*see 2Tim 1:16*).

V20. Then Paul mentions two names of brothers to inform Timothy about their circumstances. We may presume that Timothy was curious about them. Together with Erastus he has done a duty there in Macedonia on Paul's request (*Acts 19:22*). In that way Timothy has got the chance to know Erastus better and a relationship may have come into existence. Erastus had a high position as steward in the city of Corinth (*Rom 16:23*). Apparently because of the responsibilities of his work he was not allowed to spend more time with Paul.

Trophimus comes from Ephesus (*Acts 21:29*). He traveled along with Paul from Ephesus (*Acts 20:4*) but got sick soon. Paul left him behind in Miletus because his sickness made it impossible for him to travel further. You see that Paul didn't heal him just like that, although he was able to. He actually had the gift of healing. Paul and Trophimus accepted this sickness from the hand of God. It was not a sickness that had to be punished or something like that. There also is no mention of lack of faith at all with Trophimus to become healthy.

When a believer falls sick he can see the hand of the Lord in it and not the hand of the devil. Similarly Job did not accept his

disasters and sickness out of the hand of satan, but out of God's hand (*Job 2:10*).

It is possible that a believer falls sick, due to his own fault, in-cautionness, possibly even because of a sin (*Jam 5:14-16*). Then a confession has to be made, so that God can give restoration. Believers may also fall sick due to their efforts on behalf of the work of the Lord, like Epaphroditus (*Phil 2:25-30*).

The Lord Jesus identifies with His sick brethren, as He identifies with them when they are hungry or thirsty or in prison (*Mat 25:35-40*). Here you clearly see that sickness is not supposed to be automatically associated with sin. The Lord will never identify Himself with sin. He did that once for all on the cross in the three hours of darkness. After that He never had anything to do with sin (neither did He have anything to do with it before). Therefore don't ever let yourself be fooled by extremely charismatic Christians that sickness has to be eliminated as a sin.

V21. Paul would love to see Timothy once more before the Lord calls him to be with Him and his earthly service has ended. That he would like to see him before winter also has a practical reason, namely because of his cloak (*verse 13*).

Then he greets Timothy on behalf of three men and a woman who had visited him and who also know Timothy. He passes their greetings to Timothy without any reflection of feelings of disappointment about the attitude of the brethren in Rome.

V22. He closes his letter with a personal wish for Timothy and a collective wish for all believers with whom Timothy was together. It is wonderful that the letter ends like that. He wishes Timothy that the Lord will be with his spirit. I hope that also for myself and for you. It implies that you in your life and service for God will continually experience the presence of Christ, the Lord. Don't let your spirit be occupied with the world and its thinking, not even when you see how the decay is increasing more and more in Christianity and you want to do something about it.

When we see this then there is nothing more left than wishing one another the awareness of grace. But how great is that! Grace triumphs over each difficulty.

Now read 2 Timothy 4:16-22 again.

Reflection: What could you learn from the attitude of Paul?



## The Letter to Titus

First carefully read this letter to the end. Try to imagine that it is personally addressed to you. Ask the Lord while reading, what His intention is for your life regarding this letter. Open yourself for His directions whether or not to do something, whether or what to change.

### Introduction

Just like both previous letters which are addressed to a person (Timothy), this letter is also addressed to a person: Titus. Timothy and Titus are not random people. They belong to the fellow workers of Paul. You have already learnt some things about Timothy from the book of *Acts*. If you want to learn about Titus in that book you will search in vain in it. He is not mentioned there. As a matter of fact you can learn about him in some letters of Paul. As you will notice, Paul mentions him in his *second letter to the Corinthians*. If you read there what Paul says about Titus you will notice that he very much appreciates him.

The work of Titus at Corinth is an example of his devoted service. From references to Titus in the mentioned letter we can conclude that he became a mature believer through spiritual growth and experience. Paul desired the support of Titus (*2Cor 2:12*); he experienced comfort through Titus (*2Cor 7:6*); he knew the joy of Titus and the refreshment of his spirit about the good that he saw in the believers (*2Cor 7:13*); he knew about the love that Titus had for the obedient believers (*2Cor 7:15*); he testified to the willingness of Titus of committing himself on behalf of poor believers (*2Cor 8:6, 16*).

He calls Titus his 'partner and fellow worker' with the Corinthians (*2Cor 8:23*). Titus has the same goal like Paul, that's why Paul appreciates Titus very much in the work for the Lord. He also sees the same unselfishness with Titus which characterizes him-

self (2Cor 12:18). In both the work and the motives Paul has an exceptional co-worker with Titus.

Because Paul calls Titus his “*true child*” (Tit 1:4) we may assume that Titus heard the gospel from Paul and came to conversion. It is not clear whether he went together with Paul immediately after that.

The first time we find Titus together with Paul somewhere is in relation to the issue whether believers from the Gentiles have to be circumcised (Gal 2:1,3; cf. Acts 15:1-2). In that way Titus is quickly confronted with the legalistic pressure that the Jewish believers want to exert on the believers from the Gentiles. He experiences and learns how Paul deals with that. The great opponent of the law is grace. Titus gets a great impression of that too. One and the other appear to be a good preparation for his task at Crete of which you learn from this letter.

The last reference of Titus in the letters of Paul is in his *second letter to Timothy* (2Tim 4:10). Without any further explanation Paul writes to Timothy that Titus had traveled to Dalmatia. Most apparently Titus went there to serve the Lord.

When Paul has been in Crete is not to be concluded from the Scripture. It has been assumed that he was accompanied by Titus at Crete after his first imprisonment in Rome. He left after churches came to existence there, but not without leaving his co-worker Titus there, out of his concern for the newly founded churches. The churches have been founded, but still need many instructions with a view to their daily practice. In this view Paul has not been able to finish his work. Titus had to do that. Paul already gave orally as an apostle the authority to Titus and now he does that in writing too.

The order to Titus is twofold. He has to set in order what is lacking and he has to appoint elders in each city (Tit 1:5). The letter therefore deals with the maintenance of order in the local churches of God. This order is not seen here so much in relation to the gatherings of the church; it is more about the daily believer-to-believer relationships and their conduct in the world.

## Titus 1

### Sender, Faith and Knowledge | *verse 1*

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

*1 Paul, a bond-servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of those chosen of God and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness, ...*

V1. Paul starts his letter with mentioning his own name. It is not that he wanted to put his own person in the foreground by that. The important thing for him is the service he was called for. For that reason he relates his name with two tasks, that of a bond-servant and that of an apostle. He starts with “*a bond-servant of God*”. By that he puts himself next to Titus and you. He is first a bond-servant of God, like you also are in the first place. If you take the humblest place you are most able to serve (*cf. Lk 22:26*).

After he introduced himself as bond-servant he calls himself “*an apostle of Jesus Christ*”. As an apostle he took a position of authority. Therein he doesn’t stand next to Titus and you, but above. It is a good thing to repeat that he calls himself first a bond-servant and then an apostle. Exercising authority according to the will of God can only happen in the mind of a bond-servant. If a person wants to be a good leader he ought to know first what it is to be a bond-servant, servant. But he also calls himself an apostle. As an apostle he has a position and a task that grant him authority that demands obedience.

Then he delivers the proof of his apostleship. Nowhere else than here does he do that so extensively and strongly. It is remarkable how close he relates his apostleship with the believers. You will see that in *verses 1-3*. The particular way in which he introduces the believers is also remarkable.

His apostleship is above all *“for the faith of those chosen of God”* (Rom 8:33; Col 3:12). That rules out an apostleship according to the law or in relation to an earthly nation. The apostleship of Paul does not belong to the law but to faith. Law and faith exclude one another (Gal 3:12).

Paul doesn't submit his apostleship to the judgment of the law, but to the judgment of faith. The important thing for him is not obedience to rules and laws, but obedience that comes from faith. This faith is present in *“those chosen of God”*. Because it is about the church here, it is clear that you may think of the election that took place *“before the foundation of the world”* (Eph 1:4). You believe, don't you? And you are elected by God, aren't you? Then you will surely acknowledge Paul's apostleship.

Application: Today you can say that each spiritually minded leader considers the faith of the elect and exerts his authority accordingly. He doesn't impose a yoke on them but stirs them up to obedience of faith. Thereby he doesn't focus in the first place on the outward of the believers but on their heart, their inward spiritual life.

There is a second character of Paul's apostleship. It is also to (or: in accordance with) *“the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness”*. You can also put the apostleship of Paul to the test by verifying the way he presents the truth. He doesn't present the truth about God and the Lord Jesus and the church, etc. as a doctrine, as truths for you to learn by heart. With Paul you see that he relates all his teachings to a life in Godliness. That means that you see the true acknowledgment of the truth being implemented in a life that shows a deep reverence for God and everything He has said.

Application: Today you will recognize a spiritual leader by the fact that he lives to the honor of God by practicing the knowledge of the truth in his own daily life. Such a leader doesn't demand a submission to a theory, but presents the truth in his speech and his deeds. Today there are many who claim to be bond-servants of Christ, but who want to serve 'according to' the latest so-called

knowledge of science of the latest arguments of unbelief. But the faith and the knowledge that are meant here are not the faith and knowledge of the world, neither that of Christianity, but of 'God's elect'.

Now read Titus 1:1 again.

Reflection: Which criteria for spiritual leadership do you discover in *verse 1*?

**The Promise of Eternal Life** | *verses 2-4*

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

*..., 2 in the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago, 3 but at the proper time manifested, [even] His word, in the proclamation with which I was entrusted according to the commandment of God our Savior, 4 to Titus, my true child in a common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.*

V2. A third test of Paul's apostleship is that it belongs to "the hope of eternal life". Here eternal life is presented as something you still are to receive. That seems to be in contradiction to what John writes about that. John speaks about eternal life as something you already have now (1Jn 5:11). Still, that is no contradiction. Life is actually presented in two ways.

Briefly said: John speaks about the life *through which* we live, Paul about the life *in which* we live. The one is the life *in you*, the other life is about the life *around you*, your environment. In the first case you may compare it with living a healthy life and in the second case with an urban or rural life.

You have eternal life in you, but you still live in a world that lies in sin. When you are in heaven, then the whole environment and atmosphere wherein eternal life is being lived and enjoyed, will perfectly fit with the eternal life in you. Eternal life doesn't indicate only the duration or length, but also the quality.

Application: Today you recognize the true spiritual leader by the fact that he encourages the hearts of the elect by presenting to them the heavenly glory at the end of their journey.

You can be sure that you will enjoy eternal life in that life atmosphere, for it is promised by "the not-lying God", as it is literally said. God cannot lie, He is not able to, it is impossible for Him to lie (Heb 6:18). That stands against the character of the Cretans

who apparently cannot do other than lying (*verse 12*), and against the deceitful nature that each human has (*Rom 3:4*). God is perfectly faithful in His promise of eternal life.

I almost wrote: the eternal life is promised *to you*. Actually there is nothing wrong about that. You are after all elected before the foundation of the world. The promise is indeed for you, though it is not written like that. It is said that God has promised “*before time began*”. When I think of that I actually prefer the thought more that God has promised this eternal life to *the Lord Jesus*, for only He was there then. Not that eternal life was promised to the Lord Jesus as something He didn’t possess, for the Lord Jesus *is* the eternal life (*1Jn 5:20*). No, God promised Him the eternal life that He will give it to His elect (*Jn 17:2*).

You wouldn’t have known anything about that promise if God had not revealed it. Isn’t it impressive that God makes you familiar with something that has been an issue in eternity about which the Father and the Son have been talking? Isn’t it mind blowing if you consider that your name was mentioned by the Father to the Lord Jesus for giving you eternal life?

To manifest this promise God waited to do that “*at the proper time*”, that is His own time. First the heart of man towards God had to be revealed. That has become fully clear at the cross. There man let the Lord Jesus, God revealed in goodness and mercy, die the most horrific death.

That lowest point in the history of man is at the same time the moment that God fully exposes His heart and reveals the width, the length, the height and the depth of His counsels (*Eph 3:18*).

V3. And how does God do that? Through “*His word, in the proclamation*”. This proclamation was entrusted by Him to the apostle Paul (*cf. Rom 10:14-17; 1Cor 2:7-10*). That Word we have now in the Scripture (*Rom 16:25-27*). In that way the revelation also reaches you (*1Cor 2:10-14*).

Paul has not drawn this ministry to himself or fulfilled it in his own way (*Gal 1:11-12*). His apostleship and the ministry that is related to it, is “according to the commandment of God our Savior”. This name of God shows Him as the One Who brings salvation or redemption (is a Savior) to all men (*cf. Tit 2:11; 1Tim 2:3-4*). The preaching that was entrusted to Paul is therefore twofold. On the one hand he preaches the gospel to all people through which they receive salvation. On the other hand he unfolds the full truth to all who have received the gospel and have been saved.

Application: Also today something has been entrusted to each spiritual leader to pass on to believers. What they pass on must cause that believers learn to live with one another to the honor of God.

V4. Paul addresses Titus whom he calls his “true child in a common faith”. The word ‘true’ actually means ‘legally begotten’. That doesn’t mean that Titus is physically his own son. The addition ‘in a common faith’ makes clear that it is about a spiritual conception (*cf. 1Tim 1:2; 1Cor 4:15; Phlm :10*). Titus came to faith and was born again through the ministry of Paul. The Gentile Titus and the Jew Paul confess the same faith (*cf. 2Pet 1:1*). They both belong to the church where there is no Jew or Greek (*1Cor 12:13; Col 3:11*).

Paul concludes his introduction with the usual blessing of “grace and peace”. ‘Grace’ is at the front. Titus can only do his work when he is aware that he needs God’s grace for his task. He will never be able to execute his duty by his own strength. When he is aware to be dependent on the grace that God is giving him, he will be able to do his duty with the ‘peace’ of God. He will not easily be discouraged when he continuously faces adversary or when there is no cooperation or when his work doesn’t seem to be bearing fruit.

Grace and peace are wished to him from “God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior”. That puts Titus in the relation of a son to his Father and to the Lord Jesus as his Redeemer. The one gives confidence and the other works commitment and efforts.



Application: A spiritual leader knows God as his Father and entrusts himself totally to Him. He also knows the Lord Jesus as his Redeemer Who has set him free that he may live for Him. The price the Redeemer paid and the awareness that in that way he has been redeemed is the greatest exhortation to serve Him.

Now read Titus 1:2-4 again.

Reflection: Which criteria for spiritual leadership do you discover in verses 2-4?

**Elders** | verses 5-9

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

*5 For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you, 6 [namely], if any man is above reproach, the husband of one wife, having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion. 7 For the overseer must be above reproach as God's steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain, 8 but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled, 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.*

V5. After his introduction Paul comes to the main point of his letter in *verse 5*. He has founded some churches at Crete. That he speaks about “*every city*”, gives the impression that the gospel has been accepted on a large scale on that island, due to which possibly in every city on the island a church has come into existence. However, Paul has not had the opportunity to build up and confirm the churches in the truth. There was still something missing, regarding the teachings.

If you read the next chapters you may think for instance of the teaching on the relationships among the believers (*chapter 2*) and the attitude towards the government (*chapter 3*). Although Paul himself is not able to provide what is lacking, he provides in the person of Titus someone who is capable to replace him.

Besides, it is not the intention that Titus stays at Crete. Paul will have him to be replaced by someone else (*Tit 3:12*). Every ambassador of the apostle will be of great support to the believers in order to live their lives as Christians. But there is also qualified leadership needed among the believers that will not be changed. Therefore Titus receives another order and that is to appoint el-

ders in every city where there is a church. That's what the greater part of *chapter 1* deals with.

The Cretans are very wicked people by nature (*verse 12*). Paul knows them. Therefore he knows what qualifications elders should have to be able to lead the churches at Crete so that they meet the will of the Lord.

In order to keep them in line or to bring them into order, Paul doesn't develop a church order. He doesn't order Titus to introduce church regulations that seem to be most suitable for their way of life on the island. That has certainly happened in church history, but that is not in accordance with the Bible. I will try to explain what it takes to appoint elders.

There has always been a lot of discussion about appointing elders. There are continually questions like: 'Who is going to appoint?' and 'Do we still have elders nowadays and how do you recognize them?' In order to find correct answers to these kinds of questions, you should consider some things. Therefore it is important to bear in mind that elders occupy a position of authority and that they are put in that position by a higher authority.

You notice that where you read about the appointment of elders in the New Testament (that is in three places: *Acts 14:23; 20:28* and *Titus 1:5*) they are appointed by apostles or their ambassadors. Therefore the appointment is not to be done by the church. It would be strange when the church itself determines who exercises authority over it. That's why this letter is addressed to Titus and not to the church at Crete. No, authority always comes from above.

Titus receives the order to appoint elders on behalf of the apostle. The appointment of elders is necessary here because the church doesn't have the complete New Testament yet. An official appointment gives the authority to elders to take action against people who pretend to be spiritual leaders, but who actually are deceivers. The church ought to listen to the elders and will therefore

experience the blessing. In our days it is not necessary to have that official appointment, for we have the complete Word of God.

The question whether elders are still to be appointed is not that difficult to be answered if you consider that elders can only be appointed by a higher authority. There are no apostles anymore and neither are there people who can act by the order of an apostle. Therefore it is not right to appoint elders in our days. But that doesn't mean that they are not anymore to be found. The Bible more often speaks about elders without reporting that they are officially appointed (e.g. *Acts 11:30; 1Tim 5:17; Jam 5:14; 1Pet 5:1-2*).

The word 'elder' indicates in both the Old Testament and the New Testament a mature person with life experience. In that sense there are fortunately still 'elders', including those who have a leading position, pastors, the gift of leadership (*Acts 15:22; Rom 12:8; 1Cor 12:28; 1Thes 5:12; Heb 13:7,17,24*). They all have no formal authority, but you are willing to submit yourself to them if you notice that they act in accordance with God's Word.

V6. Then the qualifications follow that an elder should comply with. Before I deal with those I want to point out to you that those qualifications do not only apply to an elder. It is a good thing to ask yourself to what extent they are present or absent with you. You may say that what is required for an elder as a qualification, is required to you as a rule of conduct.

The first qualification is that an elder must be "*above approach*". That means that he shouldn't be accused of anything, that he is not to be blamed for anything. The first area where that applies is his marriage and family. He must be "*the husband of one wife*". When he has more than one wife, as a result of his life in sin, he cannot be an elder. And in case he has children, they also have to be believers. And not only that. Those children ought not to be known as money wasting people with little restraint, who cannot be controlled by their father.

Therefore the family of the elder is not to be blamed for anything. For if he doesn't rule his family well, how will he be able to rule

the church (*1Tim 3:5*)? Does it seem to ask too much of you? It may be, but can you imagine God to lower His standards to fit our practice? That's not possible.

It is absolutely grace when the children come to faith, for faith is not a heritage. But there is also the side of human responsibility. God assumes that the result of a family with believing parents, the children also believe. It is God's intention to save a person *with his house* (*Acts 16:31; Jos 2:18; Exo 12:3; Gen 6:18; 7:1*).

Application: Spiritual leaders are responsible for causing their children to desire to follow the Lord Jesus.

V7. After the family the personal qualifications of the overseer follow. Have you noticed that Paul spoke about 'elders' in *verse 5* and about "*the overseer*" in *verse 7*? As it has been noticed already (see the explanation of *1 Timothy 3:1-5*) this clarifies that the elder and overseer are the same person.

- As the first personal qualification, now apart from his family, it is said again that he "*must be above reproach*", therefore not to be accused of anything.
- He must be aware that it is about a task in *God's house*. He is a "*steward*" there and not the owner. He has been entrusted to manage something that belongs to Another, God. Therefore he is also responsible, concerning his conduct, to Him.
- When an overseer is conscious of that, he will not act "*self-willed*". He will not claim any authority and obedience without any reason.
- He recognizes the right of the others for explanation whether something is good or bad. When questions rise he will not respond "*quick-tempered*" like being stung by a wasp, even if he has the presumption of evil intentions. He is not quick to anger, but has self-restraint.

- That self-restraint is also concerning his lusts. He is not to be tempted by alcohol, he is “*not addicted to wine*”. There is nothing wrong with drinking some wine at times (1Tim 5:23), but to desire it is wrong.
- An overseer is also not a brawler, he is “*not pugnacious*”. He doesn’t seek to overpower other people, neither with his fists nor with his tongue.
- He is also “*not fond of sordid gain*”, which implies that he doesn’t exercise his service, in order to make financial profits.

V8. After the characteristics in *verse 7* (of which six are negative) Paul reminds Titus of a number of positive characteristics in *verses 8-9*. Being a Christian is not only characterized by the absence of negative things, but especially by the presence of positive things that are also to be developed. Instead of seeking his own interest and profit the elder ought to seek to be meaningful to others.

- That is especially expressed in being “*hospitable*”. He not only invites friends for a cup of coffee, but he has an open heart for needy believers who may be unfamiliar to him.
- As one “*loving what is good*” (or: ‘a friend of the good’) he has a heart that is wide open for everything that is good and useful. That doesn’t make him thoughtless, a person who gets excited about everything, without distinction.
- He is “*sensible*” or thoughtful, well-balanced in his view and deeds.
- He acts “*just*” towards other people: he deals fairly and uprightly with others.
- He is “*devout*”, which means that He is focused on God and lives in devotion to Him.
- As far as he himself is concerned, he is “*self-controlled*”. That includes more than only with regard to the consumption of

alcohol. It is about a person who can control himself and who is able to control his desires and lusts.

An elder must therefore be just towards people, holy towards God and sober-minded towards himself.

V9. An elder also has to deal with contradictors, especially from the Jews ('those of the circumcision', *verse 10*). These people are always and everywhere active against the truth. They try to confuse the thoughts of people in a devious way. The overseer is not to try to resist these people with his own words, but with a word that is in accordance with the doctrine of the apostle. He ought to exhort and convict with a word that comes from the Word that is only really faithful, because it comes from God and which is transmitted by Paul.

The overseer is actually a man with authority, but he himself is also under authority, that is the authority of the Word of God that has been taught by the apostle. This is called "*sound doctrine*". It is sound in itself, not mixed with strange, human thoughts. Its effects are also sound. Therefore you will grow sound in faith when you listen to it.

Now read Titus 1:5-9 again.

Reflection: Which of the characteristics do you want to be seen in your life? What do you think you could do about it?

**False Teachers** | verses 10-16

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

**10** For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, **11** who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not [teach] for the sake of sordid gain. **12** One of themselves, a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons." **13** This testimony is true. For this reason reprove them severely so that they may be sound in the faith, **14** not paying attention to Jewish myths and commandments of men who turn away from the truth. **15** To the pure, all things are pure; but to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled. **16** They profess to know God, but by [their] deeds they deny [Him], being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed.

V10. The work that Paul has achieved at Crete was much blessed. In many cities churches have come into existence. However, where the Lord is at work satan also becomes active. The adversary has not only sneaked a few insubordinate people into the churches to destroy the work, but "many". That's why formal authority at Crete is so useful and necessary.

These "many rebellious men" are people who are baptized and who confess to be Christians. They have taken their place in the church, but they are wolves in sheep's clothing. They openly resist the truth that is revealed by God and preached by Paul. By rebelling against the sound doctrine they reveal their insubordination. These people have no respect for authority at all.

Paul also calls them "empty talkers", who spit out only empty words that lead to no good at all. They possibly are very eloquent people, who have a ready tongue. Believers who have no spiritual discernment are being deceived by this idle talk. That's what it is all about for this people. They are "deceivers" who fool the



thoughts of the believers, misguide them and lead them in the wrong direction. They are not people who sincerely think that they are right, but swindlers who confuse the believers inwardly.

Most of these false teachers are “*of the circumcision*”, so from Judaism. They are Christians who are originally circumcised Jews. They have never been totally freed from the law and are trying to impose the law on the Christians at Crete. Also today there are many of such people to be found in Christianity where there is so much Jewish religiosity present from the Old Testament. There is a spirit of Judaism going on around in Christianity of outward formal service and legalism. But that is in contrast with the spirit of the Scripture, to introduce elements of the Jewish religion, especially the law.

There had been a controversial issue due to this in the early church. This controversial issue had come to a solution at an apostles’ meeting in Jerusalem (*Acts 15:5-10*). There it was decided that the law is not to be imposed on the believers ‘from the nations’. The law cannot be the rule of life for the Christian. You actually are not legalistic when you live strictly for yourself and at the same time give room to the other. You become legalistic only when you impose your rules of life on others.

V11. We should combat legalism radically, for it permeates whole families. In the *letter to the Galatians* Paul also sharply responds to these false brothers (*Gal 2:4-5*). Their doctrine is just wrong and is being proclaimed from evil motives. Paul commands here in general, so also you, that their mouths must be stopped. ‘To stop the mouth’ is to muzzle the mouth, that it is not able anymore to do any harm. It means to silence somebody. That is only possible through the power of God’s Word and through His Spirit (*cf. Mat 22:34*).

You cannot take a passive attitude towards false teachers. The moment they get an entrance in a family, when for instance a member of a family joins them, they disrupt the whole family. They destroy families by sowing confusion, regarding the sound

doctrine. The motive that is hidden behind it, is the greed for money (*cf. Acts 20:33*).

V12. These Jewish false teachers easily find entrance because of the depraved national nature of the Cretans. When somebody comes to faith, he fundamentally doesn't belong to a certain nation anymore. Still he bears with him the national nature with its evil characteristics. He always has to be alert that it will not control him again. Paul point this out to Titus. It is necessary to take a stand and act with authority against the expressions of this evil national character, that the believers may remain sound in faith.

This assertion about their national character is not just a view of Paul, but is confirmed by one of their own prophets (a certain Epimenides). He states without circumlocution that Cretans always lie. Their mendacity is even proverbial. 'Speaking like a Cretan' means lying.

Their own prophet compares them also with an evil, wild beast. Such a beast doesn't want any bridle, for its nature is rebellious. It wants to bite and has a propensity for cruelty. A 'lazy glutton' thinks of nothing else than the satisfaction of his own lowest needs. He has an uncontrollable gluttony. Paul underlines the truth of their own prophet. Although Epimenides is not a prophet of God, God acknowledges his testimony through the mouth of Paul.

V13. The false teachers are being led in their evil practices by this depraved national character. Paul knows what he is talking about. He has experienced during his stay at Crete that they are troublesome people. Therefore he tells Titus to act sharply against the outbreaks of that national character in the church. The goal of this action is that they will be sound in the faith.

V14. Paul connects another goal to this action. Titus must severely rebuke fantasies, human statutes and traditions. They are evil plagues in the church of God that stir Him up to jealousy and that are in contrast with His grace, for they exalt man. That applies to

the believers at Crete and that applies to all believers at all times all over the world.

It concerns in the first place "*Jewish myths*". Those are all kinds of fantasies and fabrications about the origin of spiritual beings like angels and demons. Those are all speculations without even a modicum of truth. It may seem very interesting and books are written about it that also find readers. But to be sound in faith the believers should turn away from it. We must not pay attention to that, we must totally ignore it.

In the second place it concerns "*commandments of men*". The commandments of men put man in the middle and make him imagine that he can earn salvation by complying with certain traditions and rituals. That can happen by additions to a commandment of God or by a distortion of a commandment of God. Jewish scribes are excellent masters in that. The result is that people neglect the commandment of God, while they keep the traditions of people (*Mk 7:5-13*).

In both cases there is mention of a "*turn away from the truth*" (*cf. 2Tim 4:3-4*). You recognize it today in many protestant churches where human statutes (reverends and pre-programmed services) play a major role and in the roman catholic church where traditions (fables, mystics and idolatry) also play a major role.

V15. The Christendom that the Scripture shows us, doesn't know any external rituals, except baptism and the Lord's Supper. It comes down to the inward man (*1Sam 16:7; Psa 51:7*). He, who is inwardly pure, is allowed to freely make use of all things, without any fear to get defiled. Such a person is not guided by his fleshly lusts, but by love (*Rom 14:20*).

"*All things*" doesn't refer to morally evil things of course, but to external things like eating and drinking. Nothing of that is impure in itself (*Rom 14:14; 1Tim 4:4*). But those who have defiled themselves by sin and the unbelievers, defile everything they come into contact with. That's because their mind and also their will and all their desires and goals have been blemished and de-

filed. That goes also for their conscience, their inward consciousness. They have lost the ability to discern between good and evil. Where the mind and the conscience are defiled, there can be no purity.

V16. It is not about plain apostates. They claim to be fully informed about God and join just like that the circle of believers. But confession and practice with these people are opposites. If you see what they are doing, it has got nothing to do with God. This denial of God with their works makes them “*detestable*” or ‘abominable’. The word ‘detestable’ is also used for an idol image and then it is indicated by ‘abomination’ (*Mat 24:15; Mk 13:14*). Here lies a close relation with the performance of the antichrist. These false teachers are breathing his spirit.

Another characteristic is that they are “*disobedient*” to God and His truth. They do not want to bow to it, but resist against it. There is not “*any good deed*” (i.e. everything that is useful) of such people to be expected; they are totally “*worthless*” for that.

Now read Titus 1:10-16 again.

Reflection: How can you recognize false teachers and how should you protect yourself against their influence?

## Titus 2

### Older Men, Older Women | verses 1-3

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

*1 But as for you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine. 2 Older men are to be temperate, dignified, sensible, sound in faith, in love, in perseverance. 3 Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good, ...*

*Introduction.* Chapter 1 deals especially with the flock of God and the dangers that threaten the flock. Therefore the Lord gave elders, pastors and leaders. They can lead the flock and keep them from dangers. The practical things are related with the doctrine and with the elect of God. That shows how precious the believers are to God's heart. That is what should determine the behavior of the leaders and what makes their responsibility great in dealing with them.

*Chapter 2* deals with, as it is said at the end of this chapter, an "own special people" for the Lord Jesus who are zealous for good works. We are His own special people. The Lord Jesus wanted to have His own people or nation in this world, a people who are a joy and pleasure to Him. That sounds in each group that is being addressed in this chapter. He wants to have the older men, the older women, the young women, the young men and the bondslaves for Himself. He wants to be able, in the midst of all nationalities, to point to a nation or at people of whom He can say: 'Those are My people.' Kings and rulers have their people, He has them too.

Our order is to live in such a way that He can really say with joy, without being ashamed of us: 'Those are My people.' Then certainly not only the gatherings are the point here, where we

are visibly together from our living environment and people see a nation or a unity of people. It is about what the Lord Jesus sees when He looks at us in our houses and in our working place. He sees all of those different groups in their environment, not gathered, but often as a solitary individual in the midst of so many who do not belong to His people. He not only loves to see His people when they are together, but also in everyday life in the midst of the world.

VI. To make sure that He can look at us with joy, Paul orders Titus in *verse 1* to speak things which are proper for “*sound doctrine*”. That verse also starts with: “*But as for you.*” That indicates a contrast to the previous. He should not stop to minister the saints with the sound doctrine by speaking about it again and again. This would be the best remedy against the influence of the false teachers.

Titus doesn't receive the order to teach the sound doctrine, but to ‘speak things’ that are in accordance with that. That's possibly because the work of Titus is not that much of a teacher, but of a pastoral worker, which implies that he often has private individual conversations. Public preaching is often not sufficient to meet all needs. A person who especially ministers as a shepherd, once said to me: ‘From what you bring in the meeting as doctrine, I take small chunks which I use for an individual believer who needs care.’ This is how to complement one another and this is also what the Lord intended.

The starting point is the sound doctrine. That's the doctrine which is sound in itself and which also makes all people sound who take in this doctrine. It is like fruit. In healthy fruit there are no worms or rotten spots. When you eat healthy fruit, it improves your health.

Apparently Titus is still a young man. This makes it more necessary that he only speaks things which are proper for sound doctrine. Only then the different age groups will accept his exhortations. Each category has a doctrine that is fitting for that certain group. Titus has to talk about that with each separate group. The

differences between the groups will then not cause the believers to live separately from each other, or worse, in opposition to each other, but on the contrary in harmony with one another. In that way the sound doctrine will have a sound effect.

I think that you may say that a sound church consists of the four categories mentioned. The phenomenon 'youth church' ignores this and isolates the youth of the larger whole of the church. In a church as it is presented here, you see a mixture of the maturity and experience of the older people and the energy and activity of the youth.

Paul doesn't address the groups directly, as he does in the *letter to the Ephesians* and the *letter to the Colossians*. He gives instructions to Titus on how he should properly minister each group by age and gender so that they may walk in accordance with their confession. First it is important to consider that each position that is mentioned here, is given by God (age, gender) or is acknowledged by Him (bondslave, master). As long as you are in that position, you ought to act in a way that is proper for that position.

V2. The first category that is being addressed is the "older men". Not all older men are elders. Spiritually these older men are not much older than the young people, but they certainly are regarding their age and wisdom of life. Still, their old age goes together with its own dangers. When they get older a feeling of uselessness can arise or not knowing what to do anymore.

- The danger arises that they open themselves for influences that cause them not to be "temperate" anymore. In that case they are no example anymore for the young people who look upon them. A sober person is free from exaggeration and excitement in words and deeds.
- Their behavior should not be like that of a puppy, necessarily wanting to act like a young person, but "dignified". An older man ought to have an attitude with a certain dignity. He is "sensible" and adopts a sensitive reservation. He must not want to be necessarily in charge anymore.

- Another danger of getting older is that conversation become limited and one-sided. Therefore he must be instructed to be “*sound in faith*”, which means sound in what he believes. Then he will be balanced in his speech about the truth, whereby he doesn’t overemphasize certain truths and neglects other truths.
- Also “*in love*” he ought to be sound, that it reaches out to all God’s children and doesn’t stop with a selected group.
- The last thing that Titus must tell the older men is that they must be sound “*in perseverance*”. The older you get, the more the danger increases to become despondent. The feeling can arise that nothing makes any sense at all. Weariness of life may occur.

The older men may bear in mind that the Lord has a purpose with their sojourn on earth up until the last minute of their life. Professor Gunning said it this way when he grew old: ‘I will not give death that honor to wait for it.’ He looked forward to the coming of the Lord Jesus. The expectation of Him with perseverance also renews the strength of older men (*Isa 40:31*).

V3. After the exhortations to older men now those to the “*older women*” follow. Their behavior, which means their whole visible performance in daily life in words, gestures, clothing, decoration, ought to be “*reverent*”. They are expected to have an outward behavior that is fitting for the sanctuary. That means that they are continually aware to be living in God’s presence. Anna is a wonderful example of such a woman. You read of her that she “*never left the temple*” (*Lk 2:37*).

The abuse of the tongue by “*malicious gossips*” is a great danger for older women. Anna did not commit that sin. On the contrary, she spoke about God. She also served God night and day. She was full of God and praised Him (*Lk 2:37*). Therefore she was “*not enslaved to much wine*”. She did not have to turn to the bottle out of boredom to get a kind of happy feeling by drinking wine (*cf. Eph 5:18*).



Titus must instruct older women that they should spend their time in a good way by “*teaching what is good*”. Older women do not have to maintain a family anymore and therefore they have less domestic occupations than when they had to take care of children.

You may be thinking: ‘But isn’t it written that the woman is not supposed to be teaching’ (1Tim 2:12)? You are right about that. However, it is not about the explanation of certain truths of God’s Word, but how something is to be done. They do not perform like teachers before the whole church, but their teaching is only focused on just one certain category: the young women. The teaching here regards the efforts to make clear to young women how they can be good witnesses in daily life.

Now read Titus 2:1-3 again.

Reflection: Do you know older men and older women in your environment with whom you see something of the characteristics mentioned?

Young Women, Young Men, Bondslaves | verses 4-10

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

..., **4** so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, **5** [to be] sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored. **6** Likewise urge the young men to be sensible; **7** in all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, [with] purity in doctrine, dignified, **8** sound [in] speech which is beyond reproach, so that the opponent will be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us. **9** [Urge] bondslaves to be subject to their own masters in everything, to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, **10** not pilfering, but showing all good faith so that they will adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect.

V4. Titus is not ordered to teach “young women”. That would not be appropriate for him as a brother. Brothers cannot teach a young sister much regarding their relationship with her husband and her children. He must instruct the older women that that’s their responsibility. It gives older women the opportunity to bring the warmth of motherly relations in the church. Titus passes on seven admonishments to the older women on behalf of the young women. Apparently these admonishments are very necessary because of the false teachers who are “upsetting whole families” (Tit 1:11).

What counts most is that there is an atmosphere of love in the family. The young woman ought to have that love to her husband and her children. The housekeeping and maintaining the family can take up so much of her attention that she may have no time and attention for her husband anymore. She cannot get around to address him about what he is occupied with. There is also often no time to really show attention to the children.

In our days there is the danger that the career becomes more and more important. Then husband and wife have their own agenda.

The relation with one another and also with the children (if at least they are there) happens by leaving notes to one another or through social media. Love stealthily grows cold. However, the environ notices that and the results become visible in the long term. The beautiful and attractive character of the Christian family is shown by the faithfulness and love of the woman for her husband and her children (*see Pro 31:10-31*).

V5. “[To be] sensible” implies that she acts calmly and with deliberation. She must learn to think carefully before she does something. She will not fall into extremes by on the one hand acting impulsively and on the other hand by underestimating what is necessary.

The fourth thing that has to be made clear to young women is that they should keep themselves “pure”. They should not defile themselves with other men, even not in their thoughts. They should neither cause men to have impure thoughts by wearing defiant clothing or seductive make-up nor by looking seductively or using tantalizing language.

She has an extensive task at home. That is her working area. “Workers at home” does not only mean to look after the external things, like clothing and food and drink, but also the spiritual nourishment of the children.

It is important that she is behaving “kind” in doing so. Due to the manifold of work, she can come under such a stress that she may be tempted to do the evil thing.

As the seventh aspect older women should instruct their younger sisters to be “subjected to their own husband”. Indeed the woman is *equivalent* to the man, but she is not *equal* to him. That doesn’t mean that the husband is the master or commander of his wife. He is certainly the head of the wife (*1Cor 11:7-10*), he has the leading role and makes decisions, of course after deliberation. This is how God has ordained it in creation and it is not wise to deviate from that. He who does, will reap the bitter fruit of that.

There is another aspect connected to deviating from God's order of rank in creation: when what God had ordained is being put aside His Word is being blasphemed.

V6. Then it is the turn of "*the young men*". Titus must 'urge' them. The only exhortation that Titus is to speak out to them, is that they must be "*sensible*". They ought to control themselves in each territory and aspect of their life.

To be sensible is related to almost each category mentioned here (*Tit 1:8; 2:2,6*). Therefore it should be a 'core activity' of the Christian. Young people especially run the risk to act uncontrollably and hastily, due to their inexperience.

V7. The rest of Titus' exhortation to the young men must consist of his own "*exemple of good deeds*" and indeed "*in all things*", which means that he should be an 'all embracing' pattern (*cf. 1Tim 4:12*). He is not supposed to expect things of his contemporaries that are not to be seen in his own life.

First of all he will be known because of his "*purity*" in doctrine. Compromising with the Word of God is unfamiliar to him. You cannot catch him on explaining God's Word in a way that suits him best.

Furthermore the reverential character of God's Word will be made clear from his whole performance. Due to his great respect for God's Word he will guard himself for trying to make the Word attractive by using popular words.

V8. Each word that Titus speaks must be "*sound*" and "*beyond reproach*". Ambiguous words or untrue or far-fetched explanations will give opponents the opportunity to deliver just criticism. If you do not behave yourself like a Christian, it gives the opponent the opportunity to speak evil about you. If you make sure that he cannot speak any evil of you, the reverse will happen: instead of being ashamed yourself, "*the opponent will be put to shame*".

V9. As the fifth and last group Titus must exhort “the bondslaves”. This group includes people of all previous groups by age and gender. Still they form a clear distinction from the previous groups. Men and women are created as such by God. It also goes together with creation that there is a difference in age. Regarding the bondslaves it is different. Slavery is not a part of creation, but it is a consequence of the fall. Does it mean that slavery has been abolished by the introduction of Christendom? No. That’s also not the intention of Christendom. Christendom doesn’t change social evils but changes hearts of people, including that of bondslaves.

It is certainly a blessing that slavery has been abolished for the greater part, due to Christendom. But that doesn’t mean that what is being said here to bondslaves doesn’t count for today. You can apply all instructions for the bondslaves in our time, in any case to all people who are an employee in the service of an employer.

The word for “*master*” is ‘despot’, that is a person who has absolute authority and unlimited power over other people, in this case over a bonds slave. The bonds slave in that time was totally delivered to his master. The bonds slave is here being told not to be grumpy and feel compelled, but to be active and willingly “*obedient*” to his master. He ought to do the best he can to be “*well-pleasing*” in everything, even to the capricious master who is hard to be pleased. If that applies to that relation, then how much more should Christian employees be obedient to their superiors.

That will not be easy in all cases, but the believing employee is certainly able to satisfy his superior in the strength that the Lord gives. A beautiful example of someone, who as a faithful bonds slave was well-pleasing in all things in miserable circumstances, is Joseph (*Gen 39*). Also the little maid of Naaman’s wife did not only do her duty, but sought the well-being of her master (*2Kgs 5:2-3*). The Lord Jesus, Who as the perfect Slave always did what was well-pleasing to the Father (*Jn 8:29*), exceeds above these examples.

Now you have seen the general behavior, still some details of their performance follow. A bonds slave is for instance to be expected to

obey without answering back. This goes further than not giving back-answers. It is much more about not obstructing the master, not hindering his master to be met in his desires. Today that may mean that you should not argue with your supervisor and that you do not undermine his authority. Of course that doesn't have to stop a sound deliberation, but it is about your motives.

V10. A bondslave is also told not to be pilfering. He will quite surely have that tendency. The bondslave could have the thought of being entitled to, after all he has been stolen from his family. Thereby he could have the feeling of being underpaid far too little or think that what he pilfers is only the collection of back payment. But the wrong that is done to us, does not justify us to do the same injustice. This prescription of not pilfering can for instance be applied today by using internet with the apparatus and in the time of the superior or by subscribing unjustified or too high declarations.

The bondslave must show the opposite by "*showing all good faith*" to his master. It is about 'good' faith. When the master demands him to lie or to pilfer somewhere else, he is not to obey that (*Acts 5:29*). When the bondslave shows all good fidelity, then he is 'an adorning' for "*the doctrine of God our Savior*". That brings the position of being a bondslave to an awesomely high level!

The knowledge of Him Who has redeemed him from his sins, brings him to a life in which the most beautiful features of the Lord Jesus become visible in an impressive way. How pleasant must such a life be to God in which He is being reminded of the life of His Son on earth, mustn't it? Don't you long to be such a bondslave?

Now read Titus 2:4-10 again.

Reflection: In which category do you belong? What applies to you most?

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**A People For His Own Possession** | *verses 11-15*

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

*11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, 12 instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, 13 looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, 14 who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds. 15 These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you.*

V11. Verse 11 is the beginning of a new section. Still there is a clear connection with the previous verses. You can derive that from the word “for” which indicates that everything that is said previously has its meaning through what follows. And what is it that follows? That is the teaching of “*the grace of God*”. You could say that all previous exhortations can only be realized by the teaching of the grace of God. In that teaching the doctrine of our Savior-God is being enunciated. However, not as a theory, as a theological dogma, but as something that is to be seen in our life on earth, which was seen in the life of the Lord Jesus.

The grace that appeared was revealed when the Lord Jesus came to earth in humiliation. Especially the *gospel according to Luke* exposes Him as the One Who revealed the grace of God to the whole of humanity. Already in the very beginning of that gospel you read how people wondered “*at the gracious words which were falling from His lips*” (Lk 4:22; cf. Psa 45:2).

When Christ came to earth by being born as Man, the grace of God appeared in His Person. In the Child in the manger you see how God opens His heart for all people. With that Child salvation comes to all people without exception. God’s salvation is not limited to a certain people. God had elected a certain nation to be His people. He had provided that nation with all possible means in

order to serve Him and testify of Him towards all other nations. He gave them His law. But that nation was worse and more corrupted than all other nations.

When God sent His Son, it became evident how corrupted that nation was. All of their murderousness came to light. They killed Him because they couldn't bear Him. Man is so depraved that he cannot stand God revealed in goodness. That was the end of all God's efforts to make man serve Him.

Then an awesome change came into God's way of acting. When man had delivered the proof of his absolute incorrigibility, the road was now opened for God to reveal His grace. That grace is present in the same Christ Who was killed by His people. Only, the offer of that salvation is not made to only one nation, but that offer is for all people. This offer is fitting to the value that God has for what His Son has done. Salvation is being offered to all people.

V12. Everyone who has been saved, old and young, man and woman, learn to know grace in still another way, namely as a teacher, for grace is "*instructing us*". Grace gives us the necessary teaching on how to live as a believer. Therefore grace is for 'all' people, is being offered to all people, but is teaching 'us', which implies the believers.

This teaching of grace is a continuous process. Through this teaching new people are being made able to honor God in their new walk of life. The most important thing that is shown in this teaching is that the past has been condemned. In order to live to God's honor, it is important to have a good view of your past. Before your conversion you lived without God. Your life was ungodly, which means that you did not ask for God. You pursued worldly lusts by focusing yourself on all things that the world can offer. That is what you lived for.

Through the teaching of grace you understand that "*ungodliness and worldly lusts*" can in no way have any room in your life anymore. You "*deny*" them. It is not an order to do that, but it is a



matter of course. You have renounced these things as a conscious decision with a continuous effect. It is something you are to live up to on a daily basis.

If you have turned your back on ungodliness and lusts in this way, there comes room for the new life. You live your new life in the present, "*in the present age*". Indeed that is an age, a territory of power which is so terribly evil that it rejected the Lord Jesus, but from which you have been delivered by the work of Christ and the will of God (*Gal 1:4*). But you still live in it, but as a new man with totally other features than formerly.

- The first feature is "*sensible*". That indicates how you yourself are. You do not let yourself be dragged by the issues of the day; you can control yourself.
- The second feature, "*righteously*", touches your attitude towards others, like your brothers and sisters, your family members and colleagues, the world.
- The third feature regards your attitude towards God. You live "*godly*", which is in fear or reverence to God and you serve and honor Him.

In Job and Simeon you have examples of such a life (*Job 1:1,8; Luke 2:25*).

V13. After you have seen the teaching of grace in *verse 12* for the past and the present, this teaching continues in *verse 13* with the future. While living in the present, you may look forward to a great future. The focal point in that future is "*the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ*". With a view to that Paul speaks about a "*blessed hope and the appearing of the glory*".

Our 'blessed hope' is that we shall see that glory when He will come to collect us, the church (*1Thes 4:15-17*). Regarding the world we may look forward to 'the appearing of the glory'. All sin and the misery it had caused will come to an end when the Lord Jesus shall return to earth. He is 'our great God and Savior'. The Man

Who once was on earth in humiliation, in order to be the Savior of the world (*Jn 4:42*) is also the eternal God. He, Christ, can justly be called 'great' (*Lk 1:32; Mat 5:35; Lk 7:16; Heb 10:21; 13:20*).

V14. When Paul speaks about the glory of Christ he cannot help but speak about the great love of the Lord Jesus and about the great work He has accomplished. Jesus Christ "*gave Himself for us*". He loved us that much that He not only gave everything He had (*Mat 13:44-46*) and was willing to become poor for our sakes (*2Cor 8:9*), but beyond all that He gave *Himself*. You read somewhere else that God gave His own Son (*Jn 3:16; Rom 8:32*), but here you read that the Lord Jesus gave Himself. And how did He do that? By giving His life a ransom for many (*Mat 20:28; Jn 10:11, 15*). He did that voluntarily. He died for you and me while we were still sinners (*Rom 5:8*).

What did He have in mind when He gave Himself? He wanted to make us "*a people for His own possession*". To achieve that it was necessary that He redeemed "*us from every lawless deed*". To redeem here means as much as 'to ransom', 'to release'. With this meaning this word appears another time only in *1 Peter 1:18*. There Peter writes that we are not 'redeemed' with corruptible things like silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ. That means that a price has been paid for our redemption, which is nothing less than the precious blood of Christ. We have indeed been bought with a price that is not to be paid in terms of money (*1Cor 7:23*).

But, as it is said, that price is paid for our redemption, our liberation from a power by which we were completely captivated. That power was lawlessness. Lawlessness is the essence of sin (*1Jn 3:4*). Lawlessness means that you rejected any form of authority that comes from God. The Lord Jesus has redeemed you from all lawlessness (*cf. Psa 130:8*) so that you may acknowledge Him as the only Commander. You belong now to a nation that He calls His 'own possession' (*cf. Exo 19:5*) and to whom nothing of the uncleanness of the nations of the world is attached.

The only way that this nation could come into relation with Him was that He cleansed it. That also happened through His blood (*1Jn 1:7*). Through His redemption you are His possession. Through His purification you meet with His holiness and you are able to serve Him by being “zealous” in doing “good deeds”. ‘Good deeds’ is everything you do in obedience to the Lord, for that is the way God is being glorified and others are blessed.

*V15.* Paul urgently asks Titus once more to definitely inform others everything that he said to him. If people do not want to heed this call because of their negligence, he should exhort them. And when he notices that his words are being resisted, then he ought to openly rebuke them. He should not hesitate, but he must speak with all authority. After all, he is a representative of the apostle.

But he must behave himself in accordance to his position. If he does not live up to what he says, others will despise him and his words will be in vain (*cf. 1Tim 4:12*).

Let us also speak on a regular basis with one another about the issues that this chapter has dealt with. We can tell these things to one another. When it appears that there are hindrances to practice the sound doctrine, let us then put them away or apply changes that are needed. The Lord is worthy of that. He has redeemed us and cleansed us for Himself.

Now read Titus 2:11-15 again.

Reflection: What do you learn in these verses about the practice of your Christian life? How does that become visible in your life?

## Titus 3

Once and Now | *verses 1-6*

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

*1 Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed, 2 to malign no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing every consideration for all men. 3 For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. 4 But when the kindness of God our Savior and [His] love for mankind appeared, 5 He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, 6 whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ...*

V1. In the previous chapter Paul speaks about how the different groups must behave in the house of God. In this chapter he deals with the attitude of the Christian in the world. Of course the Cretans have the security to be saved from their lawless deeds (*Tit 2:14*), but that doesn't mean that they should ignore the governing authorities (*cf. 1Pet 2:13-14; Rom 13:1*).

They know indeed that they ought to subject themselves to the government, but it seems that they have forgotten that. Titus must remind them of that. They possibly are influenced by their former life. In those days they did not care about anybody, even not about the civilian authorities.

How is that with you? Do you also struggle with acknowledging the government's authority? How do you comply with the traffic instructions or filling out forms for a student grant or your income tax declaration or other forms of the government by which

you claim to be entitled to a certain compensation? It might be necessary for you to be reminded not to be swayed by the spirit of rebellion against authority or the softer form of civil disobedience. I certainly need that.

Besides, not only obedience is required, but it is expected of you that you are *“ready for every good work”*. In this case it implies that you cooperate with the government in all things what is good for the nation and society. That means that what you do, has to meet the will of God.

V2. In *verse 2* it is not only about the government, but about *“all men”*. What is written here applies towards all people. How do your neighbors, fellow classmates or colleagues know you? Be careful not to speak with contempt about your unbelieving neighbor who may live like a ‘lazy glutton’ or an ‘evil beast’. How do you consider your unbelieving colleague? The command *“to malign no one”* regards the unbelievers here. I hope you do not participate in a gossip that may be going around about a colleague.

I also hope that you are known as someone who is *“peaceable”* and not as someone who is argumentative or contentious, but much more as someone who is *“gentle”*, kind and helpful. It cannot be right that you are kind to your brothers and sisters and in the meantime quarrel with your neighbor because he parked his car on the very spot where you normally park yours, even if he did that on purpose just to annoy you. You then miss the chance to show *“every consideration for all men”*. ‘All men’ is not ‘all men except for your annoying neighbor’.

When you show gentleness you show a wonderful feature of the Lord Jesus, Who says to you that you can learn this from Him (*Mat 11:29*). In that way people will see that you are a citizen from another realm. The whole conduct radiates gentleness, always kind and helpful to ‘all men’, not only to nice people.

V3. The remembrance of how you were will help you to bring the previous into practice. Then you will be able to show people the same love that God has shown to you. The most terrible

things that other people may possibly insult you with in the heart of your being, do not come from a source that is more evil than your old nature. Consider therefore that if the Lord does not preserve you, you too may return to commit the most terrible deeds. Therefore you cannot speak with contempt about a criminal, how great and just your abhorrence may be about his deeds.

How were you yourself once (and unfortunately may possibly still be at times)?

- You were “*foolish*”, which means: without reason. That is not flattering for people who think of themselves to be very smart.
- You were also “*disobedient*”, not be willing to do anything you were asked to do.
- You also did not see the purpose of your life, you were “*deceived*” or were “*wandering*”, for you were just wandering without knowing in which direction you would come out.
- That led you to a life where you were ‘addicted to’ and were “*enslaved to various lusts and pleasures*”.
- You were spending your life “*in malice and envy*”. You did not tolerate the other to enjoy anything he had; you wanted to have what he had.
- Your whole performance was “*hateful*”, revolting.
- The pleasure you had was unreal, for the atmosphere where you abided was one where people were “*hating one another*”.

V4. If God had dealt with you according to your behavior, you would have been lost. But fortunately He did not. Instead on the contrary he dealt with you in His “*kindness ... and love for mankind*”. Therefore you are still alive and you have not ended up in the ditch, or worse, in hell.

His 'kindness' has totally changed you. That kindness is supposed to be seen in you by people. You are not kind because others are kind to you, but because you are a Christian. While you were hateful He showed His 'love toward man' to you. In that way He showed you that He cares about you, because of who you are as a man. Speaking with reverence, God acted that way, because He could not otherwise. That love towards man must be visible in you for others, not because they show you love, but because you cannot otherwise.

V5. How did God save you? Certainly not on the basis of your own works, for those were all unrighteous before your conversion. Even your so-called good works of which you thought that God should consider for righteousness were condemnable (*Isa 64:6*). You were absolutely totally unable to present anything to God that He could reward with salvation.

But what you were not able to do, God did as an expression of "His mercy". Instead of pouring out His righteous wrath over you He held that back and gave you in His grace what you could never achieve: salvation. Mercy presumes the greatest need of its object and also the necessary means for help, in order to fulfill the need.

So God has saved you because He is merciful. In order to save you He used two means. The first means is "the washing of regeneration". Although regeneration looks very much like the new birth (*Jn 3:3-6*), yet it is not the same. While the new birth happens in you, inwardly, the regeneration is more an outward matter.

You can conclude that from the only other time that the word 'regeneration' appears and that is in *Matthew 19:28*. In that case regeneration refers to the time that the kingdom of God has outwardly come, whereby the Lord Jesus reigns on earth and His own reign together with Him. Creation will then be regenerated as it were. All things you will then see are new.

What then will be the general situation now already applies to you personally. To you that new condition has come already.

The sins you were living in formerly (*verse 3*), have been washed away. This washing happened through the Word (*Eph 5:26; cf. Jam 1:18; 1Pet 1:23*). Due to that your behavior has totally changed. What people see of you is not anymore what you once were, but is from the world that is to come.

Nevertheless the only way for you to live like that is when something has happened to you inwardly. Your outward life happens from the inside, where “*the renewing by the Holy Spirit*” has taken place. The renewing of the Holy Spirit means the renewing *because of* the Holy Spirit, the renewing that comes from Him and is worked by Him. Through this renewing work of the Holy Spirit you have received a new spiritual ability through which you are able to see and think in accordance with God (see *Romans 12:2*, the only other place where the word ‘renewed’ is used). The Holy Spirit is the source of a completely new life, of totally new thoughts.

V6. There is not only mention of the *work* of the Spirit, but also of the *gift* of the Spirit. He has been given to you (*Eph 1:13*) and gives power to the new life, that this new life may be expressed. He works a daily renewal in you and also liberates you from the old life you lived. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit is a one-time event that has taken place on the day of Pentecost (*Acts 2:33; 1Cor 12:13*). The Lord Jesus has received the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father as a result of and because of His work, Whom He afterwards poured out. He did not do that scarcely, but “*richly*”.

Consider that: You are not only born of Him, but He works in you and is available to you. He dwells in you and abides in you and reveals everything to you what is yours in Christ. Because of the Holy Spirit you can richly enjoy the true life, the life in abundance (*Jn 10:10*).

Now read Titus 3:1-6 again.

Reflection: What are the differences between the past and present in your life?



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 Heirs, Instructions and Greetings | *verses 7-15*

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

*... , 7 so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to [the] hope of eternal life. 8 This is a trustworthy statement; and concerning these things I want you to speak confidently, so that those who have believed God will be careful to engage in good deeds. These things are good and profitable for men. 9 But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and strife and disputes about the Law, for they are unprofitable and worthless. 10 Reject a factious man after a first and second warning, 11 knowing that such a man is perverted and is sinning, being self-condemned. 12 When I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, make every effort to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there. 13 Diligently help Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way so that nothing is lacking for them. 14 Our people must also learn to engage in good deeds to meet pressing needs, so that they will not be unfruitful. 15 All who are with me greet you. Greet those who love us in [the] faith. Grace be with you all.*

V7. Now you get to learn about the purpose of salvation. God has saved you, that you could become 'an heir' "*according to [the] hope of eternal life*". In the previous verses you have seen what God prepared to accomplish that. He appeared to you in His goodness and love towards man; He showed you mercy; He cleansed and renewed you. But there was still something else to happen to make you an heir, for as an heir you ought to be fully in accordance with the righteousness of God. As a true heir your 'right' to the inheritance is not to be questioned.

The Lord Jesus also took care of that through His work on the cross. He has perfectly fulfilled the right of God. Through faith in Him and His work for your sake God passes on His own righteousness to you (*Rom 3:21-22*). You are a new creation in Christ. You have new life, a life from God. You are a child of God and therefore also an heir of God (*Rom 8:17*). God sees you in Christ

Who became the righteousness of God for you (1Cor 1:30). It will be evident that you owe that justification only to God's "grace" (Rom 3:24).

It is not mentioned here what the inheritance entails. That doesn't mean that you do not know what the inheritance consists of. It is after all everything that Christ inherits, because we are His fellow heirs (Rom 8:17; Eph 3:6). Here the inheritance is related to 'the hope of eternal life'. The word 'hope' doesn't indicate insecurity, but focuses you on the future. You will enjoy the inheritance in the same way as you will enjoy eternal life in the time that sin cannot possibly exert its pernicious influence.

You and all believers will then be perfect and therefore the circumstances will also be perfect, without any chance for sin to penetrate again. The full result of the work of Christ will be seen and enjoyed in all His glory and through all eternity. And you may partake of that. That is quite an awesome perspective, isn't it?

V8. What Paul just said is an absolutely faithful word. You can count on it. But it must not stop with nice reflections. Titus must urge that the believers believe this word and should arrange their lives accordingly. Just pass on the things you just learnt to others who also believe in God, which means that they believe Him without questioning His Word. They may not all know this, but when you start to tell them about these things you will notice that they are encouraged and helped by it.

Just like you they will then focus themselves on "good works", which means that they will carefully examine for themselves which good works they can do. They will work with deliberation. When you are occupied with good, honorable works you do not harm or burden other people, but on the contrary you are engaged with things that have a "good and profitable" effect for the people in your environment.

V9. Concentrating on good works prevents you from wasting time on things that are not good. You will avoid those things.

Paul mentions some of those things. Titus must avoid “foolish disputes”, which are disputes that are useless and make no sense at all. He must also stay far away from figuring out and discussing about “genealogies”, because concerning that commentators came up with the wildest fantasies.

He must also not partake of the contentions and strivings on the law by the Jewish scribes to add all kinds of commands to it. All such empty rhetoric is without any sense and content. It produces nothing else than hot heads and cold hearts. He who mainly talks about outer things doesn't understand much of the kindness and God's love towards men.

V10. Among the people who produce such foolishness, “a factious man” can just expose himself. Therefore it is not surprising that in line with this, Paul gives Titus an instruction how he should deal with a divisive man. A divisive man can also be a false teacher (2Pet 2:1), but not necessarily. The Pharisees were a divisive group or a sect (Acts 15:5; 26:5). They made a controversial point of many things and excluded others who did not share their opinion. Still you could not say that they proclaimed a false doctrine. They were pure in doctrine, but they made additions to God's Word, which caused it to be with no effect (Mat 15:6).

A sect is a group of believers that distinguishes itself from other believers by putting an excessive emphasis on certain parts of the truth. In order to have fellowship with them they require that people embrace their concept about those parts of the truth. A sect comes to existence when the conditions to have fellowship are more than the Scripture requires. Nevertheless not everyone who belongs to a sect is a sectarian or divisive man, but the leaders of the group certainly are.

Then Paul tells Titus (and you also) how to deal with a divisive man. Note carefully that this is a personal letter and not a letter to a church. Therefore it is about a personal attitude towards a divisive man. There is also no mention of the command to ‘put away from yourselves’ (1Cor 5:13b), but about ‘warning’ and ‘rejecting’. The moment a person exposes himself as divisive he must be ad-

monished once or twice. Only when it becomes evident that the admonitions do not help, it can be determined that a person is a divisive person and then rejection should follow. Such a person persists in his deviation in such a way that further efforts to bring him to repentance will be in vain.

V11. Titus must reject such a person, because he knows that that person “*is warped and is sinning*”. Further contact will be harmful to himself (1Cor 15:33). Due to his stubborn attitude the divisive man is condemning himself without really being conscious of that.

V12. In a totally different tone Paul speaks about some fellow servants in his concluding words. He would love to have Titus to be with him. But Paul doesn't want the believers at Crete to be without any leadership. Therefore he promises to send someone to replace Titus. He still doesn't know whether to send Artemas or Tychicus. Of Artemas we do not know more than what is written here about him. He must have been a faithful fellow worker of Paul. Of Tychicus we know more (Acts 20:4; Eph 6:21; Col 4:7; 2Tim 4:12). Only when the replacement has arrived Titus could travel to him in Nicopolis, where Paul decided to spend the winter. Then he will be able to continue his journey in spring in the company of Titus.

V13. Artemas and Tychicus appear to be fellow workers of the apostle who are able to represent him elsewhere. That doesn't apply to someone like Apollos. He determines for himself in dependence on the Lord what his order is and where he should go (cf. 1Cor 16:12). It is a danger if you see something clearly for yourself, to determine that it applies also to others. That is not what Paul does. Zenas and Apollos will also come, but not sent by Paul, but by the Lord.

Paul is not jealous that others come to the area where he has worked, but on the contrary, he is happy about that. He sees no competition, but a supporting one another. Because Zenas has knowledge of the law he is able to respond to the Judaic false teachers. Apollos is mighty in the Scriptures (Acts 18:24). Paul or-

ders Titus to make sure that these two servants will have no lack of anything.

V14. The believers at Crete can give their contribution to that. Titus must exhort them to focus on this kind of “good deeds”. Then they will not remain “unfruitful”. “Our people” are in a direct sense all believers at Crete and in the broadest sense all believers on earth. We are not to limit that to those who go ‘with us the same denominational way’.

You can learn to maintain good works. Are you also that eager to learn how to meet “pressing needs”? This exhortation becomes increasingly more topical, because we live in a world where people are building their lives for themselves alone more and more. This spirit also affects Christians more and more. That is to the detriment of lost sinners and needy believers.

V15. Paul concludes with conveying the greetings to Titus from all who are with him. Wherever he is he has fellowship with other believers. In his turn Titus must greet without distinction all believers at Crete, from Paul and from those who are with him. He presumes that all believers at Crete love him and all who are with him as believers. He wishes grace to all at Crete.

In that way he says goodbye. In that way also you and I may say goodbye to one another. We wish one another on our separate ways that grace will guide us and that we will be aware of that.

Now read Titus 3:7-15 again.

Reflection: What was Titus to avoid and what was he to cooperate with?



## The Letter to Philemon

First read the letter thoroughly. Imagine that it is personally addressed to you. When you are reading ask the Lord what His intention is for your personal life. Be open for His instructions to do, to change or not do something any more.

### Introduction

Like the *first* and the *second letter to Timothy* and the *letter to Titus* this letter is also written to a person and that is to Philemon. Nevertheless this one has a unique position between the letters that are addressed to persons.

Timothy and Titus received instructions regarding their personal behavior in the church. Paul taught them how they should deal with several situations and what to tell the believers. Those letters are of great importance to you as well. You learn by it what your personal behavior as a Christian should be in a Christianity where there is great confusion. You receive instructions on how you should function to the honor of God and to a blessing to the people around you.

The *letter to Philemon* has a totally different content. You do not find any doctrinal teaching in it. This letter is only about a practical matter. Paul addresses in this letter a believing master, Philemon, about a bondservant, Onesimus, who ran away from him and who is sent back by him, Paul. It is a letter about a slave who is in debt to his master. Paul intends to help that master to receive his slave, who has wronged him, in love. In this letter you see that the Christian faith not only consists of what you believe, but also of how you practice the faith.

It is not only about having a knowledge of God and the Lord Jesus, but also about exhibiting the features of God and the Lord Jesus. As an apostle Paul could have demanded that Philemon

should accept Onesimus back and even release him. But Paul does not take his position as apostle here. He wants to show the practical application of the teaching. He shows that it is not only important that you speak about the truth; it is also that and how you apply the truth in practice. It is not only about saying the good thing, but also that you say it well. It is the tone that makes the music.

You may think: 'What could I learn from an event that lies so far away from my world of life? It would be more helpful if I learn to know my position in Christ and how to show that in my life than knowing how Philemon should receive his slave.' That would be a logical error. Precisely the *letter to Philemon* grants us, like no other letter, an example of how you are to show your position in Christ.

Although the letter does not consist of any doctrinal teaching, you will notice that it could only be written by somebody who has absorbed the whole truth in his heart. When you are reading this letter you will taste that the whole life and the whole mind of the writer are permeated with what he is in Christ. He applies in practice what he writes about the truth of the one body (the *letter to the Ephesians*) and the mind of Christ (the *letter to the Philip-pians*) and the new man (the *letter to the Ephesians* and the *letter to the Colossians*).

What is described here ought to be the daily practice of the believers in comparable situations. Although we do not have to do with slavery you may have to do with situations where another person owes you something, like Onesimus did to Philemon. It can be the case that you know of other people who find themselves in such situations. You may take a mediating role then, like Paul mediates here between Onesimus and Philemon. We learn from this letter how we should deal with such situations. That is the purpose of this letter and it should be read in that way.

In this letter you will search in vain for instructions on how to deal with slavery or how you should look at it. It is not about that at all. Christendom does not change circumstances, but the hearts of



men. But even when the heart has been changed it does not mean that the believer willingly submits himself to the circumstances. I actually find it quite difficult sometimes how to deal with the injustice that is done towards me. That also indeed depends on the nature of the injustice. In this letter it is about stealing possessions and the refusal of bearing responsibilities.

There is another injustice where something is being taken away in a much deeper sense. Then I think of physical abuse or the manipulation of your will. It will be evident that this injustice is of another kind than the injustice that induced this letter. But in case you do have to do with this terrible injustice, then you need to learn how to deal with it also. That will be quite a difficult process, but with help from the Lord and from the people you trust, you can achieve a lot.

Philemon most apparently lived in Colossae, as it can be derived from the letter to the church there (*Col 4:9*). Therefore there is a strong relation between the *letter to Philemon* and the *letter to the Colossians*. There is something else that indicated a strong relation between the *letter to Philemon* on the one hand and the *letter to the Ephesians* and the *letter to the Colossians* on the other hand. In the *letter to the Ephesians* and the *letter to the Colossians* the masters of the slaves are actually addressed as such (*Eph 6:9; Col 4:1*). Philemon is a master like that and he is also directly addressed.

It seems that he came to faith through the service of Paul. That is what you actually could read between the lines in *verse 19*. Paul had never been in Colossae (*Col 2:1*) and must have met Philemon somewhere else. That encounter or those encounters ultimately led to his conversion. Afterwards he worked together with Paul and also with Timothy (*Phlm :1*).

Here Philemon is back at Colossae. It is most likely that the woman who is mentioned here, Apphia, is his wife. It has been assumed that Archippus is his son, but that is no more than an assumption. Philemon must have had a fairly large house, for the church gathers together in his house. The fact that he has at least one slave, Onesimus, may imply that he is not impecunious.

Onesimus is the issue in this letter. Onesimus was an unconverted slave who had fled. He certainly did not flee because of a cruel treatment by Philemon. I think the problem was with himself. To all outward appearances he was an unprofitable boy (*verse 11*). Before his conversion he did not justify his name, for the name Onesimus means 'profitable'. It even appears that he became a thief.

Philemon actually did not chain him, but contrarily gave him freedom to a large extent. Philemon had confidence in him. Onesimus seriously misused that confidence. He not only ran away at a certain moment, but he properly equipped himself. He had to make the best of life, right? He might have justified himself by thinking that he did not take more than the outstanding payment with him. A person who is not being guided by the Lord can have the weirdest ideas about 'mine and thine' and will also act accordingly.

It is not told whether he aimed to go to Rome or whether he arrived there after a ramble. Anyway the Lord led it in such a way that he met the apostle there. It is possible that he 'accidentally' bumped into the apostle. He ended up into conversation with him and the Lord opened his heart so that he came to conversion. It is also not unthinkable that on his own initiative he searched the apostle about whom he must have heard a lot in the house of Philemon. The Lord might have made his conscience restless and reminded him of Paul who had been imprisoned somewhere in Rome.

What is definitely sure is that he came to conversion by Paul in prison and through the service of Paul (*verse 10*). Due to that his relation with God turned out well. Now he still had to put things right in his relation with Philemon. He still had a way to go regarding that.

So you see that through conversion not all problems disappear at once. Conversion is the beginning of a new life. From that moment growing in faith and abandoning the past go hand in hand. Everything of which you know or through which you later see

that you wronged someone, you need to put right. That's why after my conversion I went to the owner of a shop where I as a youngster regularly stole candy. I had an amount with me as a payment. That was, as far as I can remember, by no means the value of the stolen candy, but the owner accepted the payment I had with me and forgave me.

Apparently Onesimus did not think with joy about returning to his master. Nevertheless he acknowledged the necessity of it, probably after he was convinced by Paul. Paul also promised him his unconditional support. He took the responsibility to help Onesimus towards Philemon.

The way he does that is not of the kind that we mean when we are talking about 'making a plea for somebody'. He did not simply send Onesimus back, but he sent him back with a letter of recommendation. In that letter Paul testifies of the genuineness of Onesimus' conversion and of the many profits that he received from him after his conversion. You can learn from Paul in this. You can examine in which way you could help and encourage somebody who is dealing with such a situation like that of Onesimus.

You can also learn from Onesimus. By nature you are also a runaway Onesimus, who was unprofitable and of no use at all (*Rom 3:12*). That has been changed by your conversion. By the power of the Holy Spirit you are now able to be profitable to your environment. That you have changed is most striking for your daily environment, like at home, at school or at your work. Precisely where Onesimus was as a slave he now can show that he is profitable.

That is the way how God sends us back to our environment, our family, working place, in order to be a witness there, to be profitable for the Lord (*Mk 5:19*). You and I are God's 'Onesimus'.

Now read the letter thoroughly one more time.

Reflection: Have you made right, as far as you can recall, the injustice you have done towards others?

**Senders, Recipients and Blessing** | *verses 1-3*

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

*1 Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, to Philemon our beloved [brother] and fellow worker, 2 and to Apphia our sister, and to Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house: 3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

V1. As it is remarked in the introduction Paul doesn't take the position of an apostle here. If he had done that, he would have taken his authority as a starting point for what he is going to write. He could have done that, as he later says in *verse 8*. Still he does not do that on this occasion. The point is that he is not intending to make known or to defend the truth, but it is about something else. He wants to reach the heart of Philemon; he wants to have a heart-to-heart contact with him. Therefore he doesn't look at the different positions they have in the church, but what they possess together. Paul wants to talk with Philemon from the grace they both have received from God. Actually Paul takes still a lower step by adopting the attitude of somebody who is asking Philemon for a favor.

From that attitude he intends to express his feelings and wants to appeal to those of Philemon about someone they both know and that is Onesimus. But each of them knows him differently. Philemon knows Onesimus from the past, Paul knows him from the present. Between the past and present lies the conversion of Onesimus. Paul knows the good consequences of his conversion. Philemon only knows his past life and its adverse results. Paul knows about that. Therefore he doesn't wipe Onesimus' past clean or try to pretend that it was not that bad. The only thing he wants is to persuade Philemon to forgive Onesimus and accept him back. That's why he adopts this humble attitude.

In that way he shows Philemon how he desires that Philemon, the master, deals with Onesimus, the runaway slave. In this way Phi-

lemon can show the grace of the apostle, or better said the grace of the Lord. The Lord has humbled Himself more than anyone ever did. Not that He sacrificed anything of what He Himself is. But He was able to do something in His humiliation that absolutely could not be done in any other way. That is to impress the heart of His own by His graceful dealings (*Jn 13:13-15*). In the same way Paul could not deny his apostleship, but he could bypass it for this moment and give an example of a loving approach. In that humble attitude he can plea instead of command.

So Paul doesn't present himself as an apostle, but as a "*prisoner of Christ Jesus*". That must have already directly touched the heart of Philemon. The sender of the letter is someone who endures that pain for the sake of Christ. You can also tell the difference between a letter of someone for whom everything is going very well and a letter of someone who has (had) to go through many hardships. I assume that the one of the latter impresses you more.

Paul also says in other words that he is not a prisoner of men. People are just instruments in the hand of the Lord. Paul knows perfectly well to be in the hand of the Lord. He is not a plaything of destiny with the result to be a prisoner now. No, the Lord has brought him there, in order to have fellowship with this 'elected vessel' and to share the deepest thoughts of His heart with the apostle. Due to that we now have three letters that inform us about the richest blessings of the Christian: the *letter to the Ephesians*, the *letter to the Philippians* and the *letter to the Colossians*.

In a special way Paul in his imprisonment also has fellowship with a brother like Epaphras, who shares in his imprisonment (*verse 23; see also Col 4:12*). And in this letter we also see how his heart is related with Onesimus, who serves him in his imprisonment.

There is another sender, Timothy. Timothy is not an apostle, but he nevertheless has a special position in the church. But here also there is no mention of that special position. Timothy is presented as a "*brother*", an indication which you may see as a title, which also applies to Philemon. It is a title of great significance. In a general sense the sisters are also meant with 'brothers'. You see that

actually when you know that the Lord Jesus is not ashamed to call us His brothers (*Heb 2:11-12*). In that way He relates Himself to all the believers.

Paul uses this title several times in order to appeal to the heart of Philemon (*verses 7, 20*). This is how Paul was addressed by Ananias directly after his conversion (*Acts 9:17*). And during the time of his service the heart of the apostle always sought rest in the fellowship of the brothers and sisters.

We are each other's brothers through all eternity. It is an eternal family relationship that has arisen through the work of the Lord Jesus. His first expression of joy after He fulfilled the work of redemption is: "*Go to My brethren.*" The fellowship of the believers with their Father and God is that of the Lord Jesus with His Father and God (*Jn 20:17*).

Paul addresses Philemon. That name means 'one who loves' or 'rich in love'. He is worthy of that name, as it appears from *verse 5*. He is rich in love and has shown his love to others. Therefore it is inevitable for others to love him. He who loves is also loved himself. Paul has experienced his love (*verse 7*) and calls him "*beloved*". Philemon is loved by God, by Paul and Timothy and by all who have noticed the love of Philemon.

The love of Philemon also goes out to the work of the Lord. He is a "*fellow worker*" of Paul and Timothy in the service for the Lord. This is again a proof that Paul mentions everything by which he can relate himself with Philemon.

V2. It doesn't seem farfetched to me to assume that Apphia is the wife of Philemon. It is the only time that the apostle mentions the name of a woman in the salutation of his letters. That would be not appropriate on other occasions, but here it is very appropriate. Apphia has also been a victim, maybe the greatest victim. She lost a servant. Paul also adds something to her name. He calls her "*sister*", with which he indicates the precious bond of faith in the Lord Jesus through which they are related to one another. There is also nothing here that indicates that Paul has a higher position in the church.

Archippus was probably a housemate, otherwise he would not have been mentioned together with the heads of the family in the salutation. It has been assumed that he was their son. There are no indications of that. He might have stayed with them in their house for some time, maybe because he needed some rest and recovery of strength. After all he is a partaker of the fight for the gospel. It may even be the case that he had difficulty with taking part again in the fight. He actually had to be exhorted to fulfill his task (*Col 4:17*).

By mentioning these names he expresses that they have fellowship with each other, that they share a common possession together. Through Christ they are related to one another and have interest in one another. This fellowship goes right through all differences that may be in social positions, in gender, in language. In the light of the cross all differences are resolved. In the new creation God is all things in all. In Christ there is no Jew (Paul), nor Greek (Philemon) and nor slave (Onesimus) nor free (Philemon) (*Gal 3:28*).

The church in the house of Philemon is also involved with this matter. They undoubtedly had knowledge of what had happened. When Onesimus comes back they should also know how that happened. They will also know that a new brother has been added to them. The whole church must welcome this runaway slave in the mind of Christ.

In the *letter to the Colossians* Paul writes nothing about Onesimus as a runaway slave. There he only presents him as a faithful and beloved brother (*Col 4:9*). The problem between Onesimus and Philemon should be made known to the ones who are directly involved.

The church in the house of Philemon is not what is called today in the Western world, a 'house church'. A house church can arise because of several reasons. It consists of a number of believers who regularly gather in a house, in order to share something with one another about the faith in Christ. Each house church stands by

itself. People especially appreciate the small scale and therefore experience the personal attention more.

It is certainly not unbiblical to form a house church, but it is not being a church as you encounter it in the Bible. A church in the biblical sense considers the regulations that are particularly given in the *letter to the Corinthians* on the gathering of the church. That also happened in the house of Philemon and in other cases where there is mention of a 'church in a house' (cf. *Rom 16:5; 1Cor 16:19; Col 4:15*).

In the Bible there is mention of the church at a certain place. In that place believers may come together in different locations, but that doesn't mean that there are more churches in that place. This is how the first Christians gathered together to break bread in many locations in Jerusalem (*Acts 2:46*). It was indeed not possible to gather together with those other thousands of believers at one place in Jerusalem. Nevertheless the Scripture always speaks about the church in Jerusalem and not about the churches in Jerusalem.

The house of Philemon is situated at Colossae. There is the church. The fact that people gather together at two places in Colossae doesn't mean that at one place (a certain building) there is a large 'real' church and at the other place (in that house) there is a house church. Both places together are the one church at Colossae.

V3. Paul concludes his salutation with the well-known greeting. "Grace" is the unmerited favor with which God and the Lord Jesus have saved us and with which They stand beside us. "Peace" is the result of it. It is the rest in view of all circumstances, due to the awareness that everything is in the hand of "God our Father", that makes you aware of His love for His children. The same goes for "the Lord Jesus Christ" Who is the Lord of His servants.

Now read Philemon: 1-3 again.

Reflection: What is the difference between the salutation of this letter and that in other letters and why?



Love and Faith and a Plea | verses 4-10

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

*4 I thank my God always, making mention of you in my prayers, 5 because I hear of your love and of the faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints; 6 [and I pray] that the fellowship of your faith may become effective through the knowledge of every good thing which is in you for Christ's sake. 7 For I have come to have much joy and comfort in your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you, brother. 8 Therefore, though I have enough confidence in Christ to order you [to do] what is proper, 9 yet for love's sake I rather appeal [to you]—since I am such a person as Paul, the aged, and now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus— 10 I appeal to you for my child Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my imprisonment, ...*

V4. Paul starts with, as he more often does at the beginning of a letter, giving thanks to God for what he hears about Philemon. Towards Philemon he speaks about “my God”. That indicates a personal intimate relationship that Paul has with God. Such a relationship is of great meaning. I hope that you also can say of God ‘My God’ and that you have an intimate intercourse with Him in supplications for others.

Paul always remembers Philemon in his prayers. When he mentions the name of Philemon in his prayers it is not about telling God about the concerns he has about him. You certainly may bring the concerns you have about others before God. But there are also believers of whom you become very grateful when you remember them, because they have so much love and faith, isn't it? And do you show them that at a certain moment?

There is no doubt that it did Philemon well that Paul always remembers him in his prayers. In spite of the fact that they probably have not seen each other for some years Paul has not forgotten him. I hope that you also continue to pray for believers whom

you have ever met and who made such an impression on you that your prayer for them doesn't weaken.

V5. The reason of Paul's gratitude is due to the reports that he received about Philemon. In those reports is testified of his "love" and "faith. 'Love' and 'faith' go hand in hand. 'Love', the main theme of the letter, is firstly mentioned here. Philemon has love "toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints". That also goes hand in hand. It is not possible for you to say that you love the Lord Jesus and at the same time hate your brothers and sisters (cf. 1Jn 4:20). 'Faith' means confidence of faith, but can also be translated with faithfulness. Philemon trusts in the Lord Jesus and he trusts the saints.

It may be easy to have faith toward the Lord Jesus, but do you also have faith toward your brothers and sisters? It is an essential condition for a healthy fellowship that you trust one another. That has got nothing to do with ignorance. Of course you are realistic enough to know that it may even occur that you are cheated by someone. Nevertheless you are not overconfident when it comes to saints. If you are suspicious about them, if you assume that they are not honest without having any clear indications of that, it will be harmful for the fellowship. Suspicion is a great evil. With Philemon you see the contrary.

Paul does not say these things to flatter Philemon. It is really true that Philemon has love and faith toward all saints. At the same time Paul certainly says that with the intention to prepare him for what he will soon plea for Onesimus. This runaway slave now belongs also to 'all saints'. It is as if Philemon is now being tested in his love by showing that love toward Onesimus. You probably experience that yourself at times that it is sometimes easier to love brothers and sisters who live far away from you than those whom you daily meet and with whom you have daily intercourse.

When you get to know each other more and more the result may be that the love diminishes and even fades away, but it also may possibly increase. Of course the intention is that the latter happens. It is also like that in a marriage. At the beginning you see

no evil in one another. But once you get to know each other better you also learn about the less pleasant sides of one another. It turns out wrong when you start to blame each other. It makes the bond stronger and stronger when you accept each other in that.

V6. After expressing his thanks for what he heard about Philemon Paul tells him why he prays for him, indicated and introduced by the word "that". He wishes that the "fellowship of" Philemon's "faith may become effective", that it may acknowledge that every good thing that is in them for Christ. This also serves as a preparation to bring the heart of Philemon in line with the feelings of Paul. Philemon will have to be strong in his fellowship of the faith, in order to be able to forgive Onesimus and to welcome him as a brother. Onesimus belongs now to that fellowship of faith. In order to see him as such it means to Philemon, who has been cheated by him, that he needs the strength of the Lord. The Lords wants to give him that.

To make that clear to Philemon Paul wants Philemon to know what is in his heart for the Lord. His heart is full of the good for Christ. When the heart of Philemon is also full of kindness for Christ it will be easier for him to forgive and welcome Onesimus. Paul is not making an explanatory presentation on all good things that are in his heart for Christ. He prays that the Lord will make that clear to Philemon.

You don't have to propagate about everything that you do for the Lord and how great your life of faith is that other people may notice that. People who speak highly of their great knowledge and faith are more occupied with themselves than with the Lord. If you want others to discover Jesus Christ in you then you should pray about that.

The good in you is not the flesh. Nothing good dwells in it (*Rom 7:18*). The good is the faith and its effect. Where there is faith there is also the good. Where there is no faith there is nothing good.

V7. Paul has heard good things about the service of Philemon. The most inward feelings of the saints have been refreshed by

Philemon. Everyone who came into contact with him saw and experienced his faith and love. They were quickened by that, which has to do with rest, with a labor break, through which new strength is being gained to continue the work.

These reports also have a bountiful effect to Paul, who is being pleased and comforted by them. It is wonderful when you can have such a joy from the good reports you hear about someone.

Paul again addresses him as “*brother*”. It is fitting for the structure of a letter with a special appeal to the feelings of the believer. In this way Paul emphasizes that he and Philemon stand on the same ground of grace. There is no sharpness to be found in his attitude.

V8. It is not that Paul doesn’t dare to command him to welcome Onesimus as a brother. He even has “*enough confidence*” to do that. It is also not boldness of men, but boldness “*in Christ*”. It is as if Christ gives him the liberty to command. In case he had done that he would not have done anything wrong.

V9. Nevertheless he doesn’t make any use of that boldness because he has a higher motive: that of love. You see that, even though you have the boldness to do something, it is not a natural thing to make use of it.

If you want to reach a well-considered decision like Paul makes here, it is necessary to be very close to the Lord, to have His mind and to seek only the interest of the Lord and that of the other. After all, it is much easier to command somebody to do something, certainly when you are qualified to, than to, with a great deal of difficulty, persuade another person to take a certain action. To act like that, you absolutely must, like Paul, have understood something of the love of God as the core of Christendom. That is not about commanding, the fulfilling of a law, but about faith that works through love (*Gal 5:6*).

There are certainly rules you are to obey (*e.g. 2Thes 3:6*). But here it is about showing grace and love, about dealing with one an-

other as believers, accepting one another. You cannot achieve that through a command. To achieve that an appeal to love must be made, like Paul does to the love of Philemon. Besides, a command wouldn't be fitting to the love that Philemon is known for.

Paul places himself before the heart of Philemon as "*such a person as Paul, the aged*" and also as "*a prisoner of Jesus Christ*". Paul must have been about sixty years of age here. That is not really old for our understanding. Yet he calls himself an old man, which is undoubtedly due to the many hardships he went through. Apparently you could tell that from his face.

Anyway, for the spiritual eye of Philemon no impressive appearance arises, a man with personality and a fervent speech. For the natural feeling the once great apostle has no dignity anymore. But precisely this presentation appeals more to the affection of Philemon's heart when he hears the great apostle plea in such a humble manner for the sake of Onesimus. He sees how Paul takes the place of a poor beggar (*Pro 18:23*).

V10. Up till now Philemon could have been wondering what Paul's intention was, what the appeal he wants to make, consists of. Then Paul comes up with his purpose. He wants to make an appeal to Philemon for the sake of Onesimus. If Paul would have mentioned that name just like that, all kinds of unpleasant memories and bad feelings could have arisen with Philemon. But Paul precedes the name Onesimus by a description that undoubtedly have softened the feelings of Philemon.

Paul speaks about Onesimus as "*my child Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my imprisonment*". This message sounds almost like a birth announcement. A birth goes together with joy. Often the card of the birth announcement says that 'with joy' the birth is being announced. Likewise you feel the joy of Paul when he announces to Philemon by this description that he had begotten a spiritual child in his imprisonment.

Most apparently the sensitive Philemon must have felt, while reading this, that this event must have been a great consolation

to Paul. Paul experiences there, while he is restricted in his movement that he was allowed to bring someone to the Lord. That is without question God's work.

I do not know whether he was then already able to rejoice with Paul about this new birth, but it nevertheless must have softened his feelings. The letter is still not finished. Paul continues the preparatory work that should cause Philemon to reconcile with Onesimus.

'We call him Onesimus.' This is what could have been written on the birth announcement card. The meaning of that name is 'useful' or 'profitable'. His parents have expressed their expectation by that name that his life would be like that. However, he did not meet with the expectations of his parents. It appeared to be the contrary. But that also changed through his conversion. The unprofitable one becomes a profitable one.

Each brother and sister should be like that. Love assumes that each brother and sister has a profitable input. Conversion changes a person: one who only thinks about himself and who seeks his own advantage, into a person who is profitable to other people, and of whom others have profit.

Now read Philemon :4-10 again.

Reflection: What could other people say about your love and faith?

Put That On My Account | verses 11-25

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

..., **11** who formerly was useless to you, but now is useful both to you and to me. **12** I have sent him back to you in person, that is, [sending] my very heart, **13** whom I wished to keep with me, so that on your behalf he might minister to me in my imprisonment for the gospel; **14** but without your consent I did not want to do anything, so that your goodness would not be, in effect, by compulsion but of your own free will. **15** For perhaps he was for this reason separated [from you] for a while, that you would have him back forever, **16** no longer as a slave, but more than a slave, a beloved brother, especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord. **17** If then you regard me a partner, accept him as [you would] me. **18** But if he has wronged you in any way or owes you anything, charge that to my account; **19** I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand, I will repay it (not to mention to you that you owe to me even your own self as well). **20** Yes, brother, let me benefit from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in Christ. **21** Having confidence in your obedience, I write to you, since I know that you will do even more than what I say. **22** At the same time also prepare me a lodging, for I hope that through your prayers I will be given to you. **23** Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you, **24** [as do] Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow workers. **25** The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

V11. When Paul talks about the profit of Onesimus, he first points to the profit that Philemon will have and then only to the profit he himself had of him. He speaks about the profit that Philemon will have of Onesimus as a certainty. It seems that Paul is witnessing a development of the gift of grace in Onesimus. In his imprisonment he had much profit of that and he enjoyed that too.

V12. The value of Onesimus to Paul is that of his heart. That is a real recommendation. In case Philemon had already thought of a punishment for the injustice that Onesimus had caused him and

the loss he had suffered, then he still could not hurt Paul's heart. He actually would if he indeed would punish Onesimus. Paul clothes Onesimus with his own value towards Philemon. He calls him "my heart". Paul himself comes to Philemon in Onesimus, as it were. Philemon will surely accept him based on everything Paul means to Philemon. Here you learn how to reach the heart of another person.

V13. Paul would love to have Onesimus to stay with him. What a help did that fellow bring him and what a joy also. Onesimus not only served him by his presence, but also by his work. He was a very good servant of Paul, whom he would have rather kept with him. Additionally Paul saw in Onesimus a kind of representation of Philemon. When Paul saw Onesimus he saw Philemon. In that way he was always reminded of Philemon. Philemon himself did not have the opportunity to visit the apostle in his imprisonment, but in this way it was being compensated. That must have satisfied Philemon also.

V14. Paul does not manipulate with words to mentally put Philemon under pressure. He wants to share with Philemon what was going through his mind, that Philemon may be more willing to forgive and receive Philemon. By revealing the considerations of his heart to Philemon in this way he wants to soften the heart of Philemon. He renounces his own benefit he found with Onesimus for the sake of the benefit that Philemon will have of him. That is the true mind of Christ: renouncing something to grant others the benefit of it. Paul prefers to be alone if that will cause others to benefit with what delivered him benefit.

Paul's policy is different from what the law prescribes. According to the law he was not even supposed to send Onesimus back (*Deu* 23:15-16). But grace always goes further than the law, for Paul wants everything to turn out well between Philemon and Onesimus. Therefore he did not want to make use of the right to keep Onesimus with him. He wants to consult Philemon about that, he does not want to force anything at all. Forcing a decision is not the right way. Philemon actually had to, but Paul did not want



to deal with it like that. He wants to cause that the good deed of Philemon would not be “*by compulsion*”, but of his “*own free will*”.

If Paul had kept Onesimus with him he would have kept the law. He could have written that to Philemon. Then formally everything would have been in order. Philemon would have had nothing to say against that. Paul could have even written to Philemon that he should take up the courage to forgive Onesimus as a kind of obligation, as something ‘that is right and proper to do’. But love is not to be forced. You can only stimulate that by showing that yourself. That causes the other to a voluntary action that is appreciated by the Lord (2Cor 8:8-9; 9:7).

V15-16. In *verses 15-16* Paul gives another reason to take Onesimus back. Onesimus has become a brother. Paul even speaks about him as a “*beloved brother*”. He even says that the running away of Onesimus was the cause of his conversion. He does that though, in a way that it is absolutely not compromising the responsibility of Onesimus.

You can see that by the word “*perhaps*”. That indicates the cautiousness with which Paul draws the conclusion. He doesn’t speak out any absolute certainty because God may still have other aims. Paul speaks about a result that stands by itself and you should see that as a sovereign action of God. Perhaps you know from your own life some situations of which you must shamefully say that you then went your own way and that the Lord still used those situations to bring you back to Him. It doesn’t make your debt smaller, but it rather does make His grace greater.

Paul did not speak about ‘runaway’, but about being “*separated*”. That separation was “*for a while*”, but the return is eternal. The master-slave relationship is a temporary one. In that relation Onesimus returns, but a new relation has been added, that of brother. And there comes no end to a brother-brother relationship; that remains to eternity. This relationship is not something you could claim a right for; it is grace. Onesimus is above all a beloved brother to Paul. To Philemon he is both slave (that he is “*in the flesh*”) and brother (that he is “*in the Lord*”).

V17. Based on that new and eternal relation, grounded by grace, Paul asks Philemon to receive Onesimus as if Paul himself stands before him. He addresses Philemon as “*a partner*”. But notice that he calls himself a partner of Philemon and not the other way round. By saying it like this he therefore takes the humblest position and he considers Philemon more excellent than himself.

That is the policy of love and grace. This is really difficult to learn. Do you find it easy to give another person honor for a work that you have done for the greater part? Yet this is the way to fill hearts with the mind of the Lord Jesus.

V18-19. Paul surely has that mind. That definitely becomes obvious when he says to Philemon that he can put everything that Onesimus was indebted to him, on his account. Apparently Onesimus had stolen some things when he ran away or did something that might have made his master angry. Paul does everything in his power to calm Philemon down. The best thing he can do is to take all the blame. What has been stolen is to be given or paid back. Paul is therefore willing to stand bail. He takes the whole responsibility for the debts. He will pay everything back.

Don't you see the mind of the Lord Jesus here, Who perfectly took the blame of the other, of you, on Himself? Also the evil that may have been done to you was borne by Christ. He has said: 'I will repay.' The Lord has written that with his own hand. I can imagine that Philemon, while reading this, thought of that. In that way Paul did not focus the thoughts on himself but on the Lord Jesus.

If you focus yourself on Him you will always find the right motive for all your actions (1Jn 3:16). Only by looking upon Christ you will, when a brother has done injustice to you, react in the right way. A person is never a loser when he accepts any abuse for the sake of the Lord.

But there is another thing. In the case of Paul and Philemon you may also speak of a settlement of debts. Philemon owes Paul more than the other way round. Philemon owes Paul. He also came to faith due to the service of Paul and therefore Paul is his spiritual

father. Besides that Onesimus is his brother now, Onesimus also has the same spiritual father like Philemon. Would not that also have a beneficial impact on his attitude toward Onesimus?

V20. By saying “*yes, brother*” Paul expresses himself positively about what he expects of Philemon. Love hopes all things (1Cor 13:7). Again Paul calls Philemon ‘brother’ and again he does that in relation with the refreshment that Philemon gives (see verse 7). He expects to have profit from Philemon. Do you also look in faith at your brothers and sisters like that?

Needless to say that this has got nothing to do with the misuse of the kindness of others by some people. The benefit that Paul seeks lies in the attitude of Philemon. The refreshment of his heart may be that Philemon receives Onesimus in grace as he himself was received by God in grace. Paul seeks nothing for his own sake. Everything he seeks is in Christ.

V21. Paul has written his letter with the confidence that Philemon will receive Onesimus. He even expects Philemon to release Onesimus. He speaks about that in veiled terms (“*do even more than what I say*”), but clearly enough to those who understand the language of love. It could just possibly be the case that Philemon gives Onesimus the room to use his gift for the service of the church. That would imply that Philemon will not keep him for himself and for domestic duties.

V22. After having written so extensively on the preparation of the return of Onesimus, he still adds some lines with a request for his own sake. He asks Philemon to arrange accommodation for himself. That means that he will soon be released from prison.

For that release he does not count on the kindness of Caesar, but on the prayers of brothers and sisters. He sees his whole life in relation with the Lord and his brothers and sisters. This request for accommodation, which includes the soon coming of Paul, will also be another stimulation for Philemon to meet Paul’s request, regarding Onesimus.

V23. He concludes his letter by conveying the greetings of some brothers. Those are the same brothers who are also mentioned in the *letter to the Colossians* (*Col 1:7; 4:12*). Of Epaphras you read something here that is not mentioned in the *letter to the Colossians*. In this letter, which says so much about the feelings of a servant, Paul also finds consolation in Epaphras as a fellow sufferer. Knowing that someone is going through the same as you, can be very encouraging and give strength to persevere (*cf. 1Pet 5:9*).

V24. Then Paul mentions four names of people of whom he says that they are “*fellow laborers*”. Mark is the man for whom the life in the service of the Lord has become tough, but who is now useful again (*Acts 13:13; 15:37-38; Col 4:10*). Aristarchus has been a journey companion of Paul with whom he had gone through turbulent times (*Acts 19:29*). Demas is still a member of the company here, but he will quit later (*2Tim 4:10*). In that way he is the counterpart of Mark. Encouragement and disappointment often lie close to each other. Finally he mentions Luke, the medical doctor. He must have gratefully made use of him for his physical condition.

V25. His personal greeting is not addressed to Philemon alone, but to all. The word “*your*” is in plural. He wishes that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is with the spirit of all.

How important is that wish nowadays. Your spirit is daily exposed to countless impressions. Your mind is being influenced by everything you see and hear. It is certainly important to keep your spirit pure. The grace of the Lord Jesus wants to lead you to cleanse yourself “*from all defilement of flesh and spirit*” (*2Cor 7:1*). Then you will be free in your spirit and able to learn to know the Lord Jesus better. You will be more able to understand His Word and to do His will. His mind will be revealed more in you; is that not the main theme of this letter?

Now read Philemon: 11-25 again.

Reflection: How can you refresh someone’s heart in Christ?

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