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Notes for study 19: Pastoral Epistles Summary

Pastoral Epistles

The term “pastoral epistles” describe the two letters to Timothy and Titus. Although Paul was not a Pastor (Elder), the letters do describe the *nurturing* approach in these letters that is different than the other Pauline letters. They are rich in their doctrine, their practical values, and provide great insight into the contemporary problems of heresy, divisiveness, and leadership difficulties.

Paul's Fourth Journey

We cannot fit Paul's travels described in these epistles into the Acts narrative, and it is evident that they fit into another journey that Paul had made (the 4th journey) after the close of his Roman imprisonment. Some traditions and evidence (outside of scripture) show that he travels back into Asia Minor, and then to Spain where he stays for a two-year period, and then visits Asia Minor, Macedonia again, and Crete. Apparently he returned to Ephesus again where his predictions of apostasy were coming to fruition, and then to Troas where he left some things with Carpus (2 Tim 4:13). He then went to Corinth, where he wrote the first letter to Timothy and the letter to Titus, then travelled to Nicopolos, intending to stay for winter, where he was arrested and sent to Rome for execution. He wrote the second letter to Timothy from imprisonment in Rome shortly before his death around AD 66 or 67.

Place, date, and occasion of the letters

Because we don't know exactly where Paul went, and when he went there, it is impossible to pin down times and places for the letters. Titus parallels first Timothy, and was written about the same time. Paul had visited the churches on Crete with Titus, and he writes the letter to instruct him to set the churches in order.

Paul gives the occasion of the Titus letter in 1:5. He had left Titus behind in Crete to set the church(es) in order, and he now writes to instruct the newly appointed elders on how to behave and to reject false teaching.

The Cretan churches

The origin of the churches on Crete is unknown. We do know that there were many, since Titus had been instructed to “...*appoint elders in every city...*” (1:5). There were “...*Cretans and Arabs...*” present in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:11), so it is very likely that they took the gospel back to Crete during the dispersion (Acts 8:4).

The culture of Crete

Crete was on the "crossroads" of trade routes, and consequently the Cretan culture became cosmopolitan, blended with those from empires of all directions.

Cretans were famously known for being proverbial liars and shameless dishonest people. It was a place of shams and scams. False doctrine was a virtual cottage industry, circulated by men who wanted to make a fast buck, with people welcoming more heresy as fast as they could imagine it. Cicero wrote: "Indeed, moral principles are so divergent that the Cretans consider highway robbery to be honourable". Diodorus of Sicily related the story of a Cretan soldier who betrayed his army to the Romans. He scorned Roman citizenship; he wanted money.

Titus Chapter 1 - Greetings and Salutations

Paul affirms himself as “...an apostle of Jesus Christ...” (1:1), and so establishes his right to speak authoritatively. Paul hardly needed to assert his apostleship to Titus, and so his primary purpose was in establishing that he spoke with God’s authority.

Appointing Elders

There are three words in the Greek language that describe this one office, and each of these Greek words are translated into at least two English words, making a total of seven different English words. Each of these Greek words has a different meaning.

<i>Presbuteros</i>	<i>Poimain</i>	<i>Episkopos</i>
<i>(What he looks like)</i>	<i>(What he does)</i>	<i>(How he acts)</i>
Elder	Shepherd	Overseers
Presbyter	Feed	Bishop
	Pastor	

It is always a man who is to be appointed (particularly noteworthy in this time when many denominations are appointing, or seeking to appoint, women into the eldership). He is to be a mature family man, who has learned how to deal with the situations of life.

Some people were seeking to exploit the Christians “...they are ruining whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach--and that for the sake of dishonest gain...” (1:11 NIV). These characteristics are typical of the Cretans, who had (apparently) infiltrated the church so that they might have personal benefit. Those who were seeking dishonest gain were to be “...rebuked sharply, that they might be sound in the faith...” (1:13). Likewise for the Jews (who were no doubt trying to take the Christians back to the Law of Moses again). The saints were “...not to take notice of the Jewish fables and the commandments of men who turn from the truth...” (1:14).

Titus Chapter 2 - Instructions to Titus

The first instructions are to Titus “...you must speak the things which are in accordance with sound doctrine...” (2:1). He must put the rest of the instructions – those to the specific groups mentioned – into place. There is a contrast here between the Judaisers who had done much to destroy the church with their *unsound doctrine*, and Titus to build and strengthen the church.

Instructions for older men

The first group of people that Paul has in mind (2:2) are the *older men*. The term probably refers to those men who are old enough to have raised a family and seen their children begin to raise a family of their own. The Greek word that Paul uses has a similar derivation to the term used for the elders, however the elders are a specific class of *older men* – those appointed to the role of shepherding the church. They were to be mature, of sound judgement, and well behaved.

Instructions for older women

The second group are the *older women* (2:2). They are women of a similar age and maturity as the *older men*. They must not be gossipers. The last instruction to the women – teaching what is good – is specifically given so that she might be an instructor to the younger women. Whilst Titus could have taught these things Paul (guided by the Spirit) seemed to realize that certain type of teachers are best suited to certain students.

Instructions to younger women and men

We can read into what Paul says here about the required behaviour of younger women. They were to receive instruction via the older women, who were to receive it from Titus, who received

it from Paul (who received it from the Lord). The younger men are also to be exhorted, in the same way as the older men and women.

Instructions to servants

Servants / slaves regardless of their age or sex, or whether their masters were Christians or not have a stronger responsibility to deliver their service as if it was service to God (Col 3:22-23).. Slavery was extremely widespread in both Greek and Roman culture, and was protected by civil law. The NT does not condemn slavery, however it does not sanction it either, and it does demand a much higher regard for the slave / master relationship than the general culture at the time.

The basis for Godly living

As a result of knowing God comes responsibility. Our lives (the way we live) must be transformed by the gospel. We cannot accept God's grace and continue to live a way of life that denies the transformation! This world is not our home – we are just passing through (as the song says). We are “...*looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ...*” (2:13 NKJV). When we have our eyes and our minds fixed on heaven, the things of this world fade into insignificance.

Jesus “...*gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people...*” (2:14 NKJV). We do not behave in the same way that the world does, and we have a different sense of values. The point that Paul is making is a contrast with the values of the Cretans who would sell anything to get gain, and our values as Christians. We do not sit around doing nothing, but we are “...*zealous of good works...*” (2:14).

Titus Chapter 3 - Instructions to Titus

Titus “...*must speak the things which are in accordance with sound doctrine...*” (2:1). He is to carry out Paul's instructions “...*speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority...*” (2:15 NKJV). Titus had the authority from God, and he was not to squirm in carry out the task, nor was he to let anyone “...*despise you...*”.

His task was to “...*remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities...*” (3:1 NKJV). This is in direct contrast to the culture of the Cretans who “...*are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons...*” (1:12) and would *sell their own mother* if they thought they could get anything out of it! They would lie to and reject the government authorities – and carry this over to the authorities (apostles, prophets, and elders) in the church. The action that is required of faithful Christians is in direct contrast to the rebellious nature of those in the world (especially the world in Crete), “...*to obey, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing true humility to all men...*” (3:1-2).

Our change of state

In contrast, we have been redeemed by God's grace. There is nothing that we can do to earn it, and we do not deserve it. Paul contrasts mercy (in this verse) with grace (3:7). Mercy can be described as God not bringing the punishment that we do deserve, and grace can be described as God giving us a gift that we don't deserve.

We receive the change of state when we are saved “...*according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit...*” (3:5 NKJV). This is an exact parallel to what Peter said in Acts 2:38 and 3:19. Having received that change of state “...*having been justified ... (made right) ... by His grace...*” we receive a change of blessing “...*we become heirs according to the hope of eternal life...*” (3:7 NKJV).

Practical instructions to Titus

Titus is reminded to “...*affirm (these things) constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works...*” (3:8). And also to “...*avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and useless...*” (3:9 NKJV). It is clear that Paul has in mind here the Judaisers. These things are *foolish, unprofitable, and useless*. Some who were trying to create division in the church (perhaps the Judaisers, but perhaps equally some Cretans seeking self gain). This was not to be tolerated, but nipped in the bud very quickly “...*Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned...*” (3:10-11 NKJV).

Travel plans and conclusion

Titus was to be relieved of the work on Crete, and Paul wanted him to join him on the western side of Achaia “...*be diligent to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there...*” (3:12 NKJV).

As a final instruction, Paul insists that “...*our people...also learn to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs, that they might not be unfruitful...*” (3:14 NKJV). This clearly sums up the burning concern that Paul has for the Christians on Crete, that they undertake the transformation that is required as being a part of the body of Christ. They cannot continue with a life of ill-gotten gain (and probably extortion), but rather they needed to be *doing* good works to others. Rather than takers, they were to be *givers*, just as Christ *gave* Himself for us (3:4-5).

1 Timothy Introduction - The Ephesian church

We can observe the Ephesian church over as long a period of time. It was probably started when Paul visited on the close of the second journey (53 AD).

On the return to Jerusalem in early AD 57, Paul comes by Ephesus, and calls for the elders of the church. He tells them that apostasy is going to come, and that the very leaders of the church (the elders), are going to draw away disciples after them (Acts 20:30). The letters to Timothy were written late in Paul's fourth missionary journey (65 AD) and during the second Roman imprisonment (66 AD). Paul instructs Timothy to get the disorderly Ephesian church into order.

Ephesus was a major city in the region of “Asia Minor” and was the 4th largest city in the world at the time. It was the major centre of the region for trade, culture, commerce, politics and religion.

1 Timothy Chapter 1 - Introduction

As with the introduction to Titus, Paul has no need to establish his credentials with Timothy whom he regards as “...*my true son in the faith...*” (1:1:2 NKJV). However, he asserts his authority as an apostle, so that the readers of the might know that he is writing as an apostle (not as Citizen Paul) with God's full authority behind what he has to say.

The purpose of the letter is given in 1:3:14-15 “...*that you might know how you ought to behave in the church...*” and in 1:1:3-4 “...*remain in Ephesus to command certain men not to continue to teach false doctrines, or myths, or endless genealogies...*”

Like the instructions to Titus, Timothy was to set the disorderly church in order. There were some in the church at Ephesus (some of the elders Acts 20:30) who did not have these pure motives “...*some, having strayed, have turned aside to idle talk...*” (1:1:6 NKJV). Rather than being the leaders that they ought to be, (because of their knowledge and experience are equipped to teach others), these are not competent to teach “...*desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say nor the things which they affirm...*” (1:1:7 NKJV).

The purpose of the Law

Paul gives a brief discussion on the purpose of the Law (of Moses), which suggests that the Judaisers might have been trying to bind it on the. The discussion follows closely to Paul's line of argument in Rom 7:7-25. The law has a place, and through it we learn good and evil, however the law really only *points out* good and evil, and if we are doing good then we do not need the law. "*...the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly, and for sinners...*" (1:1:9 NKJV).

He points out a *list of sins* that identify the nature of the unrighteous who ought to be brought into line by the Law, and acknowledges the strange situation in which *the chief of sinners* was to be entrusted with *the glorious gospel of the blessed God*. He became the great example of God's forgiveness – if Paul could be saved, then anyone can! "*...for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life...*" (1:1:16 NIV).

Charge to Timothy

Paul's instruction to Timothy empowers him to go about fulfilling his mission of setting the disorderly church in order. He was "*...to wage a good warfare...*" as he went about his duty "*...having faith and a good conscience...*" (1:1:19 NKJV). The "*...prophecies previously made concerning you...*" may well have reference to the spiritual gifts that Timothy has (1:4:14), or it may be that Timothy was selected for the work in a similar way to Paul and Silas (Acts 13:2).

Some of the leaders in Ephesus had "*...rejected their good consciences, and because of that they had made shipwreck of the faith...*" (1:1:19). They had learned the truth, but had moved away from it and rejected it – against their conscience.

Two of the leaders are named Hymenaeus and Alexander. Paul had already disciplined these two men whilst he was in Ephesus "*...whom I delivered to Satan that they might learn not to blaspheme...*" (1:1:20 NKJV). However, it appears that they refused to leave, as Paul now instructs Timothy to deal with them, and he has to do so again in the second letter.

1 Timothy Chapter 2 - Instruction for prayers

The first instruction for the orderly worship of the church is regarding prayer. This was of prime importance, and he says "*...I exhort...*" or "*urge*" that it be done "*...first of all...*" (1:2:1).

Four different nouns to describe prayers are used in this verse. Our prayers should not be self-centred, and neither should they just be reserved for praying for Christians, but also "*...for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence...*" (1:2:2 NKJV). Paul reminds us in that "*...there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God...*" (Rom 13:1 NKJV). We need to pray for our governments so that "*...we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence...*". If praying for the corrupt leaders seems wrong to us, Paul tells us that "*...this is good and acceptable in the sight of God...*" (1:2:3 NKJV). We should not think that it is bad to pray for them because they are bad, but rather we should pray so that we can have peace.

The Plan of Salvation

God's plan to save man is the core of the whole of the Bible. God's desire is not that just some people should be saved (possibly a special reference to the Judaisers). He "*...desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth...*" (1:2:4 NKJV). Timothy had the responsibility of converting people, but also the responsibility of teaching them (taking them on to maturity) after they had been converted.

Paul has a major part in this process, having been "*...appointed a preacher and an apostle...(and) a teacher of the Gentiles...*" (1:2:7 NKJV). The word translated preacher is also translated

“herald” in NIV, and has the context of a person officially appointed to sound out messages of public officials, or to make a proclamation, or to give a public summons. Consequently, as a preacher, Paul is not here to sound out his own ideas, but to *herald* the message from the King of Kings! Paul had especially been sent to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15; 22:21; 26:17-18).

Instructions for women

Just as the men were to come to God in sincerity, so too are the women. Paul emphasises this with the expression “...*in like manner...*” (1:2:9), and he has in mind the moral character of the women, and not just the physical way that they are dressed. Paul discusses the jewellery and decorations, including the braiding of the hair. In contrast, the women are to show their true adornment by “...*professing godliness, with good works...*” (1:2:10).

Women speaking in the assembly

The role of women in the church is further given by Paul’s instruction “...*A woman should learn in quietness and full submission...*” (1:2:11 NIV). Paul has already reminded us that what he is teaching is with God’s authority (1:1:1), he is speaking as God’s herald, and as an apostle (1:2:7). We need to note that Paul says that the women *should learn*, so it is not a case of being quiet and learning nothing. Nor is it a case of being totally silent under every circumstance, but rather that she *learns in full submission*. In being submissive, Paul says “...*I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent...*” (1:2:12 NIV). There is a very strong place for the role of women in the church, but God has decreed (whether we like it or not is totally beside the point) that it is not in the leadership roles. Paul gives two reasons why this is the case, and neither of them have anything to do with the culture of the first century:

- “...*For Adam was first formed, then Eve,*
- *And, Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression...*” (1:2:13-14 NKJV)

The context of the chapter indicates that some of the women in Ephesus were going out of their way to show their superior position using their dress standards, and usurping their roles by taking leadership positions. In contrast, they ought to have taken a submissive role, and demonstrated their holiness through good works. By staying at home and raising their children they would be completing one of the noblest tasks that God has given. Hence, Paul says, “...*she will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control...*” (1:2:15 NKJV). The role of a woman in providing the nurture, guidance, and training for a child as God would have them to grow must not be underestimated.

1 Timothy Chapter 3 - Instructions for elders

Paul uses the word *episkopos* (bishop) twice, which describes how the elder ought to act (oversees). Paul hits at the problem straight away – since the elders were not acting the way that they ought to!!! Some of the qualifications are mandatory, and Paul uses the word *dei* (“it is necessary”, “must”, “it is imperative”) to describe them.

These requirements fall into four general areas:

1. Obedience and commitment in his christian lifestyle (1:3:2-3)
2. Demonstrated leadership by leading his own family (1:3:4-5)
3. Experience in his christian walk with God (1:3:6)
4. He has the respect of those outside of the church (1:3:7)

Like the requirements in Titus, the picture is of a mature family man, who has leaned from experience “...*for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?...*” (1:3:5 NKJV).

Instructions for deacons and their wives

The word deacon means *a servant*. Paul has in mind those servants who have been appointed to, or given a specific role. He uses a present tense as he describes a reward for those who serve the office of deacons well, showing that the benefits are received now, rather than being a heavenly reward. “...those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith...” (1:3:13 NKJV).

The wives of the deacons also need to have appropriate qualifications. This of course, implies that the deacons must be married. By having the right characteristics, the deacon’s wife can help and support him in his work.

Instructions to Timothy

Paul is writing the letter “...hoping to come shortly, but if I am delayed, I am writing to you so that you might know how to conduct yourself in the church, which is God’s household...” (my paraphrase of 1:3:14-15). Timothy was to set things in order, particularly relating to behaviour and conduct in the church, described as “...the house of God...” (1:3:15). This is not a reference to a building, but rather the dwelling place of *God in us*. The church is also described as “...the pillar and the ground of the truth...” (1:3:15) describing its function in supporting the truth.

A hymn of praise

Paul now inserts a hymn of praise, which sums up two parts of the life of Christ:

1. His physical life as a man:
2. His victory over sin is manifested in the church

Preaching Christ means preaching his life, death, resurrection, and ascension as glorified Lord.

1 Timothy Chapter 4 - The falling away

Paul had warned the Ephesian elders that a falling away was going to come, and would be led by some of them (acts 20:30). It happened just the way that he had prophesied it would. Their actions are described as “...following deceiving spirits and things taught by demons...” (1:4:1 NIV). Rather than being led by the Spirit, they were being deceived by spirits.

The falling away does not stop just in the *knowledge* of demons, but they were also involved in the *practice* of them “...speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron...” (1:4:2 NKJV). They knew what they were doing was wrong, but they had become so engrossed in the practice that it no longer pricked their consciences.

They were making commandments for which they had no authority “...forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created...” (1:4:3 NKJV).

Timothy’s role as a minister

Paul uses the word *diakonos* to describe the role of a servant (minister). “...If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ...” (1:4:6 NKJV). Note that Timothy’s suitability as a servant required him to do something. **IF** you instruct...

Timothy was to “...Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives’ tales; rather, train yourself to be godly...” (1:4:7 NIV). Paul describes these fables and godless myths (being taught by those who had abandoned God for the *doctrines of demons*) in the same way as an old woman might tell fairytale stories to young children. “...These things command and teach...” (1:4:11 NKJV). This was not optional – it was to be taught and delivered as commandments.

Timothy is here described as a youth (or young man NIV), which means he was under 40 years old. “...Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity...” (1:4:12 NKJV). He was to present himself with the

characteristics that those he was instructing could follow and imitate. He was to lead by example, and not just by what he said! He is further exhorted to “...*Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress...*” (1:4:15 NIV), and an example to others, to be effective. “...*Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers...*” (1:4:16 NIV).

1 Timothy Chapter 5 - Dealing with different groups in the church

Paul deals with several groups in the church – the older and the younger generation, as well as men and the women. The first two verses make it clear what Paul had in mind. “...*Do not rebuke an older man, but exhort him as a father, the younger men as brothers, the older women as mothers, the younger as sisters, with all purity...*” (1:5:1-2 NKJV). We must show proper respect to others, whether men or women, or whether older or younger. As Timothy goes about the task of setting the disorderly church into order, he needs to show gentleness and kindness, just as if he were given the task of correcting his own family – and the church is our spiritual family!

Widows

Paul singles out those who are “...*really widows...*” – (widows indeed – KJV). We can glean from this chapter some specific instructions for the work of the church in benevolence. Those who were really widows (which means that they met the qualifications that Paul provides here) were to be honoured (“...*given proper recognition...*” NIV). The church needed to meet its obligations to these people, as well as hold them with respect.

If widows have children or other close relatives, then they have the responsibility to look after them “...*these should learn first of all to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family and so repaying their parents and grandparents, for this is pleasing to God...*” (1:5:4 NIV). Paul emphasises this later in the chapter “...*If any woman who is a believer has widows in her family, she should help them and not let the church be burdened with them, so that the church can help those widows who are really in need...*” (1:5:16 NIV).

At sixty years old, a widow is unlikely to be able to find someone else to marry and look after her. Therefore, the younger widows are to be rejected.

Elders

Paul further instructs Timothy in dealing with the elders in the congregation. He begins with “...*the elders who rule well...*” (1:5:17). They should “...*be counted worthy of double honor...*” (1:5:17 NKJV) which is generally taken to mean that they should be paid for their work. Paul includes here, special recognition for those who not only nurture the flock, but also *teach* “...*especially those whose work is preaching and teaching...*” (1:5:17 NIV).

The next instructions relate to those elders who are not doing the right thing (the main point of the letter). The elders are to be held in esteem by the congregation, and as such discipline against them should not be taken lightly (nor to anyone, for that matter). The matter must be well established “...*Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses. ...*” (1:5:19 NIV). The NIV has a stronger term than the KJV / NKJV, that the accusation against the elder is not even to be *entertained* unless it is substantiated by two or three witnesses. They must be made an example of so that others would not follow in their footsteps. Timothy’s actions in setting the matters right, needed to be fully carried out without prejudice.

Instructions to Timothy

Timothy could easily be swayed by the strong personality of some of these leaders (they had persuaded other people to follow them), however, he needed to be objective, and was specifically instructed by Paul in how to deal with the situation. “...*I charge you, in the sight of God and*

Christ Jesus and the elect angels, to keep these instructions without partiality, and to do nothing out of favoritism...” (1:5:21 NIV). He must carry through with the instructions fairly.

Timothy must have had a stomach problem (an ulcer perhaps, or a gastric reflux problem?). Paul tells him to use some wine medicinally “...*No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach’s sake and your often infirmities...*” (1:5:23 NKJV). The question that must be answered is why Timothy abstained from wine in the first place? When we consider the other passages in the New Testament that condemn drunkenness (1 Cor 5:11; 6:10; Gal 5:21), and excess wine (1:3:8; Tit 2:3); the requirement to be good examples to others, and not to do things which may cause others to sin; it is not surprising that Timothy abstained from drinking alcohol.

1 Timothy Chapter 6 - Servants and masters

The population of the Roman Empire was composed of around 50% slaves, so many of the christian converts would have involved slavery in their families in some form. By showing proper respect to their masters, the genuineness of christianity, and the message that was preached would not be compromised – regardless of whether the masters were christians or not.

Dealing with those who would not listen

Timothy was not to compromise those who would not listen to his teaching. Paul very clearly asserts that the teaching that he had given (and he was instructing Timothy to teach) had come from God. These people were to be withdrawn from “...*from such withdraw yourself...*” (1:6:5 NKJV), they were corrupt through and through, and were not motivated by a love of the truth, but by what they thought they could get out of it for their own gain.

Our contentment as christians

In contrast to those who are out to get what they can for themselves (who are never satisfied), christianity brings us true peace “... *godliness with contentment is great gain...*” (1:6:6 NKJV). When we live a Godly life, and are contented in our situation – whatever the circumstances might be – then we will have true peace. If we have the basic necessities of life, we should be happy, as there are many people who do not even have that “...*But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that...*” (1:6:8 NKJV).

Those who are seeking to be rich in this world may achieve it, but they are in danger of losing their eternal salvation on the way. “...*People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction...*” (1:6:9 NIV). The reason for this is very clear and obvious “...*For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs...*” (1:6:10 NIV).

Instructions to Timothy

Timothy is told to “...*flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness...*” (1:6:11 NKJV). The instruction is not for Timothy alone, but for all who would conform their lives to that of God. The instruction might be easy to say, but it is certainly not easy to achieve, as we are constantly being snared away by Satan. Timothy was to continue in faithfulness in his work “...*(I urge you – vs 13) ... that you keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ’s appearing...*” (1:6:14 NKJV).

Closing instructions

In summing up and reinforcing the instructions that have been given, Paul instructs Timothy to “...*Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment...*” (1:6:17 NIV). The responsibility for the rich is to use the things

that they have to do good, and not to trust in riches. The rich have a responsibility to others, and Paul *commands* them to remember their obligations.

As a final instruction, Timothy was to “...*Guard what was committed to your trust...*” (1:6:20 NKJV). Paul is referring to the sound doctrine that he has been commanded to put in place in Ephesus, and he is to “...*Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge...*” (1:6:20 NIV). The false teachers were pushing such ideas, and they were to be rebuked for it (1:4:7; 1:6:3-5). The fallen elders were practicing this false teaching, and “...*by professing it, some have strayed concerning the faith...*” (1:6:21 NKJV).

2 Timothy Introduction - Background and circumstances

The epistle was written at the close of Paul’s fourth journey. After leaving Ephesus, he went to Corinth, and he then spent the winter at Nicopolos, where he was arrested and sent to Rome for execution around AD 66 or 67. The Roman historian Tacitus tells of the mad Emperor Nero, who had Rome burned, and then blamed the Christians. Paul was recognised as a leader of the Christians, and was brought to Rome as a part of the retribution that Nero was bringing upon all.

Place, date, and occasion of the letter

Unlike many of the New Testament letters, we can be fairly certain of the time and place for the letter. The time of writing is around 68 AD during Paul’s second Rome imprisonment, shortly before he was executed. Paul was dreading the coming winter (2:4:13,21) so the time of writing was most likely Spring, before the death of Nero in the Summer (June) of that year.

The occasion of the letter is a little harder to gauge. Paul is summoning Timothy to come to him. It is most likely that Timothy is still in Ephesus, although he could be elsewhere in Asia Minor. As Paul writes his last letter to Timothy, his *son in the faith*, he reflects on the loyalty shown to him over his life of ministry.

The Situation in Ephesus

Timothy had been charged with setting the disorderly church in order from some of the elders who were leading the flock away. Paul had disciplined some of them himself (1:1:20), although it seems they had refused to accept it, and continued to influence the brethren. Despite Timothy’s discipline of them (assuming that he had done what Paul told him to do), they were still influencing the brethren. Timothy has now been in Ephesus for a few years (probably 3 or 4 – 64 to 68 AD), and he is now to be replaced by Tychicus, so that he can come to assist Paul in Rome.

The Situation in Rome

Paul had already faced a preliminary hearing (2:4:16), and his friends had abandoned him in his defence. The situation is grave, and Paul is facing execution as being one of the leaders of the ‘sect’. Many Christians had already been put to death, and to stand in defence of Paul would most likely result in the same treatment. Many of his co-workers had departed and left him alone. This was one of the low points in Paul’s life. On this occasion, Paul says that “...*But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me...*” (2:4:17). Only Luke is still with him (2:4:11).

Second Timothy is much less business like than 1st Timothy or Titus, and is very melancholy as Paul reflects on his circumstances. It has very strong feelings as Paul conveys greetings for the final time to his long-standing associates. He writes to Timothy with an appeal to remain loyal to him and to the gospel, especially in the face of the persecutions and hardships.

2 Timothy Chapter 1 - Introduction and Greetings

Paul asserts his apostleship to Timothy, (who had no need to be instructed about Paul’s identity and authority), saying that the things that he is writing are not a *social letter* to his friend Timothy, but are authoritative, and has come from God. Paul adds the word *mercy* to his usual

greeting of *grace and peace*. It appears only here and in 1st Timothy (1:1:2). This provides evidence of the authenticity of the letter, as someone writing the letter purporting to have come from Paul would never have departed from his consistent greeting by introducing something else.

First Appeal to Loyalty

Timothy is urged to “...*stir up the gift of God which is in you...*” (2:1:6 NKJV), or “...*fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you...*” (NIV). This does not mean that Timothy had neglected the gift, or was not using to its full extent, but rather to continue to use them. The gift came “...*through the laying on of my hands...*” (2:1:6). Paul is referring here to the miraculous gifts, which God had imparted through him (as an apostle – c/f Acts 8:17-18). This was not the sign of appointment that came through the laying on of the hands of the elders (1:4:14).

To bring the gospel to others, Paul “...*was appointed a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles...*” (2:1:11 NKJV). He clearly identifies the multiple roles that he has here.

Despite the sufferings in his life – and those he was currently enduring in prison in Rome – he was not ashamed of the gospel. “...*That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day...*” (2:1:12 NIV).

First appeal – defection

There is a contrast with those who had turned away from the gospel, and had hindered its work. Timothy was aware of the situation, and “...*that all those in Asia have turned away from me...*” (2:1:15 NKJV) which seems to be a reference to a larger number having deserted the faith. In contrast to those who had deserted Paul, Onesiphorus had looked very hard to find Paul when he arrived in Rome. Not only did he find Paul, but visited often.

2 Timothy Chapter 2 - First Appeal – Loyalty (again)

Timothy’s role as an evangelist was not only in teaching the word, but also to ensure that it was passed on to others who could also pass it on. “...*the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also...*” (2:2:2 NKJV). Through this pattern, we see that the task of teaching the gospel was not just for a select few in the first century (since the task of teaching the lost is a perpetual role). However, the role Paul is outlining here is not the general role of teaching the lost, but the role of *teaching the teachers*. This has been given to those who are *faithful*. It is not a role that can be taken on by anyone and everyone. He brings three examples of being prepared to serve despite the hardships that might occur: *The Soldier; The Athlete; and The Farmer*.

The Second Appeal - opposition

Timothy is charged to be a true worker for the Lord “...*Remind them of these things, charging them before the Lord not to strive about words to no profit, to the ruin of the hearers...*” (2:2:14 NKJV). We can see here some of the things that were happening in the church.

People were engaging in pointless arguments (c/f 1:6:20), which did not help spread the gospel, and probably did a lot of harm, causing the hearers to fall away. In contrast, Timothy is exhorted to “...*Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth...*” (2:2:15 NKJV).

Despite the opposition, the truth of the gospel cannot be overcome. It is God’s revelation, and His will, and man cannot overthrow it. Even though these men might seem on the surface to be faithful, the truth lies underneath, and God knows the truth. If they truly belonged to God, then they would not be continuing with their wickedness.

Second Appeal - Loyalty

Not everyone in the church is the same, and “...in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honour and some for dishonour...” (2:2:20 NKJV). There are two implications here. On the one hand, those who have dishonoured God need to repent and change, and it is up to them to repent. Secondly Timothy is being exhorted to cleanse the church from those who were causing the strife.

Instructions for Correcting Error

Timothy is instructed in how to handle the difficult situation in Ephesus. He is still a young man, and needs to show maturity in his actions “...Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart...” (2:2:22 NIV). It was not enough just to purge the church of the false teachers, he also needed to demonstrate the positive qualities of righteousness, faith, love, and peace. But he should not be distracted by the disputes that were going on, and it could be likely that those involved in the disputes would try to turn the situation against him. “...But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife...” (2:2:23 NKJV).

2 Timothy Chapter 3 - Second Appeal – Opposition (again)

There was widespread opposition to the support that Timothy was showing. Paul emphasised this by a reference to “...the last days...”, which the Old Testament prophets had spoken about (Is 2:2; Joel 2:28; and other places). Paul describes the *characteristics* of this dispensation “...There will be terrible times in the last days...” (2:3:1 NIV). The people that he describes are not focused on God and the gospel, yet on the outside they appear to be very religious “...having a form of godliness...” but underneath it all they are just imposters, as they “...deny the power of the gospel...”. Timothy is instructed to turn away from these hypocrites, and “...Have nothing to do with them...” (2:3:5 NIV).

They are deceptive, and use that as the basis of accomplishing what they do. “...They are the kind who worm their way into homes and gain control over weak-willed women...” (2:3:6 NIV). This is certainly not to say that this is a characteristic of women *per se*, but rather the specific situation in Ephesus at the time. These people do not have a firm grasp on the truth of the gospel, or else they would resist the false teachers. Consequently, there is also some responsibility brought to those who are led away.

Third Appeal – Paul’s Loyalty

Paul’s manner of life stands in stark contrast to those who were trying to deceive others. No false teacher would go through the trials and tribulations that Paul went through in order to act out a lie. His teaching was clear and consistent, and the characteristics of his life were the exact opposite to those describing the false teachers (2:3:2-5). Timothy had first hand knowledge of the things that Paul had endured. He had been with him as his companion on the second journey, as his trusted messenger between Corinth and Thessalonica, and (as emphasised in this verse), he was almost certainly present when Paul was stoned at Lystra on the first journey.

Paul was not alone in his sufferings, and Timothy was also feeling their effects in Ephesus as he attempted to correct the situation there. Christians everywhere will suffer as Satan uses the influence of the world to try to upturn the truth of God.

Appeal to Timothy

Timothy is encouraged to exercise commitment in standing against the attacks of Satan. The things that he had learned from Paul and taught were not *cunningly devised fables*, but they were the truth of the gospel that had been demonstrated with the power of the Holy Spirit. The scripture is able to thoroughly equip us, and make us complete.

2 Timothy Chapter 4 - Third Appeal – Continued

Timothy is again charged to remain faithful. The gist of what he is saying is that because of the preparation we have from the scriptures, we need to be prepared to apply it to the fullest extent at every opportunity (whether it is a convenient time, or otherwise!). Timothy is to be ready to act, and make the most of the opportunities that present themselves. He needed to ensure that the gospel received the maximum effect while ever the opportunity presented itself.

The work of an evangelist

Evangelist comes from the same root word (*euangelion*) as the word *gospel*. An evangelist is a proclaimer of the good news – a *gospeller* – who goes about teaching and preaching the good news about Christ. Timothy is to correct, rebuke, encourage, and teach. He is to set the disorderly church in order (1:1:3), and to see that the church is instructed in carrying out God’s commands (1:4:6). He is not only to teach, but he is to train men who will be able to teach others (2:2:2), and is to endure the hardships that he will inevitably face (2:2:3) by not quarrelling but rather enduring through gentleness and humility (2:2:24-25). The evangelist may be permanently located (as Philip was), or he may be roaming (as Paul, Timothy, and Titus were).

Paul’s final appeal

Paul knew the seriousness of his situation. During his first imprisonment, he was very optimistic of being released. However the political climate had now changed, and this time it was the Emperor himself who pursuing him. Even although Paul knew that he was not guilty of the charges, there was nowhere to appeal.

The circumstances in Paul’s life had also changed. Paul had now made 4 or 5 missionary journeys. He had previously written some 10 years earlier *that from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ, and made it my aim to preach where Christ was not named* (Rom 15:19-20). He had almost gone from one end of the Empire to the other, and had preached to Kings, to Caesar’s household, and visited Spain.

This time, he knows that his work is finished. He is old (probably around 70), and has had a hard life (2 Cor 11:23-28; 1 Cor 4:9-13). “...*For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. ⁷ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith...*” (2:4:6-7 NIV). As the end of his life approaches, Paul knows that he has done everything that he could have done for the Lord.

Final Instructions to Timothy

Timothy is urged to come quickly to Rome to assist Paul. He is feeling alone and low as a result of his situation, and because many of his friends had moved on.

Luke had been a companion of Paul for many years, first joining him at Troas on the second journey (Acts 16:10), and staying with him for a good part of the first Roman imprisonment, where he gained his knowledge from Paul to write the book of Acts. This time, Luke has joined Paul again, and was able to minister to Paul as his physician (doctor), which may have given him some immunity from persecution. There is sadness in Paul’s words “...*only Luke is with me...*” (2:4:11). Paul had already had a preliminary hearing, and at that time, he had been totally abandoned by his friends, lest they also would be arrested for association with Paul. Timothy is being prepared for the seriousness of the situation that is playing out in Rome. Timothy may well find himself embroiled in it also.