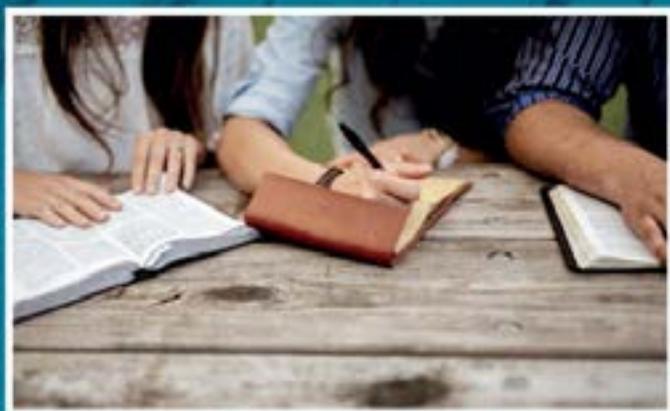


THE FIRST LETTER TO TIMOTHY



An Explanation of This Letter
Especially for You

Ger de Koning

ROCK
SOLID
8

**The First Letter to
Timothy**

The First Letter to Timothy

An Explanation of This Letter
Especially for You

Rock Solid #8 (Part I)

Ger de Koning

The original Dutch version is available at
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Abbreviations of the Names of the Books of the Bible

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.

When **ASTERISKS** * are used in New Testament quotations, it is to mark verbs that are historical presents in the Greek which have been translated with an English past tense in order to conform to modern usage. The translators recognized that in some contexts the present tense seems more unexpected and unjustified to the English reader than a past tense would have been. But Greek authors frequently used the present tense for the sake of heightened vividness, thereby transporting their readers in imagination to the actual scene at the time of occurrence. However, the translators felt that it would be wise to change these historical presents to English past tenses.

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

The First Letter to Timothy

Introduction

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, with few exceptions, be able to identify yourself with Timothy,. At least, that's the purpose. If you notice that you deviate in certain things from what God's Word says, you can correct them. In this letter you have a model that helps you to live to God's honor.

We will first look at the person to whom Paul addresses this letter. (I advise you also to read also Acts 16:1-3; Phil 2:19-23; 2Tim 1:5). By examining the 'personalia' of Timothy – his name means 'the fear of God' 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)

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 became a 'child' of Paul in a spiritual sense possibly during Paul's first visit to Lystra (Acts 14:6-20) on his first mission journey. On his second mission journey 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:

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

Personal identity:

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

Now you have some idea of who he is. You can identify a little more with 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. Paul writes the letter so 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 topic 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 professing 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 rules of conduct is not an easy task even today. The resistance to obey is growing. 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 to him 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 increasingly abandons 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 appreciated to God.

Read again Acts 16:1-3; Phil 2:19-23; 2Tim 1:5

Reflection: In what way would you be more like Timothy?

1 Timothy 1

1Tim 1:1-4 | Blessing and Exhortation

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 accomplished 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 that He is Lord (Phil 2:10-11).

Paul has already bowed his knees. He subjected himself to the Lord Jesus. Paul's apostleship is not something he himself has chosen. 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 evade it. He neither desires to do that (cf. 1Cor 9:17b). He performs his task with the use of all his strength (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 decay. God called Himself "Savior" in Isaiah 45 (Isa 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 (Lk 1:47; 1Tim 2:3; 4:10; Tit 1:3; 2:10; 3:4; Jude 1:25).

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. If the Person of Christ Jesus is your only hope in this time of decay, you will surely be able to walk a path in a special way that is to the glory of God and the Lord Jesus in the midst of decay.

Summarizing you could say that if 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 (Mal 3:16) and in Luke 1 and 2 (Lk 1:5-6,26-28; 2:8-12,25,36-38). 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 child in [the] faith". Timothy is his spiritual child. 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 child. 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 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 to live to His glory. 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 in view of the miserable situation you are 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 if you trust in 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 can always go to your 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 remain on at 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 must take action.

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 strange, false doctrines. If you don't remain in the grace of God, you will go astray. Only by being aware that only by the grace of God you know what you know you will be preserved from that.

Therefore Timothy has to stop the strange doctrines that "certain men" are teaching in Ephesus. He was not to ask those 'certain men' kindly to stop their unedifying occupations. There should absolutely be no tolerance toward 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 those ‘strange doctrines’ in several ways. The ways these effects appear are described in verses 4-11. In all cases it is about doctrines that are contrary the teachings 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 topics subsequently have their origins in human fantasy, human curiosity and human religiosity. They all are opposite 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 pay attention heed to it.’

The ‘endless genealogies’ is another product of the corrupt spirit of man. Regarding this the command is also: not to pay attention to it. It 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 pays attention to it, arrogates himself to be able to explain that all blessing we have received is the result of a process. In the evolutionary theory you have something like that.

By the way, you should not confuse this kind of genealogies with the genealogies you find in the Word of God, for example in 1Chronicles 1-9 and in Matthew 1 (Mt 1:1-17). Those are inspired by God’s Spirit and serve God’s purpose.

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

Disputes stand against “the administration of God”. This means: tasks and responsibilities given by God that must 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 task 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?

1Tim 1:5-7 | The Goal of the Instruction

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 instruction that Timothy should give to ‘certain men’ (verse 3). If God instructs something it always has a purpose. The instruction here is to stop the wrong. The wrong holds up God’s blessing and if 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 within our hearts (Rom 5:5). False doctrines block the outflow of that love, while it should freely outflow to God, to the fellow believers and to the fellow men. A false doctrine 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 if love comes from those sources the goal of the instruction will be achieved.

The first source is “a pure heart”. Out of your heart flow the springs 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 fellowship with God. The ones with a pure heart shall see God (Mt 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.

Baptism has to do with 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 foremost of all 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 God in all things.

V6. If your heart and conscience do not remain in the light of God and if your faith is only keeping up appearances you will deviate from the way of love. Here it is still limited to "some men" (cf. 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 "fruitless discussion". 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 goal is not less than to be "the teachers of the Law". That is what they are "wanting". 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 goal, 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 (Mt 22:23; Acts 23:8). Liberal Christians lead their lives entirely according to their own view. Those who fall into legalism set all kinds of rules for themselves and especially for others that should guide life. In the days of the Lord Jesus the Pharisees were like that (Mt 23:4). Legalistic people have set 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 leave ourselves out of range. 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 within 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 the law out of gratitude.

But in both cases people totally ignore 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 purpose and the function of the law is being ignored.

I would suggest you to read the letter to the Galatians once again. That letter is a unique explanation about the purpose 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 thereby your gratitude. 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 will see in the next section.

Now read 1 Timothy 1:5-7 again.

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

1Tim 1:8-11 | The Law and the Gospel

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 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 professing Christianity holds on to the law ‘out of gratitude’. But also regarding the evangelic part of professing 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 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 purpose of it. So you should know the purpose. It is important to bear in mind that the law is given:

1. 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);
2. to Israel, that is to only one nation (Rom 9:4);
3. in order to separate this nation from the other nations (Eph 2:14-15);
4. as a tutor until Christ (Gal 3:24), which indicates its temporal character.

Furthermore, the power of the law is in its 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. The law clearly puts sin as a transgression in the light (Rom 3:20) and passes an unmerciful and righteous judgment on it (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 on 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 someone who refuses to acknowledge 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 on 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 goal 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" violate 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 of homosexuals.

"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 enumeration Paul doesn't conclude the list with 'every other thing that contradicts the law'. This 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 teaching. In that teaching the holiness of God is fully maintained. That teaching is pure and without mixing with 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 teaching of the New Testament.

V11. That sound teaching 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 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 learned about it 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 enthusiastically mentions that it is "entrusted" to him. He takes it as a matter of honor that he is allowed to 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.

1Tim 1:12-14 | The Past and Now

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 of it. 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 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 can 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 (cf. verse 16). He remembers well that he "formerly was a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor" (cf. 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 it 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, introduced 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 persecuted 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 in ignorance. He had not willfully resisted God's will. He had sinned 'unintentionally' and not 'defiantly' (Lev 22:14; Num 15:22-31). What he did, he did with a good conscience (Acts 23:1; 2Tim 1:3).

He thought 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 thought to defend the honor of God. He showed zeal, but without knowledge (Rom 10:2; Acts 22:3). His thoughts 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 is fully opposite the Word of God.

He was acting "in unbelief". In his former deeds there was no trust in God. It 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" (cf. Rom 5:20). He does that because that grace was given to him as the foremost 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 himself in this letter, in the same relationship with the Lord that he has and in the same grace that has become his portion. Grace is always opposed to wages (Rom 4:4). Grace means fully undeserved merit. A right consciousness of 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 goal. 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?

1Tim 1:15-17 | Honor and Glory to God

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). If 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 about the ministry in the house of God (1Tim 3:1) or about Godliness (1Tim 4:9) or about our future (2Tim 2:11) or about our inheritance (Tit 3:8), 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 1 Timothy 4 (1Tim 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 if 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 live. He came from the wonderful realm of heaven into a realm of darkness, hatred and death 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 judgment, the love that God our Savior has for mankind 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 toward 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 can 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 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 toward Christ.

When Paul says that it is without exaggeration, but it is a profoundly conscious experience of his own unworthiness. This consciousness becomes bigger the more he sees the grace of the Lord Jesus. You see his consciousness grow bigger when he tells 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" flashed 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 toward him: he acted 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 foremost of all sinners there is salvation for everyone. You can compare it to a sluice gate. If 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 that he has turned 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 fight for the salvation of a sinner God has the longest breath. His patience is perfect.

The salvation of Paul as the foremost of the 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 foremost, 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 meant to indicate that each conversion should be like that. It is meant 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).

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 is 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 service. Praise arises from him for the grace of God. In Romans 11 the wisdom of God is the cause of a praise (Rom 11:33-35) and in Ephesians 3 he cries out because of the love of God (Eph 3:14-21).

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 opposite 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 1:25). 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.

1Tim 1:18-20 | Prophecies and the Good Fight

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 introduces 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 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 matter 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). If 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 how that is with you?

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 last mentioned struggle is that of a sinner to be saved (Lk 13:24; Mt 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 struggle has different aspects. You read about

1. the struggle in the gospel (Phil 4:3);

2. the struggle against the rulers, the powers etcetera (Eph 6:12-18);

3. the striving against sin as a power *outside* us (Heb 12:4-5);

4. the content for the faith which is the truth of the faith (Jude 1:3-4);

5. the strive in prayers (Rom 15:30);

6 the good fight (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 in this context says to Timothy as an encouragement.

V19. In this fight your personal “faith” is absolutely essential. The point here is your inner confidence of faith, holding on to God’s faithfulness, even when the fight is very fierce. Hold on to your confidence of faith in the fight. Don’t give up your trust 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 if 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”.

If 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’.

If you do not judge the first wrong step before God you will deviate further. The enemy has an easy entrance if 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 teaching of the Scripture. You will distort Scripture quotes and explain and maneuver them in a way that you ease your conscience and can continue your misguided path.

V20. Paul gives the names of those, whose faith has suffered shipwreck, "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 subject 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 be used by him. They now have to feel who he is to whom they had listened. 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 persons, although it is within the limits determined by God (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

1Tim 2:1-4 | A House of Prayer

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.

This chapter consists of two topics. The first topic is that of prayer and the particular responsibility it has for men regarding praying in public. The second topic is the external and the conduct of the woman and her place in public. Both topics 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 toward the unbelievers who are outside the house of God and toward the fellow believers who are in the house of God. This conduct ought to reflect the characteristic that God shows in this letter, that is as God our Savior.

V1. Isn't it telling that Paul "first of all" gives exhortations with a view to prayer? There will be more admonitions or exhortations, but this one 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 spiritual life. In any case it is a fact for the newly converted Saul (Acts 9:11). The first believers of the church were continually devoting themselves to prayer; they gathered together and were praying (Acts 1:14; 2:42; 4:24; 12:12).

In the activity of prayer the conduct that should characterize the inhabitants of God's house is most evident. 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 continuous, 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 or will not give or do, 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 purpose of God that we represent Him as the God-Savior. This is how He wants to be made known to all men (Mt 5:45; Acts 14:16-17; 1Tim 4:10). If you become fully aware of this 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 should not 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 pray 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 pray for him (cf. Ezra 6:10). Also the Lord Jesus tells His disciples to pray for those who persecute them (Mt 5:44).

It is not about the authorities in themselves. We ought to obey them and to be in subjection to them (Rom 13:1-7; Tit 3:1; 1Pet 2:13-14). It is about people who form the government. All who are in authority, are those who hold a high office. It not only concerns the rulers of one's own city of the own country, but also beyond. There is mention of 'kings and all who are in authority'.

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 above the prevailing situation. It makes the soul “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 anxiousness, 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 people. 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 human being perishes. That human being owes that to his own stubbornness, he doesn’t want to. Here, however, it is not about the kind intention of God’s will, i.e. the will of God’s counsel (Eph 1:5), for that will is always executed. It is about the desiring will of God, about His longing, that can be resisted by a human being in his responsibility (Mt 23:37).

The second part of God’s desire is that all people “come to the knowledge of the truth”. Salvation is not a goal in itself. God’s old people Israel was redeemed with a goal. That goal was that God should dwell in their midst. In that way the New Testament people of God are delivered from the power of the world in order to be a dwelling place of God in the Spirit (Eph 2:22). That becomes visible when believers gather together as a church with the Lord in their midst (Mt 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 (Mt 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 in the local church and in the believer’s own life is judged (1Cor 5:13; 11:31).

Now read 1 Timothy 2:1-4 again.

Reflection: What place does prayer take in your life?

1Tim 2:5-8 | The Mediator – The Praying of Men

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. This verse is connected by the word “for” with what is previously said. What follows now is how people 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 (Mt 28:19). That happened when the Lord Jesus came on 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 the Mediator between God and men. A mediator was necessary, because God in His holiness could not 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 atonement 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 49:7) 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 (Mt 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 forefront. Because his apostleship was sometimes questioned 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 to 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 in him an exceptional revelation of His grace 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 see it all clearly either.

V8. Against the background of the authority that is given to Paul you hear in this verse "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 the place: "every place". This means every place wherever believers gather together, regardless the building or goal (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 (1Cor 11:5-10; 14:34-35).

In professing Christianity you encounter an unbiblical restriction and an unbiblical widening of this commandment. The restriction is that only one man prays in the public gathering. The widening 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 else 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 common in those days. In the Scripture there is also mention of other prayer positions, as kneeling (Dan 6:10; Acts 20:36; Eph 3:14), standing (Gen 18:22-23), lying on the face (Jos 5:14) and seated (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. 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 features of the Lord Jesus as Mediator? Someone who leads in prayer is in a sense also a mediator. What are the features of such a person?

1Tim 2:9-15 | Women

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 want ...’ 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 starts talking about women’s appearance, no fashion prescription follows. 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 could 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 if she has her hair cut off (1Cor 11:6), but it is just as much an anti-testimony if 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 (Mt 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. If you as a Christian woman make a claim to Godliness, if 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 toward the man. He starts by saying that she should be ‘quiet’. You should also see this in the context of performing in public (cf. 1Cor 14:34) and not in the context of personal conversations or in the domestic environment. By nature women will not predominate. But the spirit of the world certainly doesn’t pass by the Christian woman either, encouraging her to do come forward and assert herself.

Also the attitude and mind “with entire submissiveness” will not find approval in the world. However, the point is not how the world values something, but how God values it. Through her submissiveness it becomes clear that her being ‘quiet’ is not a sign of bitterness or bondage, but that it comes from a willing acceptance of and living 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 "what is good" (Tit 2:3-5).

A woman is also not permitted to exercise authority over a man. If a woman exercises authority over a 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'. This does put a special emphasis on it. By the way, 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 these verses Paul gives two reasons for the command of verse 12. He finds those two reasons at the very beginning of the Bible. Then God determined things and things happened that He ordered to be documented in His Word, so that reference could always be made to them. The Lord Jesus also refers to the beginning when He is questioned about the man-wife relationship (Mt 19:3-4).

The first reason that Paul gives for his commandment is the ranking 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 determined 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 determined it. The fall of man shows the character of the man and the character of the woman. The woman is easily to be tempted. Leading up to 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 the abandoning of 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 toward the man is that of "someone weaker" (1Pet 3:7). The devil found an access to deceive her by appealing to her feeling and "the woman was deceived" (2Cor 11:3). It is for a good reason that John addresses a woman in his second letter that is about false teachers (2Jn 1:1). 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 set 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 preserved through the bearing of children. 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 sound 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 preserved through the bearing of children, but died. And what about women who cannot bear children or who remain unmarried.

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 goal 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

1Tim 3:1-5 | The Office of Overseer

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?),

As an introduction on this chapter I would like to give a brief repetition. You know that this letter is meant in the first place for Timothy personally. As a messenger of the apostle he needs to know which guidelines he ought to present to the believers. Second, 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. Third, all believers get practical teachings about 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 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 desire the spiritual gifts (1Cor 12:31; 14:1). '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 aspiring.

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 20:17 with Acts 20:28 and Tit 1:5 with Tit 1:7. 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 is intoxicating. He ought to keep himself far away from all exaggeration and ought not let himself be dragged by emotions, whether his own emotions or other people’s emotions. He should not let himself 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 his personal characteristics, some characteristics related to his performance in his household (family) and in the world are now mentioned. 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’ (Jos 24:15) applies especially to the overseer. His house ought to be a reflection of the house of God. If 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 also is included that he is “keeping his children under control with all dignity” (cf. Gen 18:18-19; Jer 35:1-19). He is not a weak father like Eli who did not even rebuke his sons (1Sam 3:13). Neither is he a tyrant who lashes out in blind rage to his children.. He applies discipline as God disciplines His children, in love and for a purpose (Eph 6:4; Heb 12:5-12; Pro 23:13; 29:15).

The overseer deals with his children

1. with a steadfastness that makes it advisable to obey;
2. with a wisdom that makes it natural to obey and
3. with a love that makes them love to obey.

V5. It will be clear that “if a man doesn’t know how to manage his own household”, 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 if 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?

1Tim 3:6-11 | Overseer (continuation) and Deacons

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 considered to have grown spiritually 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 important 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 if a young believer aspires this task for himself or when people give him that task. Then he comes in the hazard area of pride or puffiness. Then the importance 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 if 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 fixed. 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 reputation 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 with him (Lk 6:26). The point is that he "will 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, he displays in the world a temperament, a use of words, a dishonesty and uncleanness that make him an object of derision and scorn.

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, especially the leaders 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.

“Dignity” is the first characteristic of the deacon. His conduct radiated a dignity that shows what a deacon is occupied with inwardly, in his thoughts and deliberations.

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 importance that a deacon always has self-control. Therefore he must not be “addicted to much wine”. Almost nowhere does a believer lose his dignity faster by, than by getting drunk.

Directly connected to wine follows prosperity gained by “sordid gain”, in other words ‘dirty profit’. It is indeed 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 going to speculate with that money. 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 topic. Also these matters have to do with “the mystery 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 in his heart he is kept 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). If, after investigation, there is nothing for which the

'prospective deacon' must answer, if he appears to be "beyond reproach", 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.) Like 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 materially and spiritually. 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?

1Tim 3:12-16 | The House of God

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 for overseers, marital faithfulness is also an absolute requirement 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 manage their own children and households 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 managing. The deacons get access to and insight into many houses and domestic matters. 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 if 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 in the realm of material, but relates 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). God

deals here according to the principle that 'everyone who has, more shall be given' (Mt 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 through experience has learned to know this confidence as a confidence that never shames.

V14. Paul has not informed Timothy "these things" orally, but in writing. In that way his instructions for his dealings are fixed and you now have insight into them as well. 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 think 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 must be made known; you need to know them. 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 no different for 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 (Mt 16:16-18). God dwells in His house through the Holy Spirit (1Cor 3:16; Eph 2:21-22).

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 purpose 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? (Jn 1:14; Col 1:15; Heb 1:1.) He is the true, 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”. fully Him a full testimony has been given by the Holy Spirit The Holy Spirit fully agreed with everything He was and did on earth, He could join 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 arose (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 (Mt 4:11; Lk 22:43), when He was arrested (Mt 26:53), when He resurrected from the dead (Mt 28:2) and when He ascended to heaven (Acts 1:10).

Then 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 proclamation is that He is “believed on in the world”. He is the object of faith on the territory where He still doesn’t openly reign, 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

1Tim 4:1-5 | Apostasy in Later Times

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. If people abandon or ignore what is being said there, it 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. In summary, you can say that in case people do not hold on to the truth of the last verses of chapter 3 (1Tim 3:15-16) then verse 1 of this chapter 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 an influence. It is the Spirit Who 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 these times. What particularly characterizes them 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 1:18), in which 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 pretend to be pious, 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 like wearing a mask that hides one's true identity. In that way these deceivers wear the mask of piety as it is seen in abstaining from marriage and food (verse 3).

Such people have "seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron". It is as if a glowing branding iron has been applied to their being with as a result the unremovable characteristic on them that they are completely closed off to 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: 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 belongs to a lower order. They may suggest 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 (Lev 11:46-47). 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 abstinence. [The Scripture indicates that there can be reasons for a temporary abstinence in marriage (1Cor 7:5) and with regard to food (fasting, Acts 13:2-3). But that's another issue.]

V4. What comes from the good Creator-God cannot be other 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 (Mt 15:36; Jn 6:11; Lk 22:19). Paul assumes it as a general rule (Rom 14:6) and also lives up to that himself (Acts 27:35).

The point is that if 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 toward the Creator. You also enjoy in the ordinary things like food and drink fellowship with God. This fellowship with God you especially enjoy 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?

1Tim 4:6-11 | Discipline for the Purpose of Godliness

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 point out “these things” he just mentioned, to the believers. He doesn’t give this order as a command. He appeals to Timothy as someone 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’ these things.

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 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 too. 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 sound doctrine, appropriated this doctrine for himself and has “been following” it (2Tim 3:10; cf. Acts 17:11). That has become visible in his service. 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 (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 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 discipline 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 focus on asking yourself in everything you do whether it is the will of God. With this discipline (literally: gymnastics) is not meant intellectual gymnastics to increase your memory, but how your heart and conscience are being disciplined 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 discipline 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 discipline for the purpose of Godliness is not only profitable for the body, but also for the spirit and soul.

Paul doesn’t plea for an abstinence of everything regarding the body. He only wants to put it in the true perspective. In the comparison between bodily discipline and the discipline in Godliness the balance must be com-

pletely tipped to the side of the commitment to get disciplined in Godliness. His goal 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. Discipline for the purpose of 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 discipline for the purpose of 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 truly 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 brink of exhaustion (that is what the word "labor" means) he wants to convince the believers, including you, to discipline themselves for the purpose of 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 discipline 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 fixes his hope on "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 also is the strength for the service that Timothy has to achieve and also for you and your service.

Of that service people are the object. God Himself gives the example of that service 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 to 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 ‘pointing 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?

1Tim 4:12-16 | Exhortations for the Servant

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.

These verses 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 toward people. In these verses you read how the servant lives in the awareness of grace (verse 12), how he serves 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 may 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. When 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 meant 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 insincerity 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 this verse 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 important. The Lord Jesus also read aloud or public (Lk 4:16-27; cf. 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 at-

tention to reading aloud already gives, when it happens and is heard in a spirit of subjection, abundant fruit.

After the attention to reading aloud comes “exhortation and teaching”. The ‘exhortation’ is the application to the heart and the 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 within 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 (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 approval with his service. 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 wants to encourage Timothy. When Paul then says “take pains with these things; be [absorbed] in them”, his 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 service 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 making its way through a difficult terrain or jungle under great effort. But through these efforts 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 continue to teach the sound doctrine without interruption.

If you are spiritually active in such a way, it will have beneficial consequences for both you and others. You and those who hear you will then achieve the final destiny 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

1Tim 5:1-6 | Obligations Toward Others

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.

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 toward different groups of people in the church:

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

Verses 21-25 close 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 toward 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 toward 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 were 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, ‘having suffered loss’. Someone who is a ‘widow indeed’ is someone 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.

The Holy Spirit devotes much space to speak about the widows, no less 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 God’s special care (Psa 68:5; 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 toward 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 corrupt pious motives to withdraw from this obligation (Mt 15:3-6).

He who supports his mother or grandmother who is a widow, doesn't do that only because the Lord desires it. 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 "return" 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 in the sight 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 if 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' em-

phasizes 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 fix her hope on 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 wanton 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 toward the different groups that are mentioned here? Do you see a particular category to which you may spend some care?

1Tim 5:7-13 | Several Groups of Widows

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 toward their parents and grandparents than believers do. It is a bad testimony if a believer neglects to practice the simplest and clearest principles of Christian mercy toward 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 have “a reputation 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”. Perhaps we need not limit this to her own children, but can also refer to children in general, 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 any work in which the desire to do good to others is expressed. 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. If there is a good arrangement, like this one for the widows of sixty years and older, there is always the danger of misuse. In Paul's days 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" if 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 the first time they were widowed, 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 shows a wrong conduct and becomes a 'professional busybody'.

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.

1Tim 5:14-19 | Younger Widows and Elders

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 (1Cor 7:1-9,25-28), 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 if 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 equivalent.

If she is faithful to her own house then the adversary will have no occasion 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 devi-

ated from the way of faith and have turned aside to follow 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. Faith exempts no man from personal responsibility. When others are able to provide ‘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 “assist those who are widows indeed”.

V17. After these extensive instructions to Timothy how to deal with widows in the church, Paul yet has some instructions regarding the elders (or overseers, see the comment on 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 are to be considered 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 every elder has a work in that. His first duty is: to rule, to maintain the order in God’s house.

Indeed, 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 do heavy

work, to the brink 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 statements from 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 from Deuteronomy 25 (Deu 25:4). Paul already quoted this verse earlier in 1 Corinthians 9 (1Cor 9:9-10; cf. Gal 6:6). God has determined: “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 (1Cor 10:11) and Romans 15 (Rom 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 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 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 leading 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. Therefore, if an accusation is made against an elder, then it must be rejected, unless there are two or three witnesses.

If an elder is accused of a certain sin, then that accusation must properly be investigated (Deu 13:14) and be dealt with great 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; Mt 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. There is a real danger 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 then hear remarks 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 quickly and it causes enormous damage. It is important to remain 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?

1Tim 5:20-25 | Sins, Sickness and Infirmities

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. If 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 in this case the rebuke must take place in the presence of all. 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 who 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 the 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 Residents of heaven, God and Christ Jesus, and also creatures that were kept from rebelling against God, the chosen angels, continuous-

ly 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, the sin that is occurring there provably, 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 toward 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, if 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 do 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 (cf. Acts 6:6).

By a too quick recognition of a person to do 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 remain pure if you fear God. Then He will show you His will in all cases where you doubt whether you can commit to it or cooperate with it (Psa 25:14).

V23. As you know, Timothy is an unpretentious, somewhat shy man. He is someone who lives meticulous and has a close conscience. 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 doesn't God's Word often warn against the abuse of wine? 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 strikes 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. Here 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 in which 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 (Mt 5:16), like we see with Dorcas (Acts 9:36,39). There are also good works that were unnoticed for men. These will become equally 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

1Tim 6:1-5 | Workers and Sound Words

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 a 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 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 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 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 doesn't fit the Christian slave. If the believing slave 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?'

Even today, a believer's testimony for his Lord at his place of work is either positive or negative. If 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 this verse 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 toward your unbelieving colleagues.

It should rather be the case that the fact that your boss is a believer it leads you to "serve" him all the more. You may be aware of doing a "benefit" to your believing boss. The quality of the service is better because this doesn't happen out of fear but out of love.

Incidentally, such a situation requires much wisdom and caution on both sides. 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 slave has a more prominent position in the church than the master. Then it is important that both of them show a spiritual mind.

It is necessary for Timothy to also teach these things and insist that this teaching be put into practice.

V3. "A different doctrine" undermines the relationship between the slave and the 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 on 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 itself 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 about 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. Mendacious things are passed on and even evil motives are assumed in the opponent..

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 “deprived 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 sound 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 “suppose 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. 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 these 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?

1Tim 6:6-10 | Want to Get Rich

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.

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. If you are really content you are not focused on outward things, but on the Lord, Who provides all your needs. 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 with Job, who said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb" (Job 1:21; Ecc 5:15). Is there something that you can take with you from the world if you have to leave it again? Nothing either (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 purpose 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: 'A shroud has no pockets.'

V8. If you have "food and covering" you have the basic needs of life (Deu 10:18; Mt 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. The foregoing is not to say that it is wrong to be rich. If 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 (Mt 13:22). It may even be a hindrance to be saved (Mt 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 desires”. 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 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. In Luke 5 you have the only time where the word ‘sink’ appears and where the literal sense is used in the New Testament (Lk 5:7). Here it is about a soul that is overpowered by the desire for wealth and is now plunging further and further in the sea of his desires. The unwise use of money just to get more has already plunged many into ruin and 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, 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 wander away 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, will close your eyes to all 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 to you, then take a look at people who were guided by it. There are cases of bitter experiences, broken family relationships, lawless and wasteful 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.

Now read 1 Timothy 6:6-10 again.

Reflection: What role does money play in your life?

1Tim 6:11-13 | The Man of God – Pursue, Fight, Take Hold Of, Confess

11 But flee from these things, you man of God, 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,

V11. 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 (2Tim 3:17). In the Old Testament this person is also called a ‘man of God’: Moses (Deu 33:1); David (2Chr 8:14); Elijah (1Kgs 17:18); Elisha (2Kgs 4:7). See also 1Kgs 12:22; 13:1; 20:28; 2Chr 25:7; Jer 35:4.

A ‘man of God’ is someone to whom God wants to connect His Name because this person stands up for His rights among His people who do not (no longer) take His rights into account. 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 are put in your letterbox and which are continuously 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 these cases, there is a great danger to your spiritual life. 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 someone who fled sexual immorality is Joseph (Gen 39:12).

There are also cases that you should not flee but 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 toward 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 essential. Then comes the other side. Now you can and must show that your life as a Christian consists of striving for something and fight. That is what the second part of verse 11 is about.

To flee and to pursue and to fight are recurring and ongoing activities. 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 (cf. Rom 14:19; Phil 3:14; 1Thes 5:15; Heb 12:14). This word includes action, speed and purpose. 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 first mentioned. This is not the righteousness of God that you have received on the basis 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 anyone what is his or her right. This 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 next goal 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 what pleases Him. This implies that you adopt the right attitude toward God. You honor Him if 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 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 (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 swimming against the current 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 danger to become bitter or rebellious, or pay back evil for evil. A man of God responds as the Lord Jesus did (Mt 11:29). Then you do not insist on your own rights, but rather waive them for the benefit of others.

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 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 the 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. It means 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 might think of baptism in this context. That is a public testimony to express that you have abandoned your old life and that you will henceforth walk "in 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 *as it is now*, is not of this world (Jn 18:36). That makes Him 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. If you hold on to this and expresses it toward the world you are a worthy follower of the Lord Jesus to whom He looks with pleasure.

Now read 1 Timothy 6:12-13 again.

Reflection: How do you testify the good confession?

1Tim 6:14-21 | Praise and Final Exhortations

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 can you sustain such a thing? 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 up the church to be with Him. No, reward doesn’t fit with that coming. When He has caught up the church (1Thes 4:15-18) He will afterward 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 event leads the apostle to 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 the only Sovereign.

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" (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 is totally in God's hand alone (Zec 14:7; Mt 24:36; Acts 1:7). When He appears He will be outwardly perceivable for every eye as Sovereign, 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". It is a state intangible to death, a state on which death can never get a grip.

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 (Eph 2:1). He who converts, receives life from God and will be clothed with immortality when the Lord Jesus comes (1Cor 15:53-54). As a result, he has 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" (cf. 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 if 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. If 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 flies by. Riches can just make itself wings (Pro 23:4-5). He who trusts in his riches will become a mockery (Psa 52:5-7). The rich must be taught what they should not and what they should be paying attention to and why. They must 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. The idea is not to surrender to it and live in opulence and self-indulgence (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. That's why 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". If you are 'ready to share', you deal just as 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”. Humanly reasoned, you have lost 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 “take hold of that which is life indeed”. This actually is the real life if 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 subjected 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 kept 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?

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