The Pastoral Epistles: God's Vision for the Church as His Faithful Family

By Bryan Lilly

Extended class notes for Grace Anglican Church, Fall/Winter 2021 Adult Formation

(Humbly presented as an extremely rough draft)

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Preface

A Note Regarding the Purpose and Quality of this Document.

This document may appear overwhelming at first. Indeed, it surpassed the length that I first imagined it would be when I began putting it together. Forgive me for this egregiousness, but please let me explain. When I began preparing my lectures for this class I started, as I typically do, by doing research, taking notes, and developing outlines; then followed the writing of full manuscripts. I quickly realized that there was no way that I would be able to fit everything into the lectures given our time constraints.

Editing, as you'll see, is not a self-discipline of mine.

At the same time, I wanted to give myself room to give fuller arguments and provide details for those who, like me, naturally want to research and learn everything I can about a subject. This booklet is the bridge between the reality of time constraints and a torrent of information. Therefore,

The purpose of this booklet is to provide not just the information that will be in the lectures for this class, but the extra details which I hope will enhance the study for those who are so interested.

To this end please note in your charity that everything contained within this document is a rough draft at best. Though I hope my research has shown through the content, what is presented is largely a stream-of-conscience stringing together those points which came out of my own reading and meditation on the text and the help that the cited materials provided. Suffice it to say, no editing has been done in terms of grammar, spelling, or flow. Beyond my terrible, unchecked grammar, the wording is rough and unpolished, transitions between ideas—when they exist—are brittle, delicate things, there may bevmissing information in footnotes, and placeholders where I mean to come back and fill in information. I covet your graciousness and prayers, repenting in dust and ashes.

A Note Regarding the use of Scripture Translations.

In line with Grace Anglican Church's use of the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, all unmarked citations from Holy Scripture can be assumed to be that of the NRSV. All other translations have been noted in their citation. The only caveat to this is those places where I missed adding a citation in my lack of editing.

There is a non-zero amount of times that I offer my own translation. Please don't take this as a sign that I don't trust our English translations with respect to those verses. I have complete confidence in them. Rather, these passages (which I denote with "author's own translation") are used when I wanted to bring out a particular nuance with the verse given the context of the lecture. With all due respect to acknowledging that I am a huge nerd, I've tried to keep the actual appearance of Greek words relegated to footnotes except in places where the discussion of the underlying Greek has largely reached popular audiences. I offer neither excuses nor repentance for such nerditry. Respond as your conscience leads.

1 TIMOTHY
& TITUS

Week 1: Introduction

Collect For Inner Renewal Through the Word

O God the Holy Spirit, Sanctifier of the faithful: Sanctify this congregation by your abiding presence. Bless those who minister in holy things. Enlighten the minds of your people more and more with the light of the everlasting Gospel. Bring erring souls to the knowledge of our Savior Jesus Christ; and those who are walking in the way of life, keep steadfast to the end. Give patience to the sick and afflicted, and renew them in body and soul. Guard those who are strong and prosperous from forgetting you. Increase in us your many gifts of grace, and make us all fruitful in good works. This we ask, O blessed Spirit, whom with the Father and the Son we worship and glorify, one God, world with end. **Amen.**

Over the course of the next few months we will be studying the three letters known as the Pastoral Epistles—1 and 2 Timothy and Titus—together. The goal for this first class is to offer a basic introduction to the epistles, to give us some foundational context which will help us as we study. I've developed the introduction around the six main "question words:" who, what, where, when, why, and how. We'll take them in the following order:

1. How is this Course Structured?
2. Why should we study the Pastoral Epistles?
3. Who are St. Paul, Timothy, and Titus?
4. When were the epistles written?
5. Where were Timothy and Titus ministering?
6. What are the main themes of the epistles?

Our first question, "How is this course structured?" will be a guide for what to expect as we do these classes. The other five questions will then build a foundational context for the rest of our

weeks together.

How the Course is Structured

We begin with the question "How is this course structured?"

The Class Outline

As we will see in the coming weeks, these letters share a lot of the same themes, address many of the same issues, and were written largely at the same time. Second Timothy, however, presents with a very different focus and tone for reasons that will become obvious once we begin to study that particular letter. Because of this marked difference between 2 Timothy and 1 Timothy and Titus, I've thought it best to organize the class into two parts. Part 1, consisting of the first eight weeks, will cover 1 Timothy and Titus together given their similar themes and tone. Part 2, the final 5 weeks, will cover all of 2 Timothy.

Each of these two parts will take a slightly different approach. For 1 Timothy and Titus I've planned each class around a particular theme. While this keeps us from addressing each and every verse, it will allow us to cover the vast majority of the epistles in the time that we have. When we move onto studying 2 Timothy we will be working our way through the text sequentially and studying it a chapter or half-chapter at a time. The class outline is as follows:

I. **1 Timothy & Titus**
   - Week 1: Introduction (You are here)
   - Week 2: The False Teachers & Their Doctrine
   - Week 3: Sound Doctrine – The Gospel, The Church, & Good Works
   - Week 4: Sound Doctrine – The Gospel & Holy Baptism
   - Week 5: Sound Leadership – Holy Orders & Church Ministers
   - Week 6: Sound Relationships – Being the Family of God
   - Week 7: Sound Obedience – Christians & Authority
   - Week 8: Entrusted with the Gospel

II. **2 Timothy**
   - Week 9: Fidelity in Suffering
   - Week 10: Fidelity in Ministry
   - Week 11: Infidelity in Opposition

- Week 12: Fidelity Anchored in Holy Scripture
- Week 13: Fidelity to the End

The Purpose of this Book

This book serves as supplemental material for each of our classes. It is not required reading. There is now no condemnation (cf. Romans 8.1) if you stop here and never open the file again. If you continue reading, however, you will find not only the content that gets covered in the class, but extra content that gets cut from the lectures due to time, references (footnotes and bibliography) for all the research that went into these classes, and questions for reflection at the end of each chapter that I hope will help you think through the presented material.

"Questions for reflection" is a troubled genre. One either asks questions that are too specific or two general. In either case, the questions are rendered unhelpful at best or nonsensical at worst. Should you find the questions in either category, forgive me this grievous sin. I do not pretend that they are good questions, merely that they are questions by way of grammar and syntax. That being said, they may be used as a way to guide a period of Q & A at the end of lectures where we have enough time. If we have lectures where we have enough time.

Ultimately, this book is a collection of first-draft lecture manuscripts that I realized very early on were much too long. Rather than tossing the work I put into the lectures, they became this resource. They are very much rough-drafts. You may find incomplete citations, derailed trains of thought, and terrible spelling and grammar. You have been warned.

Why Should We Study the Pastoral Epistles?

We turn now to the question of "why," as in, "Why should we study the Pastoral Epistles?" If you're wondering this, let me affirm that it is a fair question!

There are two concerns that raise this question off the top of my head; one concern is raised by the letters themselves, the other by a history of interpreting the letters. The first concern the letters themselves are addressed to specific individuals. If they were written to specific individuals, why would it be so important that we spend thirteen weeks studying them? Again, fair question.

The second concern comes from the title which has been attached to them in our attempt to interpret the letters: the "Pastoral Epistles." Even if we allow that the letters are written for a

wider audience than Timothy and Titus, are not the epistles still restricted to pastors and church leaders? What would the "Pastoral Epistles" have to offer for the rest of us?

The Pastoral Epistles – Not Just for Timothy & Titus

With respect to the first concern, are these letters for Timothy and Titus, or are they written for the benefit of the church? The answer is "yes." It's a both/and rather than an either/or. True, the epistles are addressed to particular individuals, unlike the rest of the New Testament letters. True, the tone of these letters—personal, at times with the intimacy of deep friendships—is far different than the rest of the New Testament letters. And true, the letters address particular situations and problems that happened in particular locations at a particular time.

If we take a step back, however, we can look at the rest of the New Testament epistles through these same general lenses and see that—perhaps apart from tone—what we've just said regarding the Pastorals does actually apply to every other letter in the New Testament. Just to take one example, the first epistle to the Corinthians isn't written to a particular individual, but it is written to a particular congregation. It also addresses particular problems (of which there were many!) and situations that were happening at a particular place.

If we take just one more step back, we can realize that tthise actually true with every book and letter in Holy Scripture. The particularities from which each of our sixty-six books came about is often called the "occasion," as in the "occasion for writing." We'll say more about "occasion" and universal truths under the last question, "What are the main themes?"

How are these individualized letters "profitable" (2 Timothy 3.16–17) for the universal church? As just one example (since, indeed, this whole series of lectures attempts to answer this question!), such letters give us an "insider view" into St. Paul's pastoral work, his discipling of his inner circle, his affection for his friends, and his concern for their fidelity. How is getting this first-hand look not to the benefit of the whole Church? Indeed, the Apostle writes in 1 Corinthians 11.1, "Imitate me as I imitate Christ." Once we get over the shock of impossibility of such a task, I hope we are able to realize that in the Pastoral Epistles, he has given us the opportunity and invitation to do just that.

Finally, but briefly to close out this point, the Pastoral Epistles themselves have clues which tell us that St. Paul wrote with some degree of knowledge that these letters would have a wider

audience. The ending to 2 Timothy, chapter 4, verse 22, gives us an example. The Apostle ends this letter with the blessing, "The Lord be with your spirit," with the "you" here in the singular. But in the next phrase, "Grace be with you," the "you" is plural. Or, as we might translate it here in Kentucky, "The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with y'all."

The Pastoral Epistles – Not Just for Pastors

With respect to the second concern, the title "Pastoral Epistles" has been unfortunately misunderstood. The Pastoral Epistles are not just for pastors. We can be a bit more brief, here, as much of what we said above applies here, too. To those arguments we can add that the title itself is relatively new. It wasn't coined until the early 18th century and it was given as a way to acknowledge that the recipients themselves were doing pastoral work[1]. The Pastoral Epistles are not, and never were meant to be, strictly "pastors' manuals" or "ministry handbooks." They are filled with theology and application meant for the benefit of the Church. Allow me this moment of dubious self-quotation as an example:

> In the Pastoral Epistles, St. Paul…reveals God's vision for what it means to be the church: God's faithful family living out God's mission of making disciples from all nations. In our study of these letters we will explore the theme of fidelity as St. Paul relates it to God, sound doctrine, the church, and mission.[2]

Holy Scripture is Meant to be Read and Studied

So, these letters are written both *to* Timothy and Titus and *to* the whole Church. They are not *just* for pastors to study, but all Christians at all times in all places. Yet, the reasons above, while convincing I think, are the main reason that we should study these letters. The ultimate reason, which explains *why* such personal letters are to the benefit of the Church, is that they, in fact, part of Holy Scripture. Scripture, because of its nature, is meant to be read and studied. In Scripture we find God's very word to us, sufficient in revealing all things pertaining to our salvation, profitable and useful in shaping us into the image of the Son (Romans 8.29) and godliness (1

[1] Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 19.

[2] I'm sure I don't *need* to cite this, but you may have no idea where this is coming from. This was part of the paragraph I wrote as a description for the class to be used on the Grace Anglican website.

Timothy 3.16–17, NIV2011[3]).

St. Paul explicitly teaches this in 2 Timothy 3.16-17, which, God willing, we will look at in depth near the end of our weeks together in this class. He writes,

> *All scripture is inspired by God by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.*

Who Are St. Paul, Timothy, and Titus?

As part of Holy Scripture then, this intent of this class is to deepen our understanding of the Pastorals with the end goal of deepening our faith, our understanding of the gospel, and our relationship to God through Christ. As these epistles were addressed to particular individuals, our third question, which seeks to better understand those involved, naturally arises: who are St. Paul and Sts.Timothy and Titus?

St. Paul the Apostle

Many of us are likely familiar with who St. Paul is, but as he sketches his own testimony throughout the Pastorals let us consider his life more fully here. Most of what we know about Paul comes from the book of Acts and his own letters.

Prior to his conversion to Christianity St. Paul[4] was a Pharisee who studied under the Rabbi Gamaliel (Philippians 3.5, Acts 22.3). He was zealous in his faith, persecuted the church for her proclamation that Jesus of Nazareth was the long-awaited Jewish messiah (Philippians 3.6, 1 Timothy 1.13), and was present at the martyrdom of St. Stephen (Acts 8.3). This would all change dramatically when St. Paul met Jesus of Nazareth and converted to Christianity.

Conversion

The Apostle's conversion is recorded in Acts 9. While traveling on the road to Damascus a

[3] Yes, I am specifying the new NIV for this one. I'll go into more detail in week 3, but for equivalent translations that bring across the meaning of the text, the NIV 2011 really gets this one right over the 1984 edition. Also, if you have no idea what I'm talking about, the NIV was revised, largely for the better in many places, in 2011.

[4] It is often thought that St. Paul changed his name after converting to Christianity because the book of Acts calls him Saul up until his conversion, and then switches to using Paul after the conversion. Likely, Paul has always had both the names Saul and Paul. Saul is simply his Hebrew name while Paul was his Greek name. Indeed, Paul is still called "Saul" several times after his conversion.

We see this double-naming with Jesus himself. Jesus is our anglicized form of his Greek Name, while Jesus' name in Hebrew and Aramaic is roughly equivalent to Joshua.

bright light appeared, causing St. Paul to fall to the ground. He heard a voice addressing him from the light. The voice announced, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But get up and enter the city, and you will be told what do" (Acts 9.5-6). Rising from the ground, the Apostle realized that he had been struck blind. Shortly thereafter, Jesus also appeared to Ananias and told him that he was to find Paul and pray for him. Ananias did as he was told, and laying his hands on St. Paul, prayed for him, healed the Apostle of his blindness, and baptized the former persecutor into the family of God.

Missionary Journeys

In Ananias' vision, Jesus also told him that Paul "is an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before Gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel" (Acts 9.15). This launched the ministry of St. Paul as an apostle to the Gentiles—the story of which the remainder of the book of Acts is devoted to telling. Paul began his ministry in earnest with his first of three missionary journeys as recored in Acts 13-14. The second missionary journey is recorded in Acts 15.36–18.22, and the third in Acts 18.23–21.16.

The pattern of these missionary journeys was largely the same each time. St. Paul, along with a group of other evangelists who he often refered to as "fellow-workers," would travel to various cities where they would preach the gospel and start new churches out of those who converted through their proclamation. They would then move on to the next city and repeat the pattern. Once they reached the last city of their journey they would often go back and revisit the new churches, ordaining church ministers when able to oversee the new church plants. At times, some of St. Paul's "fellow-workers" would remain behind until they could raise up indigenous leadership from within the church.

Imprisonment and Martyrdom

The book of Acts ends with St. Paul imprisoned in the city of Rome, having been arrested for his ministry of proclamation (Acts 28). This is not the end of the Apostle's story, however. We know from history that the Apostle was released from prison sometime around 60–62 AD. He then went on at least one more missionary journey before he was arrested a second time in Rome sometime during the reign of Emperor Nero. St. Paul would not be released. Instead, the apostle was martyred for his faith and proclamation of the gospel. Many scholars propose that St. Paul was killed between 64-65 AD, though the historian Eusebius wrote that his martyrdom occurred

in 67 AD.[5]

Timothy

Timothy is the recipient of both 1 and 2 Timothy. He is first mentioned in Acts 16.1–3, which records part of St. Paul's second missionary journey:

> *Paul went on to Derbe and to Lystra where there was a disciple named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer; but his father was a Greek. He was well spoken of by the believers in Lystra and Iconium. Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him; and he took him and had him circumcised because of the Jews who were in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.*

Derbe and Lystra were sister cities in the province of Galatia in Asia Minor, part of what is modern day Turkey. Timothy was originally from one of these two cities. It was here that he was raised by his devoutly Jewish grandmother and mother, who also taught him the Holy Scriptures —our Old Testament—from infancy (cf. 2 Timothy 3.14–15). His grandmother and mother converted to Christianity, apparently before Timothy himself did (cf. 2 Timothy 1.5). Timothy himself, though unmentioned, likely converted to Christianity under Paul's preaching during his first missionary journey which also took the evangelists to Derbe, Lystra, and Iconium (though, I'm sure his grandmother and mother planted the seeds and did much watering, too, cf. 1 Corinthians 3.6).

By the time St. Paul returned in Acts 16, Timothy was already a disciple of Christ who was "well spoken of" by many believers throughout the region. Upon meeting Timothy (for the first time?), Paul invited him to join with him as a partner in ministry. This partnership would last for decades, and Timothy became a prolific partner. Excluding the two epistles which bear his name, Timothy is mentioned in eight of the remaining eleven Pauline letters. In six of those eight, Timothy is mentioned in the greetings of the letter, which tells us that he was with St. Paul at the time of writing the letters. For example, in 1 Corinthians 1.1–2 we read: "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy, our brother, to the church of God that is at Corinth…" It's likely that Timothy wrote some of these letters as Paul dictated the contents. Furthermore, we know that Paul also sent Timothy to visit and help the churches they started, including the church in Corinth (1 Corinthians 4.17; 16.10), Philippi (Philippians 2.9), and

[5] Eusebius, *Chronicle Canons*, Book II.

Thessalonica (1 Thessalonians 3.2).

The relationship between St. Paul and Timothy was such that the Apostle considered Timothy a "loyal child in the faith" (1 Timothy 1.2), going so far as to call Timothy "my beloved child" (2 Timothy 2.12) and "my beloved and faithful child" (1 Corinthians 4.17). This designation is part of why many suspect that Timothy was converted under St. Paul's preaching, but as we'll see in week 6 that the familial language of the New Testament is more than just a metaphor (cf. Mark 3.31–35).

Finally, many commentator argue that Timothy was timid, shy, or otherwise prone to fear. They base this argument on 2 Timothy 1.7 and 1 Corinthians 16.10. Such an interpretation seem valid, but doesn't quite square with all the other times Timothy is mentioned. For example, 1 Corinthians 16.10 likely stems from St. Paul's concern for Timothy's safety while he visits Corinth due to the extreme hostility that some of the Corinthians have towards the Apostle.

Titus

Less is recorded and known about Titus, though what we do know suggests that his ministry with St. Paul was similarly prolific as Timothy's. Surprisingly, Titus is never named or mentioned in the book of Acts, we know that he was present with both St. Paul and Timothy during the missionary journeys. We can infer this because of St. Paul's mentioning of Titus several times in both the Galatians and 2 Corinthians. Titus is also mentioned in 2 Timothy as well, and, like Timothy, is referred to as Paul's "loyal child in the faith we share" (Titus 1.4).

Titus was a Greek likely converted to Christianity from Paganism through St. Paul's preaching. Sometime before writing 2 Corinthians, St. Paul sent Timothy to Corinth with a "painful letter." This letter likely included a harsher rebuke than was usual from the Apostle that led to repentance by the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 7.6–14). Titus would be sent to Corinth again to Corinth to collect an offering from the Corinthians to help other financially struggling churches (2 Corinthians 8.6–23; possibly also delivering this second epistle?).

In Galatians 2.1–3, St. Paul mentions that he, Barnabas, and Titus travelled to Jerusalem. The Apostle, led by a revelation from God, went there and gave a defense for his ministry among the Gentiles. Scholars are not sure to which event this refers to, but there are two options. The first option is Acts 11.28–30, where St. Paul and Barnabas were selected to send an offering to

Judea after a prophecy was given regarding a severe famine. The second option is found in Acts 15, which records the well-known Jerusalem Council. It was here that the apostles admonished the "circumcision party" for requiring Gentiles to follow the ritual and ceremonial laws of the Old Testament—an issue particularly relevant in the letter to the Galatians.

When Were These Epistles Written?[6]

From the major people involved, we turn to consider our third question, when were these epistles written? By knowing approximately when they were written, we can understand a little more about what was going on in the world, and thereby have a little more context for the letters' historical situation. Thus, our fourth question, "when were the Pastoral Epistles written?"[7]

As we read through the Pastoral Epistles, we'll notice that a lot of language and themes are shared between all three epistles. This suggests that St. Paul wrote all three epistles within a relatively short period of time but doesn't necessarily require this to be true. In 2nd Timothy, St. Paul is imprisoned in Rome, writing with a sense of urgency because he knows that he will be martyred. The martyrdom of St. Paul gives us an approximate boundary for the latest possible date of writing, and we can work backwards from that point to deduce 1 Timothy and Titus.

A General Timeline for Context

The book of Acts ends ~59 AD with Paul imprisoned in Rome, though with quite a bit of freedom. It was, essentially, a house arrest. The last verse tells us that

> *He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance. (Acts 28.30)*

Thus, Paul was probably released from his house arrest in Rome around 61–62 AD. After being released, the Apostle went on at least one more missionary journey which is not recorded in the New Testament.

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[6] For these dates, I am mostly relying on D. A. Carson & Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 2nd ed., 571-2, 578, 582-3. See also the discussion on "Time and Place of Writing" in "The Pastoral Epistles of Paul the Apostle to Timothy and Titus," Introduction, Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown, *Commentary, Critical and Explanatory, on the Whole Bible*.

[7] To this question we can add "and what was the socio-political and religious context?" but I'm saving "what" for exploring the themes of the epistles, and to use it here breaks my entire system. Nobody wants that to happen, I'm sure.

In 64 AD, a fire broke out in Rome that burned for about nine days; The fire was controlled after six, but then reignited and burned for three more. Rumors spread amongst the people that Emperor Nero started the fire; Nero, to stop the rumors, claimed that it was started by the Christians, thus starting an intense but mostly localized persecution of Christians.[8] This persecution "ended" in 68 AD, when Nero died by suicide. Unfortunately, the last two years of Nero's life coincided with the first two years of the First Jewish–Roman war, which lasted from 66 AD until 73 AD. It was during this war, in 70 AD, that the temple in Jerusalem was destroyed as prophesied by Jesus in Matthew 24 and Mark 13.

It was during the Neronic Persecution that St. Paul was imprisoned a second time in Rome and eventually martyred for his faith. Therefore the latest we can date his death is 68 AD. As mentioned before, however, the church historian Eusebius wrote that St. Paul's martyrdom occurred in 67 AD, though most modern scholars place his death sometime around 64 or 65 AD.

2 Timothy

Second Timothy is the last epistle that St. Paul wrote that the early church considered inspired Scripture and preserved. The context of the letter, particularly that of 2 Timothy 4.6–15, tells us that Paul's martyrdom was imminent. The immediacy evoked by 2 Timothy 4.6 and 4.21 suggests that his death may have occurred within half-a-year, give or take a few months, after writing the epistle. Thus, it is extremely likely that 2 Timothy was written around 64 or 65 AD. While not entirely bulletproof, a safe assumption would be 65 AD.

1 Timothy & Titus

First Timothy and Titus are a little more difficult to place within the timeline. Again, because they have such a shared sense of themes, language, and tone, it is likely that one was likely written soon after the other. My working assumption would be within a year, but like all ranges that I give in this section, that should be taken with a degree of error.

They do not offer any hint of persecution occurring in Rome, and so they were likely written before the Great Fire occurred in 64 AD. At the same time, their focus is hyper-local to Ephesus and Crete, particularly the false teachers who were operating within the local churches, and

[8] Tacitus, *Annals*, 15.44. We will revisit this in Week 7, Christians & Authority. See the full quote there.

therefore there's no guarantee that such a persecution would be mentioned. However, 1 Timothy seems to have been written while St. Paul had residency in Macedonia (1 Timothy 1.3) in the midst of his fourth missionary journey with no hint of potential danger.

Another point in favor of a pre-persecution date is the fact that 2 Timothy uses "persecution" language. While this makes sense given the circumstances, St. Paul also uses "persecution" and "suffering" synonymously to describe Timothy's situation as well. This may be due to the Roman situation lurking in the background of Paul's mind such that he equates the suffering of a difficult ministry with persecution.

Assuming, then, that St. Paul was released from his first imprisonment around 61–62 AD, and that 1 Timothy and Titus were written before the persecution began in earnest, it seems that a date of 62–64 AD is and appropriate range of dates. To allow for some travel and missionary work, I'll work with the assumption of ~63 AD.[9]

Where Were Timothy and Titus Ministering?

So, sometime in the early to mid 60s, St. Paul writes to two particular evangelists named Timothy and Titus, whom he has assigned to particular locations in order to help churches that were planted during several of the Apostle's missionary journeys. Thus, our fifth question: Where were Timothy and Titus ministering? Timothy is ministering to the churches in Ephesus; Titus to the churches in Crete.

Ephesus

The city of Ephesus was considered one of the most important cities in the Roman Empire. Ephesus was a port city, located in Galatia, a region of Asia Minor—modern day Turkey. As a major port city, Ephesus becomes a cultural, political, and religious center for the Empire. In a

[9] One important caveat to these dates involves the work of J. A. T. Robinson in his book *Redating the New Testament*. Though Robinson was theologically liberal, his work on dating the New Testament actually broke through the conservative/liberal divide and dated the entirety of the New Testament far more earlier than even the most theologically conservative scholars. In full disclosure, I tend to side with Robinson's dates, if not the specific date given for a book, then at least his general idea, which is that the entirety of the New Testament was written by 70 AD. This is a minority position.

Robinson offers even earlier dates for the writing of the Pastoral Epistles than I do here. He places the writing of 1 Timothy in 55 AD, Titus in 57 AD, and 2 Timothy 58 AD. Though I am not convinced, his arguments are well reasoned and, because there are assumptions at work in dating them to 62-66 AD, they cannot be rejected out-of-hand. Dating them a decade earlier certainly changes some of how we would interpret the background influences to the letters, but does not change the overall themes and messages which are quite clear.

syncretistic mix of politics and religion, the city becomes a stronghold for the imperial (or emperor) cult, the common practice of worshipping the emperors as deities. Furthermore, the city of Ephesus was dedicated to the fertility goddess, called Diana (Latin name) or Artemis (Greek name). The temple of Diana, considered one of the seven wonders of the world before its destruction in the 3rd century, served as a central point of civic and religious life. [10]

Ephesus also played a large role in apostolic Christianity (and post-apostolic as well). The city is mentioned in Acts, 1 Corinthians, 1 & 2 Timothy, and Revelation. In the book of Revelation, Ephesus is mentioned first in a list of seven churches in Asia Minor to whom the book is addressed (technically making Revelation an epistle!). By placing Ephesus at the head of the list of addressees, St. John acknowledges the church's importance. Jesus, through the Revelation, says to the Ephesian church:

> *I know your works, your toil, and your patient endurance. I know that you cannot tolerate evildoers; you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them to be false. I also know that you are enduring patiently and bearing up for the sake of my name, and that you have not grown weary. (Revelation 2.2-3).*

We will see just how important this description is as we go through our class. Jesus then says,

> *But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember then from what you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. (Revelation 2.4-5)*

Tradition holds that St. John lived in Ephesus after he returned from his exile on the island of Patmos (where Revelation was written) until his martyrdom at the turn of the century.

St. Paul's second trip to Ephesus sees the apostle living in the city for three years (Acts 20.31). During this time St. Paul writes several epistles to other churches. It is likely that this was when the Ephesian church became a hub for missional and church planting activity.

Crete

"Their very own prophet said, 'Cretans are always liars, vicious brutes, lazy gluttons.' That testimony is true," St. Paul writes in Titus 1.12-13. Crete was a mountainous, yet fertile island in the Mediterranean Sea. Seemingly insignificant, the island bookends the the Acts of the Apostles.

[10] E. M. B. Green and C. J. Hemer, "Ephesus," *New Bible Dictionary,* 3rd ed.

In Acts 27, near the end of the book, the Apostle is on board a ship heading towards Rome having appealed his recent arrest to the emperor. The ship stops, briefly, off the shore of Crete and Paul wants to stay for the winter. He's overruled, and the ship sails on. A storm quickly overtakes it, however, and they are driven further out to sea. After two weeks adrift without food, the ship finally wrecks on the island of Malta.

In Acts 2, the beginning of the story, we read that Jews were present in Jerusalem from the island of Crete on the Day of Pentecost (2.11). They, like many others, heard the proclamation of the gospel through St. Peter's preaching and converted to Christianity. In returning home after the end of the Festival of Weeks—the Jewish holy day that brought them to Jerusalem in the first place—they bring their faith with them.

The lack of mention from Acts 3 to Acts 26 suggests that there was little to no formalized ministry and oversight. Certainly not from St. Paul, who likely only visited Crete during his fourth missionary journey, wherein he tells Titus to remain there, in order to "put in order what remained to be don, and appoint elders in every town" (Titus 1.5). If there was a formal church started, it was likely the product of the Ephesian church's efforts. Either way, there was a distinct lack of sound pastoral oversight, and that lack allowed false teachers to flourish and their heresy to fester.

What Are the Main Themes?

We turn now to our sixth and final question: what are the main themes of the Pastoral Epistles? As we've said before, there is a considerable amount of overlap between the three letters, due to their similar occasions for writing and time periods.There are nuances, however, between 1 Timothy/Titus and 2 Timothy.

The major problem which St. Paul addresses in 1 Timothy and Titus is the false teachers, and the heresy that is spreading throughout the congregations. This heresy is still an issue in 2 Timothy, but it is no longer St. Paul's focus in the last epistles. Rather, in 2 Timothy the pressing issue is the apostles impending martyrdom and his concern for Timothy after his death. Thus, in 2 Timothy, we see a shift in Paul's writing to encouraging Timothy to press on, and talking about Timothy's fidelity in the midst of suffering and persecution.

Occasions for Writing, Cultural Application, and Universal Truths

The inspired, or "God-breathed," nature of Holy Scripture means that all constituent books which make up the Bible are the very word of God to human beings (cf. 2 Timothy 3.16) and therefore carry a universal authority over the lives of every human being (cf 2 Timothy 3.17). The picture of God "breathing out" scripture tells us that the source of all Scripture is God, but he also "breathes out" Scripture through human authors (cf. 2 Peter 1.21). God not only ordains the very words of Scripture, but the ways they were written. Sometimes, God spoke directly to the authors; other times, he made use of the time, culture, language, personality and "voice" of the human authors. This latter is what we see with St. Paul.

Because authors like Paul are addressing contemporary problems, they often offer contextualized applications. In footnote 61, found in Week 3, I give an example of this regarding 1 Corinthians 11.4–16. There are two ways the contextualizations within Scripture get abused. First, people will use the texts *relativistically*, and use "culture" as a reason to reject the teaching as binding for today. Second, people will use the texts *legalistically*, saying that every detail the contextualized passage should be followed today. Here are examples of both from 1 Corinthians 11.4–16:

1. The relativist would say that, because the 1 Corinthians 11.4–16 is rooted in the patriarchal culture of the 1st Century, it is no longer binding on us today. The authority dynamic in marriage is necessarily egalitarian because we are all equal in Christ.
2. The legalist would say that, because 1 Corinthians 11.4–16 is God-breathed Scripture, it is necessarily binding to us today; therefore any woman who does not have a head-covering as and any man who has long hair are in sin.

If both of these ways of approaching the text are wrong, how then should we approach it? We know that "all scripture is inspired by God and profitable" (2 Timothy 3.16), and therefore all Scripture has authority and relevancy to all people at all times in all places. Therefore, when we can run into issues of contextualizing we don't simply reject the text as irrelevant. Instead, we seek to understand what the universal truth is that is being contextualized. We don't require head coverings or hair lengths, but we do seek to understand the anthropological truth behind the text, and that truth is something we see in the very first chapters of Genesis, affirmed over and over again in Scripture regarding the full equality of men and women as God's image bearers, who are designed to complement one another ..

What does this have to do with the Pastoral Epistles? Much of these epistles are directed to specific circumstances that Timothy and Titus were facing. What St. Paul teaches regarding false teachers is contextualized to the situations in Ephesus and Crete. It's unlikely, but not impossible, that Grace Anglican is going to have to deal with leaders trying to teach that we should follow Jewish mystical interpretations of genealogies and abstain from marriage and certain foods (cf. 1 Timothy 1.4, 4.3–5). Yet, there is a universal truth at play that agrees with what Jesus taught when he warns the disciples, "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves" (Matthew 7.15).

By understanding the occasions, the reasons St. Paul wrote the Pastoral Epistles, we build a necessary foundation for helping us to understand the universal, authoritative truths which these epistles have by virtue of being God's very word to all people at all times in all places.

The Problem in 1 Timothy & Titus: False Teachers and Heresy

The occasion—the primary purpose—for 1 Timothy and Titus is to give instruction and encouragement regarding the rise of false teachers in their respective churches, who through their teaching and their behaviors are leading others away from the church (1 Timothy 1.3, 3.15; Titus 1.5, 10–13). Though these epistles are written to two different churches, the heresy which has sprouted in both tend to be related if not fundamentally the same set of errors. We will consider the shared elements of these heresies below.[11]

Doctrine and Its Fruits

One of the most surprising things—perhaps, even the most provocative—regarding St. Paul's treatment of the false teachers is that he spends more time critiquing their behavior than their doctrine. I see two primary reasons for this, one speculative and one from the text. First, and this is speculative, is that there likely wasn't a reason to go into detail as St. Paul, Timothy, and Titus all shared the treasury of knowledge regarding what they taught. That being said, we should pay close attention when the Apostle does mention an aspect of their theology. The restatement of what Timothy and Titus would have already known means that he is emphasizing it for some reason or another.

Second, St. Paul's concern for their behavior arises out of his concern for the reputation of

[11] The main source of this summary is taken from William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles,* lxix–lxxvi.

the gospel and the church. Throughout 1 Timothy and Titus we see St. Paul condemn the false teachers for their character and behavior (1 Timothy 1.8-11, 6.3-11; Titus 1.15-16; 2 Timothy 2.14–22; the so called "virtue" lists are also set against the false teachers behavior, cf 1 Timothy 3.1-13; Titus 2.1-10, 3.1-3; etc.), while exhorting Timothy, Titus, and their behavior can lead to reproach (1 Timothy 3.2, 7; 5.7, 14; 6.1; Titus 2.5, 8, 10). All beliefs bear fruit, and the fruit exhibited by the church has an effect on the mission of the church. We will be exploring this throughout the study.

This isn't to say that St. Paul never deals with the theology itself. Through his writing, broadly define two major sources which form the foundation of the heresy: Jewish mysticism and Greek or Hellenistic dualism.

Jewish Mysticism

The false teaching spreading through Ephesus and Crete appears, at least with what information we have, to be similar in kind to that of the Essenes—a group of Jewish mystics who existed at the same time as the Pharisees and Sadducees.

The Jewish nature of the heresy is well established between reading 1 Timothy and Titus. St. Paul specifically calls out the heresy for utilizing "Jewish myths and geneaologies" (Titus 1.4, cf 1 Timothy 1.4; likely referring to extra-biblical rabbinic interpretations) and that the opponents themselves are part of the "circumcision party" (Titus 1.10, cf. Acts 15, Galatians 2.11-14). Furthermore, these false teachers wanted to be known as "teachers of the law" (1 Timothy 1.7), of which, they do not understand (1 Timothy 6.4). Thus, they were not teaching the Law properly (1 Timothy 1.8-11), but rather twisting it for their own purposes and creating their own laws that restricted both the salvation and lifestyles for all.

Greek–Hellenistic Dualism

The false teachers did not just adopt and twist Jewish theology, but also some of the popular Hellenistic philosophy of the day. In particular, the opponents borrowed heavily from the concepts of Hellenistic dualism, which views the world through a sharp, binary distinction between the material world and the spiritual world. Dualists tend to emphasize the spiritual realities over the material world such that they teach that the physical world, indeed material and matter in general, is evil. The spiritual world, as the antithesis, is good and desirable. Thus, for

many, death was salvation as it releases us from our material bodies.

Given the scant amount of details regarding the opponents' doctrine, we can't say for certain just how far they took their dualism, but there are several passages that show the opponents did devalue the material world. For example, the opponents taught that people should reject things which God has explicitly proclaimed to be good and for our enjoyment. Specifically, St. Paul mentions the rejection of marriage and the requirement to extreme fasting and abstaining from foods (1 Timothy 1.3). St. Paul also says that they reject the Christian doctrine of a future, bodily resurrection, saying that the (non-physical) resurrection has already occurred (2 Timothy 2.17–18). Perhaps they were twisting St. Paul's own teaching about conversion and baptism being our burial and death in Christ, and our rising to newness of life (cf. Romans 6.3-5).

Gnosticism and Porto-gnosticism

Many commentators and scholars see the Pastoral Epistles aa response to the 2nd century heresy of Gnosticism. Because of this, they reject the idea that the Pastorals could have been written by St. Paul, arguing that someone used his name years after his death in an effort to more authoritatively speak against the Gnostic heresy.

The scope of Gnostic doctrine is beyond our purpose in the class, but it is both important to address in case you run across such this argument in your own studies, as well as because the heresy still pops up today in stronger and weaker forms. Gnosticism consisted of borrowing aspects of Jewish and Christian mysticism, Platonism, and various Pagan beliefs. One of it's defining characteristics, however is an extreme dualism. Their rejection of the material world was so extreme that they viewed "the God of the Old Testament" as a Satan figure based on the fact that he created the physical world. Because the material world is evil, the one who created must be evil himself. Thus, in Gnosticism, "the God of the New Testament" was a different diety altogether. This "true" God sent Jesus into the world to rescue us from the physical world by giving us a hidden knowledge that, after death, our soul would use to ascend into the highest of heavens which was a state of perfection. Because matter was evil, however, they denied the traditional view of the incarnation, teaching either that Jesus's body and spirit were either separate entities or that Jesus merely appeared to have a body, a doctrine also taught by the heresy known as Docetism.

The heresy in Ephesus and Crete was a far cry from the full-blown Gnosticism of the second

century. Any attempt to dislodge the Pastoral Epistles from their place in history and their Pauline authorship is to be rejected. It is very clear, however, that there are obvious points of connection between this heresy and what would become Gnosticism. Gnosticism didn't come into existence out of a vacuum, of course. The complexity of gnostic doctrine itself makes sense only in light of developmental iterations. The similarities between the heresy in the Pastorals and Gnosticism suggest that what was happening in Ephesus and Crete could very well be as one of many forms of proto-gnosticism. Still, the primary teaching of the heresy is rooted in aberrant Jewish doctrines, with dualism being a secondary, yet dangerous, influence.

The Occasion for 2nd Timothy

St. Paul's reasons for writing 2 Timothy differs drastically than that of the other Pastoral Epistles. Imprisoned in a Roman once again, St. Paul has been abandoned by some (2 Timothy 1.15, 4.10a, 16) and left by others for ministry reasons (2 Timothy 4.10b, 12). Only St. Luke remained with him (2 Timothy 4.11). Furthermore, he knows that he will not escape prison again, and that his death is soon coming (2 Timothy 4.6–8). In light of the situation he finds himself in, St. Paul writes a second letter to Timothy with dual purpose. The first purpose is to express his affection and love for Timothy and to request that Timothy visit him again before his death (2 Timothy 1.4; 4.9, 21).

At the same time, the issue with the false teachers which St. Paul spoke to in his first letter had not yet been resolved. Timothy has faithfully and dutifully kept his hand to the plow and ministered to the Ephesian congregation, but the seemingly ever-increasing opposition has had its effects. Thus, the Apostle writes to encourage Timothy in the midst of suffering and persecution, and to point him towards fidelity in life and ministry by reminding him of God's fidelity to his children. Throughout, the Apostle calls on Timothy to press on through suffering and shares his own testimony of how God has been faithful in empowering St. Paul to persevere through suffering and persecution, and that his faithfulness stands even in the sovereign control and allowance of his impending death at the hands of Rome.

The Theme(s) of the Pastoral Epistles: Fidelity

The major themes which St. Paul teaches throughout the Pastoral Epistles are all in response to the occasions for writing mentioned above, chief of which is the false teachers and their heresy.

As we compare the various themes, we might notice that a meta–theme—or, "one theme to rule them all"—arises which connects all the parts together: the theme of fidelity. Before I explain what I mean by fidelity, let's consider the themes themselves.

The Gospel and Sound Doctrine

The first obvious theme of the Pastoral Epistles is that of "sound" or "healthy" doctrine. This stands in direct contrast to the false teaching of the opponents. Throughout the epistles, sound doctrine is really any doctrine that conforms to the teaching revealed through Holy Scripture. This includes the Old Testament, specifically, but also the teaching of the apostles themselves which has been "entrusted" to the them (cf 1 Timothy 1.11) and which they have taught and entrusted to others, such as Timothy (cf 1 Timothy 6.20; 2 Timothy 2.2, 3.10-11).

The Pastoral Epistles are clear, however, that chief amongst the sound teaching of the Church is the gospel itself. Though people may be mistaken on this or that point of doctrine, once one gets the gospel wrong then a "wrong doctrine" rises to the category of a false or heretical doctrine. The false teachers misuse of the law and their ascetic practices have wrested salvation away from the free offer of redemption which is given by grace alone through faith alone. Thus, St. Paul goes to great lengths to proclaim that salvation comes to us as a gift, apart from any works that we do (cf. Titus 3.4–8a). Our fidelity to God requires a fidelity to sound doctrine. In rejecting sound doctrine we also deny God. Should we persist in our denial of God, until death, we are told that he will deny us on the last day (cf. 2 Timothy 2.13b).

The Gospel and Good Works

The truth that salvation comes by faith alone through God's grace and mercy alone does not mean that our works, our behavior, doesn't matter. Without considering other synonyms, the phrase "good works"occurs eight times in the Pastoral Epistles. St. Paul argues throughout that good works are the fruit of salvation as the Holy Spirit empowers us to live a life which "conforms to the glorious gospel" (1 Timothy 1.11; cf. Titus 2.1–10, 3.1–3; 1 Timothy 3.14–16 NIV2011; 2 Timothy 2.1).

Not only are good works the fruit of the Holy Spirit working in us, the behavior of the false teachers is presented as the rotten fruit of their own heresy. All beliefs bear fruit. Beliefs that accord with the gospel and sound theology bear good fruit, whatever is contrary bears rotten fruit

(Luke 6:43–45). As mentioned above, St. Paul has a particular concern for how the behavior effects the reputation of the church and the gospel to those outside the church. In other words, what we say or do and how we say or do it, has consequences for the mission of the Church.

St. Paul's theology of salvation through faith by God's grace and mercy is well represented throughout his other epistles. That St. Paul spends so much time on "good works" in the Pastoral Epistles, is likely the reason we also find some of his strongest affirmations that the Gospel repudiates any notion that we can be saved by those same good works. Indeed, it is grace and mercy alone by which Christ redeems and purifies us, and yet that redemptive work results in a gathering of people "zealous for good works" (Titus 3.4–8a). Our fidelity to God, marked by fidelity to sound doctrine, displays our salvation to a watching world through the good works that God has prepared for us (Ephesians 2.10).

The Church as the Faithful Family of God — Worship, Mission, & Relationships

The redeemed and purified people that God gathers together through the gospel is the Church. St. Paul has much to say about the Church in the Pastoral Epistles, particularly as the Church gathers in her local congregations. For example, St. Paul gives instructions on how local churches should conduct themselves when they come together (cf. 1 Timothy 2; 3.15, 5; Titus 2.1–10), and what character qualifications the leaders of the local churches must have (1 Timothy 3.1–13; Titus 1.5–9). It is the Church who is called to be the defender and steward of the gospel and sound doctrine (1 Timothy 3.14–16), which manifests itself through the ordained ministries of the Church, who then equip the congregations for the ministry of the Church (Ephesians 4.11). This redeemed, purified, equipped church then is sent out into the world to participate in the work of proclaiming the gospel, which God uses to continue redeeming, purifying, gathering and equipping those who trust the good news for their salvation.

One major theme that arises out of St. Paul's teaching regarding the church is that those who are faithful, those who make up the Church, are the family of God (cf. Paul's relationship to Timothy and Titus, 1 Timothy 1.2; 2 Timothy 1.2; Titus 1.4). The Church is explicitly called the "household" of God (1 Timothy 3.14–16; Also, 1 Timothy 5.1-2; Titus 2.1-10), and those who are called to be ministers in the Church are to manage their households well (1 Timothy 3.4, 12; Titus 1.6) because their household leadership is linked explicitly to their leadership of the church

(1 Timothy 3.5).

The teaching that the Church is God's faithful family is not merely a metaphor, rather it has its roots in a stronger reality that accords with the teaching of Jesus himself (cf. Mark 3.31–34). The shed blood of Christ, the seal of the Holy Spirit, and the efficacy of our baptism form a stronger bond than that of our biological DNA. This teaching doesn't denigrate the biological family, rather it rightly orders our understanding of the biological family and the Church. It also gives meaning and value to the act of adoption, which forms a family apart from DNA, because we come to the family of God only by his sovereign adoption of us as his sons and daughters in Christ (cf. Galatians 4.4–5; Romans 8.14–17; John 1.12–13).

The truth that the Church is the family of God transforms how we are to relate to one another, making each of us fathers, mothers, brothers, and sisters to one another (Titus 2.1–10; cf. 1 Timothy 5.1–2). Fidelity to God, marked by fidelity to sound doctrine that God the Holy Spirit uses to empower and equip us, work which bears the fruit of good works in us, calls us to live lives of fidelity to one another as the family of God, united under a good and sovereign father through our adoption which makes us brothers and sisters along with Christ.

Perseverance in Suffering and Persecution

Our final major theme takes the front of the stage in 2 Timothy—patience and perseverance in the face of suffering and persecution. Because we live in the "last days," the rise of false teachers and apostasy should not be surprising to us (cf 1 Timothy 4.1–5; 2 Timothy 3.1–9). This opposition and the opposition from those outside of the Church come together and in a cocktail of trials, tribulations, persecution, and suffering that ranges from ridicule to martyrdom.

Because of the reality of this opposition, St. Paul invites Timothy to "share in the suffering for the gospel" (2 Timothy 1.8, 2.3–7). This isn't because Timothy hasn't suffered, and the Apostle has gone sadistic in his imprisonment; Rather, Timothy has already been suffering in the difficulties and hardships of his ministry in Ephesus and St. Paul's invitation is an encouragement to remain faithful to God in the midst of his suffering (2 Timothy 2.11–13).

At the same time, the Apostle knows how frail we are, and that each of us moves towards faithlessness at one time or another, and so we cannot hear his call to "share in suffering" apart from his encouragement to "be strengthened [daily] by the grace that is in Christ Jesus" (2

Timothy 2.1), and the reminder that "if we are faithless [yet, without denying Christ], then he remains faithful [to us]" (2 Timothy 2.13). He gives Timothy his own life as an example of what perseverance in suffering looks like, namely, that behind our fidelity to Christ is the absolute fidelity of God towards his family (2 Timothy 3.10–11; 4.6–8, 16–18).

Fidelity

The Fidelity that Scripture Calls us to

Each of these themes come together to forge a picture of what fidelity in the Christian life looks like. So, what is fidelity then? Fidelity is faithfulness. We must be careful, though, because our culture loves to praise faithfulness of an altogether different sort. This cultural faith is really just the idea of faith; the faith that culture praises is general, ethereal, and refuses to take an object. It isn't actually faith *in* anything. Fidelity, on the other hand, is faithfulness with a concrete object; faithfulness over time and in a particular direction. In the Pastoral Epistles, St. Paul exhorts us to:

1. Fidelity to God
2. Fidelity to the gospel and sound doctrine
3. Fidelity to God's church and one another
4. Fidelity to God's mission in the world

The Fidelity of God

The Pastoral Epistles, indeed the whole of Scripture, teaches us that we cannot muster up this fidelity within ourselves. Rather, whatever fidelity we offer is purely the work of the Holy Spirit's empowering work in our lives. To paraphrase St. John, we are faithful towards God, because he is faithful towards us, first. God is faithful to his children, and this is the foundation upon which everything that is contained within the Pastoral Epistles. God's love and covenant faithfulness, embodied in the person and work of Jesus Christ, lavished upon us in the Holy Spirit, calls us, redeems us, justifies us, purifies us, equips us, and keeps us.

There is no better passage to read about this truth than in Romans 8.31–39:

> *What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died,*

yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us.a 35 Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written,

"For your sake we are being killed all day long;
we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered."

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amen.

Week 2: The False Teachers & Their Doctrine

Collect For a Spirit of Evangelism

Almighty God our Savior, you desire that none should perish, and you have taught us through your Son that there is a great joy in heaven over every sinner who repents: Grant that our hearts may ache for a lost and broken world. May your Holy Spirit work through our words, deeds, and prayers, that the lost may be found and the dead made alive, and that all your redeemed may rejoice around your throne, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Scripture

1 Timothy 1.3-18; Titus 1.10-16

We're beginning our study of 1 Timothy and Titus by looking at the problem of the false teaching that had taken root in both the churches of Ephesus and Crete. If you remember from the introduction, this false teaching was the major catalyst for the writing of these epistles. Almost every passage and theme that we read in the Pastoral is haunted by the heresy, explicitly or implicitly addresses either the teachers, their teaching, or their behavior.

We'll begin with a discussion on what makes something a "false doctrine." Then, we'll take a look at what the false teachers were teaching by doing a survey at the various passages which explicitly deal with the heresy. Finally, we'll see what St. Paul's goal was in rebuking those who taught false doctrine.

* * *

What is False Doctrine?

What makes something a "false doctrine?" Scripturally, and particularly in 1 Timothy and Titus, the term is used in a technical sense. It is used to describe a teaching that is heretical, that tears at the very fabric of Christianity. Usually, the term is not employed to describe someone's doctrine when it is just generally in error. For example, disagreement on whether infants should be baptized does not rise to accusations of false doctrine in the technical sense. The Christological debates in the first few centuries of the New Testament Church, on the other hand, did involve false doctrine. The Arians, who taught that"there was a time when Christ was not," were rightly declared heretical by the Church at the Council of Nicaea in 325 AD.

There are two categories that I tend to use when discussing false doctrine. They are anachronistic, and not mutually exclusive, but I find they are a helpful triage for determining what is false doctrine today:

1. Creedal Heresy
2. Gospel Plus

Creedal Heresy

False doctrine that I would classify as "creedal heresy" is any doctrine which contradicts the apostolic teaching which we now have summarized in the three Creeds—the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed. Our province, the ACNA, explicitly mentions these three creeds in our *Fundamental Declarations of the Province*[12], and they are furthermore explicitly affirmed in article VIII of the *Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion.* Obviously, the creeds did not exist in apostolic times, but our affirmation of the creeds is that they rightly and without error affirm the teaching of Holy Scripture. If we deny that Jesus was "conceived by the Holy Spirit, born to the Virgin Mary," we are denying a truth taught by Holy Scripture that we have historically seen as necessary to believe.

Gospel Plus

False doctrine that I classify as "gospel plus" is any doctrine which adds requirements beyond

[12] "Fundamental Declarations of the Province," *Book of Common Prayer (2019)*, 766–67. See #4 on page. 767.

what Scripture teaches is necessary for salvation. One example of a "Gospel Plus" type of false doctrine from Scripture is found in the book of Acts and Galatians, where a group called "the circumcision group" taught that Gentile Christians must be circumcised according the Abrahamic covenant to truly be part of God's people. From our position looking back, that is an obvious example. But "gospel plus" creeps in subtly, too. Our rhetoric regarding politics, children's education, alcohol, movies, and on and on and on; these often betray what we each of us add to the gospel. I'm not saying that these aren't important issues; in each of them we are guided by conviction and conscience. Yet, when we begin to judge other Christians by these extra-biblical categories, we are in sin. When we begin to question someone's salvation based on those categories, we are in danger.

The False Doctrine at Ephesus and Crete

As mentioned in the previous class, we don't know with certainty all of the false doctrine the false teachers were teaching. St. Paul, Timothy, and Titus were all already familiar with their teaching and so there was no reason to systematically refute their heresy point-by-point. That isn't to say that the epistles don't shed any light on the teachers. Quite the opposite. As was also mentioned in the introduction, we find in these epistles that the heresy was some blend of Jewish mysticism and Hellenistic dualism, which we'll explain in a bit more detail today. We'll study the heresy by considering the Jewish nature of the heresy, the dualistic asceticism, the ultimate source of the heresy, the character of the false teachers, and the fruit of their doctrine.

The Jewish Nature of the Heresy

1 Timothy 1.3–4, 6–11; Titus 1.10–16.

The first aspect we'll look at is the Jewish nature of the heresy. St. Paul immediately begins his first epistle to his Timothy by reminding Timothy of the false doctrine:

> *I urge you, as I did when I was on my way to Macedonia, to remain in Ephesus so that you may instruct certain people not to teach any different doctrine, and not to occupy themselves with myths and endless genealogies that promote speculations rather than the divine training that is known by faith…some people have deviated from* [the faith] *and turned to meaningless talk, desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or things about which they make assertions. (1 Timothy 1.3, 4, 6–11)*

Already the roots of Jewish mysticism begin to show. In biting irony, St. Paul describes the teaches as "desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or things about which they make assertions." The "law" here means, at least, the Mosaic law; It may include all of the Pentateuch—Genesis through Deuteronomy—since the passage also makes mention of genealogies. Rather than interpreting the law according to its divine intent, the false teachers were utilizing "myths and endless genealogies that promote speculations;" this all was "meaningless talk." Unfortunately, what exactly those myths and genealogies were exactly is lost to us, though they were likely a mixture of Old Testament Scripture and extra-biblical Jewish myths and other rabbinic teachings.

St. Paul is more direct in mentioning the Jewish influence of the heresy in Titus 1.10, 14:

> *There are also many rebellious people, idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision…rebuke them sharply, so that they may become sound in the faith, not paying attention to Jewish myths or to commandments of those who reject the truth.*

Here the Apostle specifically says that they are following "Jewish myths," that is, beliefs that developed in segments of Judaism outside of the Scriptural canon. He also specifically highlights "those of the circumcision."

I mentioned this group briefly earlier, but they persistent antagonists to the gospel throughout the New Testament. They were a group of Jewish Christians who, though they rightfully proclaimed that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah, also taught that Christians had to follow the laws of the Old Testament that marked the Jewish nation as set-apart by God from the other nations. These laws included, for example, circumcision and the dietary laws.

One thing we should note from Titus that connects back to our passage in 1 Timothy is that the false teachers are teaching the "commandments of those who reject the truth" (Titus 1.14). In 1 Timothy, St. Paul says they want to be known as "teachers of the law," yet, ironically, they don't have a clue as to what the law actually teaches. When we consider the false teacher's infatuation with the law, the fact that they are part of the "circumcision group," and that they are teaching man-made laws, a picture begins to develop regrind their mixing of Scripture and extra-biblical myth and doctrine. The false teachers are not simply requiring Christians to follow the Mosaic law, they are inventing their own laws and requiring Christians to follow them, as well. Thus they

were elevating their own law to the same authority as Holy Scripture.

In the next section we will see what some of those laws actually were, but for now let's continue to consider the law in general. Going back to 1 Timothy, we see St. Paul focus his attention on the Mosaic law and it's appropriate use in 1.8–11:

> *We know that the law is good, if one uses it legitimately. This means understanding that the law is laid down not for the innocent, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the godless and sinful, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their father and mother, for murderers, fornicators, sodomites, slave traders, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to the sound teaching that conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me.*

Contrary to the false teachers abuse of the law, which they attempt to use as a burden on the lives of Christians, St. Paul teaches that there is an appropriate use of the law that serves the gospel rather than undermining it. When put in it's proper context, the law is not burdensome for the Christian, but good. How? The law reveals God's will for how human beings should live. It paints a picture of what a flourishing life looks like. The "innocent" do not need the law because they—the ideal innocent—would already be living out the flourishing life. Yet, as David and St. Paul remind us, "There is no one who is righteous, not even one; there is no one who has understanding, there is no one who seeks God" (Romans 3.10–11; Psalm 14.1–3, 53.1–3).

How, then, is the law for our benefit? The law reveals our rebelliousness to us. It confronts us with our inability to live the flourishing life, to meet God's standard. It not only confronts us with our own sin, it reveals our inability to meet the demands of the law on our own at all. "[T]he law," says St. Chrysostom, "if thou use it aright, sends thee to Christ. For since its aim is to justify man, and it fails to that effect this, it remits us to Him who can do so."[13] The false teachers used the law to exclude others from being "true" Christians, driving a wedge between the family of God; the appropriate use of the law drives us to Christ.

The Dualistic Nature of the Heresy

1 Timothy 4.3-5; Titus 1.15.

Dualism, as we said in the introduction, involves a sharp distinction between the physical world and the spiritual world. Often, this distinction elevates the spiritual as good, and the

[13] Chrysostom, Homily II (*NPNF* 1/13).

material as evil. One of the inevitable ways dualism plays out is through strong ascetic practices. In the last section we saw how the false teachers were misusing the law—turning into a "gospel plus" category of false doctrine. In 1 Timothy 4.3-5, we see some of those man-made laws that the were being taught. Notice their extreme asceticism, which betrays the false teachers' negative view of the material world.

> [The false teachers] *forbid marriage and demand abstinence from foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected, provided it is sanctified by God's word and by prayer. (1 Timothy 4.3-5)*

The false teachers were forbidding marriage, and demanding abstinence from foods beyond normal fasting. The problem, other than the fact that Scripture no where forbids marriage nor demands extreme fasting, is that these commands deny the very goodness of creation and reject the good gifts that God has graciously given us. This is the argument St. Paul makes in verses 4 and 5, which we'll return to in just a minute.

Before we follow Paul's argument refuting these two particular laws, we should note that ascetic practices are not in-and-of themselves a bad thing. The Christian acts of devotion and piety which are prescribed in Scripture such prayer, Scripture reading and mediation, periodic fasting, and silence and solitude, are ascetic. They are acts of self-denial, requiring us to devote time that might be otherwise used for work, or in spending time with others, or giving up any other amount of innumerable demands placed on our lives by the busyness of our modern culture. As our culture tells us to consume more and more, to relish anything that meets our insatiable appetites for instant gratification, these practices are counter-cultural, revolutionary acts that say our time and attention are not primarily dedicated to the self, but to Christ.

Asceticism goes wrong, however, when forms of abstinence and self-denial are forced upon you as we see here in 1 Timothy 4.3-5. St. Paul doesn't even bother with rebuking the teaching on marriage. His theology of marriage is clearly stated elsewhere, as is the canonical teaching of Scripture. Regarding the issue of extreme fasting, Bill Mounce outlines two interwoven arguments that the Apostle makes in rebuking the prohibition against eating certain foods[14]:

Argument #1 focuses on how God gives good gifts. "God created [food] to be received…for

[14] Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 240-42.

everything created by God is good…for it is sanctified by God's word." All creation is good, as Genesis 1 teaches us; food is part of that creation and was created for human beings to eat and enjoy. All food is "ritually pure" because it was sanctified by God when he declared it to be good along with all of creation.

Argument # 2 focuses on how we properly receive those gifts. "God created [food] to be received *with thanksgiving* by those who believe and know the truth, for…nothing is to be rejected [if received with] thanksgiving…for it is sanctified by…prayer." Because all food is good, we are to receive it with thanksgiving; there is no need to reject any food. If we are in doubt about whether or not we can eat something, that food is "sanctified" through a prayer of blessing.

The first argument deals with food objectively—it has already been declared good and sanctified by God. That is an unchanging fact. The second argument, on the other hand, deals with food subjectively, i.e., deals with our consciences before God. If we are unsure whether or not we should eat certain foods, St. Paul says that our consciences can be put at ease by praying over the food and receiving it with thanksgiving.

This isn't saying that we render God's objective work of sanctifying food ineffectual if we eat it thanklessly, or if we neglect to bless the meal in prayer. Food is still objectively good and sanctified by God's word. However, our consciences, which may be bothered for various reasons regarding food, may be assuaged by our prayer and thanksgiving.

As this doctrine was being spread, many Ephesian and Cretan Christians would have been filled with doubt and anxiety, wondering anytime they ate if their next meal would condemn them. St. Paul teaches those believers that they need not doubt or be anxious, because of God's objective work. If they find themselves with doubts and anxieties anyways, they can be further assured of eating their food if they receive it with thanksgiving to God, and bless the meal as a means of sanctifying it before eating.

This teaching gets summarized succinctly in Titus 1.15:

> *To the pure, all things are pure, but to the corrupt and unbelieving nothing is pure; both their minds and their consciences are defiled.*

The Source of False Doctrine

1 Timothy 4.1-2

The false doctrine was influenced by Jewish mysticism and a strict dualism, but these were not the ultimate source of the teaching. What is its source? From whence did this heresy flow? William Cowper wrote that there is a "fountain fill'd with blood, / Drawn from Immanuel's veins;"[15] This fountain is the source of true, abundant life. There is, however, an alternative fountain, and all who reject the first find themselves drinking from the putred waters of the second:

> *Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will renounce the faith by paying attention to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, through the hypocrisy of liars whose consciences are seared with a hot iron. (1 Timothy 4.1-2)*

Here is revelation in it's truest sense. St. Paul "peels back the curtain," so to speak, on the contemporary situation in Ephesus to show us the drama going on behind the scenes. The doctrine espoused by the false teachers did not originate in their own minds and speculations. The source of the false teaching is Satanic. It is the doctrine of "deceiving spirits and the teaching of demons." The false teachers, culpable as they are for being "hypocritical liars," are merely the conduit of Satan and his forces.

This is the second time St. Paul mentions the consciences of the false teachers. In Titus 1.15, with which we ended the last section, he noted that their consciences were "corrupted;" here, they are "seared with a hot iron." How are the two related? What is a "seared conscience?" Here's what we typically mean when we say it: someone has a seared conscience when they've committed so many sins that they no longer feel conviction regarding them. This can happen, to a degree. However, this is simply the natural state of the conscience apart from the work of the Holy Spirit. This is not what St. Paul has in mind. Here the imagery is that their consciences have been burned by a hot iron.

This raises a question—who is held the iron to their conscience? Did the false teachers hold the iron themselves or did someone else? Notice how passive the false teachers are in this verse, their consciences are "being seared." The imagery is that of livestock being branded by their owners, being marked as property. While some translations capture the "branding" imagery, it is the New English Bible which captures the whole picture:

> *Some will desert the faith and give their minds to subversive doctrines inspired by*

[15] William Cowper, "There is a Fountain", *Collection of Psalms and Hymns*, Richard Conyers, ed., 1772.

> *devils, through the specious falsehoods of men whose own conscience is branded with the devil's sign. (NEB)*

There is a parallel passage which uses this same imagery—Revelation 13.11–18. In this passage we find the infamous "mark of the beast." This "branding" is placed on the foreheads and hands of those who follow Satan and his counterfeit prophet.

The false teachers are morally culpable for their teaching and behavior, and yet, their doctrine comes from demons and their consciences are owned by Satan.

The Character of the False Teachers

Titus 1.15b-16, 3.11; 1 Timothy 6.3b-4.

The false teachers are teaching the doctrine of demons. They are borrowing from Jewish myths and other spurious and speculative source, and rejecting the very things God has given us as gifts to enjoy. All doctrine—sound or unsound—bears fruit. The rotten fruit of this demonic doctrine can be seen in both the character and the behavior of the false teachers. We'll look at their character first. We'll start by going back to Titus 1.15–16:

> [The false teachers'] *very minds and consciences are corrupted. They profess to know God, but they deny him by their actions. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work. (Titus 1.15b-16)*

The Apostle minces no words when it comes to the false teachers. Their minds and consciences are corrupted, as we just talked about. They are detestable, disobedient, and unfit. Though they proclaim to know God, both their character and their behavior betray their denial of God. As we continue to study the Pastoral Epistles, you will find that this is a theme: the gospel produces Christ-like character and behaviors in God's people, but false doctrine produces the opposite in those who are led astray. This will be important as we look at the relationship between the gospel and good works in week 2, the qualifications for church leaders in week 5, and what it means to be the family of God in week 6.

Let's jump over to 1 Timothy 6, where we read:

> *Whoever teaches* [false doctrine] *and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that is in accordance with godliness is conceited, understanding nothing, and has a morbid craving for controversy and for disputes about words. (1 Timothy 6.3b-4)*

Again St. Paul says the false teachers "understand nothing." The irony here is that, despite

their lack of knowledge, the false teachers are conceited and arrogant. Perhaps, it's out of this arrogance as well as their insistence on speculative theology that they have "a morbid craving for controversy and for disputes about words." We live two-thousand years after the writing of this passage, and I can't think of a better description of social media. The human condition has not changed; there is "nothing new under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 1.9).

This introduces two more themes that we are going to encounter throughout the Pastoral Epistles. The first is the contentiousness of the false teachers and their "addiction" to causing division We'll see St. Paul's disgust towards contentiousness come out in the qualifications of Church Leaders in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1.5-9. The second theme is the difference between how we are to speak to and act towards false teachers and true believers. This theme is most evident in 1 Timothy 5.1-2. Both themes are related to one another.

Detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work, conceited in arrogance, and addicted to controversy and fruitless debate which only stirs division. Here is the character of the false teachers. Surely, such character has consequences that play out in their lives.

The Behavior of False Doctrine

Titus 1.11b; 1 Timothy 6.4b-5.

The rotten fruit of the false doctrine being taught has already begun to manifest in both Ephesus and Crete. As St. Paul acknowledges to Titus,

> [The false teachers] *are upsetting whole families… (Titus 1.11b)*

The NRSV's translation is a bit weak. The word which lies behind the NRSV's "upsetting" is better rendered as "ruining." Families were being ruined by what they taught. Likely, families were splitting up, possibly directly related to the teacher's demands that marriage be forbidden.

Church and family are two way streets. Family units are often said to be "little churches," and the Church is called the "family of God." Because they are so interconnected what happens on the "little church" level also happening on the "parish church" level, and vice versa. Satan, through the false teachers, is the ultimate home wrecker, driving divisions within the church and in families, between husbands and wives, parents and children.

We see the false teachers' inclination for division and the splintering of the church in 1 Timothy 6.4a:

They have a morbid craving for controversy and for disputes about words…

Division is not an incidental effect of heresy; it is the goal. This shouldn't surprise us, knowing that Satan is ultimately behind false doctrine. Dividing the family of God from God himself and one another has been Satan's playbook from the very beginning. From our introduction to Satan in Genesis 3, to his destruction at the return of Christ in Revelation 19.19 and following, the Devil's *modus operandi* has been to stop and wreck the fulfillment of Jesus' high-priestly prayer as found in John 17.

In this prayer, we find Jesus's expressing his desire that the Church "may all be one." As the Father is in the Son, and the Son is in the Father, "may [the Church] also be in [the Father and the Son]." Then, in a surprising addition, Jesus tells us that the unity of the Church has an explicitly missiological purpose: "*so that* the world may believe that you have sent me" (John 17.21).

Let's not read over this prayer thoughtlessly. There is, Jesus teaches us, in the mystery of God's sovereignty an attractional efficacy to the Church's witness in the proclamation of the gospel *through* the Church's witness of her unity. As Jesus teaches us through his prayer, the unity of the Church is predicated on the unity of the triune Godhead. When the Church is unified, she accurately displays the God's nature to the unbelieving world; when she is divided, she presents a distorted gospel.

St. Paul continues,

> *…controversy and disputes about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, and constant frictions among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth. (1 Timothy 6.4b-5a)*

Again, the translation is accurate, if not a bit softened. The language here is that the contentious character of the false teachers leads to controversy and division, these then "give birth to" envy, dissension, etc. Each "rotten fruit" listed is sinful and a concern in their own right, but here we must note how each one also contributes to division within the Church.

Division, arguing, and contentiousness births "constant frictions" (v5a), which St. Chrysostom points out, is probably an allusion to "infected abrasions."[16] A constant scraping over the same wound that won't allow it to heal. The picture of infection is appropriate; The character of the

[16] "[Paul] may mean intercommunication, and that as infected sheep by contact communicate disease to the sound, so do these bad men." Chrysostom, Homily XVII (*NPNF* 1/13).

false teachers is gangrenous, and it is spreading throughout the churches. It must be cut out and treated for the church to heal.

Healing The Infection

How do we go about trying to heal the infection and rot spreading through these false doctrines? The process begins in rebuke and ends either with healing (repentance and restoration) or amputation (church discipline). In this final section of today's class we'll look at both, but will spend much more time with restoration as that is ultimately Paul's goal through the rebuke he calls for.

Healing Through Restoration

1 Timothy 1.3, 5; Titus 1.13.

There are two main goals of rebuking the false teachers. The first goal is explicitly discussed in our text, the second is implied but discussed throughout the Pastorals. We'll take them in reverse order, as we're going to spend our time on the first. The implicit goal of rebuke is for the protection of the congregation, that they would not be led astray by the false teaching. This protection is strongest when it is paired with the regular preaching and teaching of sound doctrine. To put it another way, the notes of rebuke resound all the more against the constant refrain of sound teaching. To continue the healing metaphor, sound doctrine is preventative medicine for our souls.

The first goal, explicitly found throughout our passage, is that through the proclamation of the gospel and sound doctrine, the false teaches would repent, return to Christ, and be restored.

> *Rebuke [the false teachers] sharply, so that they may become sound in the faith. (Titus 1.13)*

St. Paul expands on this idea in 1 Timothy 1.3–5:

> *I urge you…to remain in Ephesus so you may instruct certain people not to teach any different doctrine…the aim of such instruction is love that comes from a pure heart, a good conscience, and sincere faith.*

The aim of such instruction (rebuke) is love. As St. Augustine has written,

> Whoever, then, thinks that he understands the Holy Scriptures, or any part of them, but puts such an interpretation upon them as does not tend to build up his twofold love of God and our neighbor, does not yet understand them as he

ought.[17]

All of Holy Scripture points us toward building the "twofold love of God and Neighbor." We shouldn't be surprised then, that the Apostle tells us that love is the aim, or goal, of rebuke. There are effective and ineffective ways to rebuke. A rebuke motivated by love—we'll have more to say about this throughout the class—rather than superiority or "being correct"—is best suited for such a work. Is the love produced by a pure heart, a good conscience, and sincere faith a description of the one giving the rebuke? Or, is it a description of what we hope the Holy Spirit produces in the one being rebuked? It's not an either/or. The aim of the one doing the rebuking is to love the person rebuked; the hope is that this same love is worked in the one rebuked by the Holy Spirit.

At the same time, the next verse (v6) states that the false teachers "have deviated from these and turned to meaningless talk." Deviated from what? From love, a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith. Thus, we'll focus today on the goal of these things being produced in the false teacher through the work of the Holy Spirit.

First Timothy 1.5 then lists three "sources" from which true love is produced in us:

1. A pure heart
2. A pure conscience
3. A sincere faith

Because we are sinful by nature we do not have the capacity within ourselves to produce a "pure" heart or conscience, nor a sincere faith. As a consequence, whatever love we have is often disordered.[18] True love for God and neighbor is something that is born from the work of the Holy Spirit in us.It is He, and He alone, who is able to awake true faith and love of God in us. It is the Holy Spirit who both enables and empowers us to hear our condemnation by the law and respond appropriate in repentance. This is not only the *initial* work of the Holy Spirit to bring us into the family of God, it is also the *continual* work of the spirit in keeping us in the family of God.

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[17] St. Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, Book I, Ch. 36, (*NPNF* 1/2*)*

[18] I don't want to give the wrong impression, because I've heard others teach that non-Christians cannot do any good, be good, truly love, and so on. This is based on a passage we've already quoted, "no one is good." This is a misapplication of the passage. The passage in Romans is quotes from various Psalms, which St. Paul places in parallel with the opening declaration "None is righteous, no not one" (Romans 3.10). When placed in parallel, the meaning becomes clear: "No one can do anything to merit 'righteousness;'," that is, no one can merit salvation by what they do.

Through this work, the Holy Spirit gives us a pure heart, a pure conscience, and a sincere faith, which then produces a true and ordered love.

A Pure Heart

The Holy Spirit purifies our hearts. When Holy Scripture speaks of our hearts, it does not refer—most of the time—to the physical organ. Rather, scripture refers to the heart as a figure of speech called *synecdoche*. Synecdoche is when a part refers to the whole. Here, the human heart refers to the whole "core inner being" of a person—our spiritual, emotional, and mental self along with all of our desires.

How does the Holy Spirit purify our hearts? By ministering to us with both a scalpel and a sledgehammer. With the latter, he shatters the parts of our hearts that have calcified and become like stone; with the former, he cuts with surgical precision the areas which have started to become calloused. As he does this purifying work, he enables us to return to Christ through the glorious repetition of confession, repentance, and absolution.

A Pure Conscience

The consciences of the false teachers were "corrupted" and "branded by Satan." Let's not forget, however, in our rebukes of others that our consciences are prone towards the same. As the Holy Spirit moves us towards repentance and receiving God's absolution, he purifies our consciences as well. "If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us" (John 1.9). In his forgiveness, "as far as the east is from the west, so far he removes our transgressions from us" (Psalm 103.12). This is the renewal brought about by the Holy Spirit, which is pictured when we receive the "washing of regeneration" (Titus 3.5).

How does the Holy Spirit purify our consciences? If the Holy Spirit cleanses and renews us through faith and repentance, if indeed he removes our sins from us as far as the east is from the west (Psalm 103.12), then what possible accusation could our consciences bring against us? Why should our conscience get the final say rather than the very King of the universe that took our sins and intercedes for us?

> *There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus…If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? Who will bring charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? It is*

> *Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raisde, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. (Romans 8.1, 31-34)*

If you are a Christian, repentant of your sin and forgiven by God, then there is no condemnation. Your conscience cannot condemn you. Satan cannot condemn you. The best he can do is make you believe that you are still condemned in your sin when God has forgiven you.

A Sincere Faith

The third "source" of love is a "true" or "sincere" faith. This stands in direct opposition to the "professed" faith of the false teachers. Later in the Pastoral Epistles, St. Paul reveals that these false teachers pursue "godliness" as a way to get rich (1 Timothy 6.5).

How does the Holy Spirit work in us to produce true and sincere faith?

> *Even when we were dead through our trespasses, [God] made us alive together with Christ… for by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God.(Ephesians 2.5, 8)*

He gives us true faith as a gift. When St. Paul says "and *this* is not your own doing," the word "this" points back to the whole phrase "by grace you have been saved through faith." Grace, by definition, is not your doing, but God's. Salvation, as the following verses explain, is not by your works, but God's. And, yes, even faith itself is part of that grace-gift. Our own faith is not of our own doing, because it is impossible to work up true faith in ourselves. It, too, is God's doing.

Rebuke and Restoration

Notice the dynamics between these three sources with respect to the false teachers. Motivated not by *faith* in God, but in the pursuit of wealth, their doctrine and behavior reveal the state of their *heart*. The source of their doctrine is demonic, and their *consciences* have been corrupted and branded by Satan. The false teachers are the inversion of the Spirit's work. The only antidote for these false teachers is the Holy Spirit working through the gospel to transform them. St. Paul's hope for these false teachers, even though they are actively trying to destroy the church, is that through rebuke they would hear the voice of the Good Shepherd, calling them to fidelity and the family of God.

What happens, though, if the false teachers do not repent?

Controlling Disease through Amputation

1 Timothy 1.19b–20.

We always hope for healing through repentance, bringing full restoration to the body, but this is not always how things go. How do we stop the spread of disease and infection in such situations? Amputation. Amputation is always the last resort, considered only when all other avenues of healing have been thoroughly pursued and nothing has stopped the death of a limb.

Church discipline is ecclesial amputation. It is the last resort, used only when all other avenues have been thoroughly searched out, when someone continues to persist in unrepentant despite multiples attempts of reconciliation. We see this in 1 Timothy 1.19b–20:

> *By rejecting conscience, certain persons have suffered through shipwreck in the faith; among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have turned over to Satan so that they may learn not to blaspheme.*

What in the world does St. Paul mean when he says he "turned them over to Satan?" The Apostle uses similar language in 1 Corinthians 5, when he refers to a case of a church member who committed an incestuous act.

> *Let him who has done this be removed from among you. For though absent in body, I am present in spirit; and as if present, I have already pronounced judgment on the one who did such a thing. When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus, you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord. (1 Corinthians 5.2b–6, ESV)*

To be "turned over" or "delivered to" Satan is to be removed from the church—amputated from the body of Christ. St. Paul continues,

> *I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people—not at all meaning the immoral of this world, or the greedy and robbers, or idolaters, since you would need to go out of the world. But now I am writing to you not to associated with anyone who bears the name of brother or sister who is sexually immoral or greedy, or is an idolator, reviler, drunkard or robber. Do not even eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging those outside? Is it not those inside who are inside that you are to judge? God will judge those outside. "Drive out the wicked person from among you." (1 Corinthians 5.9–13)*

Now, the goal is always restoration, and removal is always a last resort. But the thing about church discipline is that we are all facing it each Sunday at a minimum. It's built into our liturgy. If you pray the daily office, you face church discipline every day. Multiple times in fact. What do I mean? Church discipline is a process (cf. Matthew 16.15–20). When we hear the law proclaimed, when we are led by the liturgy to cry out "have mercy upon us," when we hear

Scripture read and proclaimed, when we pray a prayer of confession and hear our absolution in Christ proclaimed over us, these are the dynamics of church discipline. And the goal of the liturgy is not removal, but driving us all towards restoration, a renewal that we receive in the body and blood of the Lord in the Eucharist.

The Example of St. Paul

1 Timothy 1.12-14, 17.

Is there any more appropriate example of a false teacher converting under the power of the Holy Spirit than St. Paul? Certainly, St. Paul recognized something of himself in 1 Timothy 1.3–11, as he begins to reflect on his own testimony in verse 12:

> *I am grateful to Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because he judged me to be faithful and appointed me to his service, even though I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and a man of violence. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. (1 Timothy 1.12-14)*

"The grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus." What is true of St. Paul is true of us; what was made available to St. Paul and us is made available to the false teachers. It's available to those who preach a different gospel. It's available to those who support different political parties. It's available for that relative that we think is beyond hearing the voice of the Shepherd. It's available to those who seek to destroy the church. We all become part of God's family the same way: God pours out his love and mercy upon us through the Holy Spirit and overflows us with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

Isn't this exactly what we see portrayed through the sacrament of baptism? In our baptism we are overflowed, drowned in the cleansing waters of God's grace and raised to a new life:

> *You were buried with him in baptism, you were raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. (Colossians 2.12)*

No wonder, then, that in reflecting on this miraculous work of God, the Apostle is moved to doxology.

> *To the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. (1 Timothy 1.17)*

Amen.

Questions for Reflection

1. What's the difference between "incorrect" doctrine and "false" doctrine? Does the type of doctrinal dispute shape how we approach theological differences? If so, how? If not, why not?
2. What are some historical examples of false doctrine and heresy? What are some contemporary examples?
3. False gospels that add requirements to be a Christian often take the form of opposites. In other words there are "conservative" false gospels, and "liberal" false gospels. What are examples of each? For example: Someone could not support the Republican Party and be a Christian, or, someone could not support the Democrat Party and be a Christian.
4. What is the goal of church discipline?
5. Why are divisions, contentiousness, and arguments so destructive? When, as Christians, is it appropriate to separate from others? Were the English and Continental Reformations in error? Or the formation of the ACNA as a response to the Episcopal Church? Why or why not?

Week 3: Sound Doctrine – The Gospel, The Church, & Good Works

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Collect For the Mission of the Church

Almighty God, you sent your Son Jesus Christ to reconcile the world to yourself. We praise you and bless you for those whom you have sent in the power of the Spirit to preach the Gospel to all nations. We thank you that in all parts of the earth a community of love has been gathered together by their prayers and labors, and that in every place your servants call upon your Name; for the kingdom and the power and the glory are yours, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Scripture

1 Timothy 3.14-16; Titus 2.11-14, 3.3-8

In our last class we looked at the false teaching the was spreading like an gangrene through the congregations of Ephesus and Crete. I mentioned, briefly, that there is a two-prong attack against false doctrine:

1. Direct rebuke
2. Teaching sound doctrine.

We spent all last week discussing the call to rebuke; this week we are going to to start looking at teaching sound doctrine, starting with the chief doctrine: the gospel. The Pastoral Epistles teach that the gospel is the central truth of the Christian faith, and that all other true doctrines flow from it. Today, we're going to study the gospel through the lens of St. Paul's use of the words "mystery" and "epiphany," the relationship between the gospel and good works, and the

relationship between the gospel and the church. Next week we'll look at the relationship between the gospel and baptism.

The Gospel and the Mystery of Faith

1 Timothy 3.16; Titus 2.11-14, 3.3-8.

The Gospel, The Mystery of Godliness

1 Timothy 3.16.

We'll begin by looking at 1 Timothy 3.16:

> *Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness:*
> *He was manifested in the flesh,*
> *vindicated by the Spirit,*
> *seen by angels,*
> *proclaimed among the nations*
> *believed on in the world,*
> *taken up in glory. (1 Timothy 3.16, ESV)*

This text is a very early creed which lays out several events in the life and ministry of Christ—events when are included in our proclamation of the gospel. Scholars often point to 1 Timothy 3.14–16 as the centerpiece of the entire epistle. This placement is intentional. By placing this text at the center of the Epistle, St. Paul is highlighting the gospel as the centerpiece of all Christian doctrine and ethics. This will become more clear when we see 1 Timothy 3.16 in context, as the crescendo of verses 14–16.

St. Paul introduces the creed—the gospel events—as the "mystery of godliness." What in the world does this mean? To get a better understanding of the word "mystery," we need to look at how St. Paul uses the word in other passages.

Mystery and Epiphany in St. Paul's Letters

St. Paul frequently uses the word pair "mystery" (hiddenness) and "epiphany" (revealing/appearance/manifestation) throughout his epistles. Consider the following verses, and we'll start to draw out some of the common themes:

> **Romans 16.25–26**
> *Now to God who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages, but is now disclosed, and through the prophetic writings*

is made known to all the Gentiles, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith.

1 Corinthians 2.1,7; 4.1
When I came to you, brothers and sisters, I did not come proclaiming the mystery of God to you in lofty words of wisdom.
But we [the Apostles] speak God's wisdom, secret and hidden, which God decreed before the ages for our glory…
Think of us [Apostles] in this way, as servants of Christ and stewards of God's mysteries.

1 Corinthians 15:51
Listen, I will tell you a mystery! We will not all die, but we will all be changed

Colossians 1.25-27
…I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Colossians 2.2-3
I want their hearts to be encouraged and united in love, so that they may have all the riches of assured understanding and have the knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ himself, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Colossians 4.3
Pray for us as well that God will open to us a door for the word, that we may declare the mystery of Christ…

Ephesians 1.9
He has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ…

Ephesians 3.2-6
Surely you have already heard…how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I wrote above in a few words, a reading of which will enable you to perceive my understanding of the mystery of Christ. In former generations this mystery was not made known to humankind as it has now been revealed to his holy Apostles and Prophets by the Spirit: that is, the Gentiles have become fellow

heirs, members of the same body, and sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

Ephesians 5.31-32
"…a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." This is a great mystery, and I am applying it to Christ and the Church.

Ephesians 6.19
Pray for me, so that when I speak, a message may be given to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel.

When we place these passages in close proximity, patterns emerge that help us understand what St. Paul means when he refers to the "mystery" and its "epiphany;" that which was hidden, and how it was revealed. We can summarize these patterns this way: the mystery of our faith is the gospel events—their purpose, their proclamation, and they effects which the gospel produces —that God kept hidden from human beings until the appointed time that it was to be revealed in the person of Jesus Christ and proclaimed through the preaching of the Apostles. When we bring in a canonical understanding of the gospel in light of redemptive history, we can fill out the details of the mystery like so:[19]

1. The **kingdom of God** has come in **Jesus Christ**, through whom God will bring about the **restoration of all things**.
2. Central to this restoration is the **incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension** of Jesus the Messiah.
3. By his incarnation, life, death and resurrection God has made salvation **available to all**; both **Jew and Gentile** are now able to become heirs of Christ, and therefore **the Church** is constituted as **God's true family.**
4. By his ascension, Christ was **enthroned as the King of the cosmos**, ensuring the **victory of the gospel** over Satan, sin, and death, and ensuring the **restoration of the cosmos** as the play for his Church to live as they were meant to live from the very beginning.

Did you notice how the bulk of the scripture quotations above came from the letter to the

[19] Though I have my disagreements with The Rt. Rev'd N.T. Wright, mostly regarding the inferences he draws at times from his exegetical work (which itself is usually quite excellent), and his penchant for hyperbole regarding his "discoveries," his work on situation the gospel in a biblical and canonical framework is unparalleled. See N.T. Wright, *How God Became King*.

Ephesians? That's not simply coincidence. One of the major issues at Ephesus that was being addressed in that epistle was the relationship between Jewish and Gentile believers. If you notice in point 3, above, the inclusion of the Gentiles into Abraham's is part of the mystery.

The inclusion of the Gentiles into the family of God was always a part of the Abrahamic covenant—the purpose of Abraham's election and blessing was always that God would "bless the nations" through Abraham's family. What was a mystery was *how* the Gentiles would be brought in. Once the Mosaic covenant was introduced the assumption was that the Gentiles would be brought in through circumcision and have to follow the Torah—the full Mosaic law—as part of the national Israel. This was all flipped on its head when the mystery was finally revealed in the epiphany of Christ.

The Epiphany in 1 Timothy 3.16

Returning to 1 Timothy 3.16, let's see how the elements of the "mystery" are dealt with in the creed which St. Paul quotes. We'll start with the introduction to the creed itself.

Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness (1 Timothy 16a, ESV)

English translations all handle the text of 1 Timothy 3.16 in a few different ways. The NRSV has for the introductory clause, quoted above as is found in the ESV, as "the mystery of our religion." Here, the NRSV is picking up on the nuance of a word that means "a religion, with the sum of it's beliefs and ethics." This is, of course, a technically faithful rendering of the Greek—but we don't quite think of religion in such a holistic way. The ESV's rendering "godliness" is more clear, as that word does call to mind sound doctrine and behaviors. But, what is the "mystery *of* godliness" itself? The phrase is still somewhat opaque.

I find the NIV's translation to be a very clarifying, if not a bit wordy. It also brings out an important scriptural teaching regarding "good works" which we'll discuss in a bit. Here is how the NIV renders this text:

The mystery from which true godliness springs is great: (NIV)

This, then, is how we are to understand that little, opaque word "of." The mystery, which we've look at in detail already, is the *source* of true godly living.[20] We will see how the rest of 1

[20] If you're a bit puzzled by this, I don't blame you. However, I'm relegating the explanation to a footnote because it gets into a issues of Greek grammar.

Since you're reading this, I'm assuming you didn't get here by mistake and that you're the type who actually reads footnotes. This means you're probably also the type of person who wants to make sure arguments are made in

Timothy and Titus bear this out. The Apostle then cites the creed which contains the content of the mystery:

> *He was revealed in flesh*
> *vindicated in spirit,*
> *seen by angels,*
> *proclaimed among Gentiles,*
> *believed in throughout the world,*
> taken up in glory. (NRSV)

Just as with the first part of 1 Timothy 3.16, this latter part comes with it's own translation difficulties. The big question here involves structure. Should we render this creed as one stanza with six separate points (NASB, CSB)? Two stanzas of triplets (NRSV, ESV)? Or three stanzas of couplets (NIV, NLT)? Thankfully, an ultimate decision is not so important. How we group the phrases may change how something of them are understood broadly ("seen by angels," for example), [21] but the meaning of the creed is clear. In this creed we see the major themes of the Pauline mystery and epiphany: the incarnation, the resurrection, the ascension, the inclusion of the Gentiles, and the mode by which the mystery is revealed (proclamation). In other words, the gospel itself.

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good faith or otherwise just enjoy learning *minutiae*. You may even be the kind of person who would read footnotes regarding the grammar of ancient languages. To you, footnotes are a *duty* and a *delight*.

There's no judgment here. I'm one of you. Let's celebrate this fact by talking about genitives.

The phrase "mystery of godliness" (τῆς εὐσεβείας μυστήριον, *tēs eusebeias mystērion*) is a *genitival* phrase. Genitives are often translated, generically, as "x *of* y," which brings across the general relational understanding of x being a *kind* (*genus*) of y. There are, however, many different ways of further defining this relationship and some of them are quite ambiguous even in context. One famous debate which you might be familiar with is whether we should translate the phrase πίστου χριστοῦ as the "Christ's faithfulness" (the *subjective genitive*) or as "faith in Christ" (the *objective genitive*). Both are valid ways of translating the genitive, but context determines which we use. The NRSV and ESV render their translations with the general formula; The NRSV reads more like a subjective genitive: "our religion's mystery," while the ESV is probably more vague.

The NIV, however, takes a different (and I believe, correct) approach. It translates the phrase as a *genitive of source* or *origin*. The "mystery" is the source from which "godliness" comes. From the context of the Pauline epistles, we saw how St. Paul typically uses the language of "mystery" and "epiphany" to refer to the events of the gospel. Thus, an *objective genitive* is very strained—"the gospel's godliness;" the *subjective genitive*, (godliness' gospel) makes even less sense.

St. Paul's argument in 1 Timothy is that the false teachers are promoting a false sense of godliness—behaviors and ethics which do *not* conform to the gospel (cf. 1 Timothy 1.8-11). True godliness—or godly behaviors and "good works"—St. Paul argues, can only be produced *through* believing and trusting in the gospel; This is how the Holy Spirit is given to us and, as a result, begins his work of conforming us into the image of Christ. The NIV's translation captures this wonderfully: "The mystery from which true godliness springs." The life, death, and resurrection of Christ (the centerpiece of the mystery) cleanses us from our sin by faith, and then fuels the motivation given to us by the Holy Spirit to live lives in light of what Christ has done for us.

[21] See Table 1 for examples of each structure.

The Gospel and Good Works

The Apostle has shown the relationship between the gospel and what we often call "good works," or ethical behavior—good works flow from the gospel. But what does this mean? And why is there so much emphasis on *behavior* if St. Paul is writing regarding *doctrine*?

Before we answer these questions outright, let's gain some more context from 1 Timothy 3.14-16, which, as we've mentioned is the centerpiece of the epistle. The Apostle writes,

> *I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these instructions to you, so that if I am delayed, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God… (1 Timothy 3.14-15a)*

Now, we've stated in previous weeks that the major reason these epistles were written was to confront the false teachers and their doctrine. The "medicine" that gets prescribed to fight the "infectious abrasions" (cf 1 Timothy 6.5, week 2's discussion) is the sound doctrine of the gospel. How, then do we make sense of St. Paul's stated reason for writing in verse 14? Namely, "that… you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God?" Well, we know from the work we've just done on 1 Timothy 3.16 that there is a relationship between the gospel and behavior. Jesus Christ, the embodiment of God's mystery, is the *source* of godliness. This relationship is so strong that the Pastoral Epistles can speak of "sound doctrine" on one hand, and then refer to ethical behavior on the other.

Part of what made the false doctrines being peddled at Ephesus and Crete is that they reversed this relationship. In last week's discussion, I categorized their false asceticism as a "gospel plus" kind of heresy. They taught that one cannot be a "true Christian" unless they followed the right rules—rules which they happened to make-up based on their patchwork syncretism of scriptural and extra-scriptural sources.

By way of correcting these false doctrines, the Apostle writes the Pastorals with the aim to explain what is proper behavior for God's people. How he frames proper behavior, however, is extremely important. In the next few sections we are going to look at how St. Paul articulates the gospel, and its relationship to good works, according to Titus 2 and 3.

The Gospel and Good Works in Titus 2

Titus 2.11-14.

Titus 2 begins with the Apostle teaching about how people should "behave" in the church. St.

Paul begins with older men and women before speaking to younger women, younger me, and even slaves. He even tells Titus, who would be categorized as a "young man," that as a leader in the Cretan church he is to be "a model of good works" (Titus 2.7). We'll be exploring these verses more in depth during week 6 under the heading of "Sound Relationships," but for now all that is important to know is that the Apostle is teaching regarding proper behavior—good works.

He then writes:

> *For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions, and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly, while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. He it is who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deed. (Titus 2.11-14)*

Yes, this passage is a mouthful, and our English translations break apart what was originally a single sentence. Welcome to studying Paul. We're going to need to parse this sentence out in order to follow the main idea, or else we can get lost in the details.

What's the "For" For?

Before we start looking for subjects and verbs, however, we need to recognize something about the very first word we read: the word "for." I think there's a rule that if you're going to teach the Bible in English speaking churches, you are required to make observations such as "when you see the word 'therefore,' you ought to ask 'what is the therefore there for?" This passage works as a corollary. It begins with the word "for" so we need to ask ourselves "what is the 'for' for?"

This one small word carries a lot of weight. The word "for" lets us know that what follows is the *cause* or *reason* for what has just been said. In the context of Titus 2, verses 11–14, which is the gospel, gives the reason why the Apostles teaches what he does in verses 1–10, namely, ethical behavior that is "consistent with sound doctrine." It is absolutely crucial that we get this relationship right.

Subjects, Verbs, and Subclauses – Oh My!

In order to interpret the the passage we need to pick out the main idea—the subject and its verb—and then determine how any subclauses serve to help us understand that main idea. What's the main idea of verses 11-14? "The grace (of God) appeared." Notice the use of

"epiphanic" language: God's grace appears, ergo, it was formerly hidden in some way.

Let's start to break down the passage according to this main idea. First, the appearance of God's grace accomplishes two things: it "brings salvation to all," and it "trains us to renounce impiety…and live lives…that are godly." Second, we note that this work of God's grace happens "in the present age…while we wait for the blessed hope and [appearance] of the glory of Jesus Christ." Third, God's grace is able to do this because this same Jesus "gave himself for us." He did so in order to, 1) "redeem us from all iniquity," and 2) "purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good works."

Did you notice the parallelism St. Paul uses here? Look closely: The appearance of the grace is parallel to Jesus' selfless sacrifice on our behalf. Both of these things accomplish two parallel things. First, the appearance of God's grace brings salvation to all and Jesus' sacrifice redeems us from all iniquity. Second, the appearance of God's grace trains us to live godly lives, and Jesus' sacrifice purifies the Church, producing people zealous for good works.

The Gospel and Salvation for All

What does the Apostle mean when he says that "God's grace has appeared, bringing salvation to all?" Is this teaching a form of universalism, where all people regardless of belief are ultimately saved through Christ's work? If so, that means that St. Paul's main reason for writing the Pastoral Epistles is simply about curbing the amount of damage such false doctrines would wreak upon the church. Wouldn't that make sense of how much the Apostle writes regarding our behavior?

Here's the problem with that interpretation. I could make a compelling argument for universalism, and it would be compelling because I'm mixing in truth with what is ultimately very speculative theology. In other words, I could do what the false teachers were themselves doing. If universalism were true, then St. Paul would attempt to curb the damage false doctrine such as "forbidding others to marry" would do, but both his tone and his prescribed punishments do not make sense in that context. St. Paul often uses the eternal state of believers as reasoning and motivation for how we should live in the present. If St. Paul believed that all would be saved in the end—which, his other letters make very apparent that he doesn't—he would be arguing from the position of a universalist rather than just letting a little universalism slip into what is

essentially an off-the-cuff comment. In other words, universalism would be all throughout the epistles.

So how, then, do we understand what St. Paul means when he says God's grace brings salvation to all? Remember, he is using the language of epiphany here, which presupposes the mystery. What is the content of that mystery which is now revealed in the person and work of Jesus? That, despite the prevailing beliefs of Judaism at the time, the coming of the Messiah ushers in the "new age" in which God brings Gentiles into the family of God. This passage is the Apostle's commentary on the mystery, where "all" stands in contrast to the false doctrines of the circumcision sect which still maintained that if a Gentile was to become part of God's people, they had to first go through the "conversion" ceremonies of Judaism. To put it another way, for Gentiles to become Christians they must first become Jews, because only faithful Jews were part of God's people.

To this St. Paul says a resounding "No!" Because of the incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of Christ (the appearance of God's grace) salvation *is made available* to all people, Jew and Gentile alike, and that both Jew and Gentile become members of the kingdom of God through a single entry point: Jesus the Messiah. This is the argument of St. Paul's letter to the Ephesians, the letter which speaks to the "mystery" most, summarized.

What is this salvation which is now made available to all? That, in Christ's work of "giving himself for us" he "redeems us from all iniquity." Salvation is available for all, but applied to people through faith alone by God's grace alone.

The Gospel and the Catechesis of Grace

The second accomplishment of the revelation of God's grace in the person and work of Jesus is that God's grace catechizes us towards godliness. This is the point we've been making regarding the relationship between the gospel and good works. First, the gospel; then, good works which flow from the gospel.

God's grace catechizes us in both a positive and negative sense. The positive aspect is that God's grace "trains us to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly." The negative aspect is that God's grace "trains us to renounce impiety and worldly passions." Throughout the Pastorals, we will see that it is not enough to simply avoid or reject what is bad, but we must also

actively pursue that which is good. Another metaphor that the Apostle uses for this is to "put off the old self…and clothe yourselves with the new" (Ephesians 4.22-24, cf. Colossians 3.9-10; Romans 13.11-14), which is to say, "clothe yourselves with Christ." This happens sacramentally in our baptisms (Galatians 3.27), when we are grafted into the Church:

> *In him also you were circumcised with a spiritual circumcision, by putting off the body of the flesh in the circumcision of Christ; when you were buried with him in baptism, you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. (Colossians 2.11-12)*

Though this is what happens in our baptism, the Apostle is clear—just as was Martin Luther when he declared the whole Christian life be one of repentance—that

> *As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to live your lives in him (Colossians 1.6)*

The English word "train" appears a few times in the Pastoral Epistles. In our present passage, it carries the sense of "training up a child," hence my use of the word "catechize." Here's the point that we cannot miss: who or what is it that catechizes our lives? Who or what *trains* us in godliness? It's not us. The Christian life is not that we get saved and then spend the rest of our lives pulling ourselves up by our bootstraps in order to keep God's love. Remember the subject and verb of this passage—the main idea! "God's grace appeared…training us…"

The Christian life is all God's grace. From our conversion, to the fruit which our conversion manifests, to that moment we either slip into the presence of God through death or he returns—the whole of the Christian life is God's grace. Titus 2 emphasizes this for us, because St. Paul has plainly given us the bounds of time in which we are catechized: "in the present age…while we wait for the blessed hope and manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ."

The Gospel and Good Works in Titus 3

Titus 3.3-8

The Apostle teaches similarly in Titus 3.3-8:

> *For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, despicable, hating one another. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because or any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy, through the water of rebirth and renewal of the*

> *Holy Spirit. This Spirit he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.*

Next week will be devoted to this passage, so we can consider it in brief this week. Again, our passage starts with the word "for;" here, the passage is giving St. Paul's reasoning for why the church should

> *…be obedient, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show courtesy to everyone. (Titus 3.1b-2)*

What is that reason? Because we too were once like them. We too

> *were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, despicable, hating one another.*

So what is the difference between "us" and "them?" God's grace saved us. And to make sure St. Paul drives this point home—that the only difference is God's grace—he says,

> *when the goodness and loving kindness of God appeared, he saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done but according to his mercy…I desire that you insist on these things so that those who have come to believe in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works; these things are excellent and profitable to everyone. (Titus 3.4-5a)*

The order is important. The only difference between us and those who were false teachers, but more broadly the unbelieving world, is that we have been saved by the grace of God. We are saved by God's mercy and grace, and God's mercy and grace alone. There is nothing we can do to save ourselves—no "works of righteousness" that earn our salvation. Then, and only after God's grace has done it's initial work, does God's grace and mercy continue to work in us so that we devote ourselves to do good works. Notice, however, that "devoting ourselves to good works" is not something that we work up in ourselves. That devotion is still God's grace and mercy working in us through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

The Gospel and the Church

1 Timothy 3.14-15

Through the proclamation of the gospel, God is redeeming sinners and in so doing he is building up his Church (Matthew 16.18). Who is it, then, that proclaims this gospel? The Church that Christ is building. God, out of his mercy and grace calls people to himself, redeems them from their iniquity, brings them into the church, and then sends them back out as ministers of the

very same gospel which saved them. Therefore, it is the church which is the steward of sound doctrine, and of that the gospel chiefly. We see these dynamics back in 1 Timothy 3.14, 15.

> *I hope to see you soon, but I am writing these instructions to you so that, if I am delayed, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth.*

As we've seen, St. Paul then goes on to define the "truth" as the mystery from which true godliness springs, the gospel. The present passage has three descriptions of the church: the household of God, the church of the living God, and the pillar and bulwark of the truth.

The Household of God

When St. Paul calls the church the "household of God," he not only gives us the key to understanding the rest of the Pastoral Epistles but also what I think is one of the most fundamentally important ways of understanding the Church in the whole of Scripture. In fact, I would go so far as to say that if liken the Church to a family by way of metaphor, then we've significantly erred[22]. The Church is not *like* a family, it *is* a family.

This idea didn't begin with St. Paul, it has always been so. Adam and Eve, the first human beings, were created "in the image and likeness" of God (Genesis 1.26). The language is that of the"begetting," and that is not an accident. St. Luke picks up on this when he ends his genealogy of Jesus with "Adam, the son of God" (Luke 3.38). This familial imagery continues as God declares,

> *"Say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the Lord: Israel is my firstborn son. I said to you, "Let my son go that he may worship me." But you refused to let him Go.'" (Exodus 4.22-23)*

And, later:

> *Out of Egypt I called my son. (Hosea 11.1)*

Thus the sonship of Adam and Israel comes to a head on the day that Jesus was baptized. St. Mark records that

> *As [Jesus] was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased." (Mark 1.10-11).*

[22] I don't mean we've erred in the same way that the false teachers had. The error here is incorrect doctrine, rather than the technical term "false doctrine," cf Week 2 and the distinction I've made there.

Later on in his ministry, Jesus is teaching in or near his home town. His mother Mary arrives with some of his brothers, and when this is announced to Jesus, he responds,

> *"Who are my mother and my brothers?" And looking around at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother." (Mark 3.32-34).*

This is why the language of "brothers and sisters," used by Christians with Christians, is not mere formality. God's family is neither biological nor metaphorical. The language used by Holy Scripture is that of adoption—and anyone who tells you that an adopted son is not a true son, or an adopted daughter is not a true daughter, is wrong. We may have the language of "adoptive parents" and "step-parents," but those are merely legal terms. A family is a family.

St. Paul isn't taking the time to write the Pastoral Epistles, focusing on "how one ought to behave in the household of God" on the strength of metaphor alone. No, he does so because the church *is* a family, *is* the household of God. That is why he begins both epistles by saying

> *…to Timothy, my true son in the faith… (1 Timothy 1.2)*
> *…to Titus, my loyal child in the faith we share… (Titus 1.2)*

If you are a Christian, you are not metaphorically God's son or daughter. You are truly God's son or God's daughter. Rest in knowing that your Heavenly Father loves you.

The Church of the Living God

The church is not only the household of God, it is properly the church of the living God. Now, the emphasis here is not so much on "church" as it is on the phrase "living God." Such a description of the church has a two-fold purpose: to comfort the faithful and terrorize those who seek to damage God's family.

The phrase "living God" reminds us that God is alive and present in the church even now. The transcendent God is also the immanent God. He is not some relic of the past, like the lifeless stone statues which adorned the temple to Diana in Ephesus or the other pantheon gods of the Greco-Roman world. God is daily, minute-by-minute actively at work in the church, in our lives, and in the world.

To those who are faithful, this is a truth of great comfort. Whatever problems plague the world and culture around us, whatever problems plague our denominations and provinces, whatever problems plague our parishes, the living God is at work. If we can grasp the truth that

the church is the household of God, that we are truly God's sons and daughters, whom he cares for, and protects (see Matthew 6), then we see that this same living God is actively working for our good, even when we do not have the "eyes to see or ears to hear" how this might be so.

To the false teachers and those who seek to be cosmic "home-wreckers," however,

It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Hebrews 10.31)

Such a phrase should terrify those who set themselves up against God. How much more should it terrify those who do so from within God's household? But this is part of the problem, isn't it? Having unconverted hearts and branded consciences such people cannot feel the weight of any such warning apart from the Holy Spirit's work of conversion and purifying the conscience. This is why, as we saw in week 2, St. Paul's response to false teaching is a rebuke which aims for conversion.

The Pillar and Bulwark of the Truth

As the household of the living God, the church is called to be the "pillar and bulwark of the truth." God's common grace means that human beings can find truth outside of Scripture. We can even discover, through what the Church Fathers often called "the book of nature," truths such as 2 plus 2 equals 4 , and even believe things like every human being has inherit dignity and worth. Without God's revelation of himself through Holy Scripture, however, holding these truths are like coming across a few disparate pieces of a large, complex puzzle without any frame pieces or cover to guide us. Because of this, human beings attempt to construct their own frame and draw their own puzzle pieces in order to complete the picture.

We can't press this illustration to far. Someone will inevitably say that however remote a possibility it may be, there is the possibility that someone somehow guesses all the framing and the pieces accurately. The Scriptural answer to this is that even if someone were to do that, they would look at the completed puzzle with disgust, tear it apart and attempt to remake it in their own image. Scripture is clear that no one is saved apart from Christ and the direct intervention of the Holy Spirit.

So, then, of what truth is the Church to be a pillar and bulwark? Our Anglican and Protestant forebears have indirectly answered this question in their articulation of the doctrine of the "sufficiency of Scripture." Article VI of the Thirty Nine Articles of Religion states:

> Holy Scripture contains all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the Faith, or be through requisite or necessary to salvation.

The "sufficiency of Scripture" was formulated against the abuses of medieval Roman Catholicism. For example, Roman Catholicism errs as it holds the perpetual virginity of Mary, her bodily assumption at death, and the infallibility of the Pope when speaking *ex Cathedra* all as doctrines which are necessary to believe for salvation. Such dogmas add to what Scripture requires.

Herein is the truth of which the church is called to be a defender and steward: the spiritual condition of human beings, the inability to save ourselves, the holiness of God and exclusivity of Christ, the mystery as we've so far discussed, and the necessity of mercy and grace for salvation. In short, the gospel and matters pertaining to salvation. Thus we come back to our feedback loop: Christ builds the Church through the proclamation of the gospel—as people hear the voice of the Shepherd and respond with repentance and baptism; that very same church is entrusted with stewarding and protecting the gospel message; part of this ministry is being sent back out into the unbelieving world to proclaim that same gospel and Christ continues to build his Church.

Therefore, the Church is the pillar of truth, because she both "holds up" and "holds forth" the gospel message to the world through her proclamation of it in Word and Sacrament. The Church also defends and protects the gospel by maintaining fidelity to the gospel message as revealed in Holy Scripture, rebuking any false doctrine which attempts to add to or take away from it.

Questions for Reflection

1. St. Pauls refers to the "mystery" far more than any other New Testament author. Why do you think this is so? Consider, as you answer, why was the "mystery" language so prevalent in the epistle to the Ephesians?
2. What is the relationship between our salvation and good works? Should Christians be concerned about doing good works? Why or why not?

3. Consider Romans 8.1, John 16.8, and 2 Corinthians 1.10. What is the difference between condemnation and conviction? Are Christians condemned when they fail to live as God calls us to in Holy Scripture? What is the Christian response to conviction?
4. Why is the reformational doctrine of the sufficiency of scripture so important? Why is this doctrine still important or relevant today?
5. St. James wrote "You see that a man is justified by works and not faith alone…faith without works is dead" (James 2.24-26). Does Scripture contradict itself? How do we explain this apparent contradiction?

Week 4: Sound Doctrine – The Gospel & Holy Baptism

Collect For Inner Renewal through the Word

Gracious God and most merciful Father, you have granted us the rich and precious jewel of your holy Word. Assist us with your Spirit, that the same Word may be written in our hearts to our everlasting comfort, to reform us, to renew us according to your own image, to build us up and edify us into the perfect dwelling place of your Christ, sanctifying and increasing in us all heavenly virtues; grant this, O Heavenly Father, for Jesus Christ's sake. ***Amen.***

Scripture

Titus 3.5-6.

In week 3 we sought to understand the relationship between the gospel and good works, and the gospel and the church. In summary, we are saved by God's grace and mercy alone through the proclamation of the gospel. There is nothing we can do to earn our salvation. Rather, doing what is often referred to as "good works" is an outflowing of our salvation, and they, too, are products of the Holy Spirit working in us. It is through the proclamation of the gospel that Christ builds his Church, and he entrusts that same church with the ministry of proclaiming the gospel to the world. Thus, to the church is given the call to both steward the gospel message and protect it from false doctrine.

This week, we will be looking at the relationship between the gospel and the sacrament of Holy Baptism. Those who are observant may have noticed that I completely skirted the issue of

dealing with Titus 3.5 and the phrase "he saved us…through the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit." I absolutely did. That's because I think that as an Anglican Church in a city that is predominantly Roman Catholic while also hosting the largest Baptist seminary in the world it would be more prudent to dedicate a full class to deal with this passage.

Beyond the context of the city that we live in, many of you are, like myself, former Baptists who have become Anglican. Though we became convinced of Anglican theology and practice, we bring our own former traditions baggage with us. Others of us, I'm sure, have come to Anglicanism from Roman Catholicism with its own type of baggage. Cradle Episcopalians? You guessed it, baggage. I'm sure there any other number of traditions represented here today. If I haven't hit on yours yet, and you feel left out, don't worry. Plenty of baggage is represented here.

So, today we are asking the following questions: What is the relationship between salvation and baptism? More pointedly, as Anglicans, what do our formularies and baptismal liturgy[23] mean when they link baptism to regeneration, often explicitly citing Titus 3.5? For example, our liturgy for Holy Baptism says in the prayer of Thanksgiving Over the Water, "Through it [the waters of baptism] we are made regenerate by the Holy Spirit."

Stating the Problem

Titus 3.5c–6;

> *He [Christ] saved us…through the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit., whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior… (ESV)*

Stating The Problem

So, the passage says we are saved "through the washing [or water] of regeneration," our baptismal liturgy agrees, specifying that through the waters of baptism "we are made regenerate," and our other formularies give similar affirm. What, then, is the problem? Well, let's start out by explicitly stating that the problem is not with Holy Scripture itself, but in our

[23] "In Holy Baptism…the inward and spiritual grace is death to sin and new birth to righteousness, through union with Christ in his death and Resurrection."
"Concerning Holy Baptism," *Book of Common Prayer (2019)*, 160.

"We thank you, Father, for the water of Baptism. In it we are buried with Christ in his death. By it we share in his resurrection. Through it we are made regenerate by the Holy Spirit…"
"Holy Baptism," Book of Common Prayer (2019), 168.

interpretation of the text.

Various Christian traditions approach this passage very differently. The key questions we need to answer are these:

1. Does Titus 3.5 refer to the sacrament of baptism? What is the "washing" or "water" referred to in the text?
2. If it refers to baptism, what does it mean that we are saved through baptism? How is baptism regenerative? And what is the relationship between salvation and regeneration?

To help us answer these questions, we need to know a few definitions. First, we need to be familiar with the words "sacrament" and "ordinance;" Second, and this is the issue that is skipped over most in this debate, we need to know what scripture means when it says "regeneration" or "new birth."

To understand the contours of this debate, we need to explore the Baptist position, which is also representative of most churches that teach only adults should be baptized, the Roman Catholic position, and the Anglican position. Now, I saw "Anglican position," singular, but there are in fact several Anglican positions which will be discussed.

What is a Sacrament?

Article XXV from the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion says,

> Sacraments ordained of Christ be not only badges or tokens of Christian men's profession, but rather they be certain sure witnesses, and effectual signs of grace, and God's good will towards us, by which he doth work invisibly in us, and doth not only quicken, but also strengthen and confirm our Faith in him.
> There are two Sacraments ordained of Christ our Lord in the Gospel, that is to say, Baptism, and the Supper of our Lord.

Article XXV continues, speaking about five other sacramental rites which are often called Sacraments but are not pertinent for our class today. So, Holy Baptism and the Holy Eucharist, often called the "dominical sacraments" to specify them from the other rites. The Baptist tradition, on the other hand, call these rites "ordinances," because they see them primarily in terms of being "badges or tokens of Christian profession." They reject the idea that God does in work through these rites, which will greatly effect their view of Titus 3.5. Anglicans and Roman

Catholics, however, largely both agree with the Articles definition. There are some differences which will be discussed later.

The key point to understand about sacraments is that they are an *effectual* "sign" of God's grace. So, the "sign"—the physical, tangible part of the rite—actually brings about the grace that it signifies. It is effectual. To say it another way, God works "invisibly" (i.e. spiritually) through the visible signs, meaning that he both "quickens" and "strengthens and confirms" our faith. To "quicken" our faith means to make our faith alive, active, or aroused; to "strengthen" or "confirm" our faith means that God increases and deepens our faith.

What is Regeneration?

What does it mean to be made regenerate? Here is where the confusion between views is most apparent. There are two ways in which people use the term "regeneration." The first, and most common way today, is to refer to the work of the Holy Spirit in conversion. The Rev. Canon J.I. Packer explains it as "the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart, imparting a capacity for response to God that was not there before…thus…an intrinsic change in the human subject." Throughout, I'll refer to this view, held by most Protestants, as the "conversion" view of regeneration.

By way of contrast, there is another view, which I'll refer to as the "covenantal" view of regeneration. This view sees regeneration, as Packer explains again, as "Symbolizing and illustrating a relational change; not a first imparting of life in any sense." According this view, regeneration and conversion may happen simultaneously, or they may happen at different points in time.

This term is largely synonymous, in both definitions, with the idea of the "new birth" or "re-birth." Thus, if someone defines regeneration as conversion, then they see the "new birth" as the moment of conversion as well. If someone defines regeneration in a more general sense of a change in state or relationship, then they define "new birth" as such also.

Considering Other Views

Having stated the issue and mentioned some definitions in brief, let's look at the various views. We'll start out with the Baptist—or "non-sacramental" view, then, we'll consider the

Roman Catholic view, and finally the Anglican view(s).

The Baptist or Non-Sacramental View

Overview and Arguments Made for this View

The Baptist, or Non-Sacramental view utterly rejects the idea that Titus 3.5 is referencing the "ordinance" of baptism in any way. They would hold that there is no intrinsic relationship between regeneration and baptism. They reject the idea that God works through baptism, meaning that they see baptism as a "symbol" of God's grace, but not a "sign" of God's grace.

What's the difference between the two? A symbol is just that—it is merely a representation or picture of something. A sign, on the other hand, has an intrinsic connection to the thing it signifies. God works the grace—either quickening or strengthening—that is being signified. For the Baptist, baptism is a symbol of someone's conversion.

So what is the purpose of baptism in Baptist or Non-Sacramental theology? It plays two parts. First, it is the Christians first step of obedience in the Christian life. Scripture commands believers to be baptized, ergo, believers should follow suit in obedience. Thus, the main purpose of baptism is that it becomes a believers' "public statement of faith," and a requirement for church membership.

Therefore, since the "washing of regeneration" is a vehicle by which God applies salvation to the sinner, the Non-Sacramental view rejects the idea that Titus 3.5 can be related to baptism *a priori*. Because Holy Baptism is seen as a believers "first act of obedience," this tradition would say that, if Titus 3.5 was referring to baptism then it would contradict itself. The text says "he saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done…" As an act of obedience, baptism would fall under "works of righteousness."

This view often critiques the idea that the use of the "washing/water" language as a referent to baptism as an over riding of sacramental theology into Holy Scripture. They accuse a sacramental reading of scripture of finding the sacraments under every nook and cranny. If St. Paul intended us to understand this text as referring to baptism, why not make it explicit and just say "baptism of regeneration?" or something similar?

The Anglican Response to This View

In response, I am not going to argue for or against the idea that the text refers to baptism just yet. Rather, I'm going to respond to the non-sacramental theology itself which makes their interpretation of the text *a priori*. Their interpretation of the passage may be correct, even if their foundation is shaky.

The idea that God does not work through the Sacraments, frankly, has no scriptural footing. To take just the New Testament in particular, this view has to say that every teaching regarding God's work through the sacraments is *merely* metaphor and symbol. So, for example, when St. Paul says

> *In [Christ] also you were circumcised with a spiritual circumcision, by putting off the body of flesh in the circumcision of Christ, when you were buried with in baptism, you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. (Colossians 2.11-12)*

he is saying that all by way of metaphor. You are not *actually* buried with Christ in your baptism. To which someone may say "but of course that's metaphor, you are not *literally* buried and raised in baptism." The point is taken, but my point is not that metaphor isn't employed, but that such teaching is not *merely* metaphorical. The metaphor of burial points to an actual thing that God does through baptism, which is identify us with Jesus' death and resurrection such that we *participate* in both through baptism.

The language of participation is important when it comes to the sacraments. The sacramental aspect of the eucharist, for example, is explained in precisely these terms:

> *The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. (1 Corinthians 10.16-17)*

Whatever else we might believe about the eucharist, St. Paul is clear that Jesus himself is truly and really present when we commune. More than that, there is some work that God does in our communion that joins us to the benefits of the shed blood and broken body of Christ. God works through the Eucharist. Otherwise, the use of "participation" language is nonsense.

That Holy Baptism and the Holy Eucharist are sacramental brings us to our second response to the Non-Sacramental view, namely, that by their nature as sacraments neither baptism nor the

eucharist should generally be considered "works of righteousness." This doesn't mean that they can't become works of righteousness for some, but that they are not works of righteousness in and of themselves. We'll take these points in reverse order.

First, the sacraments are not works of righteousness in and of themselves. The phrase "works of righteousness" is interesting. Often we understand the word to mean "any action we take"—but this is hardly feasible. For example, salvation is predicated on repentance, which necessarily entails doing *something*, yet no one calls repentance a "work of righteousness." Of course not—repentance is a gift from God even though it is manifested in our actions. Confession, for example. Faith is similar. We are saved by faith alone and that saving faith is a gift. Yet, it's not just any faith that saves but a faith which has the appropriate object: Christ crucified risen.

Similarly, the sacraments are not works that we do, even though we participate in the sacraments by actions we take. Sacraments are sacraments because it is God who works through them in us. They are not, in any way, our work which demands God to respond.

Second, can the sacraments become works of righteousness? Yes. In fact, sinful human beings are professionals at creating works of righteousness out of things that are right, proper, and good. If, for instance, you believe that God requires you to participate in the eucharist and that he will somehow punish you if you miss that participation for some reason, then you have made the eucharist a work of righteousness. If you think that God *must* save you *because* you have been baptized, then you have made baptism a work of righteousness. These are not problems with the sacraments themselves, but rather our sinful misappropriation of them. Do we then put fences around the sacrament for fear of their abuse? To quote St. Paul, "may it never be!"

Our third and final response is to the idea that a sacramental reading of scripture is inserting meaning into the text that the authors did not intend. To this we should respond that it's certainly not ok to import a meaning into the text that cannot be arrived at from the passage in context. At the same time, we cannot arbitrarily limit the interpretation of a text either. The authors of the New Testament were sacramental. They were sacramental thinkers who had a "sacramental imagination," and were part of the sacramental community of the church. This effects the way the Apostles and their partners wrote and framed their thoughts. One example of this is St. Paul seeing the sacramental types embedded within Israel's story.

I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all

> *under the cloud and passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ. (1 Corinthians 10.1-4)*

What in the world is St. Paul talking about? Here, the Apostle teaches that in the Exodus, which prefigures our salvation in Christ, the Israelites themselves participated in the sacrements as they were themselves prefigured in types. Baptism was prefigured by God's covering them by the pillar of cloud and fire, and the Israelites' passing through the Red Sea. The Eucharist was prefigured by God's giving of manna—bread from heaven—and water from the rock, i.e. spiritual food which nourished the people of God. And this is to say nothing of the Passover meal itself!

Whether by gospel or epistles, the New Testament authors were writing in full knowledge of the sacramental nature of the church. Would they need to mention "baptism" and "communion" explicitly for everyone to know what was being referenced? Of course not. More will be said on this later, however.

The Roman Catholic View

Overview and Arguments Made for this View

The Roman Catholic interpretation of this text is about as far from the Baptist or Non-Sacramental view as one can get. Not only do Roman Catholics believe Holy Baptism to be a sacrament, their stated interpretation of this passage is that the "washing of regeneration" is baptism. They hold this view so strongly that they teach that "God has bound salvation to the Sacrament of Baptism, but He Himself is not bound by His sacraments.[24]"

This language is very important if we want to represent the Roman Catholic position with charity. "God has bound salvation to the Sacrament of Baptism," means that God works through the sacrament of baptism to save the recipient. Such is the literal understanding of St. Peter's statement, "Baptism now saves you" (1 Peter 3.21). Those who participate in the sacrament of baptism are saved.

At the same time "[God] Himself is not bound by His sacraments." This means that God can save sinners *apart from* the sacrament of baptism if he so chooses. One example of this is the

[24] *The Catechism of the Catholic Church,* §1257.

illustration often used of a baptismal candidate who dies in a car wreck on the way to their baptism[25]. God would not withhold salvation in such a situation. This is called "baptism by desire" by the Roman Catholic Church, wherein someone dies in a state of faith without receiving the sacrament. Related is "baptism by blood" which happens when someone is martyred[26]. In philosophical logic terms, baptism is sufficient but not necessary for salvation. At the same time, we could say that baptism is functionally necessary as it is the normative way in which the Roman Catholic Church says that someone is saved. Given this view, then, a grace given in the sacrament of baptism is the gift of regeneration-as-conversion.

Here we get to the problem with the Roman Catholic view of regeneration in baptism. According to Roman Catholic theology, the grace that God gives through the sacraments is given *ex opere operato*—that is, literally, "by the work, worked" or "worked by virtue of the act itself." The Sacrament of baptism regenerates (in the sense of conversion) the candidate simply through the act of a validly administrated baptism. If you receive the sign, you receive the thing signified. Therefore all those who are baptized experience conversion by the Holy Spirit through their baptism. The only hindrance to this is if the baptism is not administered validly, i.e., not by a member of the Church (laity if no ordained priest or bishop is available and the situation necessitates not delaying the baptism) in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit[27].

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[25] I have heard this illustration so much that I have no idea how to cite it. Rest assured, it's not mine.

[26] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §1258.

[27] Having discussed the Roman Catholic doctrine of the sacraments working *ex opere operato*, we should put it in its proper context. Salvation, in Roman Catholicism, is more of a process than a one time event. Conversion is a one-time event, but the concept of "salvation" ranges the entire Christian life, from conversion to final judgment. This concept, properly understood is perhaps not the most problematic as scripture seems at times to talk about our salvation as both our conversion and our final judgment. How this tension is navigated is very important, however.

In the Roman Catholic economy of salvation, they would say that one cannot be saved by their works apart from God's grace. There's not a cosmic scale by which God weighs us and we spend eternity with him if our good works are greater than our sin. They would say, however, that our good works would *contribute* to the *ongoing process* of salvation. This is because Roman Catholicism has a fundamentally different view of the doctrine of justification. This was, of course, the "material cause" of the whole Reformation.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says, "Justification has been merited for us by the Passion of Christ. It is granted us through Baptism. It conforms us to the righteousness of God, who justifies us" (§222). Whereas the Reformation uncovered the biblical teaching of justification as God's declaration, to the Roman Catholic, it is something given at Baptism by which we are "conform[ed]… to the righteousness of God" rather than declared as such. In Roman Catholicism, it is justification which is transformative, rather than sanctification.

Furthermore, this "justifying" grace received in baptism can be lost through committing a "mortal" sin. Thus, in Roman Catholicism, baptism bestows a change in state, and that state can be reverted (or "killed") through mortal sin. The proper response to mortal sin is not to be baptized again, but through Confession, Penance, and Absolution. Thus, Penance—good works in response to mortal sin—contributes to the on-going process of our salvation by restoring through Absolution the justifying grace received at Baptism and since lost.

The Anglican Response to this View

Responses to this view will be given more in full when we explore the Anglican view(s) in the next section. There is much that we, as Anglicans, can affirm with Roman Catholics including a definition of the sacraments and the belief that Holy Baptism is normative for salvation. There is one area which does need a proper response, even if we delay the details for the next section. That area is the Roman Catholic doctrine of *ex opere operato*.

As we will see, our formularies explicitly reject the Roman Catholic belief that the sacraments confer the grace they signify indiscriminately. However we understand the word "regeneration" as it's used in our liturgy, Articles, and catechism, it is not bestowed to the baptismal candidate simply by the act of being baptized. Faith is a necessary condition for the sacraments to be efficacious. Therefore, when we say "remember your baptism!" we are not saying that to all who have been baptized. Rather, the assurance given in that phrase is given only to those whose baptism has been married to true, saving faith. That faith may have been gifted before, during, or after their baptism, but there must be faith. Furthermore, as we've said, we are not talking about faith abstractly; the faith which the sacraments require has a proper object: the person and work of Jesus Christ.

A Survey of Baptismal Regeneration in Reformed, Protestant Confessions and Writings

Before we jump into the position taken by the Anglican Prayer Books and Formularies, let's consider how other orthodox, reformed Protestants have handled the idea of baptismal regeneration. My goal in doing so is to point out the it is not "baptismal regeneration" itself which is problematic but the idea that baptism always confers conversion such as the Roman Catholic Church teaches.

We begin first with the Reformer *par excellence*, Martin Luther. Luther writes in his Larger Catechism,

> But where the name of God is, there must also be life and salvation, that it may indeed be called a divine, blessed, fruitful, and gracious water; for by the Word such power is imparted to Baptism that it is a laver of regeneration, as St. Paul

> also calls it (Titus 3.5).[28]

Thus Luther, quoting from Titus 3.5 directly refers to baptism as the "laver of regeneration." This is why context is so important. Luther does not shy away from connection baptism to regeneration and salvation, but he does so in a way that is opposed to the teachings of Roman Catholicism. While there may be some tensions between Luther's theology of justification and baptism, it is uncharitable to pit the two against each other. As we've noted also, the condemnation of "works of righteousness" cannot be directed against sacraments.

John Calvin, who took reform even a bit further than Luther, writes regarding Titus 3.5 in his commentary on the Pastoral Epistles:

> By the washing of regeneration I have no doubt [Paul] alludes, at least, to baptism, and even I will not object to have this passage expounded as relating to baptism… God does not sport with us by unmeaning figures, but inwardly accomplishes by his power what he exhibits by the outward sign; and therefore baptism is fitly and truly said to be "the washing of regeneration."[29]

Calvin continues, and in so doing we begin to see the difference between the Roman Catholic view and that of the Reformers:

> Although by baptism wicked men are neither washed nor renewed, yet it retains that power, so far as relates to God, because although they reject the grace of God, still it is offered to them. But here [in Titus 3.5], Paul addresses believers, in whom baptism is always efficacious, and in whom it is properly connected with its truth and efficacy.[30]

Calvin plainly rejects the doctrine of sacraments working *ex opere operato*. Though he adds that even if someone who does not have true faith is baptized, salvation is offered to them in baptism. Not that such a person would be saved apart from faith, but that as a sign, the baptismal liturgy and the sacrament itself proclaims the gospel to the candidate, and thus true faith might be awakened—or as the Anglican formularies put it, "quickened"— in that person.

From Calvin we move on to the work of his spiritual descendants in the faith, the *Westminster*

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[28] Martin Luther, *The Large Catechism*, §IV "Of Baptism"
[29] John Calvin, *Commentary on Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, s.v. Titus 3.5.
[30] Ibid.

Confession of Faith, the confession of the Presbyterian church. The *WCF*, like the Anglican Formularies, references Titus 3.5:

> Baptism is a sacrament of the New Testament, ordained by Jesus Christ, not only for the solemn admission of the party baptized into the visible church, but also to be unto him a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, of his ingrafting into Christ, of regeneration, of remission of sins, and of his giving up unto God through Jesus Christ, to walk in the newness of life.[31]

Other such writings, confessions, and catechisms could be pointed to in acknowledging the same. As I hope I've shown just in this cursory survey, even those who were most concerned with the theological abuses of medieval Roman Catholicism did not shy away from the language of baptismal regeneration nor the use of Titus 3.5 in their mention of the doctrine.

On The Anglican View of Baptism

Baptism Regeneration, Neither ex opere operato, nor Works Righteousness

Turning to the Anglican Formularies, we find the following regarding baptism in Article XXVII:

> Baptism is not only a sign of profession, and mark of difference, whereby Christian men are discerned from others that be not christened, but it is also a sign of Regeneration or New Birth, whereby, as by an instrument, they that receive Baptism rightly are grafted into the Church, the promises of forgiveness of sin, and of our adoption to be the sons of God by the Holy Ghost, are visibly signed and sealed, Faith is confirmed, and Grace increased by the virtue of prayer unto God.

Hopefully you see how this statement on Baptism is perfectly in line with reformational theology. In contrast to Roman Catholic theology, however, the Article states that baptism is an *instrument* of regeneration for those who "receive Baptism rightly." This is an explicit rejection of the doctrine of the sacraments efficacy working *ex opere operato*.

What does it mean to receive the sacrament rightly? Article XXVI, which speaks to whether

[31] *The Westminster Confession of Faith (1646),* Ch. 28 Of Baptism, §1. Not that in annotated versions, the citation listed for "regeneration" is Titus 3.5.

or not a sacrament's efficacy can be hindered by ministers who have departed from the faith, says that

> Neither is the effect of Christ's ordinance taken away by [the minister's] wickedness, nor the grace of God's gifts diminished from such as by faith, and rightly, do receive the Sacraments ministered unto them; which be effectual, because of Christ's institution and promise.

So, even if the minister administering the sacrament be found out to be "unworthy," the efficacy of the sacrament is not hindered on two grounds. The primary ground is on the the faithfulness of Christ to work through the sacraments as is his promise in Scripture. The secondary ground is that the candidate for baptism receives the sacrament rightly, which is to say "by faith." So, for example, Pastor Nick has baptized both of my children. God willing, should their faith prove to be true, their baptisms were efficacious even if, God forbid, Nick goes off the theological deep-end.

Thus far, we have seen that the Anglican Formularies teach a form of baptismal regeneration that does not commit the errors of Roman Catholicism, and are not guilty of the "gospel plus" error of works righteousness. We have yet to discuss what "regeneration" is in this sense, nor whether or not Titus 3.5 teaches such a doctrine.

Defining Regeneration According to our Formularies

This may come as a surprise to you, but Anglicans have different ways of defining the same word. Shocking, I know. As discussed earlier, J.I. Packer outlines two ways of understanding regeneration. The first way, or "covenantal" regeneration, is a more general definition which sees the word as referring to a relational change between the regenerated person and God. The second way, or "conversion" regeneration, is a stricter definition which see regeneration as synonymous with the imparting of new life to sinful people at the moment of their conversion. Packer, in the document quoted, takes the "covenantal" view, as does The Rev'd M.F. Sadler in his book *The Second Adam and the New Birth* (published 1857). Proponents of understanding regeneration as conversion, however, include no-less the theological giants of The Rev'd John Stott, and The Rev'd J. C. Ryle.

Packer lays out the "covenantal" view:

> In the New Testament, "regeneration" and "new birth" are not technical terms… they are terms that do no have sharp conceptual edges, nor are they precisely fitted into any given stream of thought…[Rather,] they are comprehensive panoramic pictures of a life reshaped, radical in thrust through unspecific in detail.[32]

The term "regeneration" only appears twice in the New Testament: Titus 3.5 and Matthew 19:28. In this latter verse, the word is used to described the changes that overcome the world at the second coming of Christ, as the world moves from old creation to (re-)new(ed) creation.

Packer continues, saying that the terms are

> Symbolizing and illustrating a relational change; not a first imparting of life in any sense, any more than natural birth implants life in child who for nine months have been growing in the womb; [regeneration is] the total reordering of attitudes and actions that replacing self-centeredness with Christ-centeredness involves, in the way that newborn children must adjust across the board to their new environment outside the womb.[33]

Dr. Packer's points are well made, in that his illustrations also make use of the "birth/new birth" imagery associated with regeneration. Life is not given to a child through birth; that child has been alive since conception. Birth is a fundamental reorienting of that life. Thus, to fill out Dr. Packer's illustration a bit more, conversion—the implanting of life—is the moment of conception; regeneration is the reorientation of a life who is now part of a family in a fundamentally different way than they were in utero.

Packer, a Puritan scholar, notes that the regeneration-as-conversion view, the narrowing of the definition in other words, wasn't finally cemented until the time of the Puritans[34]. This was largely done in response to the view that the English Reformation wasn't doing enough to reform Roman Catholicism. This isn't to say that some strands of similar thought didn't exist pre-Puritans, but that they were the ones who largely systematized and clearly made it the sole definition.

Now, as I said, there are those who disagree with Dr. Packer, represented here by the equally

[32] J.I. Packer, "Baptism and Regeneration."
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid.

formidable Drs. John Stott and Bishop J.C. Ryle. Both explain, in their view, why the Prayer Book goes on to declare those baptized as "regenerate"—that is, converted—when it is manifestly not so for many baptized individuals. Furthermore, both mention the view that seems to be espoused by Dr. Packer; Dr. Stott says,

> Others have tried to retain both baptismal regeneration and justification by faith by diluting the content not of faith, but of regeneration. They debase it from the inward new birth unto righteousness (which it always means in the New Testament) into the admission of the external privileges of the Covenant…but there is no biblical warrant for this eviscerated idea of regeneration, which in Scripture always means a supernatural birth effected by the Holy Spirit and manifest in holy living…we have no right to give to either regeneration or faith any meaning less than their full biblical meaning.[35]

Bishop Ryle argues just as forcefully:

> I am aware that many do not allow "regeneration" to be [conversion]. They regard it as nothing more than an admission to church privileges,—a change of state, and not a change of heart. But what plain text of Scripture can they show us in support of this view? I answer boldly,—Not one.[36]

He then adds in a footnote,

> I willingly concede that this low view of regeneration is held by many holy and good men, whose doctrinal views are in all other respects scriptural and sound. But I can call no man master. Warrant of Scripture for drawing a distinction between baptismal and spiritual regeneration I can nowhere find.[37]

Though forcefully argued, neither the Rev'd Dr. Stott nor Bishop Dr. Ryle give their own scriptural warrant for understanding regeneration as conversion. Bishop Ryle points to John 3.5, but the debates that this verse has spurred on suggests that it is not such an open-and-shut case. In John 3.3, Jesus tells Nicodemus that

> *Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. (John 3.3, ESV)*

However, this verse does not use the same word that we find in Titus 3.5; rather, it uses a

[35] John Stott, "The Evangelical Doctrine of Baptism," *Churchman*, 112/1, 1998.
[36] J.C. Ryle, *A Guide to Churchmen about Baptism and Regeneration*.
[37] Ibid.

word that means "to be birthed" and a preposition that can mean either "again" or "above." This use of ambiguous language is typical of John's writing, and likely he wants us to understand both meanings. Nicodemus, confused, asks how one can be born after having grown old. Jesus responds,

> *Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. (John 3.5)*

Some have ventured to explain this verse away by saying that "water" represents our initial, physical birth.[38] Others understand it as a type of *hiendys*, where "water" refers to the cleansing work of the Spirit. These interpretations seem to be an extraordinary case of linguistic gymnastics. The Rev. M. F. Sadler says of such interpretations,

> They have ventured to say, that when our Lord used the word water, He did not really mean any such thing…such an interpretation is the more daring, when we consider that in the immediate context of this discourse we have continual reference made both to Baptism, and to water "as its outward element." The two verses which follow the conclusion of this discourse with Nicodemus are: "After these things came Jesus and His disciples into the land of Judeæ; and John also was baptizing in Ænon, near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized.[39]

But what of the mention of the Kingdom of God? Sadler continues,

> Throughout the record called "The Acts of the Apostles," whenever the kingdom of God is extended, mention is expressly made of Baptism as the entrance into it.[40]

Ultimately, where one lands on what regeneration primarily is, is not my point. Anglicans can —and do—find themselves taking both positions. My point has been to show that understanding these passages go behind merely defining the words "regeneration" and "new birth" or "rebirth," but we must take into account the full canonical view of what Scripture teaches regarding baptism. We may do that work and come to differing conclusions. What this makes clear,

[38] Note the parallelism between John 3.3 and 5. To explain away the text as being "born of water" referring to natural birth, and "born of the Spirit" to conversion misses the parallel; it is the two together, "born of water and the Spirit" which parallel "born again" in verse 5. These are not two events, but one.

[39] M. F. Sadler, *The Second Adam and the New Birth.*

[40] Ibid.

however, is that baptismal regeneration as defined by the Anglican Formularies as well as those writing which came out of the Protestant Reformation is clearly scriptural, even if the details are harder to nail down.

This still leaves us to work through whether or not Titus 3.5 is in fact referencing the sacrament of baptism.

Baptismal Regeneration and Titus 3.5

Long delayed, let us look again to Titus 3.5 and its context.

> *When the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of any works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. The saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works. (Titus 3.3-8, ESV).*

As we come back to this text, we can see that there's nothing on the surface which would preclude us from understanding verse 5 as referencing baptism. We've already seen how the sacrament of holy baptism is not a "work of righteousness" (v. 5) because properly understood, it is God who is working in us through the sacrament. The protestant and reformed understanding of the sacraments does not do damage to the doctrine of justification by faith, which this passage plainly teaches (v7). The only thing that remains to be seen is whether or not the language of "washing/water of regeneration" is a reference to the sacrament or a work of the Holy Spirit coinciding with the "renewal" also mentioned in verse 5.

Sacramental Language and Sacramental Imagination

The claim that sacramental readings of Scripture likely go too far is generally levied by those who are already Non-Sacramental. I would argue that we don't read the scripture sacramentally enough. To make the point, let's move away from baptism and consider the eucharist.

Consider Luke 24 and the road to Emmaus. The resurrected Jesus appears to two of his disciples who are walking from Jerusalem to Emmaus. They are upset because Jesus' crucifixion had dashed their hopes that he was the Messiah. They had heard that the tomb was empty, but

this only increased their confusion. So, Jesus takes the opportunity for an impromptu bible study, and "beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures." When they got to Emmaus, Jesus stayed with them. We then read the following:

> *When he was at table with them, he took the bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished form their sight. They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while…he was opening the scriptures to us?" (Luke 24.30-32)*

Here we have the eucharistic formula of taking bread, blessing it, breaking it, and distributing it. Certainly, this appears to be a very efficacious meal as it was in receiving the bread that "their eyes were opened." To drive the point home, prior to the breaking of bread, Jesus himself had proclaimed the gospel to them from the scriptures. Word and Sacrament. How else are we to understand the text?

Let's remember that sacramentalism did not start with the abuses of the medieval Roman Catholic Church. When the Apostles, the first stewards the sacraments, write using sacramental language to a sacramental community who were centered around the administration of the sacraments, it's not a hard leap of language to consider that the sacraments are in view. Titus 3.5, written to a church community well acquainted with the sacramental theology of the Apostles, has language which is inline with the sacrament of baptism and is explicitly talking about the very things the sacrament of baptism signifies. Surely, we should read the passage with an understanding of the sign itself.

Questions for Reflection

1. What is the relationship between the Gospel and baptism? The relationship between conversion and baptism?
2. What was your response to the term "baptismal regeneration" before this class? If it was a negative response, how would you compare that it to your response now when considering its use in the Anglican formularies?
3. Imagine you are in a local coffee shop, and a seminary student overhears you talking

about how wonderful Grace Anglican Church is. The student politely interrupts the conversation and says, "I love Anglicanism and the Book of Common Prayer! I read through the service for baptism though, and was concerned by its language. Do Anglicans really believe in baptismal regeneration?" How would you respond?

Week 5: Sound Leadership – Holy Orders & Church Ministers

Collect For Ember Days I

Almighty God, the giver of all good gifts, in your divine providence you have appointed various orders in Your Church: Give your grace, we humbly pray, to all who are called to any office and ministry for your people; and so fill them with the truth of your doctrine and clothe them with holiness of life, that they may faithfully serve before you, to the glory of your great Name and for the benefit of your holy Church; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Scripture

1 Timothy 2.11-3.13; Titus 1.5-9.

In previous weeks we have looked at the false teaching that had invaded Ephesus and Crete and how it was centered around a false gospel that produced rotten fruit; then, we looked at the true gospel, and its relationship to good works, the Church, and Holy Baptism. This week, we turn to the subject of church leadership, particularly those leadership positions which are offices of ordained ministry.

This topic comes to the forefront of the Pastoral Epistles because of the false teaching which St. Paul was counteracting. If the church is the "pillar and bulwark of the truth" (1 Timothy 3.15), then it falls on to the offices which exercise leadership to lead that charge. It was the leadership which failed in Ephesus and Crete.

In considering ordained church leadership we are going to look at the qualifications for church ministers, the functions and roles of the leadership offices, and then consider the ever-present question of gender and ordination.

Defining Our Terms

Let's take care of some definitions before jumping into the text.

Ordination, Offices, and Holy Orders

The first set of terms that might need definition are "ordination," "office," and "holy orders." These words are not from our current passage itself. They are terms which we've come up with to describe certain things we find in Scripture. The term "ordination" refers to the pattern we find throughout Scripture of setting individuals apart for specific ministry roles. The pattern is this: individuals are selected from out of the Church for ministry. These individuals then take part of a ceremony which serves as a rite to set them apart. During this ceremony, the people doing the ordination lay their hands on the ones being ordained and pray for them. After this ceremony, those individuals are considered "ordained," and begin to serve in the capacity to which they were ordained. This pattern is observed in both the Old and New Testaments.

The term "office" refers to the official position or responsibilities to which ordained persons dedicate themselves. In the Old Testament, there were three permanently established offices: prophet, priest, and king. There was also a temporary offices of "judge" which can be read about in the book of Judges. In the New Testament, there were several offices, with three offices being the most prominent: Apostle, Presbyter or Bishop, and Deacon. We'll say more about these offices next.

The term "Holy Orders" is an ecclesiastical term referring to the whole system of ordination and offices. Thus, Holy Orders can be synonymous with the ordination rite and with the offices themselves. Context usually makes it clear what is meant.

Titles for the New Testament Offices

Confusingly, there several terms used for the offices of church leaders in the New Testament, and they differ a bit between what offices were extant in the New Testament and those extant after the death of the Apostles. In the New Testament, the offices we know of today as Bishop and Priest/Presbyter overlap. So let's consider those along with other synonymous titles for the

offices.

The Office of Bishop/Overseer

The words "bishop" and "overseer" come from the greek word *episkopos* (cf. 1 Timothy 3.1, 2). From this word we also get the loan word "episcopal" and its other forms. The direct translation is the word in modern English is "overseer," but the word "bishop" also comes down to us from Middle English (*biscop*) and Old English (*bisceop*). "Bishop" and "overseer" are synonymous terms.

The Office of Priest/Presbyter/Elder

"Priest," "Presbyter," and "elder" are all derived from the Greek word *presbyteros*. "Elder" is the direct translation of the word, while "presbyter" is a direct loan word from the Greek. Like "bishop" we receive the word "priest" from Middle English (*prest* or *preest*) and Old English (*preost*), as well as Old French (*prestr*). Once again, all three of these terms are synonymous.

Two- or Three-fold Orders?

If having so many synonymous titles isn't confusing enough, the New Testament uses the terms *episkopos* and *presbyteros* interchangeably. In other words, in the New Testament, bishop and presbyter are also synonyms! This is obvious, for example, in Titus 1.5-9, where St. Paul tells Titus to appoint (=ordain) *elders* in the cities before referring to those very elders as *bishops* in verse 7. Yet, Anglicanism (as well as Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy) have Bishops, Presbyters, and Deacons. What in the world is going on?

We must be brief, but let's offer several points by way of explanation. First, we must remember that the New Testament itself has a three-fold office. These were Apostle, Bishop-Presbyter, and Deacon.

Second, the office of Apostle was a time-constrained office. In order to qualify as an Apostle, one must have been present with the disciples during the life and ministry of Jesus—from Jesus' baptism by John until the ascension (cf. Acts 1.21-22)[41]. Thus, once the Apostles died out, the

[41] When Judas died by suicide, this was the qualification mentioned by St. Peter for selecting his replacement. Eventually, Matthias was appointed. It should be noted that Judas was replaced, but that no more were added, so that the number 12 could be retained, symbolizing the 12 tribes of Israel.

Eventually, this number was increased to 13, but only under special circumstances. St. Paul was added to the 12 Apostles by God's direct call (cf 1 Corinthians 1.1). This was done at the time that the gospel proclamation began going out to the Gentiles. Because the "inclusion of the Gentiles" was beginning to be fulfilled, it was appropriate to add another Apostle to the 12, as the symbolism of the 12 tribes was expanding to non-Jewish people. Thus, St. Paul became the "Apostle to the Gentiles."

office of Apostle went with them. We know from the Apostolic Fathers, disciples of the Apostles themselves, that the Apostles desired to pass on their ministry of oversight as well as the Apostolic teaching.

Third, we see the model known as "monarchical bishops" adopted very early, by the time of St. Ignatius (~105 to 115 AD). At this time, local church oversight was given by a plurality of presbyters, who served over all the churches in the city or town or in one local church (depending on how the church in that area was distributed). From this body of presbyters, one would be called as the bishop.As the Church grew, bishops served continued to serve over churches that were planted, and thus regional areas known as dioceses were formed.

Thus, the three-fold office began in the New Testament as Apostles, Bishop-Priest, and Deacons. The Apostles sought to hand down their particular ministry of oversight and teaching to particular individuals who were qualified for that particular task. After the death of the Apostles, these Bishops shifted into the the Apostles place in the hierarchy of leadership giving us Bishops, Presbyters, and Deacons.

Since this can be confusing, I am electing to use the term "bishop-priest" when discussing the New Testament passages, and "bishop" and "presbyter" when discussing the post-apostolic offices.

The Qualifications for Ordained Ministers

As we move into our passages for today, we'll begin by looking at the qualifications St. Paul gives for ordained ministers in the church.

Though the Apostle was certainly alive and witnessed the events of Jesus' life and ministry, we was not—as was previously required—part of Jesus' disciples and present from the beginning of Jesus' ministry to the ascension. How, then, did St. Paul become qualified for the office? The answer lies in his conversion. St. Paul himself explains in 1 Corinthians 15:

"[Christ] appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve… Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. For I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me has not been in vain." (1 Corinthians 15.5, 7-10a)

Throughout 1 Corinthians, and other epistles, St. Paul has to defend his apostleship. Here he picks up an insult his opponents have used—"one untimely born" as an Apostle, literally a "miscarried" Apostle—and flips their argument on their head. He agrees that, all things considered, he is unfit to be considered and Apostle, given his history of persecution and his lack of qualifications. However, he says, God has seen fit to make him an Apostle, and so the Risen Lord appeared also to him so that he would be so qualified for his Apostleship.

A Focus on Character, Rather than Ability

Two things should jump out at us as we read the list of qualifications that the Apostle gives both Timothy and Titus. First, the qualifications, other than a few specific ones, are focused on character rather than a ministers ability or skill set. The qualifications aren't a set of Key Performance Indicators. As I'm writing this, my friend Mike Cosper has just released the first episode of a long-form reporting podcast entitled "The Rise and Fall of Mars Hill."[42] What is pertinent from this story is that Mars Hill, and indeed many other like-minded churches, elevated things like "talent" over character. The result at Mars Hill is not an isolated incident. As Pastor and missiologist Ed Stetzer says in the podcast, "There is a body count of young pastors whose ability rose them to prominence before their character was ready for it"[43]

Second, as we read over these qualifications, we note that the qualifications themselves are rather ordinary. There's not really any sort of extraordinary character expected of the Church's leadership. More than that, many of the qualifications are shared across the offices.[44] Whether you are a bishop, a presbyter, or a deacon, there is a core of ordinary, mundane character which qualifies you for the office.

Why so ordinary? God does not call people to the offices of Bishop, Presbyter, and Deacon because they re inherently better or holier than the rest of the church. Rather, God calls, gifts, and equips regular, ordinary Christians from within the body of regular, ordinary Christians. This is why St. Paul is able to charge church leaders to lead by example, to model the Christian life and be able to say "imitate me as I imitate Christ" (1 Corinthians 11.1). How could they be examples if they were required to be some sort of varsity-level Christianity while the rest of us run around, just hoping for some play time with the junior varisity team?

The Qualifications

1 Timothy 3.1–7, 8–13; Titus 1.5–9a

Rather than going through individual qualifications, some of which need to explanation, I'm electing to consider specific qualifications in more detail. I will only make note of the office if it

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[42] Mike Cosper, host, writer, producer. "Who Killed Mars Hill?" *The Rise and Fall of Mars Hill*, Christianity Today, June 21, 2021. https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/podcasts/rise-and-fall-of-mars-hill/who-killed-mars-hill-church-mark-driscoll-rise-fall.html.

[43] Ed Stetzer, contributor. Ibid.

[44] See Table 3 to see the lists side by side.

makes contextual sense, and will use the generic term "minister" when speaking of all offices.

Aspiration and Desire for the Office

1 Timothy 3.1

The very first qualification goes against our pattern of the qualifications being "character" traits, speaking rather of a desire:

Whoever aspires to the office of overseer desires a noble task (1 Timothy 3.1, NIV)

Desire is a funny thing in scripture that is often misunderstood. There are very few examples of "good" or "positive" desire, which can lead us to think that all desire and aspirations are sinful. Yet, desire itself is not sinful, rather, Scripture teaches that sin is born out of *disordered* desire. So, while St. Paul praises the aspiring minister's desire and aspirations here, that desire and aspiration must also be tested. Plenty of people desire Holy Orders for the wrong reasons. For example, are they seeking out the calling in fidelity to Christ and his church, or are they seeking out prestige, power, and authority?[45]

Why would it be important for St. Paul to remind the Ephesians that pursuing the call to ordained ministry is a good and noble task? As we've seen, the false teaching took root and bore rotten fruit. Throughout the Pastoral Epistles, the Apostle will voice his concern for reputation among the unbelievers in their area. The behavior of the false teachers, and those who followed them, was bringing disrepute to the gospel, the church, and even the offices themselves. Consider, again, the effects of the fall of Mars Hill and its reverberations in Seattle. In any culture, Christians are going to be the "bad guy" in various ways, but we shouldn't let that keep us from being the "best bad guys we can be" to unbelieving culture.[46]

This concept of reputation leads us into our next qualification, being "above reproach."

Above Reproach/Blameless

1 Timothy 3.2, 10; Titus 1.6a, 7a;

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[45] As St. Augustine remarks, "Are you seeking the [title of bishop] or the real thing? If it's the real thing your seeking, you are setting your heart on a good work. If it's the [title] you're seeking, you [can have it] even with a bad work [and] a worse punishment…I have the nerve, the gall to say there are no bad bishops; because if they are bad they aren't [truly] bishops… 'He is a bishop, because he is seated on the bishop's throne.' [I say he is] a straw scarecrow guarding the vineyard." *The Works of St. Augustine*, III/9, "Sermons," 300. Bracketed text added for better clarification.

[46] This concept was taken from Stephen McAlpine's book, *Being the Bad Guys: How to Live for Jesus in a World that Says you Shouldn't*.

> *A bishop must be above reproach… if [deacons] prove blameless, let them serve as deacons. (1 Timothy 3.2, 10)*
> *Appoint…someone who is blameless…for a bishop, as God's steward, must be blameless… (Titus 1.6a, 7a)*

The character of being "blameless" or "above reproach" is the chief or overarching qualification. Every qualification which follows in both 1 Timothy 3.2b–13 and Titus 1.6b–9 are practical commentaries on what it means to be "above reproach." There are two ways in which we can misunderstand this qualification, however, and both should be noted.

First, these qualifications cannot mean that bishop-priest and deacons must be *sinless*. The entirety of Holy Scripture speaks against such an interpretation. At the same time, as evidenced by the problems in Ephesus and Crete, unqualified ministers can ruin peoples lives and faith. We must treat the qualifications—and the sins of ministers—seriously. These qualifications really do lay out the boundaries for what qualifies and disqualifies a ministers from their offices. St. James sober reminds us that,

> *Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers and sisters, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. (James 3.1)*

As Article XXVI says,

> It appertaineth to the discipline of the Church, that inquiry be made of evil Ministers, and that they be accused by those who have knowledge of their offenses; and finally, being found guilty, by just judgment be deposed.

At the same time, given the nature of these offices, we must also be balanced in how we handle accusations made against ministers. The Apostle writes later in 1 Timothy that we should

> *Never accept any accusation against an elder* [presbyter] *except on evidence of two or three witnesses. As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear. (1 Timothy 5.19–20)*

Second, we must not require our ministers follow man-made commandments in order for us to consider them "above reproach." The so-called "Billy Graham rule," which is a refusal of male leaders from meeting one-on-one with female parishioners, is just that: a rule that Billy Graham created. It may or may not be a good rule-of-thumb, and it may or may not be wise at various times, but it is no more biblical that the Pharisee's practice of only allowing someone to

walk a certain distance on the Sabbath, for concern that walking any further constitutes "work."[47] Such man-made commandments were consider "fences" around the Law itself. They were followed as commands on par with the scriptural law because if they followed them, they served as a "fence" to guard the Israelite from getting close enough to God's actual Law to, they assumed, be able to break that Law.

A "One-Woman Man"

1 Timothy 3.2, 12; Titus 1.6

Our next qualification is listed in all three lists and, while it seems obvious on the surface, deserves a closer look. A minister must be a "one-woman man." Here's how some various English translations handle this phrase which I've given as an overly wooden translation:

…married only once… (NRSV)
…the husband of one wife… (ESV, CSB, NET)
…faithful to his wife… (NIV, NLT, Köstenberger[48])

Perhaps you can see the hidden difficulty just by reading these various ways of translating the phrase. There are four ways in which this qualification has been understood:[49]

1. Minsters *must be married*, disqualifying anyone who is single from the offices.
2. Ministers *cannot be remarried*, disqualifying anyone who is divorced for any reason. Some also believe it disqualifies widowers who remarry.
3. Ministers *cannot be polygamists*, disqualifying anyone who has multiple spouses at one time.
4. Ministers *must be faithful to their (present or potentially future) spouse*, disqualifying anyone who commits adultery or otherwise lives in a pattern of sexual immorality.

We'll take each view in turn.

The first interpretation holds that **every minister must be married** in order to qualify

[47] After Israel's exile to Babylon, they found themselves in a brand new situation to which nothing was said in the Mosaic Law about how they should live. They formulated interpretations of the law that they used to guide them in post-exilic life which was often called the "oral law;" in the final centuries of the era we designate as BC, while Jesus was in early youth, the Pharisees divided into two schools of interpretation of the law. These debates continued up to and through the destruction of the temple in 70 AD. Eventually, this "oral law" was written and recorded as the *Mishnah*, which formed the core of the written work of Rabbinical interpretation known as the *Talmud* around 200 AD.

[48] Cf. Andreas Köstenberger, *God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation*, 259–64.

[49] Cf. Andreas Köstenberger's discussion on this text in *Entrusted with the Gospel: Paul's Theology in the Pastoral Epistles*, 22-24. Köstenberger lists 5 interpretations, but separates out divorced men and remarried widowers.

for their office. Anyone who is single is automatically disqualified. This interpretation can also be held together with any of the other three. This interpretation is problematic from the start, as it would have disqualified both Jesus and St. Paul, while possibly disqualifying Timothy and Titus as well. Further more, this interpretation runs contrary to St. Paul's stated preference that people remain single so that they can have a greater freedom to minister without the (good!) burdens which come from being married and having children (1 Corinthians 7.8–9). Finally, this interpretation misses the Apostle's emphasis, which is not on "woman" but on "one." *If* a minister is married, they should have "one wife."

The second interpretation is that **ministers can only be married once.** This is the interpretation which the NRSV takes. According to this view, a minister whose marriage comes to an end may not marry again without disqualifying themselves from the office. Some (most?) who hold this interpretation apply it only to marriages that end in divorce, while some (few?) would extend the qualification to marriages which end with the death of a spouse.

Those who hold the more extreme form of this view are going against St. Paul's clear teaching regarding death and the marriage covenant (1 Timothy 5, Romans 7, 1 Corinthians 7). Regarding divorce, tt is true that God hates divorce (Malachi 2.16), and that remarriage after divorce is adultery. There are, however, very specific situations in which the marriage covenant is dissolved in such a way that divorce is allowed and remarriage is valid—namely, adultery and abandonment. These "exception clauses" are in place to protect the spouse who is "in the right." Thus, this interpretation contains some truth: those who remarry having perpetuated an unbiblical divorce should be disqualified.[50] This truth, however, is far too narrow for such a qualification that is to be generally applied.

The third interpretation is that **ministers cannot be polygamists.** Honestly, I'm not going to argue against this, but I'm also not going to say that's really what the Apostle had in mind here. While not necessarily the intent, the ESV, CSB, and NET could be read this way.

The fourth interpretation is that **ministers are to be faithful to their (present or potentially future) spouse**. I find this interpretation to be most faithful to all of Holy

[50] According to the Canons of our Province, the ACNA, divorced and remarried persons will not be admitted into Holy Orders. However, there are clauses which allow the Archbishop to approve the ordination of people divorced and remarried on a case-by-case basis in light of Matthew 19 and other passages referring to the exception clauses. See *The Canons of the Anglican Church in North America*, Title II, Canon 7, §4 and Title III, Canon 2, §5-6.

Scripture. It maintains all the truth found in the second and third interpretations, avoids the errors of the first, and carries the general nature of the rest of the qualifications. The minister must—regardless of their marital status—be living a life of fidelity to their spouse and biblical sexual ethics that mirror the Pastorals' call to fidelity for the church: fidelity toChrist, fidelity to sound doctrine, and fidelity to the bride of Christ who is God's family.

Refrain from Being Contentious

1 Timothy 3.b-3, 8b, 11b; Titus 1.7b-8.

The next few qualifications can be summarized under the heading "don't be contentious:"

> *[bishop-priests must be] temperate, respectable, hospitable…not violent, but gentle, not quarrelsome… (1 Timothy 3.2b-3)*
> *…not arrogant or quick-tempered…but hospitable…self-controlled… (Titus 1.7-8)*
> *…[deacons must] not [be] double-tongued…not slanderers, but temperate… (1 Timothy 3.8b, 11b)*

Each of these also need to be taken on their own, but as we've seen the Pastoral Epistles make it clear that contentiousness is the posture of the marks of the false teachers, not the family of God. Their "addiction" (to paraphrase 1 Timothy 6.4) to starting arguments is taken directly from Satan's playbook of stopping the church from fulfilling Jesus' high priestly prayer at all costs. Arrogance, hot tempers, quarrelsomeness—St. Paul will have none of those qualities in the ministers of God's church. We'll look at this more next week, but in summary, how we react to one another and how we react to false teachers is supposed to be worlds apart. It's the wolves, not the sheep, who should be afraid when the shepherds swing their crooks.

Household Management

1 Timothy 3.4–5; Titus 1.6-7.

St. Paul makes a direct connection between how a minister ministers to their family and how they will minister to the church:

> *A bishop…must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive… (1 Timothy 3.4)*
> *Someone…whose children are* [loyal[51]]*, not accused of debauchery, and not*

[51] The can either be "children are loyal" or "children are faithful." Some, taking the latter, translate this as "children are believers." The context of Titus, and the parallel in 1 Timothy 3, suggests "submissiveness" to parents, emphasizing obedience. To require the children of ministers to be believers—though one hopes that is the case—makes this qualification circumstantial to something which is beyond the control of someone's character.

> *rebellious… (Titus 1.6)*
> *Deacons, likewise… [must manage] their children and own households well. (1 Timothy 3.12)*

Why would "household management" be a qualification for ministers? As we saw in 1 Timothy 3.14-16, the church is explicitly called "the household of God." How one leads and shepherds in the home is how one will lead and shepherd in the church. The Apostle makes this connection in 1 Timothy 3.5:

> *If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?*

There is a slight, but important difference in how this qualification is given for bishop-priests and deacons. The qualification for deacons simply states "manage their children and households well." For bishop-priests, however, St. Paul explains what he means in concrete terms. He says that their children should be submissive (1 Timothy 3.4) and not rebellious (Titus 1.6). The way he must train his children in this submissiveness is "with all dignity." There is some question as to whether "with all dignity" goes with the submissiveness of the children, or goes with "keeping." The latter is almost certainly correct, and the NIV is helpful:

> *He must…see that his children obey him, and do so in a manner worthy of full respect.*

The emphasis is not on "obedience" here, but on "in a manner worthy of full respect." Though the obedience is important, far more important is how the minister "wins" that obedience. How one directs their children exemplifies their leadership quality and character. How they lead their children is how they will lead God's children. If their parenting is contentious or draconian, you know exactly how—in time—they will lead God's church.

Bishop-priests Must Not Be New Converts. *Usually.

1 Timothy 3.6

Our next qualification is specific to bishop-priests, and, while normative, may not always be possible. The bishop-priest, St. Paul says to Timothy but not Titus,

> *…must not be a new convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil (1 Timothy 3.6, ESV)*

Even in purely practical terms, this qualification makes sense. God is concerned with the character of his ministers; character is forged over time and through trials (Romans 5.3-5, 1 Peter 1.6-7, James 1.2-4), and shown through our behavior. It stands that ministers should have both

life experience that forges character, and be observed and vetted for that character. The longer someone has been a Christian, the more time and experience they should have in facing their own sinfulness, Satan, and the fallenness of the world. They will also have had more time being formed by Word, Sacrament, and community.

This seems like it should be a universal qualification, so why do I say it is normative, but situational? That answer lies in why St. Paul did not include the qualification when writing to Titus, and why it's missing from the list of qualifications for deacons.

Titus has been sent to the churches in Crete. These churches had been recently planted and were not nearly as established as those in Ephesus. Ephesus, for example, already had a body of bishop-priest serving the congregations though many of them had fallen into grave error. Titus, however, was charged by St. Paul to

> *…put in order what was unfinished and appoint [=ordain] presbyters in every town. (Titus 1.5)*

The Cretan churches were "unfinished" and lacking the local oversight provided by bishop-priests[52]. The Acts of the Apostles show that St. Paul followed a pattern while starting new churches: first, he enters each new city and proclaims the gospel; then, those who repent and become believers are baptized and discipled over a period of time; St. Paul then leaves to continue his missionary journey and, finally, resvisits the new churches on his return trip to appoint bishop-priests to oversee the new church (cf Acts 14, esp. vv. 1-7, 21-23). In such situations, new churches would languish for years without oversight waiting for new converts to mature and qualify.

Now, our current time is far removed from the world of the first century, when the gospel was just starting to go out. The ideal goal is that churches be led by indigenous leadership, and there are fewer and fewer places that have no gospel witness thanks to the church's pursuit of the Great Commission. The situations in which we would forgo this qualification is shrinking by God's grace, but there are still places out there where serious consideration needs to be given for how to handle the "maturity gap." Sending someone in for a time until leaders can be raised up from within, essentially what Titus is doing, can help us get to the ideal qualifications.

[52] This is probably why Titus has not mention of deacons, too. Of first concern is getting the ministry of oversight and teaching in place, then deacons can be raised up from within the body to serve the body.

Ministers Must have a Good Reputation with Outsiders

1 Timothy 3.7

Our last qualification for consideration today is also for bishop-priests. St. Paul says they

> *…must have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace* [, which is] *the devil's trap. (1 Timothy 3.7, NIV)*

Once again we find the idea of "reputation" connected to church leadership. The false teachers have marred the witness[53] of the church, the gospel, and even the office of bishop-priest itself. These false teachers have "fallen into disgrace," which is "the devil's trap."[54] If the focus of inspired Holy Scripture is the minister's character, and if being "above reproach" or "blameless" is the arch-qualification of leadership, then of course Satan's attack on the church will focus on reputation and temptations that lead to disgraced and fallen pastors.

This raises a difficult question. Holy Scripture seems to teach that the opposite will happen. The gospel, St. Paul teaches, carries an inherent offense (Galatians 5.11b). Jesus himself said,

> *If the world hates you, be aware that it hated me before it hated you…because you don't belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world—therefore, the world hates you…if they persecuted me, they will persecute you (John 15.18-19, 20b)*

We must differentiate the offensiveness of the gospel and scriptural ethics with our own ability to be offensive. St. Paul writes that "we should speak the truth in love" (Ephesians 4.5). That one little prepositional phrase, "in love," silences any argument that "speaking the truth" is *de facto* loving. You can speak the truth and still be a jerk. And, at a time in which so much of our communication is public, how we speak to one another is seen by "outsiders." Their opinions are not *just* formed by how we speak with them but in how we speak to others, too.

See an example of this in St. Paul's charge to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2.24-26:

> *The Lord's Servant must not be quarrelsome but kindly to everyone, an apt teacher, patient, correcting opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant that they will repent and come to know the truth, and that they may escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.*

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[53] The phrase "well thought of" is literally, "well witnessed/testified to" and generally means " have a good reputation."

[54] The word "disgrace" is the same word for "reproach" in verse 2. The "trap of the devil" (παγίδα τοῦ διαβόλου) is likely a subjective genitive ("devil's trap") and the linking word και ("and") is explicative or appositional. See Bauer, Danker, Arndt, & Gingrich, *A Greek–English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (BDAG), s.v. καὶ, 1c.

When derision, hate, and mocking is met with kindly patience and gentleness, then the mouths of our opponents will be shut having nothing else to say (cf. Titus 2.6-8). That doesn't mean they *won't* say something—at the very least they will still hate some of the things we say. To some, however, God may perhaps grant that they will repent. This is also the oft misunderstood meaning of Proverbs 25.21-22:

> *If your enemies are hungry, give them bread to eat; and if they are thirsty, give them water to drink; for you will heap coals of fire on their heads, and the Lord will reward you.*

The "burning coals" does not indicate a growing anger, but a growing shame; the enemy is moved by our kindness towards shame for their opposition and, struck by their conscience, perhaps granted repentance.

The Functions and Roles of Ordained Ministers

Having considered the qualifications for Holy Orders broadly, we now turn to consider their particular roles and functions. First, the bishop-priest.

Bishop-priests — Overseers and Caretakers of God's Household

Bishop-priests are, by virtue of their title, "overseers." They are given the charge to exercise oversight in God's household. In so doing they are "under-shepherds" of Christ, the Good Shepherd and Bishop of our souls (1 Peter 2.25). Just as Jesus commanded St. Peter, those ordained to this office are to "tend and feed the sheep" (John 21.15-19). Therefore, it is this office which exercises governance and authority, stewards the doctrine and sacraments of the church, and offers pastoral care to God's people.

Governance, Leadership, and Oversight

The New Testament church reveals a confluence of authority within local parishes. Governance and authority rest in the bishop-priests in some ways, an parish membership in others. We see this confluence at work in the book of Acts, for example, when

> *…the apostles and presbyters [of the church in Jerusalem], with the consent of the whole church, decided to choose men from among their members and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. (Acts 15.22, cf Acts 15.22-30)*

In a scene which plays out today in our structure of bishops and presbyters, we see St. Paul

acting in his authority as an Apostle charging the Ephesian presbyters with the ministry of oversight:

> *Keep watch over yourselves and over all the flock, of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God that he obtained with the blood of his own Son (Acts 20.28)*

St. Paul writes to the Ephesian church in 1 Timothy 5.17 to remind them

> *Let the presbyters who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.*

All presbyters minister through "ruling," that is, exercising authority in the church. Those who "rule well" should be considered worthy of "double honor," which likely refers to monetary compensation and ensures that they are freed up to "labor in preaching and teaching."[55]

This ministry of governance, leadership, and oversight is why St. Paul included the "household management " qualification as he did. Each household is a "little parish," and how a minister exercises oversight and shepherds his children will be reflected in how he does the same in the church.

As we saw in St. Paul's charge to the Ephesian presbyters, bishop-priests also exercise their oversight of the church through their "shepherding" ministry (Acts 20.28). Such shepherding takes place in the administration of the sacraments, the preaching and teaching ministry (cf. 1 Timothy 5.17), the exercise of church discipline, and the various ways in which they might offer "pastoral" care.

Administration of the Sacraments and other Pastoral Rites

Christ ordained two sacraments generally necessary for salvation: Holy Baptism and the Holy Eucharist. Along with these two, five other rites of a sacramental nature have been recognized by the church as being part of the bishop-priests stewardship: Marriage, Absolution, Confirmation, Ordination, and the Anointing of the Sick. Bishop-priests are charged with administering these rites—Dominical Sacraments and Ecclesial Sacraments—flowing from their calling to oversee and shepherd God's church.

[55] It should be noted that this verse points out that preaching and teaching responsibilities are not evenly distributed among presbyters in a parish which has a plurality of ministers. All presbyters must be able to teach (1 Timothy 3.2), and therefore all should be involved in the preaching and teaching ministry of the church. This does not mean, though, that such responsibilities need be equal; "especially those who labor" suggests that some presbyters may shoulder more of the preaching and teaching burden.

In catholic Holy Orders today, it is the diocesan bishop (known as the bishop ordinary) who is the "senior pastor" (serving under Christ) of the diocese and therefore each parish within it. Thus, authority is granted to them to celebrate each of these Sacraments and Rites. Presbyters serve under the bishop's authority at particular parishes, and therefore are granted the authority to preside over and administer the sacraments of Holy Baptism and the Holy Eucharist, Marriage, Absolution, and the Anointing of the Sick. Confirmation and Ordination, however, are entrusted to the authority of bishops alone. This "division of labor" conforms to the patter we see throughout the Acts of the Apostles.

Stewardship of Doctrine Through Preaching, Teaching, and Discipline

The oversight and shepherding ministry of bishop-priests is also seen in their charge to be stewards of doctrine and discipline in God's church. It is instructive that, in discerning the ministries of bishop-priests and deacons, the lone skill-based qualification that appears in our lists is that of "being able to teach," and that it appears only as a qualification for bishop-priests (1 Timothy 3.2).

The ministry of preaching and teaching has both a positive and negative aspect to it. Positively, through the proclamation of the gospel and sound doctrine, we equipped for ministry, built up as the body of Christ, knitted together in unity, and brought to maturity (Ephesians 4.12-13). Negatively, we hear in the preaching and teaching ministry, the rebuke of our sin and the unsound doctrine.

Pastoral Care and Shepherding

Of course, all that has been said so far are aspects of what it mens for bishop-priests to be "shepherds" of the church. Shepherding is not *less* than the ministries of public teaching and administering the sacraments. It is more, however. It is bring these things to bear on the lives of the members of the church. Shepherding happens not just at the pulpit and altar, but in homes, hospitals, and coffee shops, and includes prayer, counseling, visitations, and so much more.. Shepherding is a holistic ministry, and there are as many ways to give pastoral care as there are opportunities that arise in the lives of parishioners.

Deacons — Lead Servants in God's Household

The diaconate is a "full and equal" order alongside bishops and presbyters, which is made

evident when we consider that so many of the qualifications are the same. Just as with bishops/overseers, the key to understanding the role and function of the deacon in the life of the church is found in the office's title: "servant" or "minister" (*diakonos*). If the authority granted to bishop-priests make them "servant leaders," then we might say that deacons are "lead servants."

Just as we believe in the "priesthood of all believers," and yet say that some are called specifically to priestly orders, all Christians are "deacons" in the sense that all are called to serve others, but only some are called to the vocational or permanent diaconate. It is wonderful when the local church has a large amount of its members exercising their gifts in serving the church. That should be celebrated. At the same time I wonder how many of those who find themselves in positions of leadership in the body are not also called to the Diaconate? I, personally, would love to see more and more qualified and vetted people serving in the diaconal ministry.

Just as there are any number of ways that the shepherding ministry of bishop-priests can play itself out in the life of the church, there are many ways that the ministry of vocational deacons to lead through serving the church. Still, there are some broad categories of serving that we might explore: meeting the physical and practical need of the church, evangelism, and assisting the bishop and presbyters as necessity allows.

Meeting the Physical and Practical Needs of the Church

Though it's debated, Acts 6.1-6 has been historically understood as the beginnings of the diaconal office. Explosive growth as well as early Jew-Gentile divisions had led to many growing pains after Pentecost. The Greek-speaking Jewish Christians of the diaspora lodged a complaint that the predominately Hebraic Jerusalem Church had been neglecting to give aid and care for their widows. In response, the Apostles called on the church to select seven men of "good standing" who could lead the efforts of meeting the physical and practical needs of the church. This would free up the Apostles and bishop-priests to focus on their ministry of preaching and teaching. Once selected, these seven were ordained ("appointed") by the Apostles through prayer and the laying on of hands.

The debate over this passage centers around the fact that these seven are never called deacons. This is true, but there are several reasons why I think this argument falls flat:

1. Their ministry is described using the infinitive form *diakonein*.

2. There is a clear ordination service in the passage, meaning their office is official.
3. There is no other canonical "origin" for St. Paul's sudden use of the office of Deacon.
4. The historical church has always patterned the diaconate after this passage.

The implications of verse Acts 6.2b are further reaching that it may first appear:

It is not right that we should neglect the word of God in order to [serve] *tables.*

The Apostles weren't saying that such service was beneath them, but simply that their calling was specific, and that such service would keep from being able to perform their role and function because of how much need their actually is. Consider the qualifications given in Acts 6: having good standing (=reputation), full of the Spirit, and wisdom. Food distribution was simply the contextual problem that the diaconate was formed to meet; it's not difficult then to extrapolate this pattern out to this pattern out to other practical and physical needs in the church.

Assisting Bishops and Presbyters

The pattern of Acts 6.1-6 can be also extrapolated to any ministry that would distract the bishop-priests from their ministry of teaching and preaching.We find examples of this throughout the early church. St. Ignatius (writing ~98-117 AD) says that deacons are ministers "of the mysteries of Christ[56]" likely alluding to assisting the bishop or presbyter during the Eucharist. St. Justin the Martyr wrote, saying,

> deacons give to each of those present [at the Eucharist] to partake of the bread and wine…and to those who are absent they carry away a portion[57].

The Apostolic Tradition (c. 3rd–4th century AD) also mentions the deacon's role in assisting during the Eucharistic service. In particular, it teaches that deacons often serve at the behest of the bishop[58]. This role shifted to assisting the presbyters as presbyters starting presiding over the majority of the parishes in a diocese. Throughout church history we also see that deacons were charged with administering baptism when no bishop or presbyter is present (cf. Philip, Acts 8.26-40), reading the gospel readings and other tasks during the Eucharistic service, and serving as the primary catechists for churches.

Deacons often served as "ambassadors" between churches. St. Ignatius, for example,

[56] Ignatius, *Epistle to the Trallians*, 2. (*ANF* 1).
[57] Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, 65. See also 67. (*ANF* 1).
[58] *The Apostolic Traditions*, 4.2, 8; 23.1, 12; 43. It is presumed to be written by Hippolytus of Rome, c. 215 AD.

requested that the Church of Philadephia

> …elect a deacon to act as an ambassador of God [for you, to Antioch], that he may rejoice along with them when they meet together and glorify the Name.[59]

In writing to the Ephesians, He prides Burrhus, an Ephesian deacon, among others who have been away from their church and serving alongside St. Ignatius[60]. In both of these accounts, it seems apparent that such "ambassadors" being deacons is somewhat incidental, it is still obvious that deacons often served in such ways.

Evangelism & Catechesis

At least two of the first deacons, Stephen and Philip, had vibrant evangelistic ministries. The story of St. Stephen is well known, and follows immediately after the ordination of the seven. We read about St. Philip and his ministry in Samaria in Acts chapter 8. After the Apostles came to the area and did what we now call "confirmation" for new converts (cf 8.14-17), the Holy Spirit directed Philip to go elsewhere. Upon arriving at the road between Jerusalem and Gaza, St. Philip met, evangelized, and baptized an Ethiopian. We then read the following:

> *When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away…Philip found himself at Azotus.*

Always the evangelistic opportunist, as Philip

> *Was passing through the region, he proclaimed the good news to all the town until he came to Caesarea. (Acts 8.39–40).*

There was a "gift" of evangelism, and an apparent office. Were all evangelists also deacons? Nothing suggests this. Were all deacons also evangelists? We can't confirm that, either. There is, however, an interesting but easy to miss detail that St. Paul gives in 1 Timothy 3:

> *Deacons…must hold fast to the mystery of the faith, with a clear conscience…for those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and a great boldness in the faith that is in Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 3.8, 13).*

First Timothy 3.8 says, in essence, that a deacon must be a Christian. We'd hope this is obvious, and that St. Paul would hold the same views for the bishop-priest. So, why bring it up

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[59] Ignatius, *Epistle to the Philadelphians*, 10.1. (*ANF* 1). The Philadelphian church had just come through an intense period of persecution. Apparently, the "nearest Churches" had sent "in some cases bishops, and in others presbyters and deacons." Perhaps the church had lost most of her ministers due to the persecution, and so other churches sent theirs as needed to fill in until Philadephia could restablize.

[60] Ignatius, *Epistle to the Ephesians*, 2. (*ANF* 1).

here? In part, because the diaconate is a "good works" and service-oriented office, the Apostle uses this as an opportunity to remind us where such good works and service originate.

I don't think this is the only reason why, however. The verse 8 introduces the office, and verse 13 closes it—they sandwich what comes between and I think, illuminate the contours of the office. How can one have a "great boldness in the faith" if they have not themselves experienced the work of the Holy Spirit? And what does it even mean to have "great boldness in the faith?" Throughout the News Testament, but especially the Acts of the Apostles, boldness of faith consistently refers to evangelism[61].

Evangelism is part of the diaconal ministry of "meeting physical and practical needs," or "benevolence." Here, we find a continuum between two extremes. Liberal churches have often jettisoned evangelism for meeting "felt" needs. Fundamentalist churches often jettison caring for "felt" needs for evangelism. The witness of Scripture is both/and not either/or. This confluence of evangelism and benevolence is often referred to as "mercy ministries.[62]"

Once again, evangelism and benevolence does not fall solely on the diaconate. This is the ministry of the church, to which all Christians are called and equipped (Ephesian 4). We are all sent out each Sunday into the world as a deaconing priesthood through the final blessing and dismal. Formalized ministries which serve these purposes can be—and I argue ideally are—lead by deacons who are exemplars of such things through their character and service.

Matthew 28.18-20, or the Great Commission, does not employ the word "evangelize," but "disciple:"

> *Jesus came and said to [the disciples], "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you."*

Evangelism is implied, of course, but the text goes on to explain how we disciple the nations: baptism and catechism. Again, this isn't solely on the deacon, it is the ministry of the church in the world. How helpful is it, however, to have proven, tested leaders who lead ministries of equipped parishioners to reach the nations and lead their initial catechesis?

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[61] Cf. (in their context) Acts 4.13, 29; 9.27, 29; 13.46; 14.3; 18.26; 19.8.

[62] Tim Keller's *Ministries of Mercy: The Call of the Jericho Road* is an excellent resource on the relationship between benevolence and evangelism.

The Question of Gender

Having considered the qualifications for the offices as well as their primary roles and functions, we now turn to discuss the debate on gender and ordination. Are Holy Orders restricted to men only or open to men and women?

We need to set a foundation for answering this question, which can obviously get heated fast. First, this discussion is limited, much like Scripture limits itself, to Holy Orders. Other areas of life inform this discussion, such as marriage, but we must be careful not to overly extrapolate what Scripture teaches to secular vocation and work dynamics which are largely tangential.

Second, we must recognize Scripture is concerned with justice and that involves pursuing gender equality and fairness. Holy Scripture teaches the absolute value, worth, and equality of all people, male and female, with the root of that teaching being our creation in the *imago dei*. This means that we must *de facto* reject any teaching that sees Holy Orders restricted to men based on any supposed inferiority of women. At the same time, if Scripture teaches equal-but-complementary roles for genders, then this is not an issue of "justice."[63]

Third, let us not jump to condescending labels for those who disagree with our particular interpretation of Scripture. The affirmation of women's ordination does not make one a "liberal" any more than it's rejection makes one hold to an "abusive patriarchialism." Do some who promote women's ordination deny the Scriptural gospel? Of course. Do some who reject women's ordination also participate in the abuse of power? Of course. These views are not causative, however, but correlative.

Summary of Positions

There are four major views on women's ordination:

1. Women are permitted to receive all Holy Orders.
2. Women are permitted to be ordained as priests and deacons, but not bishops.
3. Women are permitted to be ordained as deacons, but not priests or bishops.
4. Women are not permitted to receive any Holy Orders.

[63] For example, we cannot suppose that the restriction of child-bearing to women assumes the inferiority of men. This is not a "justice" issue. Or, in terms of Holy Orders themselves, the diaconate is not inferior to the presbytery because the stewardship of doctrine and sacraments fall to the bishop-priests alone, nor are bishops superior to presbyters because they alone are granted authority to confirm and ordain.

The position held by our diocese, which I affirm as the Scriptural teaching, is that women are permitted to be ordained as deacons, but that the offices of priest and bishop are restricted to men.

1 Timothy 2.11-15, Context, and Authority

First Timothy 2.11-15 provides a necessary context for St. Paul's discussion of the qualifications in chapter 3:

> *Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness, [but] I do not permit a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. Yet she will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control (ESV)*

In 1 Timothy 2.1-7, St. Paul instructs the church regarding how they should pray when they are together as the church. His main point is that prayers should be given for all people without distinction. In particular, he reminds the Ephesian church they should be praying for those who have governmental authority over them. The reason he gives for this is that Christ has made salvation available to everyone. Even Nero is not beyond God's saving power. In 1 Timothy 2.8-10, the Apostle then discusses issues the church has had while praying—namely, that people are disrupting the prayers of the church with arguments and the flaunting of prestige and social status.

The concept of authority, raised in 2.1-7, is then brought back up in verse 11. This passage bridges the gap between "authority" and "leadership in the church" which St. Paul takes up in 1 Timothy 3.1-13. Therefore, the issues of "learning and quietness" and "authority" with respect to gender has more to do with Holy Orders (3.1-13) than they do with general church life and behavior (2.1-10).

Interpretive Issues

In order to interpret this (admittedly difficult) passage, we need to clarify a few issues. The first issue is whether St. Paul's prohibitions and commands are generally applied to all male/females in the church or whether he has marriage specifically in view. The second issue is whether St. Paul is giving these commands specifically to the Ephesian church in order to correct a local problem, or whether he is making a universal argument that applies to all churches at all

times.

"Woman…Man" or "Wife…Husband?"

Are the prohibitions found in verses 11-12 for all women in general, or are they specifically to the relationship between wives and their husbands? The root of this question lies in the Greek terms used, as (like many Ancient Languages) there is one word that can mean "woman" or "wife" and one that can mean "man" or "husband." Context determines which translation should be used and there are specific grammatical clues[64] one can look for in order to decide. None of those grammatical clues appear in the present passage, including verses 7-12.

Furthermore, the arguments of verses 7-10 only make sense if we take "woman" and "man" generically. Surely, we wouldn't say only husbands should refrain from arguing during corporate prayer; nor that only wives should be more concerned with their character and good works than external beauty. Given this context, a shift from the general to the specific in verses 11 and 12 would need to be obvious.

Universal or Particular?

The first question regarded the scope of engendered people; the second regards the scope of time and place. Was there something particular happening in Ephesus that limits St. Paul's teaching in 2.11-12 to that church at that time, or is it general for all churches at all times?

Certainly, the New Testament epistles have an *ad hoc* nature; they were written to address specific issues happening in particular places. Furthermore, the epistles' authors often gave applications which were culturally relevant. This shouldn't make us nervous because that is good pastoral practice. What is key to understand is that culturally particular applications arise from universal, foundational truths.[65]

St. Paul's argument in verses 11-12 may very well be a response to a situation occurring in

[64] These clues include:
1. The presence of pronouns to modify the term, i.e. "her man" for "husband" or "his woman" for wife.
2. The presence of the modifier *idios*, which means "one's own." This is essentially the same as (1).
3. The presence of the definite article ("the") that goes with the term with a context suggesting marriage is in view; "this particular woman in the marriage relationship."

[65] For example, see St. Paul's discussion on men with long hair and women wearing head coverings in 1 Corinthians 11. These are cultural applications of scriptural teaching regarding authority and gender. Cf. Tomas R. Schreiner, "Head Coverings, Prophecies, and the Trinity: 1 Corinthians 11.2-16", http://web.archive.org/web/20200928094645/http://d3pi8hptl0qhh4.cloudfront.net/documents/tschreiner/RBMW_5.pdf.

Ephesus—all of 1 Timothy is just that, after all. However, when St. Paul gives the reason for his argument in verses 13-15, he doesn't ground it in Ephesian culture nor a specific problem, but in Genesis 1-2. This alerts us that Paul's teaching is to be taken universally rather than limited to the Ephesian problem.

Interpreting 1 Timothy 2.11-15

With these two scopes in mind, let's now interpret the passage itself.

Verse 11 is a transitional sentence which changes the topic from disruptions during corporate prayer to the concept of authority. "Women," says the Apostle, "should learn quietly with all submissiveness." The immediate context is the posture of someone who is learning. What is that posture? Quiet submission to the teacher. Before we even consider the question of authority, we should note that this is the assumed posture of *every* "learner," whether male or female, old or young.[66] The point, that corporate worship shouldn't be disrupted, is carried over from verses 7-10.

Why does St. Paul single out women parishioners if this posture is expected of all? Because verse 11 is not just a transition *from* the idea of disruption, but also a transition *to* the idea of authority with respect to the church's teaching ministry. The church is called to be a steward of sound doctrine; who, then, is tasked with authoritatively teaching the church? The Apostle answers:

> *I do not permit a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man; rather she is to remain quiet. (1 Timothy 2.12)*

Culture vs. Creation

Is the Apostle simply parroting a patriarchal culture? Isn't scripture just a product of a time that thought women were inferior? The problem with these questions is that St. Paul has already shown himself to be counter-cultural in verse 11. He affirms that women should be learning sound doctrine from Holy Scripture, something which some sects of 1st century Judaism rejected. Furthermore, the gospels hinge their eyewitness testimony of the resurrection on a group of

[66] I find the discussion on 1 Timothy 2.11 in *"A Report of the Study Concerning the Ordination of Women: Undertaken by the Anglican Mission in America"* disappointing, though the paper is otherwise excellent if lacking in nuance. The argument *against* women's ordination takes their interpretation far beyond the text when they argue that verse 11 is specific to women due to St. Paul's using the word "submission," which they argue is *always* used of women. This simply isn't true. Ephesians 5.21 stresses mutual submission between husband and wife even as it presents complementary roles in marriage in verses 21-23, including the authority of the husband and submission of the wife.There *is* a mutual submission, but how one submits to the other in a marriage relationship is complementary.

women. This would have been utterly rejected by the Jewish oral law of the time.

> The oath of testimony is practiced with regard to men but not with regard to women… (*The Mishna*, Shevuot 4.1)
> Whence is this deduced [my note: Men rather than women]? From what the rabbis taught, it reads [Deut. xix. 17]: "Then shall the two men, who have the controversy, stand before the Lord," etc.; this means the witnesses. [67]

It does not do, then, to blame St. Paul's teaching in 1 Timothy 2.11-12 on "the culture." This becomes even more obvious when we look at the Apostle's argument from Genesis 1-2 in verses 13-15. The argument of verse 13 is that Adam was created first, and then Eve. The order is theologically significant. In St. Paul's inspired interpretation of the passage, he reveals that the order is tied to authority. God created Adam first as a sign of his authority. Yet, this order says nothing of superiority/inferiority, only function and role. Given the Apostle's, and Holy Scripture's, willingness to contradict patriarchal culture, we would assume that they would willingly do so here if God's design said otherwise.

1 Corinthians Parallel Passages

Further evidence that the prohibition of 1 Timothy 2.12 is universal is that the same teaching appears in epistles written to other churches. We find a parallel passage in 1 Corinthians 11 and 14. First Corinthians 14.34-36 says,

> [As in all the churches of the saints,][68] *women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says. If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak at church.*

This passage seems, at first, to be even more restrictive than 1 Timothy 2.11-15! However, this is why 1 Corinthians 11 is also important, for it gives us a context in which to understand 14.34-36. In 1 Corinthians 11.5 we see that the Apostle explains the *manner* in which women are to pray and prophesy in the corporate gathering. Later, in 11.31, we are told that prophecy exists for both encouragement and *instruction*. How can it be that women are encouraged to prophesy, which includes instruction, yet cannot teach men, yet further still be silent completely while also praying? How in the world do we unravel this?

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[67] *The Babylonian Talmud*, Book 9, Shevuot, ch. IV. Translation by Michael L. Rodkinson, 1918.

[68] The phrase "As in all the churches of the saints" is bracketed off because there is debate on whether it should go with verse 33 or introduce verse 34.

First, 1 Corinthians 11.5ff tells us that the command for women to be "silent" or "quiet" in the churches is not an absolute prohibition.[69] They were indeed encouraged to pray and to prophesy. Second, the prohibition against teaching is with respect to the authoritative teaching of the Church only. The early church understood the instruction which comes from prophecy as a lesser or lower authority than the proper teaching and preaching ministry of the church.

The context of 1 Corinthians 14 bears this out. According to verses 29-33, St. Paul instructs the church regarding how to prophesy: how many should prophesy, how to do so in an orderly way, and when to stop or withhold giving a prophecy. This means that prophecy was controllable rather than ecstatic, and thus "subject" to the prophets control (verse 32). Once those prophecies were given, verse 29 says that each prophecy must be weighed and judged for its validity. Who gives such authoritative validation? Likely, bishop-priests or those who are acting under their authority.[70]

Thus, women are not prohibited from prophesying—even if it is instructional—because the prophet (man or woman) is not exercising authority, but submitting themselves to the authority of the bishop-priests who judges the prophecies' validity.

Quiet Submission and Authority in 1 Timothy 2.11-12

Bringing all of this context back to our passage in 1 Timothy, we see that St. Paul's prohibition against women exercising authority over men is with respect to the authority granted to the preaching and teaching authority of the Church. In other words, the stewardship of sound doctrine. The command for women to be silent in the church is only with respect to this ministry; it is not an absolute silence; otherwise, St. Paul's teaching that women should both pray and

[69] The remark "let them ask their husbands at home" in verses 34-36 is not a contradiction of 1 Timothy 2.11, where St. Paul encourages women to learn in the corporate setting. In the context of 1 Corinthians 14, it means that if the woman is confused about a particular prophecy or why it was judged to be valid or invalid, then a conversation should be had at home to clarify. Why? Likely, to avoid disrupting the church service. One question can often lead to another, and one person's questions can lead to five more people asking their own questions. Worship would grind to a halt in order to address every question that may come up. In this light, these verses have the same concern as 1 Timothy 2.7-12, that worship would not be disruptive.

[70] This discussion brings up some interesting and important aspects of the "authority" of a prophecy. One might expect that, since prophecy is given by God, it would be highly authoritative. As noted, however, the utterances of the prophetic gift must necessarily be a "lesser" authority, because it takes someone to judge and validate the utterance. The judgment of the church, then, is necessarily a "higher" authority.

The issue of order, limit, and control in verses 32-33 also show that prophecies, even valid ones, carry a limited authority. Verse 29 places a limit of 2 to 3 prophecies at a given time. Verse 30 says that if a new person is given some revelation while another is prophesying, the first person should stop! Interestingly, if prophecy was of a higher authority, we would not expect such limitations to be placed on them.

prophesy in the gathered congregation is nonsensical.

Women's Ordination to the Diaconate, but not the Priesthood

Given the above interpretation of relevant passages, and their contextual use as introduction to 1 Timothy 3, we can say that the interpretation most faithful to scripture is that the office of bishop-priest is restricted to men only. That same restriction, then, does not apply the diaconate. Women who feel called to the vocational diaconate should be both affirmed and encouraged in pursuing Holy Orders. As such, we should be reminded that the diaconal office is a full and equal order along with the office of the presbyter. The difference is not one of superiority and inferiority, but only of complementary ministries and roles.

Does this interpretation agree with Holy Scripture? Church History? The answer to both is "yes." We'll look to 1 Timothy 3, Romans 16, and a brief look at the post-apostolic era of the church.

1 Timothy 3

We can affirm this based on the functions and roles of the offices themselves. The bishop-priest, and thus the offices of bishop and presbyter today, are those offices which are called to steward sound doctrine through the authoritative teaching of the church. This is explicitly what St. Paul prohibits for women. The diaconal office, however, is not charged with authoritative teaching but with leading the church through service. There is no restrictions on this office other than being called by the Holy Spirit.

Looking to 1 Timothy 3.8-13, we see no reason to restrict the diaconate to men only. In fact, the text itself speaks to women deacons:

> *Deacons likewise must be serious, [etc.]…Women likewise must be serious [etc.]… (1 Timothy 3.8, 11)*

Again, there is a debate as to whether verse 11 should read "women" or "wives." If the latter, then verse 11 means the wives of deacons also have their own qualifications but no particular office. If the former, then this text is affirming women deacons.

1. There are no grammatical clues suggesting it be read as "wives." In fact, to be clear, St. Paul could have written "Deacon's wives" very easily, but did not.
2. It's weird to the point of absurdity that deacons' wives would need to pass a character test, but not the wives of bishop-priests. This is especially true given the availability for

scandal that comes with the latter office that does not seem as inherent to the diaconal office.

3. The syntax of "women likewise…" parallels the syntax of "deacons likewise…" which signals a change in subject (bishop to deacon, deacon to women) but not context (Holy Orders). Here, the subject change is male deacons to female deacons; Deacon's wives would retain the same subject—deacons.
4. The jilted way in which the subject changes from "deacons" to "women deacons" makes sense in light of a male-only bishop-priest office. It's almost as if the Apostle interrupts his own thought and says "And lest you think the diaconate is restricted only to men also, women deacons, like their male counterparts, must be…"

Romans 16.1-2

This reading of 1 Timothy 3.8-13 seems to be confirmed by Romans 16.1-2:

> *I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the church at Cenchreae, so that you may welcome her in the Lord as is fitting for the saints, and help her in whatever she may require from you, for she has been a benefactor of many and of myself as well.*

Deacon, or servant? We can't be completely sure, but a few clues make me think that Phoebe was indeed a female deacon. The first is that she is called a "benefactor," which has undertones of the diaconal ministry. It seems that Phoebe may have helped in the disbursement of finances while also being a contributor of large amounts of her wealth for that disbursement.

Second, the Apostle has sent Phoebe to Rome in an official capacity. He uses the official terminology of "commendation" in introducing her to the Roman church. As we saw from church history, deacons often served as ambassadors between churches, as did bishops and presbyters. It's generally believed that Phoebe delivered St. Paul's letter herself. If so, then she also likely helped answer any questions and explained what Paul meant if parts of the letter were unclear to the Roman church.

Church History

It is universally accepted by both the East and the West that the early church accepted the ordination of women to the diaconate. This practice was very popular in the East as men and women were culturally segregated. This allowed women deacons to pastorally minister to other women in ways that men could not.

Our earliest evidence for women deacons comes from a surprising source—the pagan Pliny

the Younger. In a letter written to Emperor Trajan, ca. 111 AD, Pliny expresses his concern as to whether it is legal to kill Christians based upon their confession of faith alone or if some other cause was necessary. In this letter, he wrote that

> I judged it so much more necessary to extract the real truth, with the assistance of torture, from two female slaves, who were styled deaconesses…[71]

The word "deaconesses" translates Pliny's Latin, which takes the feminine form; The actual feminized term "deaconess" didn't appear in the Greek language until the 3rd century work *The Apostolic Constitutions*. In Koine Greek (which the New Testament was written in), the term "deacon" was used of both males and females. Here's texts from the *Constitutions*:

> For [bishops] are your high priests, as the presbyters are priests, and your present deacons instead of your Levites; as are also your readers, your singers, your porters, your deaconesses, your widows, your virgins, and your orphans. But He who is above all these is the High Priest.[72]

> Let also the deaconess be honoured by you in the place of the Holy Ghost, and not do or say anything without the deacon; as neither does the Comforter say or do anything of Himself, but gives glory to Christ by waiting for His pleasure. And as we cannot believe on Christ without the teaching of the Spirit, so let not any woman address herself to the deacon or bishop without the deaconess.[73]

Note that the order of "deaconess" is not introduced here, as if it were an innovative office the church wouldn't recognize. Rather, it speaks of deaconesses as something already well-known. Several local councils attempted to ban the practice of ordaining deaconesses, but the teachings of these councils were never universally accepted. For example:

> Deaconesses are by no means to be ordained. If there are any who have already been ordained, let them submit their heads to the benediction that is granted to the laity.[74]

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[71] Pliny the Younger, *Letters*, Vol 2., Book X, Letter xcvi, 405. Translated by William Melmouth, published date 1915.

[72] *The Apostolic Constitutions*, Book II, § IV, XXV (*ANF* VII).

[73] *Ibid*., XXVI.

[74] First Council of Orange, Canon 26. Note, the Council of Orange which deals with Pelagius is actually the Second Council of Orange, held in 529. This Council was held in 441.

St. John Chyrostom, in his homily regarding 1 Timothy 3.8-16, speaks plainly regarding women deacons in verse 11:

> Some have thought that this is said of women generally, but it is not so, for why should he introduce anything about women to interfere with his subject? He is speaking of those who hold the rank of Deaconesses.[75]

Summary

Holy Scripture restricts the offices of bishops and priests to men only. This restriction is not due to any ontological inferiority within women; women are as capable at performing the duties of the office as men. Rather, it is due to God's intention that men hold authority within those spheres which mirror the relationship between God and his own family. We are not told why this vocational authority was given to men rather than women, but it is inline with God's revelation of himself in history through the incarnation of the man Jesus.[76] This cannot be explained away as merely a fact of "patriarchal cultures." Scripture, which is a trans-cultural revelation, has no problem asserting itself against the predominate culture of its times when necessary.

There is no such distinction made in the diaconal office, however. The diaconate is not granted ecclesial authority, and therefore not restricted in any way. That women are valid recipients of diaconal orders is the plain testimony of Church history as well.[77]

Questions for Reflection

1. Why do you think that scripture focuses on the character of a minister rather than their abilities?

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[75] Chrysostom, Homily XI (*NPNF* 1/13).

[76] Things get tricky when we try and parse out a "logical" order to God's decrees rather than a "temporal" order. God's decrees are from eternity past with no temporal priority; e.g., the sending of the Son was before the foundation of the world. There is no temporal "before" which we can point to say that the Triune God determined to send the Son to become a man, therefore men are granted authority. This would have to be a logical order. But then, God's decree to create human beings would have to be logically prior to his decree to send the Son to save human beings from their sin.

[77] Though it must be noted that there *is* debate as to whether deaconesses received ordination or not; The presence of ordination rites for deaconesses in the early church, along with Scripture's mention of women within the discussion of the office of deacon in 1 Timothy 3 suggests there is no reason to make such a fine distinction of ordained deacons, but unordained deaconesses. Scripturally, since we see the pattern of the diaconate introduced with ordination, and then see later that the office is open to women without remark on the ordination service, then we must assume, canonically, that Holy Scripture permits the ordination of women to the office rather than feeling a need to reduce the deaconess to quasi-office somewhere between ordained leadership and laity.

2. How would you articulate the differences between a bishop, a presbyter, and a deacon? Do you believe these are valid offices? Why or why not?
3. Your friend is a part of a denomination when ordains women as pastors; He/she is interested in Anglicanism and, while looking through our diocesan website, sees a position paper that says the offices of bishop and presbyter are restricted to men only. He/she asks you, "Isn't it misogynistic to not allow women to fulfill their calling in becoming a bishop or priest?" How would you respond?
4. In our *Fundamental Declarations of the Province*, declaration 3 says:

   "We confess the godly historic Episcopate as an inherent part of the apostolic faith and practice, and therefore as integral to the fullness and unity of the Body of Christ."

   A Baptist pastor becomes convinced of Anglican theology and practice, steps down from his pastorate, and joins your parish. In the midst of reorienting his family to a new community, new friendships, and a new way to worship, he's also having a bit of an existential crisis. He wonders if the many years he spent pastoring outside of Apostolic Succession had any validity, and therefore any meaning or was it all just a waste. How would you minister to this new member?

Week 6: Sound Relationships – Being the Family of God

Collect For Good Friday

Almighty God, we beseech you graciously to behold this your family, for whom our Lord Jesus Christ was willing to be betrayed and given into the hands of sinners, and to suffer death upon the Cross; who now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen**

Scripture

1 Timothy 5.1-2; Titus 2.2-8, 10.

In the last few weeks, we've looked at how the gospel is the foundation for all sound doctrine, and how the leadership of the church functions as the stewards of sound doctrine and exemplars of the behavior sound doctrine produces. This week, we now turn to look at what St. Paul teaches us with regards of being part of God's family.

If you remember from 1 Timothy 3.14-16, the Apostle said this he wrote his epistle to Timothy so that "one ought to know how to behave in God's household" (v15). He then immediately grounds that statement in a proclamation of the gospel, which is the "mystery from which true godliness springs" (v16). The gospel brings the church into being. Repentance and baptism is how one becomes a member of God's family. The Holy Spirit doesn't just stop at our conversion, however. He continuously works in us to conform us into the image of Christ (Romans 8.28-30). Our task this week is to consider what it looks like to be faithful members of

God's family as we all become conformed into the image of Christ together.

Teach What is Consistent with Sound Doctrine

Titus 2.1

We'll begin with St. Paul's charge to Titus in Titus 1.16-2.1:

> *[The false teachers] profess to know God, but they deny them by their actions. They are desirable, disobedient, unfit for any good work. But as for you, teach what is consistent with sound doctrine.*

As we've seen so far, doctrine taught produces fruit; sound doctrine produces good fruit, unsound doctrine produces rotten. Fruit is doctrine made manifest. This faith, then, is a fruit of the Spirit's work in us and it manifests itself through behavior such as confession and repentance. The Apostle teaches that the Law, when correctly taught and properly understood, brings conviction regarding behavior that doesn't "conform to the glorious gospel of the blessed God" (1 Timothy 1.8-11).

St. Paul's teaching in 1 Timothy 1.8-11 is paralleled in Titus 1.16–2.1. The false teachers are proclaiming to believe in the triune God of Scripture, yet their actions—their behavior—betray their confession. Their lives are lived in a way that does not conform to the gospel. Thus, the Apostle charges Titus to teach "what is consistent with sound doctrine." What follows in Titus 2–3, then, is behavior "consistent with sound doctrine," and which "conforms to the glorious gospel." In other words, good works. How should we think about this behavior that is consistent with, or conforms to, the gospel?

Let me suggest this: "Holy Spirit empowered kingdom ethics." What does that mean? The gospel is the announcement that God's kingdom has come in the person of Jesus Christ. We are barred from kingdom because of our sin and rebellion. We are able to receive citizenship through the life, death, resurrection, and resurrection of Christ. Like earthly kingdoms, God's kingdom has a set of ethics. Following ethics do not make us citizens, but they are evidence of our citizenship. They are fruit of the Holy Spirit working within us, who enables and empowers us to live them out.

The category of "behavior consistent with the gospel" or "Holy Spirit empowered kingdom ethics" that we are looking this week is our relationships to one another as the church. Behavior

that is consistent with being the family and household of God.

Our Truest Family

God's Faithful Family

Mark 3.31–35; Luke 12.51-53.

First Timothy 5.1-2 and Titus 2 are really St. Paul's commentary on Jesus' teaching found in The Gospel According to St. Mark 3.31-35. In Mark 3.1-30, Jesus has been going throughout the region, healing and working other miracles. He then returns home, but the crowds followed him so he continues teaching them. We then get this scene:

> *The Jesus' mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent someone in to call him. A crowd was sitting around him, and they told him, "Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you."*
> *"Who are my mother and brothers?" He asked.*
> *Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother." (Mark 3.31-35).*

Is Jesus rejecting his biological family? As St. Paul might say, "By no means!" Rather, Jesus is situating his biological family in it's proper place according to what it means to be part of the kingdom of God. The blood of Jesus and the water of baptism, which holds the church together, are far stronger than the bonds of biology. We are united by having Christ in us through the Holy Spirit. The greatest, most important relationships that we have is to one another as adopted sons and daughters of God. This upheaval of relationships is key to understanding what it means to be the church, to be part of God's faithful family.

This is what Jesus means when he teaches the very difficult truth in Luke 12.51-53:

> *Do you think that I have come to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division! From now on five in one household will be divided, three against two and two against three; they shall be divided:*
> *father against son*
> *and son against father,*
> *mother against daughter,*
> *and daughter against mother,*
> *mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law*
> *and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.*

What is dividing this parabolic family? Their faith in Jesus. This was especially true in 1st century Palestine, when a conversion to Christianity in the family meant a direct clash with the family catechesis of Moses and the Prophets apart from belief in Jesus as the Messiah.

When St. Paul teaches about what it looks like to be God's faithful family in the Pastoral Epistles, he casts our relationships in familial identities. Thus he speaks of "Older men" as fathers, "older women" as mothers, "younger men" as brothers, and "younger women" as sisters.

Older Men & Women — The Fathers and Mothers of the Church

1 Timothy 5.1b, 2b; Titus 2.2-4a.

> *Do not rebuke an older man, but encourage him as you would a father… [encourage] older women as mothers… (1 Timothy 5.1a, 2a; ESV)*
> *[Teach] older men to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness. Likewise, tell the older women likewise to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to drink. They are to teach what is good so that they may encourage the young women…(Titus 2.2-4a)*

Familial Identity & Behavior

Whether they are single or married, with children and grandchildren or without, older men and women in the church are our fathers and mothers. What Holy Scripture applies to parenthood, applies also to you older men and women, who "parent" the church under God's ordained leadership. What Holy Scripture teaches children about honoring and loving their parents applies to those of us who are younger.

If 1 Timothy 5 speaks to our identities in the church family, Titus 2 speaks to how we live those identities out. Older men should be sober-minded or temperate, dignified or serious, self-control, and sound in faith, love, and endurance. Likewise, older women should be reverent, not slanderous, and not enslaved to wine. These traits should sound familiar. We find the same traits in the qualifications of bishop-priests and deacons in 1 Timothy 3. Again, church leaders aren't called to ministry because they are "super" Christians, but rather they are qualified by God's calling and by living the Christian life rightly.

Younger Men and Women — The Brothers & Sisters, Sons & Daughters of the Church

1 Timothy 5.1b, 2b; Titus 2.4-8

To the younger men and women, St. Paul writes:

> *[Do not rebuke] younger men* [but encourage them] *as brothers… [encourage] younger women as sisters, in all purity. (1 Timothy 5.1b, 2b; ESV)*
> *[Teach] the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure,* [carrying out household responsibilities]*, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled.*
> *Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled. Show yourself [Titus] in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us. (Titus 4-8b, ESV)*

Familial Identity & Behavior

While St. Paul mentions that younger men and women are brothers and sisters, he is writing from the perspectives of Timothy and Titus, themselves "younger men." We would not be remiss to say, for "older" men and women that they should see younger people as sons and daughters. What this tells us are that the categories "older" and "younger" are somewhat relative.

Let's take on the obvious elephants in the literary room first. This passage has somewhat of a cultural assumption, which is that most younger women are going to be married and have children. Such passages in no way denigrate singleness, it was normative situation at the time. The church should uphold and celebrate a high view of marriage and children.We must be careful, however, in doing so, to not to give the unintentional message that the "singles" are a second-class citizen in God's kingdom. St. Paul desired *more* singles in the Corinthian Church (1 Corinthians 7)!

I'm not saying this is an issue at our particular parish. At least, I haven't heard any such thing. It is something I've heard often throughout my Christian life, however. So, while I think we're doing well here, I want to say, let's continue to do well!

There's another reason I bring this issue up however. What value does this passage hold for those who are single? Or those who are married but unable to have children? First, I hope you'll hear me and not think I'm making light of such situations. There is much pain, grief, waiting, and struggle in situations such as these, and I in no way want to ignore that. I, Pastor Nick, and

so many others would love to talk with you and pray for you if and when you need it. Second, one of the things that this passage teaches is that there is no such thing as ecclesial childlessness. We are not only all sons and daughters of others in the church, we are all the fathers and mothers to those younger than we are in the church as well.

This may be a weird concept if it's the first time you're hearing it in this way. That's ok. In a culture that values individual autonomy as much as ours, it's can be weird, even frustrating, to think we are not wholly our own but that we belong to one another. Once you see it, it's everywhere in Holy Scripture. It's why we're called to lay down our own preferences for the sake of others, to

> *do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. (Philippians 2.3-4)*

The "generational wars" of secular culture don't belong in the church. As sons and daughters, we should honor our fathers and mothers in the faith. At the same time, St. Paul tells Timothy and Titus that they shouldn't let anyone look down on them due to their youth (1 Timothy 4.12). Fathers and mothers, I can't tell you how many of us who are younger want someone with wisdom and experience to help us.

That last point brings us to our next subject.

Discipleship in the Church

1 Timothy 5.1a

> *Do not rebuke…but encourage (ESV)*

The Tone of Discipleship

The opening verse of 1 Timothy 5 speaks to the difference in tone and posture the church is to take towards each other in contrast to the false teachers. Regarding the false teachers, St. Paul teaches that they must be rebuked (1 Timothy 5.20, Titus 1.13) and silenced (Titus 1.11). Here, the Apostle is just as clear; when it comes to those who are faithful members of God's family, we are not to rebuke, but to encourage. That St. Paul warns that the family of God shouldn't be rebuked, but encouraged, assumes that situations arise in which our go-to tone and attitude wouldn't be rebuke. The difference between the two is one of attitude, motive, and tone.

As I've said before, when shepherds of God's church swing the crook it should be the wolves who flinch, not the sheep.

This doesn't mean, of course, that correction shouldn't happen in the family of God. Correction, speakingly plainly about our sins to one another, confession, repentance, and forgiveness are all things that should be happening. Because of our sinfulness, such conversations will often bring conflict with it. This is to be expected, but it should always be met with the expectation to resolve that conflict in ways that are grace-informed, charitable to one another, and glorifying to God.

Examples of Rebuke

Two scriptural scenes come to mind when considering rebuke. The first is Jesus's judgment against the Scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23. There are few places in scripture which feature harsher rebukes. Yet, these rebukes are specifically leveled against false teachers of the faith. They were hypocrites who led people astray from God's graciousness culminating in their rejection of Jesus as the true Messiah.

The second is St. Paul's rebuke of St. Peter in Galatians 2.11-14. But, wait—aren't we called to not rebuke God's family? Consider, however, why St. Paul rebuked St. Peter:

> *I opposed [Peter] to his face because he stood self-condemned…the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him…when I saw that they were not acting consistently with the truth of the gospel, I said to [Peter] before them all…*

The Apostle uses the same language here of St. Peter as he does the false teachers in the pastoral epistles! He was "hypocritical" (cf. 1 Timothy 4.2), "self-condemned" (cf. Titus 3.11), and "not acting consistently with the truth of the gospel" (cf. 1 Timothy 1.10-11). What we see in Galatians 2.11-14 is St. Paul's teaching regarding false teachers in action, and it resulted in the repentance and restoration of St. Peter!

Examples of Encouragement

Compare these scenes with the multitude upon multitude of times Jesus spoke to others during his three-year ministry. How many examples of compassionate correction we find! The woman at the well (John 4.1-42), Zaccheus (Luke 19.1-10), the unnamed woman with the alabaster jar (Luke 7.36-50), and on and on throughout the gospels. In each of these stories there is an explicit or implicit correction which has occurred, yet the differences between these and the

above are night-and-day. Each of these were at various stages of belief and unbelief by the time we meet them, yet in each they became or were part of God's family. They knew, or came to know, their sinfulness and brokenness. They were encouragingly led towards, rather than rebuked (harshly) into, repentance.

Discipleship Dynamics and Relationships

The Better, but not Easier Way of Discipleship

Matthew 28.18–20 concisely teaches what the ministry of the Church is between the first and second comings of Christ.

> *Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.*

What we have been talking about so far is the better way of discipleship. But note, it's not an easier way. I'll give you the first of two examples from my own life, with the caveat that you understand I don't do this "perfectly." Far from it. In attempting to disciple others, at times the tables have turned and I've been discipled by them when they've stood up to say that I've missed the point, or otherwise haven't cared well for them. There's been times that, the disciplee has had to correct me and call me to repentance. Friends, this is right and good. This is how relationships work in the family of God.

The first example is from a time that I met weekly with 2 to 3 other guys to talk about life, encourage each other, confess to one another, and remind each other of the gospel. These meetings were a "safe space" in the sense that we tried, unsuccessfully at times, to ensure that our "hearts were open, all desires known, and no secrets were hid." We felt a freedom to confess anything to one another, because we knew our love for one another, and that any correction would come from a place of encouragement to repentance and the preaching of the gospel.

We started meeting as a group of three. The catalyst for meeting was the looming divorce that one of us was heading towards, like a rowboat near a waterfall. This friend's spouse was in an adulterous relationship, and pursuing divorce in order to be with the one with whom she was committing adultery with. All the while, she was hurling verbal and emotional abuse towards our

friend, who, in obedience to Christ, was calling her to repentance and seeking restoration.

Now, much of our time together had a focus on caring for our friend. We spent much time reminding him of his identity in Christ, contra the identities attempting to form because abuse, or the identities formed by a failed marriage. When the divorce eventually went through, that adultery and abandonment are precisely why the exclusion clauses exist; we spoke of God's love for him, and that, reminded him that God was not angry with him.

These conversations were the majority of our time together for the first year we met. But this wasn't the only types of conversations we had. There were times when, despite the evil that was being forced upon him, we had to given correction and encourage repentance. Some of my hardest times of ministry has been calling on my friend to repent of this or that sinful thought, attitude, or action at a time that he was suffering through unspeakable evil.Of course, at times, he would push back or be frustrated. There was conflict. But imagine if this time was spent in rebuke, rather than encouragement? What if we tied how God felt about him in that moment to his obedience or disobedience, rather than reminding him of the gospel and Christ's love for him in the midst of his own sin and hers.

Did we do it perfectly? No. There were times our tone was way off. There were times when we were trying to "fix" him rather than listen to him, and we missed the point entirely. There was repentance all around. Now, imagine a moment where we did not love our friend well. When he had to correct us, even in the midst of all this other pain, and forgave us. Friends, this isnot an easier way, but it is a better way of discipleship.

Family Dynamics and Discipleship

You may have picked this up already, but St. Paul's vision of the Church as God's faithful family is itself a model of discipleship. This comes out particularly in Titus 2.3-5:

> *The older women…are to teach what is good, so that they may encourage the young women… (Titus 2.3-4a)*

Just as the biological family in scripture is called to train up their children in the Lord, so the same dynamics are at play in the family of God. The primary transmission of the faith is from older Christians to the younger, from one generation to the next. This isn't the only way, of course. St. Paul calls Titus to serve as a model and exemplar to the young men, his

contemporaries, for example (Titus 2.7-8). In my above story, those of us who met together were of generally the same age. But, the in-laws of one of those men were parents for all of us. He and his wife even did my and my wife's pre-marital counseling.

There's a tension, however, in how we view the church as God's family. First, we can't import our own biological family dynamics and make that the model by which we understand the church. Each of us, even those who come from the model Christian families, come from broken and sin-stained homes. It's easy to have our view of the church, and even God himself, formed by our experiences with our own family. For example, I have never met my father and for much of my life, that role has not been fulfilled. I have at times, and still struggle with, importing an expectation of abandonment onto the church and God himself because of this. We can't bring the brokenness of our own families into the church.

Second, and at the same time, we cannot expect the church to live up to our expectations of being perfect. We are, as the church, still a family of broken sinners. We will fail one another. By God's grace, after becoming a Christian, I have been given many fathers. I've already mentioned one of them. If I were to believe that any one of them wouldn't "let me down," or "meet my expectations," then I've put them in an impossible position. I would be playing God, giving them my own law; and I cannot offer any gospel to save them. We make terrible gods.

This, then, is the tension: we cannot view others as the family of God through the lens of the brokenness of our own families. At the same time, we cannot the church to the impossible standard of perfection. What's the answer to this tension? Grace. The gospel. Encouragement, not rebuke. First Corinthians 13 gives us a practical example of the tone St. Paul is calling us to:

> *Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. (1 Corinthians 13.4-7)*

Let this be the tone of our family conversations.

The Reputation of the Church

Three times in Titus 2, St. Paul gives us a missiological reason for the church to live out it's identity with appropriate behaviors, all fueled by grace for one another:

> *…So that the word of God may not be discredited (v5)*

> *…[so that] any opponent will be to shame, having nothing evil to say of us (v8)*
> *…so that in everything they may be an ornament to the doctrine of God our Savior (v10)*

We've mentioned several times that the false teachers have negatively impact the reputation of the church and the gospel. This is because false doctrine produces bad fruit. One of the best apologetics we can offer for the church is how we relate to one another in the church. Our unity, Jesus taught, is efficacious for the spread and acceptance of the gospel (John 17.23).

Discrediting The Gospel

Titus 2.5b

> *…that the word of God may not be discredited.*

Does not the prophet Isaiah tell us that God's word does not return back to him without accomplishing his purpose (Isaiah 55.11)? Is not God sovereign over all? How, then, can we have the audacity to say that how we treat each other as the church discredits the word of God? Well, we ourselves cannot have such audacity if the very word of God inscripturated did not say so first. God's sovereignty does not invalidate our moral culpability.

God ordains the means as well as the ends. This is good news, because it means that God uses even our most fumbled efforts of sharing the gospel with others. It's his power to save, not ours! Imagine, for a moment, trying to share the gospel with someone whose only interaction with the church is through how Christians relate to one another on social media. This is one area where the unbelieving world is able to see our family dynamic at work—and it's not very welcoming. Why would anyone want to leave behind their affirming and welcoming communities to join what they see online?

Here's the point where the "hypocritical" critique does hit home. Not in the sense that we are sinners, which shouldn't surprise anyone given our message. It's when we preach a gospel of grace and forgiveness on one hand, and adopt the attitude of the Pharisee who prayed, "I thank God that I am not like them" on the other. Who would want to accept a message of grace when the ones proclaiming it don't give grace to another another? The opposite is also true. The gospel is much more attractive when the church proclaiming God's grace lives in light of that grace by showing that same grace to one another. Changed lives are our most powerful testimony, not in the sense that we are no longer sinful but in the sense that we don't react at all in the same way

now when someone sins against us.

Discrediting Ourselves

Titus 2.7b-8

> *…in your teaching[, Titus,] show integrity, gravity, and sound speech that cannot be censured; then any opponent will be put to shame, having nothing evil to say of us*

Here we see, again, the role our rhetoric plays in the reputation of the church. In the subject of rhetoric, the speakers' reputation is one of the "three artistic proofs." This proof in particular is called *ethos*, and it is the persuasive appeal of a speaker based on his or her character. This was St. Paul's point in focusing on the character of church leaders rather than there abilities: character matters.

As we said in the previous week regarding church ministers, there is a sense in which Christians should expect to be the "bad guys" in culture. I argue we should expect this no matter if the culture is more "conservative" or more "liberal," because God's word given to us in Holy Scripture is trans-cultural. By this I mean that it transcends all culture, while also speaking into human culture. It confronts the "liberal" sins as well as the "conservative" sins, and the church has a prophetic voice no matter which culture is currently at the top of the food chain.

The task then is, as Stephen McAlpine puts it, how do we as the bad guys "live holy, happy, loving, and joyous lives that compel as many people as they repel: to be the best bad guys we can be."[78]

Discrediting Sound Teaching

Titus 2.10b

> *…so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive. (NIV)*

We haven't read this particular verse in its context yet, but it does continue the theme St. Paul's concern for reputation in Titus 2. The phrase "teaching about God our Savior" is a reference, first of all, to the gospel, and secondarily to doctrine and behavior consistent with the gospel. The phrase "will make…attractive" *kosméo*, from which we get our word "cosmetics." It is a verb which is used when you "cause something to have an attractive appearance through

[78] Stephen McAlpine, *Being the Bad Guys: How to Live for Jesus in a World that Says you Shouldn't*, 14.

decoration,"[79] hence the NRSV's "may be an ornament to the doctrine of God our Savior."

If you've been attuned to debates within Evangelicalism the past few decades, you may have heard about the battles between "missional" churches and "attractional" churches. Though, you may very well have been taught they were the same thing. Briefly, churches that see themselves as "missional" focus on their active participation in the Great Commission and see themselves as being missionaries in their neighborhoods, towns, and cities. The Sunday service sends them back out into the world as missionaries. "Attractional" churches tend to focus on a more passive participation in the Great Commission, in which people are invited to church in order to hear the gospel, and the church service attempts to remove any "barriers" in their services which would keep others from wanting to come.

Churches should integrate the best of both of these models. The "missional" model seeks for the church to live out the "priesthood of all believers" and the view of the church laid out in Ephesians 4.11-14; It sees the final blessing rightly as a sending back out into the world to be part of the *missio dei*. The "attractional" model—though they wouldn't use these terms—recognizes something about the sacramental ministry of the church. Indeed, Anglican churches services are in the native language of the people precisely because we believed that services conducted in ecclesial Latin is counter-productive to the comprehensibility of the gospel—a barrier if there ever was one.

What in the world does any of this have to do with the passage at hand? St. Paul is making it quite clear that we are to pursue "attractional" Christianity. By this, I don't mean the attractional model, I—as I take St. Paul to mean—a holistic attractional Christianity. Our behavior as the family of God, as the parish gathered on Sunday and scattered Monday through Saturday, our character should be an accentuating beauty that testifies to the truth of the gospel; what McAlpine calls a "compelling" Christianity. As Bill Mounce writes,

> Considering the presentation of the gospel in the [Pastoral Epistles] this [attractiveness] cannot be an adornment apart from content but rather must be a

[79] BDAG, *s.v.* κοσμέω, 2. The ESV renders this verse "they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior" suggesting that the individual themselves become "attractive" through good doctrine, i.e. the good works are attractive because of the doctrine. While true, this would require a somewhat rare New Testament use of a middle voice in the verb, "to make oneself beautiful through" which doesn't really fit the context nor the verb tense. The NET Bible, in it's translator notes, mentions "adorn; show the beauty of" while rendering it in the text "bring credit to the teaching of God our Savior."

> clear presentation of the gospel that is enhanced by [their] behavior.[80]

As we've said many times, this does not mean that we are required to live perfect, sinless lives. This would be contradictory to what Holy Scripture reveals about ourselves. Scripture is not confused. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1.8). This is not only the testimony of scripture, which contradicts the idea we should be perfect, it is also the attitude, that when shown to the public, leads to the accurate condemnation of the church as hypocrites. We cannot hold forth the gospel with *ethos* if we are calling others to repent and acting as if we are beyond the need for repentance ourselves. Or, maybe even worse, that our repentance is mere lip service that we don't actually believe is necessary.

To give another example, consider the damage done by our own sexual failures to our proclamation of the "sanctity of marriage" or "family values." The public failure of our leaders in areas of marriage fidelity, sexual abuse, and so forth adorns our message, too. While lives are lived consistent with sound doctrine adorns our message with beauty, our hypocrisy adorns the message with dung and mud. Not because these leaders are beyond the enticement to sin, but because the result is often not repentance, attempts to reconcile, and restoration by process, but coverup, victim blaming, and a rejection of authority in a restoration process—if a restoration process is even begun.

Do we give up on teaching the sanctity of marriage, then? Do we capitulate to culture so that we don't risk being seen as hypocrites? Again, as with St. Paul, we say "May it never be!" Instead we have to recognize that time must be spent cleaning off the mud and dung so that the beauty of the gospel shines through again. We build relationships with non-believers so that the gospel-transformation of our own lives speak louder than what is read on social media and heard on the news. In other words, while the failures of the church reverberate broadly, we combat that failure personally—one relationship at a time.

> As far as we are concerned, our consciences are all that matters. As far as you are concerned, our reputation among you ought not to be tarnished, but influential for good. Mark what I've said and make the distinction. There are two things, conscience and reputation; conscience for yourself, reputation for your neighbor. Those who, being clear in their consciences, neglect their reputations are being

[80] Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 416.

cruel.[81]

Questions for Reflection

1. Christianity has no category for individualistic faith, but rather a personal faith. What do you think this means? How does it inform a view of the church as the community of God's faithful family?
2. How should we understand the teaching of Scripture regarding our relationship to biological families and the Church?
3. What negative aspects of biological family do you "import" into the church? What positive aspects?
4. The theme of our Pastoral Epistles study is understanding fidelity to God, fidelity to sound doctrine, fidelity to the church, and fidelity to mission. How can we navigate the tension between these fidelities and our reputation in the world? What does Steve McAlpine mean when he says we should be "the best bad guys we can be?"

[81] St. Augustine, "Sermon 355," *The Works of St. Augustine,* 3/10:165, §1. St. Augustine delivered this sermon to a group of monastic clergy, so the "we" in the first part represents Augustine and other leaders, and the "us" is the clergy being taught. In the second sentence, Augustine moves towards application for the clergy—your conscience is for yourself, but your reputation is for others. It is a mistake to assume, though, that just because your conscience is clear that your reputation among others does not matter.

It should be added to this, of course, that one might place their reputation over their conscience, making an equally wrong and destructive mistake.

Week 7: Sound Obedience – Christians and Authority

Collect For the President and All in Civil Authority

O Lord our Governor, whose glory fills all the world: We commend this Nation to your merciful care, that we may be guided by your providence, and dwell secure in your peace. Grant to the President of this Nation, the Governor of this Commonwealth, and to all in authority, wisdom and strength to know and to do your will. Fill them with the love of truth and righteousness, and make them continually mindful of their calling to serve this people in reverent obedience to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end. **Amen.**

Scripture

1 Timothy 2.1-2, 6.1-2; Titus 2.9-10, 3.1-2;.

In what is sure to be an absolutely uncontroversial topic, we come this week to the relationship between Christians and authority. St. Paul raises the topic of authority in the Pastoral Epistles through three lenses: ecclesial authority, governmental authority, and authority in the master/slave relationship. We've discussed ecclesial authority when we studied Holy Orders and 1 Timothy 3. Therefore, in what is sure to make this conversation even easier for us to have, we are left to tackle the institutions of government and slavery.

Delegated Authority

Before we look into those two institutions concretely, let's consider authority in Holy Scripture

broadly. Scripture is clear that God himself is the ultimate authority over all things (Romans 13.1); all other authority is derived from the authority of God. Holy Scripture itself is authoritative because it is God's word written.[82] God is the only sovereign, and all other authority is delegated.

Dutch Reformed theologian Abraham Kuyper's best known work, "sphere sovereignty," is a framework for how we understand the delegation of this authority[83]. Sphere Sovereignty states that human life is made up of many "spheres," each having their God given "domain" and delegated, (therefore, bounded) authority. Such spheres include the sphere of family, the church, the state, education, business, art, and so forth. These spheres necessarily interact with one another, creating a complex ecosystem which God designed for our flourishing.

This ecosystem arose from the creational mandate given to human beings, but, since the Fall, the "spheres" have often attempted to infringe upon the delegated authority of the others. The main idea is thatSphere Sovereignty holds that no one sphere has total claim over human beings. That alone belongs to Christ, as Kuyper has famously said:

> There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human life which the Christ, who is Sovereign of all, does not call, "Mine!"

Obedience and Authority in Slavery

Titus 2.9-10; 1 Timothy 6.1-2.

Let's deal with the texts regarding the relationship between slaves and their masters first.

> *[Teach] slaves to be submissive to their masters and to give satisfaction in every respect; they are not to talk back, not to pilfer, but to show complete and perfect fidelity, so that in everything they may not be an ornament to the doctrine of God our Savior. (Titus 2.9)*
> *Let all who are under the yoke of slavery regard their masters as worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and the teaching may not be blasphemed. Those who have believing masters must not be disrespectful to them on the ground that*

[82] Cf. N.T. Wright, *Scripture and the Authority of God*.

[83] Of course, Kuyper did not come up with this framework on his own; rather, he builds upon the work of John Calvin, Johanne Althusius, Groen van Prinsterer, and others. For the historical development, see Craig G. Bartholomew's *Contours of the Kuyperian Tradition: A Systematic Introduction*, chapter 5, "Sphere Sovereignty: Kuyper's Philosophy of Society." Chapters 6-11 deal with several of these spheres: The Church, Politics, Mission, Philosophy, Theology, and Education.

> *they are members of the church; rather they must serve them all the more, since those who benefit by their service are believers and beloved. (1 Timothy 6.1-2)*

These are difficult passages, not least of which because of our own nation's history in participation in what is called "chattel slavery." Before we dig into these passages, let's address some of the cultural issues and questions that typically arise when scripture mentions slavery.

Common Deflections of the Slavery Passages

In my time as an evangelical Christian, I have heard four different, but related, ways of preaching and teaching these passage which end up deflecting the their actual meaning. That doesn't mean what is said doesn't contain some truth; instead, they usually focus on something true and ignore other harder truths regarding slavery.

"Slavery was Different in the First Century"

The first way of handling these passages is to declare that slavery in the ancient world was entirely different than chattel slavery. Chattel slavery is the full ownership of a human being, wherein the slave and their offspring are considered property of the enslaver. The form of chattel slavery we are most familiar with is "race-based" chattel slavery, wherein people of a particular ethnicity are dehumanized as a whole and enslaved based on their supposed inferiority.

"This is not the kind of slavery that took place in the ancient world, especially first century Rome!" the preacher or teacher may proclaim. The only problem with this is that it simply isn't true. There has always been different types of slavery, and chattel slavery has always been extant. While some types of slavery are more humane than others in their treatment of human beings, this spectrum does not allow us to dismiss chattel slavery in the ancient world outright.

Rome did have many debt-based slaves, who worked a type of indentured servitude that offered more personal freedoms. Yet, Roman law declared *servus non habit personam.* "A slave has no personhood." Over time, Roman laws changed to give some slaves more and more rights, but chattel slavery continued to exist alongside these laws.

"Slavery Was Like Our Employee/Employer Relationships"

The second way of handling these passages is to declare that slavery was like our employee/employer relationships today, and then apply those texts to our current day vocations. As mentioned above, some forms of slavery were similar in some ways to our current jobs, yet the

ancient world had words for such a relationship. Indentured servants, for example, were not "hired" but enslaved, with few personal rights.

Are we able to apply these texts to our vocational positions today? I think we can. Before we jump to application, though, we must actually do the work to understand the text. Otherwise, we may make the wrong application to today entirely.

"We are Slaves to Christ!"

The third way of handling these passages is to soften the word "slave" by deflecting to St. Paul and the New Testament's declaration that we are "slaves to Christ" or "slaves to God." This phrase does not have the softening effect for "slavery" that people are hoping for, however. Rather, the phrase "of Christ" is being strengthened by what the audience knew about slavery. As St. Paul teaches, "you are not our own for you were bought with a price" (1 Corinthians 6.19b-20a).

So what does the phrase "slave of Christ" mean? In one sense, it means that our idea of "freedom" as "unrestricted" must be adjusted. We are either "slaves to sin" or "slaves to Christ" and there is not middle ground. Something or someone has a claim to our lives. True human flourishing and freedom does not come by the removal of limitations or restrictions, but our submission to the appropriate limitations and restrictions. A musician can only become a virtuoso , and enjoy the freedom of playing it represents, if they restrict themselves to practicing instead of doing other things they might find more fun. A fish can only find true freedom if they embrace their confinement to water.[84]

What comfort do we find in being a "slave to Christ?" That in Christ, our true Master, we receive the infinite self-giving love and benevolence of God. When we jump from passages regarding slavery to the declaration that we are "slaves of Christ" without working through what slavery entails, we end up diluting both slavery and our relationship to Christ.

"Scripture is Wrong"

The above methods of handling these passages, though in error to one degree or another, are still distinctly Christian and take a high view of Holy Scripture. The fourth way of handling these passages reject this high view of scripture by claiming that the passages and their authors

[84] I originally heard these examples in a book or sermon by Tim Keller.

were simply wrong in their "approval" of the institution of slavery.

For those of us with a high view of Scripture, we either must reject this conclusion or else reject our high view of scripture. Rejecting the "scripture is wrong" way of interpreting these passages gets us into a far deeper conversation than space allows. We must therefore stop as simply confessing along with the *Fundamental Declaration of the Province*, §1,

> We confess the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments to be the inspired Word of God, containing all things necessary for salvation, and to be the final authority and unchangeable standard for Christian faith and life.

One issue with this method that should be considered, however, is what is meant when someone says that scripture "approves" of slavery.

Scripture's Subversion of the Institution of Slavery

The argument of many Christians in the Antebellum South was that Holy Scripture endorsed the institution of slavery, and therefore they were free to engage in race-based chattel slavery. Does Holy Scripture endorse the institution of slavery? In the following sections we are going to consider slavery with respect to the canonical narrative of Scripture.

Genesis 1-4: Slavery as Abused Dominion

We begin in the beginning, with Genesis 1.26:

> *God said, "Let us make humankind in our our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."*

Genesis 1 is a crescendo that begins in chaos and disorder and ends with the installation of human beings in Eden as God's vice-kings and queens over creation itself. Their task is to exercise a dominion which reflects God's beauty, benevolence, and glory throughout the whole world. In Genesis 3 everything changes with the introduction of sin into the world.

In Genesis 4, after human beings are removed and barred from the Garden of Eden, we find the the first recorded act of post-Fall dominion is the very reverse of God's intention. Rather than a beautiful and benevolent dominion that seeks the flourishing of creation we find the brutalizing, violent dominion by one image of God over another:

> *Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let us go out to the field." And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel, and killed him. (Genesis 4.8)*

What does Genesis 1-4 teach us regarding slavery? First, it teaches us that human beings were never meant to have dominion over other human beings. There are "spheres" in life in which human beings might have authority over another, but nowhere does this acknowledgement of authority support the consideration of image bearers as property.

Second, it teaches us that the authority and dominion that we have as humans beings is a delegated authority, which should reflect God's character in the world. Third, it teaches us that when human beings go against God's design for how things should be, things go very, very wrong.

Why, then, does it seem like scripture at times endorses the institution of slavery?

The Mosaic Law: Regulating Evil Hearts

As we move throughout the Pentateuch, we find that the Mosaic Law does indeed speak to Israel's treatment of slaves. To be frank, the civil laws regarding slavery are very, very difficult.

When interpreting the Mosaic Law, it must be remembered that it was given to a particular people in a particular place. It is an expression of God's divine will, particular to the incorporation of God's covenant people into a nation. Therefore, we must keep in mind the distinctions between the categories law found within the Law itself.

The Ten Commandments are often referred to as the moral or ethical law. These are an expression of God's unchanging character and nature, and therefore have applicability beyond Israel. The rest of the Mosaic Law, however, is what is known as "case law," and these laws seek to apply the Ten Commandments to situations which were particular to Israel.[85] "Case law" can then be further broken down into civic law, criminal law, cultic or liturgical laws, tort laws, etc..[86]

Considering that the majority of the Mosaic Law is particular rather than universal, we cannot attempt to interpret the Mosaic case law for ourselves unfiltered and apart from seeing how Jesus Christ fulfills those laws in our place.[87] .

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[85] Tremper Longman III, *How to Read Exodus*, 126.

[86] Beyond these categories, it must also be remembered that Israel was not simply another geo-political state among others, but God's chosen people who were called to be "holy" or "set-apart." Thus, there were laws given that are particular to Israel's calling that do not deal with morality so much as dealing with ways that Israel was to remain "peculiar" or "distinct" from other surrounding nations

[87] See David A. Skeel Jr. and Tremper Longman's "The Mosaic Law in Christian Perspective," *Faculty Scholarship at Penn Law*, # 367. https://scholarship.law.upenn.edu/faculty_scholarship/367.

In Matthew 19 the Pharisees attempt to trap Jesus with questions regarding divorce. Namely, they attempt to make Jesus choose a side between the Mosaic Law, which allows divorce, and the prophet Micah, who declares that God hates divorce. Jesus' response is to take the Pharisees back to Genesis 1 and 2, which leads to the counter-question of "Why then did Moses command us to give a certificate of dismissal and divorce her?" Jesus responds, "it was because you were so hard-hearted that Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so."

The point we take from this is that much of what is contained within the Mosaic Law is not the full extent of what God considers "right" or "wrong;" Rather, given the temporal nature of the Mosaic Law, it's true purpose was in many ways to restrain evil. This is part of what lies behind St. Paul's insistence that the Mosaic Law cannot save—at best it merely restrains evil and has no power of transformation.

Similar to Jesus' teaching on divorce, we began our look at slavery in scripture and say, "it was because you were so hard-hearted that Moses allowed you to take slaves, but from the beginning it was not so." Even so, slave trading (a huge part of the chattel slavery of the Antebellum South) was explicitly forbidden:

> *Kidnappers must be put to death, whether they are caught in possession of their victims or have already sold them as slaves. (Exodus 21.16)*[88]

Indeed, even in the Mosaic Law we find that much of the case law provided regulation that required the Israelites, should they take slaves, to treat them far more humanely than other nations at the time. Indeed, many of these laws were given in order to protect the rights of the slaves over and against their masters[89]. If, for example, a slave escaped then the Law requires they retain their freedom (Deuteronomy 23.15-16).

St. Paul's Epistles

We must keep all this background in mind when we read what St. Paul says to slaves and their masters. I can't help but think that Exodus 21.16 lies behind 1 Timothy 1.10, when he explicitly mentions "slave traders" as something that is contrary to the Law and inconsistent with the

[88] With the rejection of slave trading, the Mosaic Law thus limits the ways in which slaves can be acquired: debt-based servitude or war conquest.

[89] For example, the Law required that Hebrew slaves only serve a maximum of six years; During the seventh year (or jubilee year) they were to be freed, no strings attached (Ex. 21.2). If a women slave marries into the slave owner's family, she is to be treated as family and given the rights of a daughter (21.7-11). If a slave is injured by their master, the master is required to let that slave go free (21.26-27).

gospel, and Deuteronomy 23.15-16 was in mind when he wrote

> *Were you a slave when you were called? Don't let it trouble you—although if you can gain your freedom, do so (1 Corinthians 7.21, NIV)*

The Apostle writes this as a follow up to what he says in verse 17:

> *Let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned him, and to which God has called him. This is my rule in all the churches.*

This is a hard lesson for any of us—to be content in our lives now, as they are, resting in the sovereignty of God. How much harder would it be for the slave? Yet, as we saw, St. Paul's advice to slaves was to not be troubled at their present state, but also to seek freedom if they could. Still, we might wonder, why be so cautious?

The Roman punishment for escaped slaves could be very severe. They ranged from being whipped to branded with a hot iron to crucifixion. If a slave was caught but not executed, they would be branded on the forehead with the letters "FUG," short for *fugitivus*—fugitive. St. Paul was calculated in how he recommended slaves escape their masters. Subversive, even.

We see this subversiveness at play in his epistle to Philemon. Onesimus was one of Philemon's slaves who converted to Christianity under St. Paul's preaching while in jail. In the Apostle's letter we see how he argues that Philemon should free Onesimus rather than discipline him for running away. Notice how he does so according to 1 Timothy 5.1-2, encouraging Philemon rather than rebuking him outright.

First, notice that the Apostle uses *appeals* rather than *outright commands* in vv8-10:

> *Though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do your duty, yet I would rather appeal to you on the basis of love…I am appealing to you for my child Onesimus…*

Second, notice St. Paul's use of emotive and familial language, which demonstrates what St. Paul teaches about the Church as our truest family:

> *I am appealing to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I have become during my imprisonment…I am sending him, that is, my own heart, back to you…no longer as a slave but more than a slave, a beloved brother…welcome him as you would welcome me (Philemon 10, 12, 16a, 17b).*

Third, notice how St. Paul appeals for Onesimus' freedom on the basis of it being a "good work," that is, behavior consistent with the gospel:

> *I wanted to keep him with me, so that he might be of service to me in your place*

> *during my imprisonment for the gospel; but I preferred to do nothing without your consent, in order that your good deed might be voluntary and not something forced. (Philemon 13-14).*

Fourth, the Apostle goes so far as to say that he will purchase Onesimus' freedom, in order to ensure his freedom and cover any financial loss to Philemon:

> *If he has wronged you in any ways, or owes you anything, charge that to my account. I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand. I will repay it. (Philemon 18-19)*

We don't know for sure what happened, but later St. Ignatius mentions that someone named Onesimus has become a bishop in the church.[90]

Slavery, Obedience, and Authority

We return back to our present passages. Without the above background, reading Titus 2.9-10 and 1 Timothy 6.1-2 would seem like a blanket endorsement of slavery. Even with that background, we still flinch when we read "be submissive to your masters and give satisfaction in every respect" and "show complete and perfect fidelity [to your masters]."

The Hierarchy of Fidelity

The key phrase in this passage is our theme for the whole Pastoral Epistles: "show complete and perfect fidelity." We should ask ourselves, fidelity to what? Or to whom? For slaves, escape wasn't always possible. For those who could escape, it wasn't always readily achievable. The question was how do slaves live lives of fidelity to God in the midst of their enslavement? By living with the recognition that their life as it is was not outside of God's sovereign rule and therefore by being faithful with that current life until opportunity for freedom came about.

This is a difficult truth to come to grips with, and yet this is what St. Paul is getting at in 1 Corinthians 7.21. Now, this does not mean that slavery itself is good or ok. It merely means that in good situations and evil situations there is a way to be faithful to God, and that is to trust him with our very lives. This extreme example serves us in more the more ordinary and mundane situations in which we find ourselves.

It is also instructive for our understanding of authority. Every sphere of life comes with a multi-layered fidelity to authority and obedience. Whenever Holy Scripture calls people to

[90] Ignatius, *Epistle to the Ephesians*, 1 (*ANF* 1).

submission there is always a hierarchy of actors in which we are to submit. At the top is submission to God, and thus our submission at each lower level of the hierarchy is filtered through the lens of fidelity to God in Christ foremost.

What About Christian Slave-Owners?

Much like the Mosaic Law, St. Paul's writing suggests that in an ideal world there would be no such thing as a Christian slave-owner. The abolitionists were right, in seeking justice for the oppressed, to bring down the institutions of slavery as they were in their day. It's here, finally, that we can say that all things being proper, a Christian slave-owner would be practicing a far different form of slavery than what we find in chattel slavery; such would be a debt-based indentured servitude.

St. Paul has even more to say in these situations, however. Just as he said to Philemon, the believing slave is "more than a slave, but a beloved brother." Indeed, "there is neither slave or free…for all of you are one in Jesus Christ" (Galatians 3.28). Therefore, the servant-master relationship is only a constrained, practical hierarchy. Just as the waters of baptism form a stronger bond that biology, so too the bonds of the slave are lost in their deluge.

Obedience and Gospel Reputation

Once again we find that St. Paul links fidelity exercised in obedience to the reputation of the gospel and the Church.

> *Let all who are under the yoke of slavery regard their masters as worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and the teaching may not be blasphemed* [slandered]. *(1 Timothy 6.1)*
> *[Slaves,] show complete and perfect fidelity, so that in everything they may be an ornament to the doctrine of God our Savior. (Titus 2.10).*

We dealt particularly with this in the previous week, so we will not deal with it again here. I bring it up again, however, so the full weight of what St. Paul is saying with regards to reputation can now be felt. How difficult this teaching is, but how much more beautiful it makes the freedom we find in Christ. That freedom is the truer freedom, unmatched against whatever constraints our external circumstances places on us.

Obedience and Authority in Government

What we have learned about fidelity, obedience, and authority in slavery helps us as we consider what it means to submit to governmental authority. St. Paul uses even stronger language when it comes to God's delegated authority in the sphere of human government. Consider the well-known passage found in Romans 13:

> *Let every person be subject to the governing authorities; for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists authority resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment… Therefore, one must be subject, not only because of* [Government's authority to bear the sword] *but also because of conscience. (Romans 13.1-2, 5)*

We have neither the time, nor the purpose, to construct a full political theology; to do so requires us to wrestle with issues of theocratic Israel, the debate between nature vs. grace, definitions of the sufficiency of Scripture and the debates around the …. Suffice it to say, we must reckon with the fact that St. Paul was not writing this in a modern, Western democracy but under the authoritarian rule of Emperor Nero—who would later send the Apostle(s) to their martyrdom—and the Roman Empire.[91]

From 49 AD to 54 AD Jews and Christians alike were banned from the city of Rome under an edict from Emperor Claudius. Christians were often arrested on the charge of being "atheists" because they rejected both the state-sponsored polytheism and the belief that the emperor was divine. The religious language of the empire came about with the deification of Julius Caesar. Whenever there was a new emperor, the "gospel" was proclaimed throughout the entire Empire that "the son of god, the savior" had ascended to to the throne.

Around 64 AD a fire broke out in Rome that burned for nine days and destroyed two-thirds of the city. Rumors began circulating that Emperor Nero himself was the arsonist.To deflect the blame, Tacitus reports that Nero blamed Christians for the fire:

> But all human efforts, all the lavish gifts of the emperor, and the propitiations of the gods, did not banish the sinister belief that the conflagration was the result of [Nero's] order. Consequently, to get rid of the report, Nero fastened the guilt and

[91] The Senate was essentially the "appendix" of the Roman Empire, being a left-over-but-mostly-useless appendage of the Roman Republic. Their job was to rubber-stamp the decisions of the emperor. So, maybe Rome in St. Paul's time isn't as distant from modern democracy as I suggested.

> inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. [Christ], from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judæa, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their centre and become popular.[92]

Thus began the Neronic persecution, in which St. Paul was eventually arrested and put to death. Tacitus continues by giving us a picture of Nero's destruction of Christians.

> Accordingly, an arrest was first made of all who pleaded guilty; then, upon their information, an immense multitude was convicted, not so much of the crime of firing the city, [but] as of hatred against mankind. Mockery of every sort was added to their deaths. Covered with the skins of beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed to the flames and burnt, to serve as a nightly illumination when daylight had expired.
> Nero offered his gardens for the spectacle, and was exhibiting a show in the circus, while he mingled with the people in the dress of a charioteer or stood aloft on a car. Hence, even for criminals or stood aloft on a car.[93]

Just so we're all clear on what was going on, Nero lit Christians on fire and used them as lighting for the parties he threw at night in his garden. What does fidelity look like under such a governmental oppression?

Prayer and Theology

1 Timothy 2.1-2.

As an Anglican Church, we believe that prayer and liturgy are import aspects of the Christian life. The Holy Spirit delights to work through these disciplines in order to form us, and drive home both the gospel and sound doctrine. How we pray exposes what we believe, and at the same time our written prayers can serve to teach us sound (or unsound) doctrine.

The prayers of the Ephesian exposed what they actually believed. After spending the first chapter of 1 Timothy discussing the false teaching, St. Paul then says,

> *First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and*

[92] Tacitus, *Annals*, 15.44.
[93] Ibid.

> *thanksgivings be made for everyone…so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity. (1 Timothy 2.1-2)*

The phrase "first of all" is doing a lot of work. The Apostle had just said that he was giving certain instructions to Timothy, and so this phrase certainly marks the beginning of those instructions. However, the phrase is really emphasizing the importance of what is about to be said. We could paraphrase it as "First, and above all else…" or "The first and most important change you could make is…"

What is that most important change? That prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone—including kings, and all those in high authority. Remember, this includes Emperor Nero.

Why is this so important? Why did they need this correction? We looked at the context of this verse back in week 3. If you remember, the argument of verses 3-5 was that through the person and work of Jesus Christ, salvation was made available to all people without distinction. This truth is the theological ground for praying for all people, including kings and all those in authority. Likely, one aspect of the false teaching was that only certain people could be saved. Perhaps, Ephesians Christians had given up praying for their government leaders out of a hatred for them born out of persecution. Either way, a belief crept into their church that some people were beyond the saving grace of God. Thus, St. Paul reminds them, salvation is made available for all. Even Nero wasn't beyond God's ability to save sinners.

Have you ever read a passage and thought, "I have no idea what this text means?" Or, "I have no idea how to apply this text?" This shouldn't be one of those. Our modern political rhetoric has become so divided, and we so easily place our preferred candidates into the cosmic battle of "good" vs. "evil" that we can easily fall into the same trap. No one is beyond God's grace.

Unlike Rome and Nero, the rise and fall of America is not part of our apocalyptic texts. We are merely just a part of the current act in the grand drama of the history of the world. That story did not begin with us, and will not end with us, just as it didn't begin with Rome or end with Rome—despite their place in the death of Christ and their role in Revelation. Christianity continued even during Nero's persecution—flourished, even. I say all this simply to put our current day in a proper perspective. Let's pray for our leaders, no matter who they are. Let's

reject the urge to speak of the leaders we support in hagiography, and the assignment of those we don't to evil as if human sinfulness isn't complex. Let's recognize God's hand in putting those in authority over, and let our rhetoric reflect these things.

Fidelity to God in our Submission to Governmental Authority

Titus 3.1-2.

St. Paul gives similar advice to Titus. Again, this epistle was written at nearly the same time as 1 Timothy, and under the Emperor Nero and the Roman Empire. The Apostle says:

> *Remind [the church] to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show courtesy to everyone. (Titus 3.1-2).*

"Be ready for every good work, speak evil of no one, avoid quarreling, be gentle, and show courtesy to everyone." This is what I mean when I say we should watch our political rhetoric. I'm not saying that we shouldn't voice our disagreements. What I'm saying, and what I believe St. Paul is saying, is the manner, the motivation, and the attitude we have while voicing them matters. Jesus taught that "it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but what comes out of the mouth that defiles" (Matthew 15.11). How we speak reveals our hearts. How we speak about others—particularly our "enemies" reveals what we truly believe about our own sinfulness.

Submission to Governmental Authority

The string of words I quoted at the beginning of the last paragraph are all ways in which St. Paul envisions that we "be subject to rulers and authorities." The words "be subject" comes from the same word that is often translated as "submission." It's the same word that we find when the Apostle speaks of sinners refusing to submit to God's law and righteousness (Romans 8.7, 10.3), our submission to ecclesial authority (1 Corinthians 14.34, see week 5; 1 Cor 15-16), creation's submission to the kingship of God (1 Corinthians 15.27) in Christ (Ephesians 1.22; cf. Hebrews 2.8, 1 Peter 3.22), our mutual submission to one another in the church (Ephesians 5.21), and marriages (Colossians 3.18, Titus 2.5; cf. 1 Peter 3.1) which pictures the Church's submission to Christ (Ephesians 5.24). Lastly, it is the very word St. Paul uses to refer to the posture of slaves to their masters which we've already seen (Titus 2.9).

The word "submission" is a strong word—though the context of each of the above cited

verses tells us out that submission is lived out in various spheres of life. We find, again, a hierarchy of fidelity. Yet, when it comes to authority given to the sphere of government, Holy Scripture gives us some of it's hardest teachings on submission. We've already quoted Romans 13 as well as our present passages. St. Peter himself writes this around the same time St. Paul is writing Titus and 1 Timothy (62-64 AD, possibly during the Neronic persecution):

> *For the Lord's sake accept the authority of every human institution, whether of the emperor as supreme, or of governors, as sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to praise those who do right. For it is God's will that by doing right you should silence the ignorance of the foolish. As* [slaves] *of God, live as free people, yet do not use your freedom as a pretext for evil. Honor everyone. Love the family of believers. Fear God. Honor the emperor. (1 Peter 2.13-16)*

These are hard passages, particularly in a society that emerged from a revolution and seeks to enshrine individualism and individual rights. This is the tension of being a citizen in two kingdoms—our national citizenship and our supranatural citizenship in the kingdom of God. Many of us have very strong convictions regarding politics, laws, and so forth. That's good! And we, more than any other Christians, actually have an ability to voice those convictions. Nero certainly didn't care what Christians believed about this or that issue; he only cared that his parties stayed lit throughout the night.

The language the New Testament uses with respect to submitting to earthly governments sounds awfully absolute. We should feel the weight of that. But, even here, there is a hierarchy of fidelity. Our submission to the government is an expression of our submission and fidelity to God himself. This is why St. Paul says that it is both a matter of the role of Government in public justice, but a matter of our conscience as well. Our conscience should compell us to submission because of God's direct commands to do so. But does this mean there is no place for civil disobedience in the lives of Christians? Absolutely not.

Civil Disobedience in Scripture

The use of such absolute language points to the normative submission and obedience to governmental authority, the posture we should ordinarily take. At the same time, Holy Scripture gives us examples of God's faithful people engaging in civil disobedience. Some of these examples are descriptive, but many seem to be prescriptive. This is particularly so when we see St. Peter and St. Paul engaging in civil disobedience which they would see as in line with their

teaching on submission and authority.

Before we get to the apostles, however, we start our survey way back in the book of Exodus.

Exodus 1.15-21

The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives…"When you act as midwives to the Hebrew women, and see them on the birthstool, if it is a boy, kill him; but if it is a girl, she shall live. But the midwives feared God; they did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but they let the boys live… So God dealt well with the midwives; and the people multiplied and became very strong. (Exodus 1.15a, 16-17, 20-21)

Here, the Hebrew midwives committed an act of civil obedience that was obviously valid, as the narrator alerts us to by mentioned that because of their actions, "God dealt well" with the midwives. The impetus for civil disobedience is obvious: Pharaoh was demanding that the midwives murder children. This practice of infanticide and forced abortion still has state sponsorship in places such as China. Thus, the refusal to commit murder by Chinese Christians would fall under the same scenario as the Hebrew midwives.

Joshua 2.1-6

Joshua son of Nun sent two men secretly from Shittim as spies, saying, "Go, view the land, especially Jericho." So they went and entered the house of a prostitute whose name was Rahab and spent the night there…The king of Jericho sent orders to Rahab, "Bring out the menthe have come to you, who entered your house, for they have come only to search out the whole land." But the woman took the two men and hid them. Then she said, "True, the men came to me, but I did not know where they came from. And when it was time to close the gate at dark the men went out. Where the men went I do not know. Pursue them quickly, for you can overtake them." She had, however, brought them up to the roof and hidden them with the stalks of flax that she had laid out on the roof. (Joshua 2.1, 3-6)

Frankly, the civil disobedience of Rahab is the most puzzling; there was no reason why she should disobey her king over the spies she did not know apart from God's sovereign intervention. We probably shouldn't model hiding fugitives without cause. However, this does become a template when the government is known to be perpetuating an injustice. The obvious examples of this would be the "Underground Railroad" and when Nazis were rounding up Jews for concentration camps. This becomes apparent in our next two passages.

1 Kings 18.13 & 2 Kings 11.1-3

Has it not been told, [Elijah,] what I did when Jezebel killed the prophets of the

> *Lord, how I hid a number of the Lord's prophets fifty to a cave, and provided them with bread and water? (1 Kings 18.13)*
> *Now when Athaliah, Ahaziah's mother, saw that her son was dead, she set about to destroy all the royal family. But Jehosheba, King Joram's daughter, Ahaziah's sister, took Joash son of Ahaziah, and stole him away from among the king's children who were about to be killed; she put him and his nurse in a bedroom. Thus she hid him from Athaliah, so that he was not killed; he remained with her six years, hidden in the house of the Lord, while Athalia reigned over the land. (2 Kings 11.1-3)*

And so, apart from the story of Rahab (which we see only through the rest of scripture's story), each of these episodes of civil disobedience occurred in situations where the government was unjustly brandishing "the sword." This is not the only situation in which we see civil disobedience, however. Holy Scripture is clear that civil disobedience is required when the sphere of the state infringes on the sphere of worship by requiring the worship of particular deities.

Daniel 3.1-18 & Daniel 6.1-10

> *King Nebuchadnezzar made a golden statue… [and] set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. Then King Nebuchadnezzar sent for the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the justices, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces to assemble and come to the dedication of the statue of the king. So [they all] assembled for the dedication of the statue…When they were standing before the statue that Nebuchadnezzar had set up, the herald proclaimed aloud, "You are commanded, O Peoples, nations, and languages, that when you hear the sound of…the entire musical ensemble, you are to fall down and worship the golden statue that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. Whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be thrown into a furnace of blazing fire." …*
> *Certain Chaldeans came forward and denounced the Jews. They said to King Nebuchadnezzar, "…Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego pay no heed to you, O King. They do not serve your gods and they do not worship the golden statue that you have set up." Then Nebuchadnezzar in furious rage commanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought in; so they brought those men before the king. Nebuchadnezzar said to them, "Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods and you do not worship the golden statue that I have set up?"… [They] answered the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to present a defense to you in this matter. If our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire hand and out of your hand, O king, let him deliver us. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods and we will not worship the golden statue that you have set up."*

* * *

The [officials] conspired and came to the king and said to him, "O King Darius, live forever! [We] are agreed that the king should establish an ordinance and enforce an injunction, that whoever prays to anyone, divine or human, for thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be thrown into a den of lions." … Therefore, King Darius signed the document and injunction. Although Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he continued to go to his house, which had windows in its upper room open toward Jerusalem, and to get down on his knees three times a day to pray to his God and praise him, just as he had done previously. (Daniel 6.6-7, 9-10)

This pattern continues into the New Testament. We've seen, of course, that the Apostles faced great opposition from the Roman Empire and the Jewish religious leaders. We've read what St. Peter wrote regarding obeying and submitting to the government, and yet we also find this episode in Acts 4-5 after he and St. John had been arrested for preaching the gospel:

Acts 4-5

Peter and John answered [the council], "Whether it is right in God's sight to listen to you rather than God, you must judge; for we cannot keep from speaking about what we have seen and heard." …
With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all…
Then the high priest took action; he and all who were with them (that is, the sect of the Sadducees), being filled with jealousy, arrested the apostles and put them in the public prison… The high priest questioned them, saying, 'We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name…" But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than any human authority" (Acts 4.19-20, 33; 5.17–18, 27-29)

Summary

Holy Scripture portrays valid civil disobedience as taking place when Christians refuse the State's unjust use of the sword in murdering human beings, the State's requirement to worship other particularly deities, and the State's attempt to silence the proclamation of the gospel. What we should take note of, then, is that in each act of civil disobedience, God's people acted in defiance of the misuse of state authority, but also embraced the punishment that the State sought to inflict upon them for that defiance. Scripturally, it seems that one can look for asylum as a way to avoid unjust punishment, but typically Christians do not have the means to do so.

The flip side of civil disobedience is that we do not find scriptural examples of disobedience

simply because we disagree with the state on philosophical or religious grounds. Indeed, this is likely why the New Testament authors remind us that God calls us to submission in the first place. Authority is not expressed when there is agreement, but disagreement. Thus, the normative way of dealing with such disagreements is to utilize the systems in place to seek the changes we desire, recognizing God's sovereignty when such desires aren't materialized.

Questions for Reflection

1. I used the phrase "hierarchy of fidelity" several times. What do I mean by the hierarch of fidelity, and how does it help us understand our relationship to authority?

   What does it mean when scripture calls us slaves of Christ?
2. How would you respond to someone who says they don't believe scripture is God's inspired word because of how it endorses slavery?
3. In what ways do you find it easy to follow Holy Scripture's teaching regarding authority and submission? Where do you struggle with it?
4. What does it mean when St. Paul says "Whatever you do, work gladly, as if working for the Lord and not men, because you know that it is from the Lord that you will receive his inheritance as your word" (Colossians 3.23-24, my translation)? How does this verse inform the idea of a "hierarchy of fidelity?"

Week 8: Entrusted with the Gospel

Collect For the Fifth Sunday of Epiphany

O Lord, our Heavenly Father, keep your household the Church continually in your true religion, that we who trust in the hope of your heavenly grace may always be defended by your mighty power; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Scripture

1 Timothy 1.17, 4.1-14, 6.3-14, 20; Titus 3.9-11.

This week end's our study on 1 Timothy and Titus by focusing on some of St. Paul's encouragements to the young leaders. Because we've been going through these epistles, you may have missed that 1 Timothy feels very cyclical. This becomes evident when we look at the structure of St. Pauls letter:

First Timothy introduction contains two sections. Chapter 1, verses 3b-11 are the first discussion on the Ephesians heresy, and verses 12-17 is the Apostle's testimony which serves to encourage Timothy. This section is marked off by the use of an *inclusio* in verse 3a and 18a. The body of the letter follows a similar pattern, only in between these sections, St. Paul introduces issues going on in the congregation:

1 Timothy 2, 3: Congregational Issues/Sound Doctrine

1 Timothy 4.1-5: Ephesian Heresy

1 Timothy 4.6-16: Encouragement for Timothy

1 Timothy 5.1–6.2: Congregational Issues/Sound Doctrine

1 Timothy 6.3–10: Ephesian Heresy

1 Timothy 6.11-16: Encouragement for Timothy

1 Timothy 6.17-19 Congregational Issues/Sound Doctrine

In week 2, we looked at this passages in which St. Paul discusses the heresies at Ephesus and

Crete. In weeks 3 through 7, we looked at most of the the passage involving congregational issues and sound doctrine. That brings us, this week, to look at the passages where the Apostle is encouraging his young leaders.

Reviewing the Source, Character, and Fruit of the Heresy

Before jumping into those texts, we should do a review of the false teaching as in 1 Timothy the two discussions are paired together, and because it's been a while since we looked at those passages.

Don't be Surprised by Apostasy

1 Timothy 4.1-2.

How did things go so wrong so fast in such a young church? Granted, Ephesus was more established than Crete, but the New Testament church as we know it was only about 30 years old at this point. Such a downturn in so little a time would be discouraging for any faithful leader, St. Paul not the least of which who planted these churches. But notice what he says in 1 Timothy 4.1-2—"Don't be surprised by this apostasy."

> *Now, the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will renounce the faith by paying attention to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, through the hypocrisy of liars who consciences are seared with a hot iron (1 Timothy 4.1-2).*

If you remember from week 2, we discussed from this passage that the source of the false teachings were satanic. The consciences of the false teachers were branded by Satan, marking them as his. The teaching is not just something the false teachers came up with because they are bored; it comes from "deceitful spirits" and is the "teachings of demons." Furthermore, this teaching is actually captivating people in the church, they are leaving the faith because of the lies and hypocrisy of the leaders.

We talked about how this false doctrine and hypocrisy can affect the reputation of the gospel, closing the ears of unbelievers. Here, however, we see sadly that it has the same affect inside the church, choking off the gospel message from those who are baptized, visible members of God's church.

To all of this overwhelming information, the Apostle says, "Don't be surprised at this." The

Holy Spirit has said this is what's going to happen. We know this going to happen. The passages raises a natural question, though: "Where or when did the Holy Spirit say this?"

On one hand, the Holy Spirit has always been saying this to us; this is a theme all throughout Holy Scripture from Genesis 3 on through Revelation 20. Satan's *modus operendi* from the beginning has been to slither in, plant lies like time bombs, and then watch them go off. On the other hand, however, we also have a record of St. Paul giving the Ephesian presbyters this very warning, in Acts 20.29-31:

> *I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare your flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away many disciples after them. So be on guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.*

First Corinthians 13 teaches us that we shouldn't have a "hermeneutic of suspicion" towards our brothers and sisters; we should graciously assume the best—but if something seems troubling, we should approach them about it. Scripture, Acts 20, and the Pastoral Epistles teaches us that when that trust is broken, however, we shouldn't be surprised.

The Character of the False Teachers

1 Timothy 6.3-4a; Titus 3.11.

In 1 Timothy 6 and Titus 3, St. Paul writes regarding the character of the false teachers, and the rotten fruit which is born of their false teaching. We'll look first to their character.

> *Whoever teaches [something other than apostolic doctrine] and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that is in accordance with godliness, is conceited, understanding nothing, and has a morbid craving for controversy and for disputes about words (1 Timothy 6.3-4a)*
> *Such a person is perverted and sinful, being self-condemned. (Titus 3.11)*

Note well the irony: Even though they know nothing about which they teach (cf. 1 Timothy 1.7), they are conceited and arrogant. If you recall St. Paul's teaching on the "fruit of the Spirit" in Galatians, you may recall that neither conceit nor arrogance made the list. They are so arrogant that they continually want to argue and debate others. The Apostle says that they have a "morbid craving for controversy and for disputes about words."

There are two dangers here. The first is that the sin of contentious arrogance begets itself in others. When someone is always on the attack, some people on the end of that attack end up

shutting down. This is by design. Whoever speaks the longest and loudest wins. Others, however, get stirred up to fight back, and this is prime breeding ground for the same sin of contentious arrogance to be birthed in them. This is the whole point of social media, which rewards the loudest by gathering them a tribal following who reinforce their contentiousness through "likes" and "favorites" and "retweets." Meanwhile, the exhausted "middle" drops out, and the warring tribes become "influencers." And each tribe self-justifies their anger towards the other, further cementing them into never-ending arguments. We end up doing Satan's work for him.

That leads us to the second danger: how easy it is to self-justify being contentious and arrogant. We think that because we are "speaking the truth" or "defending orthodoxy" that we are in the right. Scripture tells us the manner in which we are to "speak the truth" and "defend orthodoxy." We've been studying it for eight week now: convictional humility. Christians are to stand firm on their convictions and sound doctrine, and to do so with love and grace.

The Fruit of False Teaching

1 Timothy 6.4b-5.

Both sound and unsound doctrine produces fruit in their own kind. The false teachers had

> *…a morbid craving for controversy and disputes about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining godliness is a means of gain (1 Timothy 6.4b-5, ESV)*

Here the Apostle highlights sins of thought, word, and deed. As we just noted, contentiousness "begets" contentiousness in others. Here, the word "produces" means "gives birth to." Thus, this contentiousness gives birth to envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions and constant friction. "Evil suspicions" is what I referred to early as a "hermeneutic of suspicion." The hermeneutic of suspicion is a way to critically read literature with the *a priori* belief that the words don't really mean what they say. It's the posture of the skeptic. Applied to people, however, it means that you are automatically distrustful of someone's words and motives.You comb every word they say, note every thing they do, so you can catch them and expose them.

St. Paul says that such people are a "constant friction," which as St. Chrysostom points out, is probably an allusion to "infected abrasions." Imagine getting a rug burn so bad that the skin is broken; then you get another rug burn in the same place before it heals. An hour later, you trip is

the exact same spot, and yet again, another rug burn. Eventually, unable to heal the abrasions become infected. Throughout, it's just a constant rug burn after rug burn after rug burn. If nothing intervenes to start the healing process what began as an irritation will become gangrenous. If uncontrolled, the rot will begin to spread and fester throughout the congregation.

St. Paul's Encouragement to Timothy and Titus

Here's the situation for both Timothy and Titus: the infection had taken root and was already spreading and thriving throughout the congregation. What does St. Paul say to his beloved sons in the faith in such a discouraging situation? Hear his encouragement: fight the good fight of faith. How were they to do this? By anchoring their contentment in God, giving no quarter to those who insist on being divisive, and remembering their calling, which is to guard in their life and ministry the sacred deposit of faith which has been entrusted to them by God and the Apostle himself.

Fight the Good Fight of Faith

1 Timothy 6.11-12; 1 Timothy 4.7b-8.

> *But as for you, man of God, shun* [the false teachings and their rotten fruit]; *pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness; Fight the good fight of the faith; take hold of the eternal life, to which you were called and for which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. (1 Timothy 6.11-12)*
>
> *Train yourself for godliness; for while physical training is of some value, godliness is valuable in every way, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come. (1 Timothy 4.7b-8)*

St. Paul begins his encouragement by making a strong, emphatic distinction between the false teachers and Timothy (and Titus)—"But you, man of God." The false teachers are claimed by Satan, but Timothy and Titus are, decisively, "men of God." Note this: even the most faithful men and women of God need to be encouraged in there lives and ministries. No matter how strong one might be in the faith, the brokenness of our sin, the brokenness of this world, and the determination of the enemy wears on us all.

The false teachers fought over words and useless controversy. By way of contrast, St. Paul encourages Timothy and Titus to fight the good fight of the faith. Fight for fidelity to Christ, to the family of God, to the gospel and sound doctrine, and to God's mission to the world through

the church. How? By shunning, or avoiding the doctrine and fruit of the false teachers, and pursuing "righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness." Notice that the encouragement is to *pursue* those things. The apostle isn't confused about human nature, even redeemed human nature. The Christian life is a "long obedience in the same direction," not immediate perfection; It's a journey that is made possible only by God's grace.

With what weapons due we wage the war of fidelity? How do we pursue "righteousness, godliness, etc.?" In 1 Timothy 4.7b, St. Paul uses a different metaphor to describe the same idea. There the apostles exhorts Timothy and Titus to "train yourselves in godliness." This metaphor is taken from the sphere of athletics, where training and practice help to build habits.

Whenever I think of practice and habit, I always think of Allen Iverson's rant after the Philadelphia 76ers first-round loss in the 2002 NBA Playoffs. I don't think of it because of Iverson's rant, per se, which ended up diving into some pretty deep waters such as the recent death of his friend. I think of it because of how it was portrayed by sports media—the rantings of a male diva who is completely self-absorbed.

The way it was portrayed by the media at the time, Iverson—the 76ers superstar player—got angry at a reporter who asked a question about Iverson's neglect at being at team practices. His response, in part:

> We're sitting here, and I'm supposed to be the franchise player, and we're in here talking about practice. I mean, listen, we're talking about practice. Not a game! Not a game! Not a game! We're talking about practice. Not a game. Not the game that I go out there and die for and play every game like it's my last. Not the game, we're talking about practice, man. I mean how silly is that? We're talking about practice. I know I'm supposed to be there, I know I'm supposed to lead by example, I know that. And I'm not shoving it aside like it don't mean anything. I know it's important. I do. I honestly do. But we're talking about practice, man. What are we talking about? Practice? We're talking about practice, man!

What does this have to do with our faith? Consider, how did Allen Iverson get to be as good of a player as he was? He was, as he said, the franchise superstar. How does someone get to that level of ability? This isn't a trick question. You only get there by practice. In practice you run the same drills over and over and over, thousands of times, so that when that situation happens in a game you can react without even thinking about it.

The Ministry of the Word and the Ministry of the Sacraments, the liturgy of the Church, the Daily Office and prayer, confession and absolution, reading scripture, community, catechism—these all form our practice; they are how we "train for righteousness." Human beings were created as creatures of habits. Through these practices, we *inhabit* the gospel. God doesn't kick us off the team because we miss a practice; rather, he keeps the gym doors open so we can come in at any time. This is what it means to "train ourselves in Godliness," to take part in the means of grace that God, out of his mercy, has given to us as a gift.

The sports media missed Iverson's point entirely. There was a moment in that post-game interview, however, where Iverson himself missed the point as well. This whole conversation happened because Iverson's coach, Larry Brown, had gone on record saying that he was frustrated regarding with his player missing a practice. This led to the following interchange during press conference:

> Reporter: Is it possible, though, from where he's coming from, if you practiced, [it's] not [that] you would be better, but your teammates?
> Iverson: How the hell can I make my teammates better by practicing?

Our training is not just for our own individual benefit, but for the benefit of the church. The irony in the Corinthians arguing about who has the better spiritual gifts is that every spiritual gift which the Spirit gives to members of the church is for the benefit of others. Our faith is personal, but it is not individualistic.

Find Your Contentment in God

1 Timothy 6.5b-10.

One way that we "fight the good fight of faith" is by fighting to anchor our contentment in God; God is constant and never changing. To put our ultimate happiness in anything other than God is to put our anchor in "shifting sand." As the hymn proclaims:

> My hope is built on nothing less
> than Jesus Christ, my righteousness;
> I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
> But wholly lean on Jesus' name.
> On Christ, the solid rock, I stand;
> All other ground is sinking sand,

all other ground is sinking sand.

As St. James said,

> *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. (James 1.17, ESV)*

The false teachers sought their contentment in riches and wealth. As Bill Mounce says, "Behind the opponents' facade, their supposed intellectualism and false piety, lies the real motivation for their ministry; they want to make money."[94] St. Paul, in a wonderful reversal, turns the motivation of the false teachers on its head:

> *They consider "godliness" as a way to make a profit; but true profit is found when godliness is paired with contentment. (1 Timothy 6.5b-6, my translation)*

The pursuit of wealth for security and happiness is, as the Teacher tells us in Ecclesiastes, "vanity of vanities,"[95]

> *For we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of world. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. (1 Timothy 6.7-8)*

In no way does St. Paul intend to say that such contentment is easy. He wrote in Philippians 4.11 that he has "learned to be content." Contentment is not our natural state. To make matters worse, our culture assaults us with its own training program that seeks to cultivate within us habits of discontent. Modern marketing invents problems, convinces you that you that this invented problem negatively affects your life, and then—conveniently!— that only their product solves that problem. Social media sites like Facebook and Instagram encourage us to put our lives on display for others—but only a personally curated, false version of our lives that normalizes our mountain-top moments while sweeping our valleys under the rug. Both marketing and social media (and let's not kid ourselves, they are one and the same now) attempt to cultivate within us habits of discontent.

The antidote to this parasitic training program is the gospel. The alternative training program that inhabits the gospel is, again, the Ministry of the Word and the Ministry of the Sacraments, the liturgy of the Church, prayer, confession and absolution, reading scripture,

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[94] Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 340.

[95] This phrase is an example of a hebraic superlative, and can be translated "the highest vanity;" the word also could be translated as "vapor" or "mist," emphasizing impermanence and fleetingness.

community, catechism, and so on.

Admonish, then Avoid the Divisive

Titus 3.9-11.

Another way that St. Paul encourages Timothy and Titus to fight the good fight of the faith is to admonish the divisive and then avoid them.

> *Avoid stupid controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless. After a first and second admonition, have nothing more to do with anyone who causes divisions, since you know that such a person is perverted and sinful, being self-condemned. (Titus 3.9-11)*

Avoid contentiousness arguments and controversy. Again and again the refrain of the Pastoral Epistles is simply to avoid the things that lead to division within the body of Christ. That doesn't mean that division isn't necessary sometimes. Avoiding controversy and quarreling is only one side of the coin. The other side of the coin is those who are being divisive get two chances to stop. After receiving two admonishments, St. Paul says "have nothing more to do with them."

There's a paradigm that I find helpful in understanding how important a doctrine is for maintaining unity in the church called "theological triage." As far as I can tell, the term itself was coined by Dr. Albert Mohler, president of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary right here in Louisville, though the concept dates further back. In the 17th century, a Lutheran theologian named Rupertus Meldenius wrote a tract on Christian unity wherein he coined the phrase "In essentials, unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity."

Dr. Mohler's theological triage is a way of applying that principle by dividing doctrine into three tiers or levels. The first tier are the essentials of the faith. These are the doctrines which one must believe to be a Christian. It is at this level that Meldenius calls for absolute unity. To be divisive on a first tier or first level issue is to be a false teacher. To deny these doctrines is to deny Christianity itself.

The second tier or level doctrines are those doctrines which faithful Christians can disagree on, but doing so will generally cause a division on a diocesan or denominational level. This includes differing views on baptism, church government, etc. While these disagreements may cause divisions across parish or denominational lines, it still allows for unity around common causes, including first level doctrines. For these issues we would seek diocesan or denominational

unity, and inter-denominational liberty.

The third tier or third level doctrines are those things which Christians might disagree on but still remain in close fellowship on the parish level. These doctrines include what one believes about the "millennium" in Revelation 20, when the "rapture" takes place—or even whether the word "rapture" should be used or not, the age of the earth, views on alcohol, the social responsibilities of the church, views parenting styles, etc. This is by far the largest category of doctrines, all of which fall under Christian liberty. Note well, however, that being place in this category does not mean something is unimportant. Rather, it means that Christians can fully disagree charitably and our fellowship with one another not be hindered in any way.

Remember Your Calling

1 Timothy 4.13-14.

St. Paul continues encouraging the young leaders, saying,

> *Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conducts, in love, in faith, in purity. Until I arrive, give attention to the public reading of scripture, to exhorting, to teaching. Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you through prophecy with the laying on of hands by the council of elders. (1 Timothy 4.13-14)*

"Keep doing what you're already doing," the Apostle encourages. "Remember your ordination; remember the gift that was given to you for exactly this kind of ministry." The historic Christian view of ordination is that it is sacramental. God conveys grace to the ordinand through the prayers and laying on of hands by those who are given the authority to ordain. In remembering his ordination, Timothy can be assured that he has the gifts necessary for the present needs of his ministry, because it was God himself who called him to such a ministry and who gifts his ministers for ministry.

In this way, the services of ordination and confirmation are very similar. Confirmation is the ordination of the laity to the ministry of the church; through confirmation, God delights to give believers the blessing of confirming and strengthening their faith and their spiritual gifts, which God has given for the service of the church. As Sandra McCracken sings in the song *Grace Upon Grace*, "All that You ask Your grace will provide."

St. Paul reminds Timothy that the gifts necessary for his ministry "was given to you through

prophecy with the laying on of hands by the council of elders." We might typically think of prophecy being the foretelling of future events. Prophecy in scripture does involve, at times, foretelling, but the heart of prophecy is the unveiling or revealing of God's will in that present moment. Through Timothy's ordination ceremony, God's will that Timothy be ordained into ministry was revealed by means of the affirmation given by the council of elders.

Interestingly, in 2 Timothy 1.6, St. Paul again reminds Timothy of his ordination. In this passage, however, the Apostle says that it was he who laid hands on Timothy. This is no contradiction; St. Paul himself was numbered among the council of elders mentioned in 1 Timothy 1.14. How much stronger the encouragement in 1 Timothy, then, as it was the same Paul who was part of Timothy's ordination who was now encouraging him by assuring him of his faith in God's calling and gifting? St. Paul's voice was among the prophetic affirmation then, and is the prophetic affirmation now.

The same can be said for all Christians who have been baptized, and even more so for those who have been confirmed. When we were baptized we received the gift of the Holy Spirit, who grafted us into the body of Christ, the family of God, and who gifts us for ministry. In confirmation, as we said, those gifts—including our faith—is confirmed and strengthened. A major gift that God gives through such rites of the church to those who are faithful is the gift of assurance.

All that God asks, his grace will provide.

Guard What Has Been Entrusted to You.

1 Timothy 1.17; 6.20.

> *…sound teaching that conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me (1 Timothy 1.17)*
> *Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you. (1 Timothy 6.20)*

Throughout this class, we've been exploring what fidelity looks like in the church—fidelity to God, fidelity to sound doctrine, fidelity to the family of God, and fidelity to God's mission to the world. In fact, the Pastoral Epistles have been one long example of just that. St. Paul has spent six chapters passing down to his true son in the faith, Timothy, the very thing that God has entrusted to him. After all is said and done, the Apostle then gives Timothy the very same charge.

God entrusted his glorious gospel in mystery to Adam and Eve, to Noah, to Abraham, Issac,

and Jacob, to the twelve tribes, to the kings, the poets, and the prophets. That mystery was revealed in the incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension, and current reign of Jesus Christ, fully God and fully man, second person of the triune God. Jesus then entrusted the revealed gospel to the twelve Apostles, and then to St. Paul. The Apostles then entrusted the gospel and sound doctrine to the churches, signified in the post-apostolic age to the bishops. Bishops guard the doctrine while entrusting it to their parishes.

This has been happening for millennia. For over 2,000 years the New Testament church has been guarding and entrusting the revealed Gospel of Jesus Christ—with difficulty at times, but no less successfully. And we know that the church has been successful because we are here, today, participating in that very same work of guarding and entrusting. We are proof that Christ builds his church.

And so, as we take part in the same mission, and we receive the same charge given to Timothy and Titus, given to Paul and the Twelve, to the Patriarchs and to the first human beings: Guard what has been entrusted to you and pass on that sacred deposit—to one another as the Family of God, to our families, and to the world which desperately needs it—with God's help, trusting that it is Christ through the Holy Spirit who is building his church, his true family.

Questions for Reflection

1. So often we think of the Spiritual Disciplines (scripture reading, prayer, etc.) as a law, and that, when we fail, God becomes angry with us. Yet, Scripture tells us that "there is now therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8.1). How do we cultivate habits that "train ourselves in godliness" without the fear of condemnation when we fail?
2. Where do you look for your security, happiness, and contentment? What is it about those things to which you look that gives the illusion of the ability to make you content? How does Christ and the gospel call you away from finding contentment in those things and to find your contentment in God himself instead?
3. "Laity as Holy Orders;" What does it mean that every Christian is ordained to ministry at their baptisms, confirmed and strengthened in their confirmation?
4. What has been most encouraging to in our study of 1 Timothy and Titus? How has it

encouraged you?

2 Timothy

Week 9: Fidelity in Suffering

Collect For Times of Suffering or Weakness

Dear Lord and Savior Jesus Christ: We hold up all our weaknesses to your strength, our failures to your faithfulness, our sinfulness to your perfection, our loneliness to your compassion, our little pains to your great agony on the Cross. We pray that you will cleanse us, strengthen us, guide us, so that in all ways our lives may be lived as you would have it lived, without cowardice and for you alone. Show us how to live in true humility, true contrition, and true love.. **Amen.**

Scripture

2 Timothy 1.1-18.

St. Paul's second epistle to Timothy picks up many of the same themes as the first, but under very different circumstances and a very different tone. The year approximately around 64 to 65 AD, and Nero's persecution of the church has begun in earnest. Timothy is still serving the churches of Ephesus and fighting against the influence of the false teachers. St. Paul, however, is imprisoned for preaching the gospel in Rome, and facing certain execution and martyrdom.

The Apostle's impending death haunts the text throughout. Second Timothy very much serves as St. Paul final words, his last wishes. In the beginning and ending of the letter, we see St. Paul's affection for Timothy as he expresses his desire (in very strong language!) to see the young protegé one last time before his martyrdom. In delivering them to Timothy, we see the Apostle practicing what he has been teaching Timothy: the faithful handing down of the deposit of faith entrusted to him by God himself.

Yet, while the text strikes an obvious minor chord of sombre reckoning, the overarching sense is hope in a major key. For example, St. Paul asserts in the very first verse that his apostolic calling

is "by the willing of God, for the sake of the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus" (v1). The main themes of the letter are woven together in such a way that the Apostles focus is not on himself, but on making sure that Timothy is encouraged to continue on after St. Paul's death. In the face of death, St. Paul's love for Timothy compels him to pastorally care for his "beloved son."

What is it that allows St. Paul to both face his martyrdom with hope and have the wherewithal to ensure that Timothy is encouraged in his current and future ministry? The answer is that St. Paul is convinced of God's character and the truths of the Gospel. But St. Paul's is not a blind faith; rather it is a faith informed by a lifetime of seeing God's fidelity to him which fuels and empowers St. Paul's fidelity to Christ and the gospel.

We find the whole of the Pastoral Epistles summarized in the short sermon delivered by Polycarp at his martyrdom some 90 years later.

> [The proconsul] sought to persuade [Polycarp] to deny [Christ], saying "Have respect for thy old age," and other similar things according to their custom, such as, "Swear by the fortune of Caesar; repent, and say, 'Away with the Atheists.' But Polycarp, gazing with a stern countenance on all the multitude of the wicked heathen then in the stadium, and waving his hands towards them…said, 'Away with the Atheists.'…Polycarp declared, "Eighty and six years have I served Him, and He never did me any injury; how then can I blaspheme my King and Saviour?" (IX)

What leads someone, facing their own executioner, to proclaim that the God they worshipped and serve "never did me any injury?" Only someone who believed that this very same God has overcome they very death they now faced, utterly convinced of all that Christ himself taught about eternal life. This brings us to today's passage, 2 Timothy 1.1-18, where we find St. Paul encouraging Timothy towards fidelity in suffering for the sake of the Gospel.

My Beloved Son

> *Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, for the sake of the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus, to Timothy, my beloved child: grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.*
> *I am grateful to God—whom I worship with a clear conscience, as my ancestors did—when I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. Recalling your tears, I long to see you so that I may be filled with joy. I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother*

Eunice and now, I am sure, lives in you. (2 Timothy 1.1-5)

St. Paul's tone is so different in 2 Timothy because he is writing not only as an apostle to the church, but as a father to his son. More than ever, the Apostle's affections are on display towards Timothy. While this is a natural outflow of their relationship, it also serves the undercurrent of Paul's encouragement to Timothy in the midst of hardship, suffering, and his inevitable death.

A Father's Affections

The Apostle addresses his epistle this way: "to Timothy, my beloved child." This is similar to how he began his first letters to Timothy and Titus:

to Timothy/Titus, my true son in the faith (1 Timothy 1.2; Titus 1.4; ESV)

Recall in our study of the church as "God's faithful family" in week 6 that while we often over spiritualize this language, the scripture's vision of the people of God as family is something more than mere metaphor. Not only does this address reveal St. Paul's affections towards Timothy, it echoes the proclamation of God the Father over Jesus at his baptism—a stunning revelation of the Father's encouragement and affirmation of his Son.

After this greeting, the Apostle immediately launches into stating his thankfulness to God for Timothy's faith. Our English translations break up verses 3-5 into multiple sentences for clarity, but this often muddies the flow of what was originally one sentence. The main idea of this passage is that Paul is thankful to God (v3) for Timothy's sincere faith (v5). Typical of Paul, we make several parenthetical pitstops along the way. In these pitstops we see the Apostle's great love and affection for Timothy:

when I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. Recalling your tears, I long to see you so that I may be filled with joy. (2 Timothy 1.3)

As a Pharisee, St. Paul would have prayed three offices of prayer at fixed times each day, which he likely continued to do after converting to Christianity. The phrase "in my prayers night and day" probably alludes to this or a similar practice. The Jewish concept of a day began at sunset following the pattern of "there was night, and then there was day" from Genesis 1. The Apostle's use of "night and day" reflects that understanding, and pairing that with the word "constantly," we can paraphrase this verse like so: "I pray for you every time I pray throughout the day." As Paul faces his own death, he does not forget to pray for Timothy each time he prays.

Each time St. Paul prays for Timothy he remembers Timothy's tears. Because the English

translations break verses 3-5 up into multiple sentences this connection is muddled. The original sentence would say something like "remembering you constantly in my prayers night and day, I recall your tears and yearn to see you again so that I may be filled with joy."

We don't have any context to tell us what event or series of events caused this "sad moment" shared by Timothy and St. Paul, but we can infer it probably relates to the the apostle's leaving Ephesus and Timothy. The original grammar makes a connection between St. Paul's "recalling your tears" and his "yearning to see you again." It's in this latter statement that the apostle's fatherly affection is made abundantly clear. The word "desire" is not only given an intensifying prefix ("I greatly desire; I yearn"), but it is placed in an emphatic position. "I yearn to see you—recalling your tears—so that my joy may be fulfilled."

This brings us to St. Paul's fatherly affirmations of Timothy. These affirmations are largely the result of St. Paul's affections being explicitly made known.

A Father's Affirmation

It's no secret that every child craves affirmation from their parents. St. Paul encourages Timothy by relating his fatherly affirmation throughout the epistle. We see this affirmation in the apostle's salutation, echoing the words that God the Father spoke over Jesus at his baptism: "You are my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased." There is a unique and special affirmation for a son when he knows that his father loves him and is well-pleased with him. By calling Timothy his "beloved son," St. Paul's implication is clear: "and with you I am well-pleased."

There is another parallel between this epistle's opening and the baptism of Jesus. In Matthew, Mark, and Luke, after Jesus is baptized and the voice of the Father makes his proclamation, Jesus immediately leaves for the wilderness to prepare for his public ministry. Throughout the forty days Jesus spends in what supposed to be *silence* and solitude, our Lord is frequently accosted by Satan himself. The narrative is clear—in Jesus' full humanity, the affirmation of his Father was an encouragement that fueled his fidelity. To be sure, the Father's proclamation had the world as its audience in proclaiming the divinity of the Son and demarcated what would follow as God's divine plan for redemption. But Jesus—fully God *and* fully man—was also an audience; and his response to the proclamation led him into his public ministry. St. Paul's affirmation of Timothy is two-fold. He really and truly does give fatherly affection and affirmation to Timothy; we dare not

cheapen this aspect of what St. Paul is doing. At the same time, because that affection and affirmation is real and true, it also encourages Timothy towards fidelity in his own ministry.

We see St. Paul's fatherly affirmation again in verse 5, as we saw, when he states explicitly his yearning to see Timothy again.Not only does St. Paul express in the strongest possible terms how much he wants to see Timothy again, he adds to this that seeing Timothy again would "fill him with joy." Again, the strongest possible language is used: "make my joy complete," "fill up (what is lacking) in my joy" Bill Mounce comments,

> Despite all the negative circumstances of his imprisonment (4.10-18) and knowing that his earthly life is nearly over (4.6-8), Timothy's presence would make his joy complete.

How easy would it be for the "most spiritual" among us to proclaim, "Paul's joy should be found complete in Christ alone!" The Apostle disagrees—not that his ultimate joy isn't found in Christ, as it should be (cf. Romans 15.13). True joy is a fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5.22). Rather, the Apostle sees no contradiction between finding one's ultimate joy in Christ and seeing that joy then spill out in response to others.He says to the Philippians, "make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind" (Philippians 2.2). To the Thessalonians, St. Paul asks, "What is our hop or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?" The "good" answer to this is that there is no boasting before Christ at his return. And yet, St. Paul continues, "Is it not you? Yes, you are our glory and joy!" (1 Thessalonians 2.19-20).

"Beloved son," "well-pleased," and "reason for my joy." These affirmations are what every son—indeed every daughter—yearns to hear from their parents. This is no different when we move from the biological family to the ecclesial one. When we give such affirmation in the church, however, we add the extra dimension of speaking from two hearts: our own, and our heavenly Father's.

Like Father, Like Son

What does any of this have to do with our main theme for today—fidelity in suffering? We have already seen the role that affection and affirmation plays in encouraging others through suffering. Though it's easy to miss, one specific way that St. Paul affirms Timothy is by showing

how their lives and ministry mirror each other.

How often do we hear the phrase "like father, like son" used in the negative? On one online dictionary that explains idioms, the first three examples of this phrase are negative, and the fourth is simply neutral:

> 1. Tommy's headstrong and impatient—like father, like son.
> 2. A: "My only interest is making money." B: "Like father, like son"
> 3-4. Jill: "George's father smoked all the time, and now George is smoking excessively, too." Jane: "Like father, like son, eh? I think my son will grow up tall, just like his father. Like father, like son."[96]

It isn't until the very final entry that we see a positive usage of the term.

> Young Jim is turning out to be as hard-working as his dad—like father, like son.[97]

There's a better way. If we look closely at the text, we'll see that the undercurrent of this whole passage is St. Paul's affirmation of Timothy following in his footsteps. This serves to encourage Timothy by way of the Apostle's model example of fidelity. The first point of comparison between St. Paul and Timothy is that they are both suffering—the apostle in prison for proclaiming the gospel, Timothy in his ministry in guarding and defending the gospel.

Notice that Timothy is never "one-upped" by the Apostle. Nowhere in the epistle do we see that St. Paul's response to the difficulty of Timothy's ministry is to say "talk to me again when you're facing martyrdom." Rather, as seen in the epistle's affirmations and encouragements, St. Paul's currently situation fuels his sympathy for his beloved son. That the Apostle is staring down his own death does not in anyway minimize Timothy's suffering in Paul's mind; rather, his own situation, his past experiences, and his affections all work together to increase his empathy for Timothy's current suffering..

The second point of comparison is introduced in 2 Timothy 1.3-5. St. Paul's first parenthetical statement in this passage is a statement of the Apostle's heritage of fidelity:

> *I am grateful to God—whom I worship with a clear conscience, as my ancestors*

[96] "Like Father, Like Son." 2015. *Farlex Dictionary of Idioms*. https://web.archive.org/web/20210507030715/https://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/like+father%2c+like+son. Also contains entry from *McGraw-Hill Dictionary of American Idioms and Phrasal Verbs*, 2002.

[97] Ibid.

> *did…*

He then ends the passage with the following affirmation:

> *…[for] your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well.*

The situational heritages are different. The Apostle first connects his faith in Jesus as the Messiah with the faith of his ancestors. There is a radical continuity between the faith of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and the faith of Paul. Because of this continuity and through their shared testimony to the fidelity of YHWH, St. Paul stands on their shoulders seeing them as light posts of fidelity in both victory and suffering (cf. Hebrews 11). Timothy's situation is more intimate, as the Apostle points out when he names Timothy's grandmother and mother as his forebears in the faith (2 Timothy 1.5). In each of these "spiritual heritages" we find the faithful transmission of the deposit of faith, ending with St. Paul's encouragement that he "is convinced" of Timothy's "sincere faith."

How easy it is to despair of the realness of our faith in the mist of hardship. The so called "prosperity gospel" is a heresy which profits off the idea that people suffer because they lack true faith. Yet the Apostle turns this idea on its head, as we'll see in verses 6-18.

Fidelity in Suffering

> *For this reason I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands; for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline.*
> *Do not be ashamed, then, of the testimony of our Lord or of me his prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel, relying on the power of God, who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace. This grace was given to us in Christ before the ages began, but it has no been revealed through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. For this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher, and for this reason I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know in whom I have put my trust, and I am sure that he is able to guard until that day what I have entrusted to him. Hold to the stand of sound teaching that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Guard the good treasure entrusted to you, with the help of the Holy Spirit.(1 Timothy 1.6-14)*

In this passage St. Paul continues to encourage Timothy in the midst of his difficult ministry,

by expanding on the themes he introduced in verses 3-5. Mounce lists four related themes that the apostles weaves together throughout this passage that all serve to encourage the young leader:

1. St. Paul continues to identify himself with Timothy and their mutual ministries
2. St. Paul calls Timothy to not be ashamed of neither the gospel nor the Apostle's imprisonment.
3. St. Paul encourages Timothy to share with him in suffering for the sake of the gospel.
4. St. Paul reminds Timothy that God has not abandoned him in his ministry, but that he has been, and will continue to be, empowered by the Holy Spirit to minister in hardships.

The Ministries of St. Paul and Timothy Intertwined

Just as St. Paul hinted at the similarities between himself and Timothy in vv 3-5, he now begins to encourage Timothy by showing how their ministries are inseparably intertwined. First, he reminds Timothy that he was present at Timothy's ordination:

> *[because of your sincere faith] I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands… (2 Timothy 1.6)*

If you remember, the Apostle used this very same encouragement in the first letter that he wrote to Timothy. One of the functions of the ordination service was the prophecy of the elders, which was most likely an affirmation and certainty of Timothy's calling. In 2 Timothy 1.6, St. Paul reminds Timothy of that very same certainty and adds to it the reminder that the Apostle himself was there. St. Paul's certainty in Timothy has not wavered.

Because of St. Paul's unwavering certainty about Timothy's fidelity to God and ministry, we probably shouldn't understand the encouragement to "rekindle the gift," as if Timothy has somehow failed in his ministry. The general idea of the exhortation—and this epistle as a whole—is that Timothy should continue to do the work that he is already doing. He has not yet given up, but given the potential for difficult ministry to erode the ministers, St. Paul's final words to Timothy amount to "press on." Other translations say that Timothy should "fan the flames of the gift," which suggests less of a reigniting, and more of a vigilence to keep the fire from going out in the first place.

Throughout the rest of this passage, St. Paul uses the word for "we/us" seven times:[98]

> *God did not give* **us** *a spirit of cowardice… (v7)*
> *Do not be ashamed, then, of the testimony about* **our** *Lord (v8)*
> *…who saved and called* **us** *with a holy calling, not according to* **our** *works…This grace was given to* **us** *in Christ Jesus (v9)*
> *…it has has now been revealed through the appearing of* **our** *Savior Jesus Christ (v10)*
> *Guard the good treasure entrusted to you, with the help of the Holy Spirit living in* **us** (v14).

The apostle accomplishes a couple of things by using the 1st person plural "we" instead of the 2nd person singular "you." First, St. Paul assures that his *encouragements* would not be read as *accusations*. How we read this passage effects our view of Timothy's character. The phrases "did not give…a spirit of cowardice…" and the command "Do not be ashamed…" could be, and often has been, read as indictments of Timothy. Just as with the encouragement to "fan the flames of your gift," however, these are meant to be encouragements rather than admonitions.

Second, St. Paul reminds Timothy that he is not alone in his discouragement and suffering. There's a reason that Christian apologetics has an entire branch dedicated to what's called "the problem of evil." That branch, theodicy, seeks to give a defense for how God can be fully good, fully loving, and yet the world be such a broken place where evil and suffering seems to thrive. The issue with theodicy, however, is that it is most effective when it is a preparatory defense. Suffering has a way of shutting out rationality. It's one thing to be catechized to know "all things work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose" (Romans 8.28), and entirely another thing to be told that by a well-meaning Christians immediately after hearing a cancer diagnosis.

We often respond to suffering by withdrawing and pulling away from others. Sometimes this response is due to sin—if our suffering *is* the result of our own sinfulness, then like Adam and Eve, we tend to hide "for we were afraid." To let others in on our suffering is to have to confess our sin. When confronted, Adam and Eve shift blame rather than receiving accountability:

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[98] Translations may have varying occurrences. This count is particular to the appearance of the word ἡμεῖς, "we/us." The appearance of this word is important because in Greek the pronoun can often be inferred by the verb or noun it modifies. To explicitly give that pronoun is a way demarcating emphasize. Therefore, to find such repetition in such a short passage means that St. Paul is heavily emphasizing their connectedness. Notably, Mounce notes only 6 occurrences

> *"Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree which I commanded you not to eat?" The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate." Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is it you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent tricked me, and I ate." (Genesis 3.11-13)*

Our shame causes us to flee even when God promises freedom to those who confess.

Sometimes our withdrawal from others is a learned defense mechanism. When we're suffering—regardless of whether it's due to our own sinfulness or not—well-meaning friends can attempt to help us and end up being more like Job's "friends" who consistently missed the diagnosis of Job's suffering, and therefore the cure. This usually happens when we try and "fix" the person whose suffering, or offer platitudes out of a sense of feeling helpless. What St. Paul shows us here is that "presence"—whether physical or affirmational—is one of the best remedies we can offer. Even if that presence is silent. As I've often said, we make terrible Holy Spirits—leave the "fixing" to him.

Finally, our withdrawal can be a learned cultural value. In the west, stoic and rugged individualism rules the day. In many ways the lone wolf with extremely pullable bootstraps has become the icon of our culture. Please don't misunderstand me; there is value and goodness in the concept of grit, self-sufficiency when necessary, and not being ruled *by* our emotions. The problem is that, as we become more and more tribal we lose our ability to critically engage where things can and do go wrong. We rightly dismiss faulty arguments when we are critiqued, but we don't stop to think if the critique itself might have validity.

For example, the explicit teaching of the gospel is that we cannot pull ourselves up by our bootstraps. We can't even reach our bootstraps by ourselves; in fact our arms have been cut off. We are saved by God's grace alone, not our works, and sanctified by God's grace, and the good works and fruit that do appear in our lives are evidence of the Holy Spirit's work, not ours. Obedience and effort are not the bad words here. Obedience and effort as a way of getting God to notice and save us are. Obedience and effort *which are the result of God having already saved us and empowering us through the Holy Spirit* is what the Holy Scripture explicitly teaches. Furthermore, when God saves us, he places us into the community of his Kingdom. There is no individual Christianity, though there is personal faith—itself a gift!—which is a mark of every Christian.

Note that St. Paul's response to Timothy's suffering is not "suck it up" or "get over it." These

types of responses only serve to teach those who are suffering to withdraw further. It signifies our inability to deal with someone else's emotions and suffering, or worse, our unwillingness. This is not encouragement, but abandonment.

> *If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it. (1 Corinthians 12.26)*
> *Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. (Romans 12.15)*

Contentment, as we saw in the last class, is not natural but learned. It is not learned by ignoring our suffering and shutting down our emotions. Rather, it is learned by facing them and navigating them with the gospel as our "North Star," not alone where we can be plagued by our own blind spots, but in the community of God's faithful family. Here is where St. Paul's gentle, gracious, reminders that he and Timothy are similar and intertwined shine through all the more. His encouragement to Timothy is not "suck it up," or "get over it." His encouragement is "you are not alone with this. I may be physically far away, but I am still with you. We are suffering for the same reasons: the gospel. Now, remember what the gospel teaches us."

Do not be Ashamed, But Share in the Suffering for Gospel

Just to make things clear, St. Paul then moves on to explain not just what the gospel is, but how it can encourage us in the midst of our suffering.

> [remember the gift given through the laying on of my hands,] *for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of* [prudent self-control]. *Do not be ashamed then, of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner. (2 Timothy 1.7)*

As we've just noted, suffering often brings with its self a sense of shame which often results withdrawal. Because of that withdrawing shame—whether the origin of that shame is sinful, psychological, or cultural—cowardice can subtly and quickly take root in the shame-driven fallow fields of our hearts. Thus, St. Paul is not asserting Timothy's cowardice, but encouraging him towards fidelity in light of that cowardice that may take root otherwise.

What's interesting about verse 7 is what St. Paul chooses to highlight as the contrast to cowardice: power, love, and self-control The fact that the Apostle does not use the obvious contrast of "courage" is instructive. Certainly, courage is the contrast of cowardice. But how then do we define courage? The first contrast, "power," probably enters into our definition somewhere, but what of "love" and "self-discipline?" In each of these we find a subtle rebuke of

the false teachers, who are fueling Timothy's hardships.

True courage is not fearlessness. The attempt to eradicate fear from your life is a losing battle. God has given us fear for its appropriate use. The person who stands on the tracks proclaiming they are not afraid of the train coming towards them will no longer be afraid in this life, for they will soon be entering into the next. This is how we should understand power in verse 7: not as might and strength, but in being able to withstand that which makes us afraid. Furthermore, this power to "face our fears" is not something which we bootstrap; it is something which the text explicitly tells us is given to us by God: "God did not give us a spirit of cowardice; but rather [God gave us] a spirit of power." The false teachers, however, desire the power and authority of tyrants. A power that commands others and crushes opposition. The Apostle, on the other hand, speaks of a "power" that gives someone the strength to be crushed for the sake of the gospel.

The second characteristic of God's gift is "love." All human beings are lovers by nature, as St. Augustine has shown us, but note well the different types of love:

> There are, then, two loves, of which one is holy, the other unclean; one turned towards the neighbor, the other centered on the self; one looking to the common good, keeping in view the society of saints in heaven, the other bringing common good under it's own power, arrogantly looking to domination;

Cowardice is love of self in action. This is the love of the false teachers: they are lovers of self, lovers of money, and lovers of domineering power. The love which the Holy Spirit produces in us, however,

> *…is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. (1 Corinthians 13.4-7)*

How often we might mistake this kind of love for cowardice. Do not mistake patient kindness for cowardice in speaking up! Speaking the truth in arrogant rudeness is often celebrated, excused by saying "speaking truth *is* loving." Not according to St. Paul. But the Apostle continues:

> *[Love] bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. (1 Corinthians 13.8)*

This is the kind of love that God gifts, and which brings us through suffering and distress—not by

asserting itself against suffering, but rather by suffering well.

Third in contrast is "moderation, prudent self-control." This is from the same word-group that we have seen all throughout the Pastoral Epistles.

Because Timothy has a sincere faith, and therefore, God has given him a spirit of power, love, and self-control rather than cowardice, the Apostle then encourages Timothy:

> *Do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me his prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel, relying on the power of God. (2 Timothy 1.8)*

What is so shameful about the gospel? Or about St. Paul's imprisonment? From the perspective of the contemporary culture, the "good news" that Christians shared was that of a "failed prophet, rejected by his own people, executed by the world's power."[99] This is, as the Apostle points out, "a stumbling block for the Jews and foolishness to the gentiles" (1 Corinthians 1.23). To make matters worse, Jesus' first followers were poor "fishermen and other undesirables."[100] To cast your lot with Jesus was to identify with the laughingstock of the first century. And who was St. Paul in the eyes of the world that it would be easy to be ashamed of him? He was merely another victory for the Roman Empire. Not only did St. Paul proclaim the message of an executed criminal, he was about to become one himself—by the very same empire who crushed his messiah.

By the world's standards, there was much which should lead us to be ashamed. Ironically, though, as St. Paul says elsewhere, "I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith" (Romans 1.23); and

> *Christ crucified…to those who are called…Christ the power of God and wisdom of God. For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength. (1 Corinthians 1.23-25)*

In light of this, the Apostle encourages St. Timothy to not be ashamed. That's the word's posture to the gospel. To those whom God has called and saved, that very same "shameful" gospel is revealed to be the power of God for salvation. The very same power that raised Jesus from the dead, that saved Timothy, and that gifted him for his ministry is now at work in Timothy to strengthen him and keep him faithful even through suffering.

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[99] Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 480.
[100] Ibid.

Trust in God's Sovereign Fidelity

Having reflected on the power of God for salvation, St. Paul then encourages Timothy by looking at why the gospel can be a comfort for those who suffer:

> *…relying on the power of God, who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace. This grace was given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. For this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and teacher, and for this reason I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know the one in whom I have put my trust, and I am sure that he is able to guard until that day what I have entrusted him. (2 Timothy 1.8b-12)*

You'll notice many similarities with themes we explored in 1 Timothy and Titus (particularly in week 3) including salvation by grace rather than works and the "epiphany," or appearing, of Christ. The gospel is, in a very real sense, the proclamation that Christ has won over death, that death no longer has the final say in the lives of Christians. The perishable will be made imperishable in Christ. What suffering is there, what persecutions, that can lay hold of us and reverse that promise? There are none. Death is dying, and at the return of Christ death will die.

St. Paul ends this section by asserting

> *I am not ashamed, for I know the one in whom I have put my trust, and I am sure that he is able to guard until that day what I have entrusted to him. (2 Timothy 1.12)*

Just as with St. Paul's emphatic use of we/our/us in verses 3-5, he uses the emphatic "I" and "my" at the beginning and ending of this passage. In verse 11, St. Paul explicitly links his past and present suffering to the gospel that is a stumbling block for Jews and foolishness to Gentiles: "for this gospel *I* was appointed…and suffer." He was, of course, imprisoned on charges of proclaiming that very gospel. In verse 12, St. Paul gives us a very strong statement regarding his fidelity in suffering, marked by his absolute certainty. "I know the one in whom I have trusted," says the Apostle. St. Paul's trust is given a strengthened form, which is followed by his assertion that "I am fully convinced."

How did St. Paul come to such conviction and resolve? The answer is in how he relays the gospel in verses 8b-10. Salvation is "the power of God" (v8b). It was God "who saved us and called us" (v9a), not according to anything Paul or Timothy had done (v9b), but rather

"according to [God's] own purpose and grace" (v9c). St. Paul knows that his salvation is all the work of God, and that he has contributed nothing. Indeed, he couldn't contribute anything eve if he desired to do so. The grace St. Paul needed for salvation was "given before the ages began"—before the Apostle was ever born, before even the creation of the world.

St. Paul has the confidence he does because his own salvation is the result of God's sovereign work. God has been in control every step of the way, and therefore, the Apostle would reason, is in control even know as he suffers. If God has been *for* St. Paul, as shown at every step of the way resulting in his salvation, why would that same God not be for him now even in the midst of suffering? The answer, of course, is that God is for him even now, because

> *If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril? Or sword? As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8.31-29)*

Indeed, what power does the world hold over Christians? The greatest power it might wield is death, but as we've said before even that weapon has been transformed for our good: it was Christ

> *who abolished death, and brought life and immorality to light through the gospel (2 Timothy 1.10)*

Jesus broke the back of death on the cross, and was vindicated—shown to be right and true—in overcoming death fully in his resurrection.

To put a fine point on it, St. Paul is able weather the storm of suffering with fidelity to God in Christ, because God in Christ has proven his fidelity towards his children through the gospel. Thus, we return to the words of St. Polycarp:

> "Eighty and six years have I served Him, and He never did me any injury; how

then can I blaspheme my King and Savior?"

Nothing can separate us from the love of a sovereign God who pledges fidelity to his own, exemplified in the sending and willingness of the Son to suffer in our place. As St. Paul says, after several epistles emphasizing the sacred deposit which God has entrusted to us,

> *I am fully convinced that he is able to guard my deposit until that day (2 Timothy 1.12)*

What was the Apostle's deposit? His ministry, the security of his faith, and his very life. God, the very definition of fidelity, will guard what we entrust to him.

With the help of the Holy Spirit

Having given this encouragement to Timothy, St. Paul offers the following charge:

> *Hold to the standard of sound teaching that you have heard from me in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Guard the good treasure entrusted to you, with the help of the Holy Spirit living in us.(2 Timothy 1.13-14)*

Whether in times of suffering, times of flourishing, and everything in between, hold on to the gospel and guard the gospel. How? "With the help of the Holy Spirit living in us." Throughout our study of this passage, there's been a concentrated effort to point out that what St. Paul is calling for in fidelity in suffering is not our natural inclinations, but the work of the Holy Spirit in us. This culminates in verses 10–12, where the Apostle points out that the entirety of our salvation rests in God's sovereign fidelity to us.

How can sinful people hold to the standard of sound teaching? How is it that one can stand in the midst of difficulty, hardship, and suffering and guard what has been entrusted to us by God? St. Paul answers, "with the help of the Holy Spirit living in us." Our fidelity, our good works, our very salvation is predicated up by the Holy Spirit living within us. Thanks be to God.

Questions for Reflection

1. We often respond to suffering by withdrawing from others; sometimes we hide in our shame, sometimes we hide so as not to be hurt more, and sometimes we hide because we're afraid of being thought of as weak. What is your typical initial response to suffering? (Though the three responses mentioned cover much ground, you might realize that you have a differently motivated response)

2. The first question and answer in the Heidelberg Catechism is as follows:

   Q: What is your only comfort in life and death?
   A: That I am not my own, but belong with body and soul, both in life and in death, to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ. He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood and has set me free from all power of the devil. He also preserves me in such a way that without the will of my Heavenly Father not a hair can fall form my head; indeed all things must work together for my salvation. Therefore, by his Holy Spirit he also assures me of eternal life and makes me heartily willing and ready from now on to live for him.

   What parallels do you find between the Heidelberg Catechism and 2 Timothy 1.8–14?

3. Does St. Paul's encouragements trivialize suffering in any way? Why or Why not? What are some ways that Christians (even well meaning ones!) trivialize the suffering of others? How can we encourage someone who is suffering without trivializing that suffering?

Week 10: Fidelity in Ministry

Collect For Enduarance

Almighty God, whose most dear Son went not up to joy but first he suffered pain, and entered not into glory before he was crucified: Mercifully grant that we, walking in the way of the Cross, may find it none other than the way of life and peace; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord. **Amen.**

Scripture

2 Timothy 2.1-26.

In the previous class we worked through the beginning of St. Paul's personal encouragements to Timothy in light of the Apostle's imprisonment and eventual martyrdom and Timothy's ongoing difficult ministry at Ephesus. He calls Timothy to share in suffering for the sake of the gospel, but encourages him that fidelity in the midst of suffering is empowered by the Holy Spirit and the fidelity of God towards his children.

Today, we look at 2 Timothy chapter 2, which can be divided up into two parts. Second Timothy 2.1-13 continues St. Paul's call for Timothy to share in suffering, and expands on many of the same points he makes in chapter 1: be empowered by God's grace to share in the suffering for the gospel, and be encouraged by God's fidelity to his children. All of 2 Timothy 1.3-2.13, then, form a single unit whose main theme is encouragement.[101]

In the second part of chapter 2, verses 14-26, we start the second major portion of the epistle which goes all the way through to chapter 4, verse 8. In this portion, St. Paul begins to discuss the

[101] Ibid., 500-502

false teaching which continues to effect the Ephesian church.[102] In the present passage, we'll look at St. Paul's charge to Timothy to persevere in his ministry until he leaves to visit the Apostle in prison. In the mean time, Timothy is to remain in Ephesus teaching sound doctrine and living an exemplary life which serves to highlight the beauty of the gospel.

Throughout today's text St. Paul gives Timothy several metaphors that encourage him in his suffering and in his ministry, which we will explore as they come to us in the passage.

Share In Suffering

We'll begin by looking at verses 1-14 and St. Paul's continued encouragement in the midst of suffering:

> *You then, my child, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus; and what you have heard from me through many witnesses entrust to faithful people who will be able to teach others as well. Share in suffering like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving in the army gets entangled in everyday affairs; the soldier's aim is to please the enlisting officer. And in the case of an athlete, no one is crowned without competing according to the rules. It is the farmer who does the work who ought to have the first share of the crops. Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in all things.*
> *Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, a descendant of David—that is my gospel, for which I suffer hardship, even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But the word of God is not chained. Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, so that they may also obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory. The saying is sure:*
>
> *If we have died with him, we will also live with him;*
> *if we endure, we will also reign with him;*
> *if we deny him, he will also deny us;*
> *if we are faithless, he remains faithful—*
> *for he cannot deny himself. (2 Timothy 2.1-14).*

Be Empowered by God's Grace

2 Timothy 2.1-2

St. Paul ends chapter 1 by giving examples of those who have deserted him during his imprisonment, and of Onesiphorus, who remained faithful to the Apostle. He then turns his

[102] Ibid., 522-23.

attention to Timothy in 2.1 and gives him this exhortation:

> *You then, my child, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus; and what you have heard from me through many witnesses entrust to faithful people who will be able to teach others as well.*

Throughout chapter 1, the Apostle gave Timothy several commands: "fan the flames of the gift of God that is within you" (1.6), "Do not be ashamed…but join with me in suffering for the gospel" (1.8), "Hold to the standard of sound teaching" (1.13), and "guard the good treasure entrusted to you" (1.14). At each command, however, St. Paul was quick to remind Timothy that he could not follow these commands because of his own innate strength and power: he was given the gift from God (1.6), who did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but one of power, love, and self-discipline (1.7), thus Timothy must "rely on the power of God who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace…given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages began" (1.8-9), the one who is able to guard what we entrust to him in faith (1.12), all "with the help of the Holy Spirit living in us."

Now, in 2 Timothy 2.1, St. Paul exhorts Timothy, in contrast to those who deserted the Apostle, "be [continually strengthened] in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." Fidelity in suffering is only available to us because God has followed through on his promise and gave grace upon grace in Christ Jesus. The Holy Spirit empowers our fidelity in suffering.

But this isn't some one-time empowerment, as if the Holy Spirit comes into our lives and creates a well of power and grace from which we have to draw until it runs out. God's grace is the never emptying, daily refreshing well of Jesus Christ. The NRSV says "be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus," but the nuance of this verse is to be read: "be continually strengthened in the grace found in Christ Jesus." In this one short verse, St. Paul is encouraging us that, first, the strength we need do what God has called us to do is only available to those who are "in Christ Jesus," and, therefore, this strength does not come from within us but from outside of us. We cannot bootstrap our way to strength. Furthermore, we must "be continually strengthened" by this grace. Who is doing the strengthening? God. When do we need him to give us this strength? Continually. We must daily come to the well of living water and draw upon a strength found in God through the Son and Holy Spirit.

Not only is this Timothy's hope in suffering but ours, too.

In the very next verse, though, it looks like St. Paul switches to a new subject, saying, "what you have heard from me through many witnesses entrust to faithful people who will be able to teach others as well." In one sense, he does, but he does so within the context of 1.3-2.13. The Apostle has already made it clear that he desires to see Timothy one last time before his Martyrdom. Doing so, however, would interrupt the ministry Timothy is doing in Ephesus. Paul knows this, and so he directs Timothy to entrust his current, difficult ministry to other faithful people at Ephesus, so that they can be sure that the gospel is being faithfully preached even in Timothy's absence.

Have you ever felt torn while having to decide which thing to do when all of your options are good, God-honoring choices? St. Paul knows the difficulty he has put Timothy in by asking for him to come visit. What would Timothy do? Would he stay and be faithful to the difficult ministry God has called him to in Ephesus, or should he honor the last wishes of his friend and father in the faith, Paul? The Apostle says "both." In 2.1, St. Paul is encouraging Timothy to be continually strengthened by God's grace as his suffers in his ministry at Ephesus. While he continues to minister there, he should also raise up faithful leaders in the church who can continue that ministry in Timothy's absence while he visits Paul in prison. After visiting, Timothy can return back to his ministry in Ephesus knowing that faithful leaders have been serving the church while he was away.

Daily empowered by the Holy Spirit and strengthened. by God's grace, Timothy is to persevere in suffering and entrust the ministry to other faithful leaders while he visits St. Paul in prison. Having encouraged Timothy in these ways, St. Paul picks back up on the theme of sharing in suffering for the sake of the gospel by giving Timothy three metaphors that will help to encourage him.

Share in the Suffering

2 Timothy 2.3-7

We pick back up in verse 3:

> *Share in suffering like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving in the army gets entangled in everyday affairs; the soldier's aim is to please the enlisting officer. And in the case of an athlete, no one is crowned without competing according to the rules. It is the farmer who does the work who ought to have the*

> *first share of the crops. Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in all things.*

Now, on the one hand, we don't want to press the metaphors too far. On the other hand, the Apostle would not have given these metaphors if there wasn't something instructive about them, for, as he says in verse 7, "think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in these things."

In general, all three metaphors serve to show Timothy that every callings go through suffering, but that we endure that suffering in order to receive a reward for our work. We'll consider each of the three examples in turn

Share in Suffering like a Good Soldier

The first example that Paul gives is the suffering endured by an enlisted soldier.

> *Share in suffering like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving in the army gets entangled in everyday affairs; (2 Timothy 2.3-4)*

Perhaps surprisingly, the Apostle does not go to the obvious suffering a soldier must endure—death, permanent injury, and so on—but rather points out that "No one serving in the army gets entangled in everyday affairs."

Imagine, for a moment, that you are a soldier in the first century. There's no phones, internet, social media, nor 24/7 news channels. That part doesn't sound too bad, but that also means there's very little opportunity to know how things are going back home. Any news must be sent by charioteer or foot. They have left behind the "everyday affairs" of their lives—their friends, their family, their cities and towns. What if the soldier leaves behind a pregnant wife, or a sick family member? At the very least, everyone has something or someone in their lives whose absences creates a sense of longing when they are absent. But what happens when a solider is distracted on the battle field? Soldiers must push through such concerns and become single-mindedly focused on their duties. This isn't easy, and it's not without it's negative effects.

Yet, in doing so, "the soldier's aim is to please his enlisting officer." To be fair, it sounds like the "reward"—a pleased enlisting officer—is out of balance to the suffering. This is why we mustn't push the metaphors too far. What is St. Paul really saying to Timothy here? It's not saying ministers should be cut off from "everyday affairs"—quite the opposite, actually—but rather that ministry requires a similar dedicated focus. There's not really a vacation from being a

minister. The minister must engage the ministry in all of the life of the church, and have focused dedication to teaching and teaching sound doctrine. Such ministry is pleasing to our enlisting officer—God.

Here, then, is St. Paul's encouragement to Timothy in suffering: persevere in God's pleasure towards you.

Share in Suffering like an Athlete

The next metaphor is that Timothy should share in suffering like an athlete:

> *In the case of an athlete, no one is crowned without competing according to the rules. (2 Timothy 2.5)*

How is it suffering to have to compete by the rules? Athletics are physically strenuous, but also mentally and emotionally strenuous as well. Really, the metaphor is incredibly apt: athletics are suffering embodied for a specific reward. Champions don't get to take short-cuts. Not just in the actual competition, which is holistically stressful to the body to begin with, but in all the hours and hours of rigorous training required for an athlete to compete at a champion level. This was part of the point in week 8 when we used Allen Iverson's 2002 post-game rant about practice as an illustration for St. Paul's exhortation to "train yourself in godliness" (1 Timothy 4.6-8). Iverson didn't become one of the best players of his time without going through daily practice.

In St. Paul's use of the metaphor, however, he focuses on the winner–the one who is "crowned" or receives the "victory wreath." His point is this: true victory rarely comes without suffering or struggle. What, then, is the victory wreath that Christians with which Christians are crowned? This metaphor will show up again later in 2 Timothy as St. Paul talks about his impending death. In reflecting on the end of his life, the Apostle tells Timothy,

> *And now the prize awaits me—the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on the day of his return. And the prize is not just for me but for all who eagerly look forward to his appearing. (2 Timothy 4.8, NLT)*

Share in Suffering Like a Farmer

The last metaphor is that Timothy should share in suffering like a farmer.

> *It is the farmer who does the work who ought to have the first share of the crops. (2 Timothy 2.6)*

The farmer suffers through their physical labor, through the sweat of their brow. Again, we have to consider the first century farmer rather than the twenty-first century farmer (which is still

hard work!). Even then, the Apostle's metaphor is stripped down. No servants in the field, just the farmer working amongst the crops.

St. Paul's choice of the word "work" is deliberate as it's not the more generic word for work. Rather, it is word which means "to exert oneself physically…*work hard, toil, strive, struggle*."[103] The Apostle often uses the word when referring to ministry. For example, he uses the same word in 1 Timothy 5.17, where the NRSV translates it "labor":

> *Let the elders (=presybters) who rule well be considered worthy of double-honor, especially those who* labor *in preaching and teaching.*

The reward for the hard-working farmer is the first of his crops.

The Gospel's Freedom in Our Chains

2 Timothy 2.8-13

St. Paul knows that the charge to suffer well is a difficult calling. No one enjoys suffering outside of having a pathology. So, after making such a strong call to suffer, the Apostle then reminds Timothy of the very gospel for which they suffer.

> *Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, a descendant of David—that is my gospel, for which I suffer hardship, even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But the word of God is not chained. Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, so that they may also obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory. (2 Timothy 2.8-10)*

The Apostle highlights both Jesus' resurrection and incarnation. As we'll see in verse 18, the resurrection is highlighted not only because it's a central part of the gospel but because the Ephesian false teachers rejected any future resurrection for Christians. Jesus' lineage from David is likely highlighted not just because it's a specific statement about his Messiahship, but also because it's a reminder that God is faithful to his promises. By highlighting the incarnation and the resurrection, all of Jesus' life of fidelity is also implied.

It's for this very gospel, St. Paul reminds Timothy, that he is in prison. He is "chained like a criminal." The word that he uses to describe himself as a criminal refers to someone who commits serious and gross crimes[104].Other contemporary literature uses this same word of the thieves crucified with Jesus, violent pillagers, murderers, and so forth, who were often crucified or

[103] BDAG, s.v. "κοπιάω."
[104] BDAG, s.v. "κακοῦγος"

maimed as punishment.[105]

Nevertheless, says St. Paul,

> *…the word of God is not chained. I endure everything for the sake of the elect, so that they may also obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.*

In verses 3-6, St. Paul used three metaphors to encourage Timothy to suffer well, each touching on some reward. Notably, the rewards had more to do with Timothy's eschatological assurance. Here, however, the Apostle speaks to an external reward–the salvation of the elect. The implication is that, while Timothy's "suffering" in ministry is different in kind from St. Paul's, both are suffering in ways that promote the salvation and faith of the elect.

The early Christians found the Apostle's testimony to be true. Through the Neronic Persecution, which claimed Paul's life, and the later more localized outbreaks of persecution and martyrdoms, the church grew. As Tertullian wrote,

> The oftener we are mown down by you, the more in number we grow; the blood of Christians is seed [for the Church].[106]

Be Encouraged by God's Fidelity

2 Timothy 2.11-13

Contemplating the call to endurance (v. 10), the Apostle then turns to God's fidelity towards us in Christ.

> *The saying is sure:*
> *If we have died with him, we will also live with him;*
> *if we endure, we will also reign with him;*
> *if we deny him, he will also deny us;*
> *if we are faithless, he remains faithful—*
> *for he cannot deny himself. (2 Timothy 2.11-13)*

This passage—which could be a hymn or creedal fragment, or St. Paul's own formulation—emphasizes the call to endurance while also encouraging us with God's fidelity towards his children. It has four distinct lines of conditional statements that map to the following categories: conversion and baptism, perseverance, apostasy, and faithlessness.[107]

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[105] Ceslas Spicq, *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament*, s.v. "κακοῦγος." Henceforth, TLNT.
[106] Tertullian, *Apology*, 50. (*ANF* 3)
[107] Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 500-20.

Conversion & Baptism

The first line speaks to our conversion and baptism.

> *If we have died with him, we will also live with him*

Remember, regardless of the the time between or the order of our conversion and our baptisms, the New Testament authors usually saw the two as part of the same event. Thus, when the New Testament speaks of our baptism it has in mind our conversion, and when speaking of our conversion it has in mind our baptism. The connection between the two is seen most readily in Romans 6, where St. Paul writes,

> *Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him but baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. For whoever has died is freed from sin. But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. (Romans 6.3-8)*

It's this very language that the Apostle uses in our present passage. As in Romans, the meaning is clear, but layered: If you have died with Christ (conversion and baptism), then you will also live with him. This promise is both present-tense and future-tense; already-but-not-yet. First, in the present, you have been raised with Christ in your baptism to "walk in newness of life." What it looks like to "walk in newness of life" has been a main theme of the Pastoral Epistles. This "newness of life" that we have now in Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit is just a taste of the final thing, however.

Second, the fullness of life with Jesus comes when Jesus returns and ushers in the renewal of all things. That is the subject of both this first line of 2 Timothy 2, and the latter part of Romans 6.8. It is then that we "will live *with* him" in full. Whatever suffering we endure in the meantime, we can cling to God's promise that in the life to come,

> *[God] will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away. (Revelation 21.4)*

God is faithful in that if he brings someone through the waters of baptism, he will bring them

into his new creation.

Third, and most applicable to St. Paul himself, is that if having been converted and baptized into Christ, when we physically die we are taken into his presence to wait with him until the new creation.[108]

Here, then, is St. Paul's encouragement: if you are in Christ, you have died to the old self and the promised future of abundant life is promised to you. More than that, you get a taste of that future life in the present. Should you die before Christ returns, you will have an even greater taste while we wait for the return of Christ.

Perseverance

The second line moves from our conversion and baptism to the present "newness of life."

if we endure, we will also reign with him.

Just as with the first line, we find in this and the third line that St. Paul's encouragement comes by way of engaging Timothy's imagination with God's eschatological kingdom. The new creation life–in which death, mourning, and suffering are completely conquered—is available to those who endure the trials and suffering of this life and, empowered by the Holy Spirit, cling to the gospel. In this second line, however, the Apostle adds another dynamic to this new creation life: "we will also reign with him."

Human beings were created in the image of God and given the task to rule over all of creation as God's vice-kings and vice-queens (cf. Genesis 1.26-28). When sin entered the world through the Fall, this mandate was effected but not removed. We are still called to be God's representatives in-and-to creation, but it is only in the work of Christ and the gospel that our

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[108] Cf 2 Corinthians 5.1-10, especially v6, "So we are always confident; even though we know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord"

It should be said, though, that this passage is often interpreted just short of its full force. I've heard much teaching which focuses on v. 8, which says "we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord" as if this is the main point of the passage. The main point of the passage is actually the resurrection body.

In verse 4, St. Paul states, "For while we are still in this tent, we groan under our burden, because we wish not to be unclothed but to be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life." The metaphor for unclothed and clothed is used to describe the embodied and disembodied existence. Here, the Apostle's desire is *not* to be unclothed, that is, in a disembodied state. His hope was that he would see Jesus return and be "further clothed" (lit. over-clothed). He would rather go from embodied existence to resurrected body existence, and skip the whole death business.

So where does verse 8 come in? The progression goes like this: To be alive is good (Genesis 1), to be with the Lord is better (2 Cor. 5.8), to skip death and see Jesus return and get our resurrection bodies fit for the New Creation is most desirable at all (2 Cor. 5.4)

imago Dei begins to be restored here and now.

Apostasy & Faithlessness

The reality of the call to endure means that some will not. What happens then? The answer to this is found in lines 3 and 4. First, in line 3, St. Paul deals with those who fall away from the faith:

> *if we deny him, he will also deny us;*

For those who persevere, they will reign with Christ over the new creation, but for those who deny Christ, he will also deny them at the final judgment. This is no less than what Jesus himself warned in Matthew 10:

> *Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell…Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven.but whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my Father in heaven. (Matthew 10.18, 32-33)*

Here's what you need to know about this category of people in the church: this is true and full apostasy that continues until death or the return of Christ. What is meant by "denying" Christ is the full rejection of the gospel, and nothing less than that. So, if you read this and are afraid that you might be in this category because in a moment of weakness you've denied Christ before others, or iff you've shirked back from suffering well because of anxiety or fear, then this isn't your category. How can we be so sure? Because of line 4:

> *If we are faithless, he remains faithful*

What does the Apostle mean by faithlessness? We know he doesn't mean those who go on to reject the faith, because that was what line 3 was all about. This line is about St. Peter, who in his own weakness, denied Christ three times while his Lord was being tortured and crucified. This line is about the man who, anxious about his son, cried out to Jesus, "I believe, help my unbelief!" This line is about the prodigal son, and the stoic who things he has to take matters into his own hands when things get hard, or the person who shrinks back from conflict with others because conflict is hard. What does St. Paul have to say about people like that? "He remains faithful." God's fidelity holds strong even when our faith fails us. Jesus is greater than our faith.

How can we trust that God is faithful even when our faith fails? Because, as verse 13 says, "he cannot deny himself." What is the one thing that God himself cannot do? Contradict his own

character and nature. "Who can bring a charge against God's elect?" No one.

> *It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. (Romans 8.33b-35a)*

An Honorable Ministry

We shift gears a bit and now focus on St. Paul's encouragement for Timothy to press on in his ministry until he leaves to visit the Apostle in prison. 2 Timothy 2.14-16 marks the beginning of the second major portion of the epistle, which goes on through 2 Timothy 4.8. Having discussed perseverance, apostasy, and faithlessness, the Apostle addresses the false teaching that is still occurring in Ephesus.

Rightly Handle The Word of Truth

2 Timothy 2.14-19

> *Remind them of [the need for endurance], and warn them before God that they are to avoid wrangling over words, which does no good but only ruins those who are listening. Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved by him, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly [handling] the word of truth. Avoid profane chatter, for it will lead people into more and more impiety, and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, who have swerved from the truth by claiming that the resurrection has already taken place. They are upsetting the faith of some. But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this inscription: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Let everyone who calls on the name of the Lord turn away from wickedness.*

A Worker, Approved By God

So far, St. Paul has encouraged Timothy to "be continually strengthened by God's grace" (v1), to entrust the ministry "to faithful people who will be able to teach others" (v2), and to "share in suffering" and "endure" for the sake of the gospel and the elect (v3, 10, 12), trusting in God's fidelity towards his children (v13). As he turns to consider the false teachers still prevalent in Ephesus, St. Paul then gives his next charge to Timothy:

> *Remind them of [the need for endurance], and warn them before God…Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved by him, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly [handling] the word of truth.*

The difficult issue to interpret in this passage is the phrase "rightly handling the word of truth," which the NRSV translates "rightly explaining the word of truth." Unfortunately, the

NRSV's interpretation (also, the NET Bible, CSB) only gets at part of what St. Paul is trying to convey. There are two main ways of interpreting this phrase.

First, along the lines of the NRSV (et al), is that Timothy is being charged with the correct interpretation of the gospel ("the word of truth"). In contrast to the false teachers, Timothy is to teach sound doctrine. This has been a main theme of the pastoral epistles and therefore makes sense here—if we are to only choose one of the interpretive options.

Second, some interpret the passage as St. Paul charging Timothy with living a right life that is in line with the gospel. This, too, is in contrast to the false teachers and has been a theme throughout the Pastoral Epistles. This "conduct" aspect is in line with the immediate context, in which St. Paul encourages Timothy to conduct his ministry in such a way that he will not be ashamed of it before God. Furthermore, as we get into the rest of verses 14-17, we'll see that the main thrust of St. Paul's charge is to remind the Ephesians to avoid argumentative behavior.

Something to keep in mind is that the New Testament authors like to lean into the ambiguity of language at times. This is true of Paul, but we see it often with St. John. In John 3.5, there's the ambiguity of the phrase "born again" or "born from above." Both ways of translating the text highlights different spheres of the whole meaning, and the Apostle likely intends for us to hold both meanings together. The authors use double-entendres and "plurisignations" when they want their readers to convey multiple meanings simultaneously. [109]That is likely St. Paul's intent here, because as we've seen the Pastoral Epistles highlight both sound doctrine *and* sound behavior (what we would call *orthodoxy* and *orthopraxis*).

How is Timothy to "rightly handle the word of truth?" He is to correctly interpret, preach, and teach the gospel and sound doctrine, *and* to live in light of those very truths that he is to preach and teach.

Avoid Stupid Arguments

St. Paul particular charges Timothy with warning the congregation to avoid the debates and argumentation that the false teachers seek to start in an effort to sow divisiveness into the congregation. This is something that we have talked about many times throughout the course of

[109] Plurisignation is "the use of words to convey several meanings simultaneously; multiple significance." "Plurisignation". *Oxford University Press*. Lexico.com. Aug 1 2021. https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/plurisignification.

the Pastoral Epistles. So I want to make two notes before summarizing this portion of the passage.

First, if the amount of times that arguing and debating has come up in the Pastorals has surprised you, I would submit for your consideration that the potential reason for our surprise is that we have normalized and self-justified that which God apparently hates.

Second, if saying that God hates such behavior sounds too strong, the frequency in which St. Paul addresses this very problem highlights it as a really big deal. Add to this frequency the fact that there is not a single time in which the issue is raised that the Apostle does not say to shut it down or avoid it, and I think a clear case is made for God's hatred of it, particularly with respect to division and unity in the church.

With that said, let's summarize what the passage has to say. First, our text says that such arguing and debating offers absolutely no benefit (NRSV and ESV: "which does no good"[110]) but only brings with it people's ruin (v14). Second, the "ruin" that it brings is that it "will lead people into more and more impiety" or "ungodliness" (v16) Third, this ruining effect is not something which, once started, can easily be stopped because it "will spread like gangrene." The word "gangrene" can refer either to gangrene which appears in tissue that is dead or necrotic, or to cancer which spreads throughout the body killing off every cell it infiltrates.

St. Chrysostom says of this spreading ruin,

> It is an evil not to be restrained, not curable by any medicine, it destroys the whole frame…He has well said, "they will increase unto more ungodliness." For it appears indeed to be a solitary evil, but see what evils spring out of it.[111]

The Resurrection and God's Fidelity

St. Paul moves on to give two examples of those whose words spread like gangrene: Hymenaeus and Philetus (v17b). Hymenaeus is almost certainly the same person named in 1 Timothy 1.20, who the Apostle says "made a shipwreck of his faith." St. Paul himself had removed him from the fellowship in an act of church discipline, yet it seems like he is still antagonizing the Ephesian church.

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[110] Where "good" translates the word χρήσιμος, meaning "useful, beneficial, advantageous." BDAG, s.v. "χρή σιμος".

[111] Chrysostom, Homily V (*NPNF* 1/13).

Hymenaeu and Philetus, along with the other false teachers presumably, had been teaching that the future resurrection had already occurred. Likely, they were abusing the language similar St. Paul's teaching on baptism in Romans 6 and in verse 11 of this chapter, and teaching that our conversion was our resurrection[112].

Unfortunately, Hymenaeus and Philetus were somewhat successful. The Apostle says that were "upsetting the faith of some" (v18). This same language was used in Titus 1.11, where the false teachers were "upsetting whole families." In spite of their "success," however, St. Paul immediately encourages Timothy, that

> *God's firm foundation stands, bearing the inscription: "The Lord knows those who are his," and "Let everyone who calls on the name of the Lord turn away from wickedness." (2 Timothy 2.19)*

Even in the midst of what seems like an overwhelming victory from the enemy, do not loser heart because "God's firm foundation stands." Though the Apostle uses similar language to describe the church in other letters, in context of the false teaching St. Paul likely means the foundation of sound doctrine and the gospel. Though this foundation is already firm, it's firmness is strengthened by God's seal which has been stamped upon it. The "seal" is often used as a metaphor for God's guarantee.

On this seal are two inscriptions: "The Lord knows those who are his" and "Let everyone who calls on the name of the Lord turn away from wickedness." First, "The Lord knows those who are his" is a quotation of Numbers 16.5 from the Septuagint. In context, the passage says,

> *God has visited and known those that are his and who are holy, and has brought them to himself; and whom he has chosen for himself, he has brought to himself. (Brenton Translation, LXX)*

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[112] We know from 1 Timothy that these teachers were also commanding a strict asceticism which rejected marriage and demanded fasting. This teaching along with a denial of a future, bodily resurrection tells us that the false teachers had a strong dualistic view of the material and spiritual worlds. While full-blown gnosticism didn't exist until the 2nd century, these teachings have much in common with the later heresy which rejected the material world—including our bodies—as evil. Gnostic salvation did not include a future bodily resurrection, because salvation was by definition an escape from the body which they saw as a prison.

In contrast, St. Paul taught that the Christian faith lived or died by the bodily resurrection:

"Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation has been in vain and your faith has been in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified of God that he raised Christ—whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised. If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have died in Christ have perished" (1 Corinthians 15.12-18).

Typical of New Testament quotations from the Old Testament, when a portion of a text is quoted the author usually has its immediate context in mind as well. Here, the word "knows" is not simple awareness, but is a key term which defines God's relationship to his people (cf. 1 Cor 8.3, 13.12; Gal 4.9) often in reference to their status as the elect of God (cf. Romans 8.29). This is the context of Numbers 16.5, where the author connects God's knowledge of his own people to his sovereign choice to make them his people ("whom he has chosen for himself") and the efficacious way in which he makes them his people ("he has brought to himself"). This allusion to the elect also points back to 2 Timothy 2.10.

The point of drawing our attention to Numbers 16.5 and 2 Timothy 2.10 is to give Timothy assurance in his ministry. Despite the apparent victory of the opponents, the gospel and all sound teaching which conforms to the gospel is a firm foundation; God's election is a sure assurance for out of the elect whom God has chosen, he promises he will bring them to himself. Despite all outward appearances, not a single sheep will be lost from God's fold. As John Calvin says, "the treachery of men cannot hinder God from preserving his Church to the last."[113]

The second inscription, "Let everyone who calls on the name of the Lord turn away from wickedness," has no single attributable source. The theme of this inscription runs throughout all Scripture however, and particularly the Pastoral Epistles. It is a call for holiness, but notice the order of the inscriptions. The first inscription gives us assurance of God's fidelity to us, and then out of that assurance and salvation comes the call to reject wickedness. As Mounce says, this

> Is one of the most strongly worded demands in Scripture, that obedience to the ethical demands [conforming to] the gospel are mandatory, not optional. For Paul, to call on the name of the Lord *is* to depart from unrighteousness.

We saw this in Titus 2.11-13, where the grace of God both made salvation available to all and catechizes us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly while we wait for Christ to return and bring the promised restoration of all things. "All that You ask Your grace will provide."[114]

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[113] John Calvin, *Commentary on Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, s.v. 2 Timothy 2.10.
[114] Sandra McCracken, "Grace upon Grace." *The Builder and the Architect*.

A Consideration Regarding Time and Ministry

Before moving on, let's address something that is implicit in the timing of the two epistles and the Timothy's ministry. Second Timothy was written some 2-5 years after 1 Timothy. This tells us that, after ministering for the same period of time in Ephesus, Timothy's ministry has not been able to course correct the opponents.

Should we then consider that Timothy's ministry has been a failure? Absolutely not. Christian fidelity is not measured by numerical "successes" and "failures." We leave those to God. Inversely, Christian "success" is measured by fidelity over the long term. And, as we saw in verses 11-13, fidelity is not measured by momentary lapses of faith, but rather by the long journey "home." To use the Apostle's athletic metaphor—did you finish the race? It doesn't matter how many times you had to rest along the way. It doesn't matter if you end up vomiting in the weeds. It doesn't even matter if you came in last and the second to last person finished hours ahead of you, or if you were carried across the goal line by someone else. Fidelity asks, "did you finish the race?" with out qualifying how one gets across that line apart of getting across the line "in Christ Jesus."

Compare this to our current society's demand for instant results and instant gratification. The desire for the "instant" has been part of the cultural milieu for awhile now, with blame often laid upon the "millennials." Certainly, the fruit has come to be borne in the last few generations, but really the seeds were planted in the industrial revolution. During the industrial revolution, manufacturing of goods and products became "industrialized," moving the western world away from artisans to factories. Over time there came a shift in the concept of "efficiency."

Efficiency is ability to produce a result with the least amount of waste in your resources. While this is still the textbook definition, our practical understanding of efficiency came to be measured in terms of maximizing profits. In other words, a business is being efficient if they produce the greatest amount of product in the least amount of time. This subtle shift has led to a whole host of problems including, ironically, the inefficient rise of work hours and burnout.

This new efficiency has trickled down from business into almost every area of our lives. If you've ever heard the term "consumer culture," it is a description of one such effect. Consumer culture

> is a hurried culture that expects immediacy and has no use for delays, and one

> that values individualism and temporary communities over deep, meaningful, and lasting connection to others.[115]

Unfortunately, the Church hasn't been unscathed by consumeristic culture. One particular manifestation of this consumeristic approach to church is seen in "church hopping" or "church shopping." This phenomenon is where someone will visit churches to see if it's in their "tastes," that is, if they like the music or the preaching or has the right programs that meets their needs. If they don't feel that their needs will be met, it's off to sample a new church *ad infinitum* until they find somewhere they feel is "a good fit."[116]

Another example of this new efficiency in the church is evident in how to view the ministry of church planting. Often, potential church planters are assessed based on the metrics of entrepreneurial skills rather than their character. Once the church is planted, the church itself is often assessed through a series of baptized KPIs, such as reaching self-sufficiency with *x* amount of years or reaching a congregational size of *y* in such and such amount of time. Certainly, there are practical considerations that must be kept in mind in resourcing new churches, but how many church plants are deemed successes or failures based on business culture rather than fidelity?

Perhaps one of the biggest ways that we find the new efficiency and consumer culture infiltrating the church is when it comes to our own spiritual formation. True fidelity is measure over the course of our lives, and yet, we despair when we don't see victory over our besetting sins quickly enough. We demand from God an immediate ROI on the time we spend in scripture, prayer, and good works. Even worse, we take this framework and we impose it on others. In discipling others, we get frustrated when they haven't gotten to a particular maturity in their Christian life that may have taken us 10 or 20 years to reach.

Here's the connection between all of this and Timothy's situation in Ephesus: change takes

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[115] Nicki Lisa Cole, "Definition of Consumerist Culture", ThoughtCo., https://web.archive.org/web/20210501215309/https://www.thoughtco.com/consumerist-culture-3026120, accessed Aug 1 2021.

[116] This isn't to say one should automatically become a member at the first church they visit, of course. One should be considering in any new church whether or not that church teaches sound doctrine and sound practices.

One counter-consumeristic-culture movement that is also occurring, however, is the movement of younger Christians towards traditions such as Anglicanism, Roman Catholicism, and Eastern Orthodoxy. For many, the liturgy and worship in these traditions offer a stronger foundation than the market-driven churches of their former traditions. Examples of this are given in Winfield Blevins study of the phenomenon in his book *Ever Ancient, Ever New: The Allure of Liturgy for a New Generation*.

It should be noted, of course, that this movement can itself be a form of consumeristic Christianity. As such, it is incumbent upon Anglican churches seeing an influx of this population to have strong catechetical measures in place.

time. Spiritual formation is often unbearably slow. Even if we say that Timothy has been ministering in Ephesus and fighting the false teachers for 5 years, that is merely a drop in the bucket of God's eternal plans. In fact, Timothy might never have seen the changes he hoped for in his life time. That is not a "failure" in ministry; that Timothy continued the hard work of ministry in the midst of such a difficult time is actually success. Timothy's ministry is a picture of fidelity.

When I think of fidelity, I often think of the writings of Wendell Berry who captures this anti-new efficiency so well. In his poem *Manifesto: The Mad Farmer Liberation Front*, Berry captures the antithesis between consumer culture and fidelity well:

> Love the quick profit, the annual raise,
> vacation with pay. Want more
> of everything ready-made…

But then he switches from culture's expectations to a greater calling:

> Invest in the millennium. Plant sequoias.
> Say that your main crop is the forest
> that you did not plant,
> that you will not live to harvest.
> Say that the leaves are harvested
> when they have rotted into the mold.
> call that profit. Prophesy such returns.

Ministry is an investment that we hope makes some returns in our lifetimes, but that is not God's guarantee. God does promise that his word will not return to him void, but that it will accomplish the purpose for which he sent it. He does not promise that we will personally see the accomplishment fulfilled. If our response to this is, "What's the use then?" then we know we have been shaped more by our culture than biblical fidelity.

An Honorable Ministry

2 Timothy 2.20-26

To finish out the chapter, St. Paul gives Timothy one more metaphor to describe his ministry in Ephesus:

> *In a large house there are utensils not only of gold and silver but also of wood and*

> *clay, some for special use, some for ordinary. All who cleanse themselves of the things I have mentioned will become special utensils, dedicated and useful to the owner of the house, ready for every good work. (2 Timothy 2.20-21)*

Here, St. Paul continues his meditation on God's fidelity in the doctrine of election, using the metaphor of differing types of vessels, picking up the same language that he uses in Romans 9 and the prophet Jeremiah uses in Jeremiah 18.1-12. The metaphor also borrows from the Old Testament's depiction of "sanctified" or "set apart" utensils which were used in the service of worship in the Temple. There are vessels for "special" (literally, "honorable") use and vessels for "ordinary" (literally, "dishonorable") use; Timothy the former, while the false teachers the latter.

What does St. Paul mean when he says "All who cleanse themselves of the things I have mentioned will become special utensils?" Here, it is important that we not take a verse out of it's context. If we read this verse thinking that it is within our own natural ability to "cleanse ourselves" in a salvific sense, then this verse contradicts the entirety of Holy Scripture let alone the Pastoral Epistles. For example, Titus 2.14 clearly states,

> *[Christ] gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds.*

The question we must ask of ourselves regarding this verse is what St. Paul refers to when he says "these things?" The most obvious answer is the godless arguing spurred on by the false teachers, the rejection of their false doctrines and the behaviors the doctrines bear as fruit. In other words, this verse is really a parallel to 2 Timothy 2.14, "avoid wrangling over words," and 2.16, "avoid profane chatter." That this is the likely interpretation is confirmed in verses 22-23:

> *Shun youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. Have nothing to do with stupid and senseless controversies; you know that they breed quarrels.*

Holy Scripture does call us to live holy lives. This is without controversy. But here, just as we've seen throughout the Pastoral Epistles, we are not saved by our good works, rather we are empowered to live them out by the Holy Spirit.

The Apostle then applies this specifically to Timothy in his role of being a church leader:

> *And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kindly to everyone, an apt teacher, patient, correcting opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant that they will repent and come to know the truth, and that they may escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will. (2 Timothy 2.24-26)*

The Christian minister must not be quarrelsome, but kindly to everyone, an apt teacher, patient, correcting opponents with gentleness. If you remember back when we discussed the qualifications of ordained ministers, you'll see many parallels here. We asked, then, how ministers might have a good reputation among non-believers when the testimony of scripture seems to teach that the opposite will happen? The answer is in the gracious way that ministers interact with the opponents of the church. On one hand, this is proverbial wisdom—not everyone who opposes the church will stop their slander when confronted with graciousness. On the other hand, however, even a cursory glance at how we interact with others in the public sphere shows that much of our confrontations are lacking in graciousness. Standing firm matters, but the language and postures we use while doing so matters, too.

What is the result of firm but gracious confrontation? "God may perhaps grant that they will repent and come to know the truth." The very same goal in confronting false teachers that St. Paul reminds Timothy of in 1 Timothy 1.5: that they would repent and come to know Christ through the gospel. Again, Proverbs 25.21-22:

> *If your enemies are hungry, give them bread to eat; and if they are thirsty, give them water to drink; for you will heap coals of fire on their heads, and the Lord will reward you.*

The "burning coals" does not indicate a growing anger, but a growing shame; the enemy is moved by our kindness towards shame for their opposition and, struck by their conscience, perhaps granted repentance.

Questions for Reflection

1. We all suffer to varying degrees. There are times, as Christians, when we endure suffering and there are times when we momentarily lose our faith while suffering. How would you minister to those in our church who struggling in a moment of suffering? (It may be helpful to imagine a scenario in order to think through contextual ministry rather than trying to generalize).
2. St. Paul calls Timothy to "share in suffering." What does he mean by this?
3. Timothy has been ministering in Ephesus for a number of years now, and it seems like the false teachers are still finding success in even in the midst of Timothy's fidelity. How would you encourage a minister who finds himself in a difficult ministry? For example, a

missionary who is not seeing many conversions or a church planter who's struggling to see a sense of permanence in their new church?

4. Where do you see yourself as being more formed by "consumer culture" or "the new efficiency" rather than Holy Scripture? For example, friendships, sabbath and rest, ministry, personal spiritual formation, etc. What would it look like to take a "long view" of God's slow but efficacious grace in those areas?

Week 11: Infidelity in Opposition

Collect For our Enemies

O God, the Creator of all, whose Son commanded us to love our enemies: Lead them and us from prejudice to truth; deliver them and us from hatred, cruelty, and revenge; and in your good time enable us all to stand reconciled before you in Jesus Christ; in whose Name we pray. **Amen.**

Scripture

2 Timothy 3.1-9.

In the last two classes, we saw St. Paul's encouragement for Timothy's fidelity in his ministry in the midst of suffering. He does not expect Timothy to work up enough faith within himself to stand firm in the face of the Ephesian false teachers. Rather, he grounds his encouragements on God's fidelity towards his own children. Because God is faithful, we can trust him in our suffering.

Despite such a firm foundation, however, our faith can be a fickle thing. Some days we feel like we can stand any trial that comes our way, while other days we feel like the slightest difficulty may be the very thing that finally breaks our faith. St. Paul knows this, and therefore reminds Timothy that he must be "continually strengthened in the grace that is in Christ Jesus."

Having given such encouragement to Timothy, the Apostle then pauses to discuss the Ephesian opponents once again. The way he frames the opponents is a bit surprising, because he introduces the discussion by referring to the "last days" before moving into a description of the opponents and a comparison of their "success" and eventual defeat.

We'll begin by looking at St. Paul's reference to the "last days" before moving into the rest of

the passage.

The Last Days

2 Timothy 3.1

St. Paul begins:

> *You must understand this, that in the last days distressing times will come.*

So far, the Pastoral Epistles have been hyper focused on the current situations in Ephesus and Crete; 2 Timothy adds to this St. Paul's current imprisonment. If you've picked up on this hyper focus, then it may sound very weird to you to hear the Apostle jump so effortlessly into the "last days." What do the "last days" have to do with Timothy's current situation at Ephesus? Why must Timothy understand that in the last days distressing times will come?

To make sense of this passage, we need to talk about "eschatology" in general and then the use of the term "last days" in particular.

What is Eschatology and the Last Days?

Understanding Eschatology

Eschatology is often referred to as the "study of last things," and is derived from the Greek word *eschaton,* which refers to the "last" of something; typically it can be the last item in a series of items or it can be the furthest boundary of an area. So, for example, the *eschaton* of the eastern United States is the beaches that meet the Atlantic Ocean. If I were to run a race, I would most likely be the *eschaton*. In verse 1, St. Paul tells Timothy "know this: that in the *eschatais* days distressing times will come."

So, when we think of eschatology, usually we have in mind the second coming of Christ, the final judgment, and the new heavens and new earth. These are the "last things" which bring human history to a close and lead us into the eternal future. Usually, it's the supposed events which immediately precede the second coming of Christ, that people consider "the last days."

This is true to a degree. But there is another aspect of eschatology that we should know about: the idea of *telos*. *Telos* is the greek word for "end," but often refers to the "goal" or "intended purpose." For example, in Romans 10.4, we read that "Christ is the *telos* of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes." The end goal, the purpose, of the

Law was to drive people to Christ. We looked at this goal in 1 Timothy 1 when we discussed the false teachers in the second class.

The universe is not hurtling towards some unknown end; rather, it is being sovereignly directed by God towards his gracious goal of the restoration of all things. Chief among these "all things" is the redemption of sinners and the restoration of those who believe the gospel into the people they were always meant to be. Kent Brower, editor of the book of essays *The Reader Must Understand: Eschatology in Bible and Theology*, writes that eschatology is

> …the direction and goal of God's active covenant faithfulness in and for his created order.[117]

Therefore,

> Eschatology thus describes the outworking of God's sovereign rule against the backdrop of the fundamental questions of human existence – 'What is God doing about our predicament and what does the future hold? Underlying these questions are two premisses: that God's purposes are good and that he will bring them to fruition. In fact, his purposes on earth are *already being realized, and their manifestations reflect his character*.[118]

Eschatology doesn't begin with the end. Eschatology has been marching forward under God's sovereign plan ever since Genesis 3 on one hand, and before the foundation of the world on the other (Ephesians 1.4)

Understanding "The Last Days"

How, then, should we understand Holy Scripture's use of the phrase "the last days" according to this framework? In the Old Testament, all the (apparently) disparate threads of God's plan for the restoration of all things which began with a promise to destroy the serpent and rescue sinful human beings (Genesis 3.15) finally came together in the calling and vocation of Abraham. To Abraham and his family, God promised to bring about the redemption of God's people, and ultimately to bring blessings to all nations.

Centuries later, this promise was under threat as Israel was no longer in the land God's

[117] Kent E. Brower, "Temple," *The Reader Must Understand: Eschatology in Bible and Theology*, 119.

[118] K. E. Brower, "Eschatology," *New Bible Dictionary of Biblical Theology: Exploring the Unity and Diversity of Scripture*, 461.

promised, but enslaved by the Egyptians. God miraculously rescues them through the ministry of Moses, and leads them back into the promised land. Before entering that land, God reiterates his promise to Abraham through Moses and reconstitutes Israel as a nation. This nation was set apart, a kingdom of priests, whose very identity was founded on being God's people and a missional conduit for God's blessing of the nations. Eventually, King David was raised up as Israel's leader and God promised David that he would be the first of a kingly dynasty through which God would restore all nations to himself. Unfortunately, Israel was not able to fulfill it's calling and vocation to be a blessing to the nations.

As punishment, God sent Israel into exile, but promised them that he would make a new covenant with them once the time of Exile was fulfilled. In this new covenant, God would cause his glory to fill the earth, Israel would be restored, nations would stream to the temple to worship God, and all of creation would be renewed. These events would all take place with the coming of the messiah, the future Davidic King, and that future time would be known as "The Day of the Lord," or, "The last days." The prophet Joel spoke to this future time when he prophesied,

> *Then* [after I bring you out of exile] *I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even on the male and female slaves, in those days, I will pour out my spirit. I will show [signs] in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes. Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. (Joel 2.28–31)*

In Acts 2 we find the miracle of the Day of Pentecost, where God sends his Holy Spirit just as he promised through Jesus. As a result of this new filling of the Holy Spirit, the disciple began to speak in languages that they did not know, but that those from other regions and nations could understand. In light of this, St. Peter, strengthened by the Holy Spirit, delivers a sermon in which he says:

> *These* [disciples] *are not drunk, as you suppose, for it's only nine o'clock in the morning. No, this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel: "in the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh…" (Acts 2.15-ff)*

St. Peter goes on to quote Joel's prophecy—but did you notice what St. Peter did with the prophecy from Joel? Not only did the Apostle say that Pentecost was the fullment of the prophecy

("*this* [occurrence which you are mistaking for drunkenness] is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel"), but he reframes the prophecy itself, adding "in the *last days* it will be that I will pour out my Spirit." St. Peter says that, on the 1st century Day of Pentecost, they are seeing the fulfillment of a prophecy that marks out the present time as "the last days."

Now, what occurred between Joel's giving of this prophecy, and the fulfillment of the prophecy in Acts 2? The incarnation, life, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ, Son of God, Seed of David, Messiah, and Temple of God. In these events, Jesus underwent the ultimate exile in our place on the cross and, through God's vindication and power, resurrected from the dead and ascended to the right hand of God so that all who believe in him can follow him in the new exodus from slavery to sin into the promised land of a new heaven and new earth.

These events were all part of God's plan to restore all things, chiefly seen in the redemption of God's people as planned before the foundation of the world (Ephesian 1.14), promised to Adam and Eve (Genesis 3.15), embodied in the mission of Israel, and achieved in the person and work of Jesus Christ. In other words Jesus is both the embodiment and *telos* of biblical eschatology.

But, "all things" hasn't been restored, yet, has it? We are still awaiting the second advent and epiphany of our Lord. The time that we live in, and that Sts. Peter and Paul lived in, that Timothy lived in, are all "the last days." The last days began with Christ and will end with Christ. They are, in a sense, "Ordinary Time" — that time between Pentecost and the second Advent of our Lord. Indeed, in these last days, St. Paul writes,

> *I consider the suffering of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and not only the creation but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, grown inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. (Romans 8.18-23)*

Distressing Times will Come

Coming back (finally!) to our present passage, St. Paul reminds Timothy that they are in the last days and that means–according to many prophecies–that "distressing times will come." The future tense phrase "will come," does not point Timothy to some future time; it is capturing the tense of the various prophecies when they were made. Rather, the "distressing times" has come upon them in the present. This is important for Timothy to remember, because chapter 2 ends with the hope that "perhaps God may grant [the false teachers] repentance." He may, but then again, he may not; Even if he does Timothy is to remember the times in which they live.

If you recall, there is a parallel passage to this one found in 1 Timothy 4.1-5. When we looked at that passage we said that the basic idea behind was that St. Paul was saying to Timothy "Don't be surprised at the evil you now see. The Spirit has expressly said that such things would happen in the *later* times." This passage carries the same meaning. "I'm reminding you of what I said before, Timothy: Don't be surprised at the apparent victories of the false teachers. We're in the last days and with the last days comes distressing times."

As we move further into the passage, we'll see that this is St. Paul's intent. In the verses that follow (vv2-5a), the Apostle gives the characteristics of people that he and Timothy know they are in the last days; characteristics that just so happen to map directly to the false teachers currently in Ephesus. In light of these characteristics, St. Paul gives Timothy a now familiar, and present-tense-command: "Avoid them!" (v5b).

Characteristics that Mark The False Teachers

2 Timothy 3.2-5

In the verses that follow, verses 2-5, the Apostle gives Timothy yet another descriptive list of what those who oppose the gospel in Ephesus will be like. The insinuation that people with these characteristics are what makes the last days a "distressing time" (v1):

> *For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slandererous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people (2 Timothy 3.2-5, ESV).*

The Bedeviled False Teachers

2 Timothy 3.3b

In giving Timothy another list describing the character of the false teachers, St. Paul has structured this passage in such a way as to drive home a point: the nature of evil in these last days goes beyond the sinful nature of people to the spiritual forces at work behind the scenes.[119] How does this list reveal this truth?

First, the list begins and ends with the disordered love of the false teachers. They are loves of themselves, of money, and of pleasure rather than loves of God (v2a, 5a). Second, (and as a result) St. Paul says, they are proud and arrogant (v2b), and swollen with conceit (v4b). Third, they are utterly uncaring about others, especially their families (v2c, more on this later), and brutalizing traitors (v4a). In the middle of all these descriptions, St. Paul says they are slanderous. "Slanderous" translates the word *diabolos*, which is the same word used when Scripture mentions "the devil."

In the Old Testament, the Devil was called "Satan," because the word means "accuser." Thus, Satan is *The* Accuser–the accuser of Christians, but also the accuser of God himself. The first venomous words we read that come from Satan's lips are, "did God *really* say?" thereby implicitly accusing God of lying in order to hide good things from his creation. When the Hebrew scriptures were translated into Greek, the translators replaced the word "satan" with "devil," that is, *diabolos*. The Slanderous One. The New Testament authors often used this Greek translation, and so "The Slanderous One" is a common way of referring to Satan in the New Testament.

Now, to put this in context, recall from 2 Timothy 2.26 that St. Paul not only ends the chapter with hope that "perhaps God may grant them repentance," but that in doing so they "might escape the snare of the devil (*tou diabolou*, "of the devil"), having been held captive by him to do his will." This parallels what St. Paul taught in 1 Timothy 4.1-5, which parallels today's passage, that the false teachers were hypocritical liars teaching the doctrine of "deceitful spirits" and "demons," and "whose consciences are branded with a hot iron." I argued in that passage that it

[119] The structure of vv2-5 which follows comes from F. Alan Tomlinson, "The Purpose and Stewardship Theme within the Pastoral Epistles", in Entrusted with the Gospel: Paul's Theology in the Pastoral Epistles, pg. 65-66. See Table 1 for the chiastic breakdown of the verses.

was the Devil who branded the false teachers' consciences, essentially marking them out as his own possessions—or, as St. Paul says in 2.26, "captives to do his will."

Thus, the central description that St. Paul gives to the Ephesian opponents (and, indeed, all false teachers) is that they are slanderous or bedeviled, by which he means, "held captive by the devil to do his will." They are "under the influence," so to speak. Hence, why, St. Paul reminds Timothy that they are to be strong confronted and silenced—as what they teach is demonic—and yet, that confrontation must be through "kind, patient, gentle teaching for correction" (2 Timothy 2.24-25). Through such correction, the Holy Spirit can heap "burning coals" which pricks the captivated and branded conscience and allows the Spirit to do the work of conviction, and God willing, conversion and repentance.

This confirms what St. Paul teaches in Ephesians 6.12, that

> *our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh*

that is, not against our opponents or the false teachers,

> *but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.*

And that, church, reframes our entire way of engaging with unbelievers. We are called to say hard, difficult things, but there are two ways in which we can say hard truths. St. Paul's way, and therefore Scripture's way, and therefore God's way, is the better way.

The Character of the Bedeviled

2 Timothy 3.2-4

With this reframing in mind, let us look to the rest of the descriptions of the false teacher's character.

Lovers of Self, Money, and Pleasure Rather than God

The entire list is encapsulated with the parallel phrases "lovers of self and lovers of money" (v2) and "lovers of pleasure rather than God." Human beings are fundamentally lovers. What we worship is, fundamentally, where we place our strongest affections. As St. Augustine says regarding ordered and disordered loves:

> When the miser prefers his gold to justice, it is through no fault of the gold, but of the man, and so with every created thing. For thought it be good, it may be loved

> with an evil as well as with a good loved: it is loved rightly when it is loved ordinarily; evilly, when inordinately. It is this which some one has briefly said in these verses in praise of the Creator: "These are Thine, they are good, because Thou art good who didst create them. There is in them nothing of ours, unless the sin we commit when we forget the order of things, and instead of Thee that which Thou hast made."
> …it seems to me that it is a brief but true definition of virtue to say, it is the order of love; and on this account, in the Canticles, the bride of Christ, the city of God, sings, "Order love within me."[120]

And,

> Now he is a man of just and holy life who forms an unprejudiced estimate of things, and keeps his affections also under strict control, so that he neither loves what he ought not to love, nor fails to love what he ought to love, nor loves that more which ought to be loved less, nor loves that equally which ought to be loved either less or more, nor loves the less or more which ought to be loved equally.…all things are to be loved in reference to God…[121]

The false teachers in Ephesus have substituted love of pleasure for the love of God, and, as a result they have disordered their loves. Instead of worshipping God they worship at the altar of self and money. Donald Guthrie comments, "Self-centeredness, and material advantages, when they become the chief objects of one's affection, destroy all moral values, and [verses 2-5] is their natural fruit."[122] To which, Mounce adds, "When one's love for God is replaced with love for oneself and the material world, then all other vices naturally flow."[123]

St. Paul teaches that bishops, priests, and deacons all must not be greedy (1 Timothy 3.3, 8 and Titus 1.7). This three-fold repetition for all holy orders, along with the condemnation of the false teachers for "teaching for sordid gain what should not be taught" (1 Timothy 1.11) and the teaching on wealth (1 Timothy 6.10, 17-19; note that 1 Timothy 6.10 uses the same word as is found here in 2 Timothy 3.2) shows that greed was dominating issue among the opponents.

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[120] Augustine, *The City of God*, Book XV, Ch. 22. (*ANF* 1). St. Augustine ends with a quote from Song of Solomon 2.4 from the Septuagint.

[121] Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, Book I, Ch. 27, (*ANF* 1).

[122] Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 157. As quoted in Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 545.

[123] Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 545.

Boastful, Arrogant, & Swollen with Conceit

From this ordered love, St. Paul then gives us what is a logical second set of characteristics: the opponents are "boastful and arrogant" (v2b) and "swollen with conceit" (v4b). As to the former, boastful generally describes behavior while arrogant describes the attitude behind such behaviors.[124] St. Paul says that bishop-priests should not be arrogant in Titus 1.7, As to the latter, St. Timothy says that ordained ministers in the church must *not be* "swollen with conceit" in 1 Timothy 3.6, and then says that the false teachers are "conceited, yet understanding nothing" in 6.4.

Abusive, Disobedient to their Parents, Ungrateful, Unholy, Unloving, & Irreconcilable.

The third set of characteristics for the opponents include "abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, and irreconcilable." It may seem like these words are just thrown together, but there is actually a subtle thread that connects them. First, once you move past the first word, which most translations have as "abusive," the rest of the list is grammatically connected by using a negating prefix. You can see this in our English translations by the repetition of the *dis-*, *un-*, and *ir-* prefixes which function in the same way. Second, and this is way more subtle and largely unnoticeable in our English translations, several of these words involve negative attitudes and behaviors towards one's family.

First, we'll start with "abusive." This is actually the word "blasphemy," which means "defaming, demeaning, or derogatory." Because this word is not connected to God in the context, it likely is meant to represent "abusive speech." We see this same usage in Titus 2.5, where St. Paul says "to speak evil (*blaspheme*) no one."

Second, St. Paul says that they are "disobedient to their parents." Here we have an explicit mention of negative behavior done to one's family. Disobeying parents is, of course, a direct violation of the 3rd commandment. The Pastoral Epistles seem to suggest that this is a widespread problem among the false teachers and those who follow them, however. In 1 Timothy 1.8-11, the Apostle brings up the opponents' misuse of the Mosaic Law and then gives a list of people for whom the Law condemns. This list loosely follows the Ten Commandments, mentioning

[124] Richard Chenevix Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament*, §xxix αβλαζών, ὑπερήφανος, ὑβριστής.

specifically "those who kill their father or mother" (1 Timothy 1.9). This is a bizarre rephrasing of the 3rd commandment that might speak to the level of familial contempt. If nothing else, several are failing to provide for their families (1 Timothy 5.8), which, given the context, likely means that adult children are not taking care of their parents when in need and especially those who are widowed. It's not out of the question to think some of this neglect has potentially led to the death of some of those in need.

Third, St. Paul says that the opponents are "ungrateful and unholy," both of which are largely unremarkable except that "unholy" appears along with "kill their mother and father" in 1 Timothy 1.9.

Fourth, we have two interesting characteristics in "unloving and irreconcilable." "Unloving" (found here and in Romans 1.31) is not a typical word for "love," but refers to "love, affection… esp. of parents and children."[125] Here, negated, likely refers to a lack of familial love or affection. "Irreconcilable" appears only in our present text, but several textual variants of Romans 1.31 has the word either before or after "unloving." Thus, it may refer to families in conflict who refuse to reconcile with one another. We see this problem explicitly mentioned in Titus 1.11, where the false teachers were "upsetting whole families by teaching for sordid gain what is not right to teach."

Thus, the basis of these characteristics and behaviors have a largely anti-familial context. Not only do the Pastoral Epistles mention the problems occurring in biological families, but we can safely apply these same vices to the church family which has been a dominant theme in these letters as well. Following this last set of characteristics is "slanderous," which we've already spent time discussing. Notable about its position, however, is that it breaks the chain of negative prefixes, demarcating these words as a singular group cut off from the words with negative prefixes that follow. This break serves to highlight the shared familial context of this group.

Uncontrollable, Untamed, Not Loving Good, Treacherous, & Reckless

This last grouping of characteristics and behaviors of the opponents are also grouped by prefixes and the general theme how dangerous the opponents are. "Uncontrollable," "untamed," and "not loving [the] good" are all negatively prefixed, while "treacherous" and "reckless" are

[125] Liddell, Scott, Jones, and Mckenzie, *A Greek English Lexicon*, 9th ed., s.v. στοργή.

compound words formed from the same prepositional prefix.

"Uncontrollable" only appears here in the New Testament, but it stands in direct contrast to the qualification for bishop-priests given in Titus 1.8, 1 Timothy 3.2, 11.[126] The next word, "untamed" or, figuratively, "savage, brutal." The imagery that it portrays is that of a wild animal and serves as the antithesis of "not violent, but gentle/gracious" in 1 Timothy 3.3 and Titus 1.7. "Not loving the good" is the final negatively prefixed word in the list, and contrasts the ministerial qualification of "loving what is good" in Titus 1.8.

The final two characteristics are both compound words formed by the same preposition prefix. The first is the word "treacherous." This word means "traitor, betrayer" and is the same word used to describe Judas in Luke 7.52, and in Stephen's martyrdom sermon in Acts 7.52. The second word is "reckless," which further serves to emphasize the uncontrollable nature of the opponents.

The Hollowed Out Opponents

2 Timothy 3.5

St. Paul finishes his list of characteristics and behaviors with a devastating summary description of the opponents:

> *…holding to the outward form of godliness but denying its power. (2 Timothy 3.5a)*

This year (2021) was the year that Brood X emerged from their 17-year hibernation. False teachers are very much like cicadas: they emerge out of nowhere and quickly take over, when you're in their midst it seems like you'll never be rid of them, they incessantly chirp to the point that everything just becomes noise all the time, and when you see them, they are mostly hollowed out shells with no substance remaining.

When St. Paul says they have an "outward form of godliness," he is essentially saying that the opponents are hollowed, empty shells of godliness. As Gordon Fee says, "they liked the visible expressions, the ascetic practices and endless discussions of religious trivia, thinking themselves to be obviously righteous because they were obviously religious."[127] This description reminds me of

[126] The word used twice in 1 Timothy 3 is νηφάλιος, often rendered as "temperate," but see BDAG, s.v. νηφάλιος, 2: "pertaining to being restrained in conduct, *self-controlled, level-headed*."

[127] Gordon Fee, *1-2 Timothy, Titus,* Good News Commentary, 270; Quoted in Mounce, pg 547.

another group of antagonists to the gospel in the New Testament: the Pharisees.

Now, the Pharisees weren't entirely a homogenous group. For example, two named Pharisees showed that they supported Jesus' ministry and message: Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea. When the New Testament talks about the Pharisees in opposition to Jesus, it really is referencing the leaders of the movement who stood opposed to Jesus. They, too, were hypocritical liars (cf. Matthew 23.2-7, 13-33; 1 Timothy 4.2). They also have an "outward appearance of godliness," which Jesus himself devastatingly called out:

> *Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which on the outside look beautiful, but inside they are full of the bones of the dead and all kinds of filth. So you also on the outside look righteous to others, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. (Matthew 23.27-28).*

Despite these outward appearances, however, they "deny the power of godliness." What is the "power of godliness?" If you remember our discussion on the gospel in the Pastoral Epistles, we spent a lot of time discussing 1 Timothy 3.16, which reads in the first half of the verse, "the mystery from which true godliness springs is great" (NIV), and is followed by a hymn or creed that showed us that the "mystery" was in fact the revelation of the gospel in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Indeed, throughout this study, we've shown that St. Paul's expectation of "good works" or "godliness" or "behavior which conforms to the gospel" is always predicated by the proclamation of the gospel and the empowerment given to Christians by the Holy Spirit.

Thus, as Mounce comments, the false teachers' "religiosity is an empty shell devoid of the power that comes from God that is meant to effect change in Timothy's life and others."[128] He then cites 1 Corinthians 4.20: "for the kingdom of God depends not on talk but on power," referring to those who oppose St. Paul and have become arrogant and condemn the Apostle with their words. The opponents and false teachers have replaced the gospel with arguing over words and constant division, and, therefore, their ministry is as devoid of power as the sun-baked cicada shell we step on absent-mindedly.

Wisdom in Dealing with Opponents

What, then, is Timothy to do with such people? "Avoid them!" (v5b). By "avoiding," St. Paul is not saying the false teachers shouldn't be corrected. Rather, he summarizes what he has been

[128] Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 547.

teaching all along:

> *…they must be silenced (Titus 1.11)*
> *…instruct certain people not to teach any different doctrine…the aim of such instruction is love that comes from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith (1 Timothy 1.3, 5)*
> *As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all… (1 Timothy 5.20)*
> *…correct opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant that they will repent and come to know the truth… (2 Timothy 2.25)*

But…

> *After a first and second admonition, having nothing more to do with anyone who causes divisions… (Titus 3.10)*
> *Avoid profane chatter, for it will lead people into more and more impiety (2 Timothy 2.16)*
> *Have nothing to do with stupid and senseless controversies; you know they breed quarrels (2 Timothy 2.23)*

This kind of ministry takes wisdom. One of the most famous set of Proverbs, due to their apparently contradictory nature, is found in Proverbs 26.4-5:

> *Do not answer fools according to their folly,*
> *or you will be a fool yourself.*
> *Answer fools according to their folly,*
> *or they will be wise in their own eyes.*

So which is it? Answer fools or not? The answer, of course, is that it depends. Wisdom dictates which proverb you follow. That's the nature of a proverb. Some fools need to be addressed and answered, other fools need to be avoided. All fools are to be pitied.[129]

Similarly, how we deal with opponents in the church takes wisdom. In the parish context, all false teaching going on by leaders or parishioners alike must be addressed. If someone in our parish is teaching that the resurrection has already happened it gets addressed. If someone is saying the same thing, but on social media, and who has no relation to your parish? Skip right to "avoidance." It's not worth the time or energy. Is someone in the parish considering that there is no future resurrection because of something they heard on social media? Address it with the parishioner directly, not indirectly by pointing to futile refutations you post under that social

[129] *Rocky III*. Dir. Sylvester Stallone. United Artists/MGM, 1982. Film.

media person's posts.

What about avoidance in the local parish context? Here is where wisdom comes in to play the most. If someone is persistent but humble, teachable, and able to have a conversation? I would continue to dialogue with that person. If they are persistent but obstinate, refusing good faith conversation? That's an obvious example of the situation that St. Paul speaks to when he teaches us to "rebuke, remove, avoid."

The Opponents Victory Devastating but Limited

2 Timothy 3.6-9

In verses 6–9, St. Paul gives one reason for "rebuking, removing, and avoiding" the false teachers at Ephesus, and one illustration:

> *For among them are those who creep into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and led astray by various passions, always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth. Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men corrupted in mind and disqualified regarding the faith. But they will not get very far, for their folly will be plain to all, as was that of those two men. (2 Timothy 3.6-9, ESV)*

The Reason: Preying on Women

2 Timothy 3.6-7

Having described the sinfulness of the opponents in verses 2-5 and commanded Timothy to avoid them, St. Paul gives one example of how their sinfulness plays out in the life of the parish as a reason for why they should be rebuked, removed, and avoided:

> *For among them are those who creep into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and led astray by various passions, always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth.*

Some of these false teachers, indeed enough to warrant the Apostle's address, were "creeping into households and capturing weak women." "Creeping" is an appropriate description, and we could paraphrase it to say they "worm" or "snake" their way into households. These opponents were preying specifically on women in the congregation. What, though, does St. Paul mean by "weak women?" This is not a general description of women, but a description of a particular subset of women within the congregation, which the Apostle further explains as those who are "burdened with sins," "led astray by various passions," and "always learning, yet never able to

arrive at a knowledge of the truth."

These women are "burdened with sins." The picture that St. Paul is painting here is that these women have piled up upon themselves so many sins that they have become a crushing weight. As a consequence, they, like the opponents who are described as "lovers of self…lovers of pleasure," are "led astray by various passions." This is an example of what St. Augustine was teaching regarding controlling one's emotions so that their loves would be properly ordered. Thus, St. Paul says somewhat sarcastically, these women are "always learning, but never being able to come to a knowledge of the truth." They love to hear the arguments and debates of the false teachers, hanging onto each worthless word under the guise of "learning." Yet, because the false teachers teach without the power of the Holy Spirit, the women are "never able to come to a knowledge of the truth." In this way they parallel the false teachers who, though "swollen with conceit [due to supposed knowledge, but actually] understand nothing" (1 Timothy 6.4).

From this description, we can better understand what St. Paul means by "weak women;" this description refers to their spiritual immaturity, and, more to the point, lack of all spiritual maturity. Predatory "leaders" often cull those whose faith is weakest or non-existant, like a lion who pounces on wounded prey.

The Illustration: The Example of Jannes and Jambres

2 Timothy 3.8-9

From the example of the predatory nature of the opponents, St. Paul then moves on to an illustration that serves to give Timothy hope even in the midst of the apparently increasing sense of success and victory among the false teachers:

> *Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men corrupted in mind and disqualified regarding the faith. But they will not get very far, for their folly will be plain to all, as was that of those two men. (2 Timothy 3.8-9, ESV)*

The Apostle is referencing the story of the ten plagues, found in Exodus 7-11. In particular, he points Timothy to the first six plagues (chapters 7-9), where in a contest of God's power vs the Egyptian gods, the wisemen and magicians of Egypt tried to match the miraculous plagues from God point by point. As these magicians opposed Moses and Aaron, says St. Paul, the false teachers oppose the gospel. The magicians started out well–they successfully mimicked the

miracles which God did through Moses and Aaron, but eventually God overpowers the magicians and their apparent success was revealed in stunning, and public, defeat. Here's an abbreviated form of that account:

> *So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and did just as the LORD commanded. Aaron cast down his staff before Pharaoh and his servants, and it became a serpent. Then Pharaoh summoned the wise men and the sorcerers, and they, the magicians of Egypt, also xdid the same by their secret arts…*
> *…he lifted up the staff and struck the water in the Nile, and all the water in the Nile turned into blood. And the fish in the Nile died, and the Nile stank, so that the Egyptians could not drink water from the Nile. There was blood throughout all the land of Egypt. But the magicians of Egypt did the same by their secret arts. So Pharaoh's heart remained hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the LORD had said…*
> *So Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt, and the frogs came up and covered the land of Egypt. But the magicians did the same by their secret arts and made frogs come up on the land of Egypt…*
> *Aaron stretched out his hand with his staff and struck the dust of the earth, and there were gnats on man and beast. All the dust of the earth became gnats in all the land of Egypt. The magicians tried by their secret arts to produce gnats, but they could not. So there were gnats on man and beast. Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God." But Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the LORD had said…*
> *So they took soot from the kiln and stood before Pharaoh. And Moses threw it in the air, and it became boils breaking out in sores on man and beast. And the magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils, for the boils came upon the magicians and upon all the Egyptians. (Exodus 7.10-11, 20-22; 8.6-7, 17-19; 9.10-11)*

The situation seems dire because, for several years now, it appears as if these false teachers have had success after success, victory after victory. Indeed, from the first miracle of the staff to the plague of frogs, Egypt's magicians seemed point for point as power as God himself. This served to harden Pharoah's heart against God. But, so that the elect of Israel might be saved from slavery, the impotence of the magicians is powerfully displayed when they could not produce even a single gnat causing them to proclaim, "these miracles are by the finger of God!"

Similarly, St. Paul encourages Timothy, the false teachers' successes have caused a hardness of hearts in some, but God will not allow such predatory victory to continue forever. Like the magicians, the folly of the false teachers will be made clear to everyone. In our fallen world, evil

has many victories, but such victories inspire a false confidence because it is a restrained and limited successful which God promises will be swallowed up by the victory of our Lord Jesus Christ through the vindication of his resurrection, his enthronement at the ascension, and the full display of his defeat of Satan, sin, and death in the second coming.

> *He who testifies to these things says, "Surely, I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!(Revelation 22.20)*

Questions for Reflection

1. "The universe is not hurtling towards some unknown end; rather, it is being sovereignly directed by God towards his gracious goal of the restoration of all things. Chief among these 'all things' is the redemption of sinners and the restoration of all those who believe the gospel into the people they were always meant to be." Eschatology is, ultimately, the doctrine of how God is faithful in fulfilling his promises. How does this understanding of history give us hope in the present? How can it help us persevere in our suffering?
2. "Our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6.12). How does this, or how should it, reframe our perspective of the typical arguments that we find ourselves in? How might it inform the way you engage with those you disagree with in light of how you tend to do so now?
3. St. Augustine says that sin is the manifestation of disordered loves. Consider a sin that you have been dealing with lately. What good love is being distorted?
4. Gordon Fee writes that the false teachers considered themselves as "obviously righteous because they were obviously religious." Anglicanism, rightly we would argue, highly emphasizes liturgical worship and habitual practices. In what ways can someone fall into the same trap as the false teachers? How can we guard against such issues?

Week 12: Fidelity Anchored in Holy Scripture

Collect For Before the Reading of Scripture

Blessed Lord, who cause all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and the comfort of your holy Word we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. ***Amen.***

Scripture

2 Timothy 3.10-17.

Second Timothy 2.14–3.9 has been focused primarily on the false teachers and Timothy's conduct towards them. Throughout, St. Paul reminded Timothy of God's fidelity towards his own children whom he loves. This is true, asserts the Apostle, even in the apparent success and victories of the opponents. Timothy is to remember that the opponents' teaching and behavior is demonic in origin, and respond with preaching and teaching sound doctrine while responding to the opponents with strong conviction and strong graciousness, hoping always that God would work through his ministry to convert those who oppose the apostolic teaching.

In 2 Timothy 3.10–17, our text for today, St. Paul has his impending death at the forefront of his mind. Despite the threat of death, however, Timothy is still the Apostle's main concern. Throughout Timothy's ministry he has always had his mentor and ministry partner to go to for guidance, encouragement, and doctrine. To whom or what will Timothy be able to turn to for

these things once St. Paul has died?

In the Apostle's last inspired encouragement to Timothy we'll see how St. Paul reminds Timothy of 1) God's fidelity to Paul in his own ministry and suffering, 2) God's fidelity to Timothy in those whom God has placed in Timothy's life to train him up in the faith, and 3) the centrality of scripture and the apostolic teaching, which has been passed down to Timothy from St. Paul himself, in guiding his ministry after the Apostle's death.

Encouragement From God's Fidelity in St. Paul's Life

2 Timothy 3.10-13

> *Now you have observed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions and suffering the things that happened to me in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra. What persecutions I endured! Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them. Indeed, all who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. But wicked people and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving others and being deceived. (2 Timothy 3.10-13)*

In 2 Timothy 3.1-9, St. Paul places Timothy's situation of dealing with the false teachers within history and God's redemptive plan by reminding him that they—and we—are in "the last days." The implication of being in the last days is that Timothy—and we—should not be surprised when opposition arises against the proclamation of the gospel. At the same time, because we are in the last days, we should take heart knowing that evil does not have the final say. While the false teachers may appear to be victorious, their ultimate success is restrained and, ultimately, they will fail and be shown for the imposters they are.

In light of this, St. Paul then turns from discussing the opponents to directly encouraging Timothy to suffer well in ministry because of God's faithfulness. To do so, St. Paul draws from his own character, sufferings, and persecutions, all of which Timothy knows very well.

St. Paul's Testimony

As we noted when we started our study of 2 Timothy, the lives of St. Paul and Timothy are intertwined and they have many common, and sometimes shared, experiences. Thus, verses 10 and 11 contain a list of St. Paul's character, sufferings, and persecutions all of which Timothy is not only aware of, but also has been shaped by in some regard.

> *Now you have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra—which persecutions I endured; (2 Timothy 3.10-11a, ESV)*

When the text says "you have followed," St. Paul doesn't simply mean that Timothy knows about the list he is about to make. Rather, he's using the language of discipleship. The definition given by one lexicon is "to conform to someone's belief or practice by paying special attention; *follow faithfully, follow as a rule*."[130] The Apostle is encouraging Timothy by saying, not only do you know these things about me, but you have followed after me in them such that they have formed you are are today.

Positive Examples

What follows is a list of nine items which highlight the themes St. Paul has been teaching throughout the Pastoral Epistles. At the head of this list is "my teaching" and "my conduct." The major theme of the Pastorals has been that our behavior flows out of our doctrine. Here, St. Paul puts himself in direct contrast to the false teachers whose heresy has born rotten fruit. Because Timothy has "followed after" the Apostle, Timothy can be encouraged that his doctrine is sound, and that the Holy Spirit is bearing good fruit and equipping him for good work.

To these St. Paul's adds his "aim in life," which is to glorify God and proclaim the gospel, his faith, his patience (which is essential to enduring the false teachers, cf 1 Timothy 1.6, 2 Timothy 2.24, and 4.2), his love (cf 1 Timothy 1.5; 2 Timothy 2.22) and his steadfastness or perseverance.

Verse 10 ends with perseverance, which is a key term throughout the Pastoral Epistles. The word is defined as "the capacity to hold out or bear up in the face of difficulty," and the typical English glosses are "patience, endurance, fortitude, steadfastness, and perseverance."[131] St. Paul tells Timothy to "pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, *endurance*, and gentleness" (1 Timothy 6.1). Older men are encouraged "to be temperate, serious, prudent, and sound in faith, in love, and in *endurance*" (Titus 2.2). The verbal form of the word appears twice in 2 Timothy 2. First, in verse 10 as the Apostle says "I *endure* everything for the sake of the elect", and then again in the faithful saying found in verse 12, "if we endure, we will also reign with him."

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[130] BDAG, s.v. παρακολουθέω. Though the NRSV's "have observed" fits according to one definition (e.g. to "observe" the speed limit laws is to travel at or below the speed limit; "observant" Jews follow the Torah, etc.), most people would probably read the word "observed" more passively, as in, you have seen my faith, etc.

[131] BDAG, s.v. ὑπομονή.

Negative Examples

It is here, with the word "perseverance/endurance," that St. Paul's list takes a stark turn. Every item in his list so far has been a positive aspect of his life that Timothy has both observed (as in, seen) in the Apostle and by which he has been formed. This changes dramatically in verse 11: "…my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra."

The shift may not be surprising, but it is sudden and sharp. It reads like a shortened list of the "hall of heroes" in Hebrews 11, which contextually shares a lot of the same themes as we find here. In Hebrews 10.19-39, the author of Hebrews gives a call for perseverance rooted in the fidelity of Christ in his work as our great high priest. In Hebrews 11.1-3, he defines the faith which perseveres. Then, starting in 11.4, he begins to list examples of persevering faith from the Old Testament, including Abel (v4), Enoch (v5), Noah (v7), Abraham (v8), Isaac (v20), Jacob (v21), Joseph (v22), and Moses (v23). Starting in 11.33, the author then moves through a litany of examples:

> *[those] who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received their dead by resurrection. (Hebrews 11.33-35a)*

The author goes through successful ministry after successful ministry after successful ministry, crescendoing in miraculous resurrections. How encouraging! That is the kind of victorious faith we desire! But then, with no transition, comes the sudden turn:

> *Others were tortured, refusing to accept release in order to obtain a better resurrection. Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned to death, they were sawn in two, they were killed by the sword; they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, persecuted, tormented— (11.35b-37)*

And here's the point—the author of Hebrews is saying the second group is no less "successful" than the first group. These, the latter group, were not failures. Indeed, both groups of saints—those who shut the mouths of lion and escaped the sword and those who were mocked and imprisoned and cut in two—all together are those "of whom the world was not worthy." Perhaps, even the author of Hebrews means for that epitaph to describe the latter more than the former.

And so it is in 2 Timothy 3.11 with St. Paul's sudden turn from "my teaching, my faith, my patience, my love, my perseverance, my persecution and sufferings." The three places he mentions—Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra—were all during his first "missionary journey," before he began to partner with Timothy, which you can read about in Acts 13-14. At Pisidian Antioch, Paul and Barnabas, the Gentiles heard their preaching and "all who were appointed to eternal life believed" (13.48), but

> *the Jews saw the crowds and they were filled with jealousy…[and] incited the devout women of high standing and the leading men of the city, and stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their region. (13.45, 49)*

Then, Acts 14.1, "the same thing occurred in Iconium." Paul and Barnabas spent some time in the city of Iconium, but eventually,

> *when an attempt was made by both Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to mistreat them and to stone them, the apostles learned of it and fled to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and to the surrounding country; and there they continued proclaiming the good news. (Acts 14.5-7)*

While in Lystra, St. Paul healed a man who, from birth, was disabled and could not walk. The crowds began to proclaim that Paul and Barnabas were gods—Hermes and Zeus. They publicly denied this and began to proclaim the gospel.

> *But Jews came there from Antioch and Iconium and won over the crowds. Then they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing he was dead. But when the disciples surrounded him, he got up and went into the city. The next day he went on with Barnabas to Derbe. (Acts 14.19-20)*

The Lord has Rescued Me

St. Paul has both "escaped the edge of the sword" and nearly "stoned to death." What, then, does he say about such things? "Yet, from them all the Lord rescued me."

The Apostle has encouraged Timothy to press forward in his suffering while relying on the power of God (2 Timothy 1.8), reminded him that, even when it looks like the opponents are winning, God is still in control (2 Timothy 2.10, 19; 3.8-9), and that he shouldn't be surprised when opposition arises (2 Timothy 3.1-5). To these, he has added his testimony that, despite his own suffering and persecution, the Lord has rescued him "from them all."

Note, St. Paul's examples that when he says the Lord has rescued him *from* them all he makes

it very clear that he was not spared suffering and persecution. Indeed, that is his whole point. Any proclamation of the gospel which attaches to it a promise of safety or prosperity as a result of your faith is a false gospel. Rather, what the Apostle says is that the Lord has saved him *out of* his sufferings and persecutions, and the implicit encouragement to Timothy is that the Lord will rescue him, too. Once again, St. Paul reminds us of God's fidelity to his children through Jesus Christ.

General Principles from St. Paul's Experiences

From his experiences, St. Paul draws to general and proverbial principles in verses 13-14, which speak directly to Timothy's current situation:

> *Indeed, all who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. But wicked people and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving others and being deceived.*

Timothy is suffering because he is pursuing godliness, which stands in contrast to the Ephesian opponents who both deceive others and are themselves being deceived.

The first principle is this: "all who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." The Apostle says this, on one hand, that Christians would not be surprised if they find themselves being persecuted. On the other hand, he says this to give assurance to those who find themselves being persecuted. For example, do you desire to live a godly life? That is your assurance that the Holy Spirit is working within you, for no one who "deceives and are being deceived" desire to live a godly life. Does your faith sometimes fail in this desire, and are you tempted at at times to say it would be easier to denounce the faith and walk away? Yet, have you not done so? "If we are faithless, he remains faithful" (2.13), but "if we deny him, he will also deny us" (2.12).

Now, does St. Paul mean that all Christians will, as he was at the time of writing, face martyrdom? Obviously not. Does he mean that Christians will not have even a moments peace in their life? Certainly not. Are all persecutions and sufferings faced by Christians equal in severity? No. St. John Chrysostom discusses the gradations of persecutions that Christians will encounter:

> Here he calls afflictions and sorrows, "persecutions," for it is not possible that a man pursuing the course of virtue should not be exposed to grief, tribulation, and temptations. For how can he escape it who is treading in the straight and narrow way, and who has heard, that "in the world ye shall have tribulation?" (John 16.33) If Job in his time said, "The life of man upon the earth is a state of trial" (Job 7.1,

Septuagint) how much more was it so in those days?[132]

Holy Scripture has much to teach us about trials and tribulations. St. Paul teaches in Romans 5, that

> *…suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us. (Romans 5.3-5)*

And St. James,

> *My brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of any kind, consider it nothing but joy, because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance; and let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking in nothing…blessed is anyone who endures temptation. Such a one has stood the test and will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him. (James 1.2-4, 12).*

And St. Peter:

> *By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith—being more precious than gold that, through perishable, is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. (1 Peter 1.3-7)*

And again, St. Paul:

> *If we endure, we will also reign with him; (2 Timothy 2.12)*

In Romans 5 and James 1, the word for "endurance" is the same word that St. Paul uses in 2 Timothy 3.11, "patience, endurance, perseverance", and 2 Timothy 2.12, above. Such perseverance does not come naturally to us, it must be learned. How is it learned? By suffering and facing various trials and tribulations. Now, every human being has some capacity to learn how to persevere through suffering. If this wasn't so the human race would not have lasted as long as it has. But we, dear Christians, have the empowerment of the Holy Spirit and the support of the family of God.

[132] Chrysostom, Homily VIII (*NPNF* 1/13).

Do not neglect these gifts. Lean not on yourselves, but on the Holy Spirit which is working within you. Lean not on yourself, but on the Holy Spirit working through the Church. May the Lord make our parish to be a place who supports one another in suffering with grace, and love, and patience, and reminders that "the Lord has rescued us" and "when we are faithless, he is faithful."

The second general principle is that "But wicked people and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving others and being deceived." We know that, just as St. Paul had Timothy in mind for the first general principle, that he has the Ephesian opponents in mind here. The word "imposters" means, in some contexts, magicians and sorcerers, but by the time of Herodotus, Euripides, and Plato (whose lives spanning from early 4th century BC to early 3rd century BC), the term had also come to mean "imposters and swindlers." No doubt, in using this word, St. Paul had in mind the example of the imposter magicians Jannes and Jambres just mentioned in 2 Timothy 3.8-9. At the same time, it was in 3.9 that St. Paul gives the assurance that the Ephesian opponents "will not make much progress…their folly will become plain to everyone." Here, the apostle warns that they will "make progress (same word as 3.9) from bad to worse." Is this a contradiction?

It's a hard sell to say that the Apostle has contradicted himself using the very same language in a mere four verses. The difference between the two verses is the difference between the specific and the general. The general principle is that those who oppose the gospel will continually go from bad to worse, within the limits that God has sovereignly opposed. The Ephesians opponents, on the other hand, are St. Paul supposes, reaching their God ordained limit and their folly is about to be exposed. Still, that limit has not yet been reached and the Ephesian opponents themselves will move further and further away from the good in the time they have left.

Perhaps this sounds bleak, but note well what St. Paul says in other places that he does not explicitly say here: the goal of rebuke and correction in Timothy's ministry is the conversion and repentance of the false teachers. What breaks the cycle of advancing from bad to worse? What disrupts the spiral of deceiving and being deceived? The very same power that broke those same cycles in each one of us: the Holy Spirit working through the proclamation of the gospel and sound teaching. This, too, is the difference between Timothy and the false teachers, as St. Paul is about to demonstrate.

Encouragement Anchored in Holy Scripture

2 Timothy 3.14-17,

From these two general principles, the Apostle returns to giving Timothy encouragement, comparing Timothy's fidelity with the opponent's ever-worsening spiral of deception:

> *But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it, 15 and how from childhood you have known the sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.*

From 2 Timothy 3.14 to 4.8, St. Paul encourages Timothy to press on with an eye towards his own impending death. It's one thing to be anchored in apostolic teaching when your ministry partner is an actual apostle—but what happens when the apostles are taken away? To what can Timothy anchor his faith, his hope, his patient endurance in the absence of his apostolic mentor?

In his encouragement and final charge, the Apostle makes six references to (some much more obvious than others) to the pairing of the Old Testament along with its new covenant interpretation through the lens of the gospel and apostolic teaching. Holy Scripture as we know it today in the Old and New Testaments—though not yet complete by the time of Paul's martyrdom—is to be that anchor.

> Holy Scripture containers all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation. In the name of Holy Scripture we do understand those canonical Books of the Old and New Testament, of whose authority was never any doubt in the church[133].

These six instances will be dealt with more fully when we get to 2 Timothy 4.1-5. As we look at 2 Timothy 3.14-17 below, some of these instances will be mentioned as they make sense to understanding the flow of the passage, namely, that Scripture is our ultimate authority and anchor, but that the what, how, and from whom we learn the Holy Scripture helps us in our pursuit of faith, patience, love, and perseverence.

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[133] "Article VI. Of the Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures for Salvation," *The Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion.*

Continue in What you have Learned and Believed

2 Timothy 3.13-14a.

St. Paul begins this section by contrasting Timothy to the opponents.

> *…wicked people and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving others and being deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed… (2 Timothy 3.13-14a)*

The false teachers were always "advancing," always on the move, always in pursuit of a larger quantity of knowledge with which they may fuel debates and lead others astray. In contrast, Timothy is to "continue in what you have learned and firmly believed. Paradoxically, the word "continue" here is the word "remain" or "abide." How does one "continue" while "remaining?" Whereas the opponents moved from new knowledge to new knowledge, increasing the quantity of their knowledge, Timothy is to "remain" or "abide" in the knowledge that he already has, increasing in the quality of that knowledge. It's not that Timothy knows everything there is to know, but that the knowledge which Timothy is to seek out is a bounded set with a paradoxically infinite depth.

Timothy, St. Paul encourages, is go *further in*, not *further out*.

This comparison between Timothy and his opponents reminds me of (at no surprise to anyone) a contrast that Wendell Berry makes between two types of people in his 2012 Jefferson Lecture, *It All Turns on Affection*[134]—groups that he borrows from his own professor, novelist Wallace Stegner—"boomers" and "stickers." The context of the essay begins with the problems that faced local farmers at the turn of the 20th century with the rise of industrialized farming that brought along with it monopolies that allowed bigger business to squash competition and reduce the payment these companies would pay towards farmers for their crops.[135]

Stegner says through the recollection of Berry, that "boomers are 'those who pillage and run,'

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[134] This lecture is an honorary invitation for distinguished intellectual achievement, given by the National Endowment for the Humanities. You can find the archived video of the lecture here: https://events.tvworldwide.com/Events/NEH-2012-Jefferson-Lecture/VideoId/-1/UseHtml5/True.

The full text of the lecture, along with extra information, can be found at the NEH website: https://www.neh.gov/about/awards/jefferson-lecture/wendell-e-berry-biography.

Finally, the lecture has been released as a book with several other essays: Wendell Berry, *It all Turns on Affection: The Jefferson Lecture & Other Essays*, Counterpoint Press, 2012. Subsequent citations will be from this book with page numbers.

[135] Wendell Berry, *It All Turns on Affection*, 10.

who want 'to make a killing and end up on Easy Street.'… stickers are "'those who settle, and love the life they have made and the place they have made it in.'"[136] Berry, of course, directs these definitions to the point at hand:

> The boomer is motivated by greed, the desire for money, property, and therefore, power…Stickers, on the contrary are motivated by affection, by such love for a place and its life that they want to preserve it and live in it.[137]

Do these descriptions sound familiar? The false teachers, motivated by greed and power, have pillaged the Ephesian church. Timothy, by contrast, is motivated by love of God and neighbor to stay—to stay in a difficult ministry, in a difficult church, and with sound doctrine that itself invites persecution. Timothy has been called to respond to the opponents with love, kindness, patience, and gentleness (2 Timothy 2.24-25, 3.10). These are the characteristics of a "sticker," whose motivation is affection. Of affection, Berry writes,

> The charge will be made that affection is an emotion, merely "subjective," and therefore that all affections are more or less equal: People may have affection for their children and their automobiles, their neighbors and their weapons…one of the endeavors of human cultures, from the beginning, has been to qualify and direct the influence of emotion. The word "affection" and the terms of value that cluster around it—love, care, sympathy, mercy, forbearance, respect, reverence—have histories and meanings that raise the issue of worth. We should, as our culture has warned us over and over again, give our affection to things that are true, just, and beautiful. When we give affection to things that are destructive, we are wrong.[138]

Timothy's charge is the "sticker" mentally applied to sound doctrine, the gospel, and parish ministry. Throughout verses 14-17, we'll see the role that Holy Scripture plays as our anchor, and the roles that the God-ordained families that the Lord has put us in have in pointing us to that anchor.

Timothy's Faithful Families

2 Timothy 3.14-15

[136] Ibid.
[137] Ibid., 11.
[138] Ibid., 14-15.

> *But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it, and how from childhood you have known the sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. (2 Timothy 3.14-15)*

In order to encourage Timothy, St. Paul gives two arguments to inspire Timothy's confidence in keeping fidelity to sound doctrine, the gospel, and his ministry. The first source of confidence is that Timothy knows the character of those who have taught him scripture and sound doctrine. The second source of confidence is Timothy's experience with Holy Scripture and how they hold forth salvation in Christ.

You Know From Whom You've Been Taught

The first source of confidence for continuing in what Timothy has learned and believed that St. Paul offers is that he knows the character and the fruit born in the lives of those who have taught him scripture and doctrine. Who is the Apostle referring to when he says "from whom you have learned it?" In order to answer that question, we must first answer the question what is it that Timothy has "learned and firmly believed," because the answer to the latter will inform everything from 3.14 to 4.5.

What has Timothy learned?

What is it that Timothy has learned and firmly believed? Even a cursory reading of the present passage will give us one answer: Holy Scripture. St. Paul mentions scripture explicitly in verse 15, "you have known the sacred writings," and again in verse 16, "all scripture." These phrases are consistently used throughout the New Testament to refer to the Hebrew Scripture, what we now call the Old Testament. Thus, the Old Testament is squarely in St. Paul's view.

We should ask ourselves, however, if this is the only thing which Timothy has learned and come to believe? The entire movement of the Pastoral Epistles has been that Timothy and Titus are charged with teaching sound doctrine which conforms to the gospel. In verse 15, while referencing the Old Testament, St. Paul adds that these Scriptures are "able to instruct you in for salvation through the Christ Jesus." Now, quite obviously, the Old Testament is able to do this as all Scripture points to Jesus Christ, but it is not able to do so by itself. Indeed, all New Testament proclamation from the Hebrew Scriptures is paired with the interpretive grid of the apostolic teaching regarding Jesus as its fulfillment (cf., for example, Luke 24.13-35; Acts 2, 7, 8.26-38; the Epistles to the Hebrews, etc.).

Thus, what Timothy "has learned and firmly believed" is not just the Old Testament, but the Old Testament and the apostolic teaching—which includes the gospel and the foundation for what we now have in the New Testament writings. As I mentioned previously, there are six instances where St. Paul refers to what Timothy has learned and believed, and in each of the six we must read not just the Old Testament, but the Old Testament, the gospel, and the apostolic teaching which conforms to the gospel.

From Whom has Timothy Learned It?

This brings us back to our first question, "from whom has Timothy learned Holy Scripture and sound doctrine? There is an obvious and not so obvious answer to this question. The obvious answer, from the text, is that Timothy has learned Scripture and sound doctrine from his faithful biological family who raised him up in the faith. Way back in 2 Timothy 1.6, St. Paul made reference to Timothy's "spiritual heritage," saying,

> *I long to see you, so that my joy may be made full, as I recall your tears and am reminded of your sincere faith. This faith dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and mother Eunice, and now, I am convinced, lives in you also. (2 Timothy 1.4-5, author's translation)*

Here, in 2 Timothy 3.14-15, St. Paul finally returns to Timothy's spiritual heritage by reminding him that he "knows from whom you have learned [what you firmly believe] and how from childhood you have known the sacred writings…" In their fidelity to God, Timothy's grandmother and mother have raised him in the faith. Through their faithfulness both to their calling in raising Timothy in the faith and their faithfulness to God, Timothy, also, came to faith through their nurturing. St. Paul says, explicitly, that the faith found in his mother and grandmother *now* (presently) is found in Timothy (2 Timothy 1.5). Timothy's faith is explicitly faith in Christ Jesus, and thus it is the foregone conclusion that Timothy's mother and grandmother also taught him the Christian faith, likely having converted from Judaism to Christianity during Timothy's childhood (2 Timothy 3.15).

There is a a less obvious answer as well, however. Consider the following:

> *Hold to the standard of sound teaching that you have heard from me… (2 Timothy 1.13)*
> *What you have heard from me…entrust to faithful people who will be able to teach others as well. (2 Timothy 2.2)*
> *Now, you have followed my teaching… (2 Timothy 3.10)*

In both 1 and 2 Timothy, St. Paul begins by addressing Timothy as his son. The above verses make it clear that St. Paul himself has been the primary teacher of Timothy from his spiritual "childhood" and into his spiritual maturity. The Pastoral Epistles are teach—as did Jesus—that being in the family of God is a stronger bond than that of even our biological–and–adoptive families. That teaching does not reduce the importance of those families. Instead, it strengthens the ecclesial family. Certainly, Timothy knows—perhaps more than most—St. Paul's character. Otherwise, 3.10-11 makes no sense.

Here are the two familial contexts in which the gospel and sound doctrine are taught and faith, love, patience, and so forth, increased: in our homes and in the church.

What, then, is the source of this teaching? 2 Timothy 3.15:

> *…and how from childhood you have known the sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.*

This is the second source of confidence that St. Paul mentions in the text: Holy Scripture is our ultimate authority, sufficient in teaching what is required for salvation and our spiritual formation.

Note the progression of tenses in this verse. First, the Apostle says , "from childhood you have known the sacred writings." Timothy began to know Holy Scripture in his childhood, but that didn't stop once he became an adult. It started in his childhood, and learning what scripture teaches continues even until his ministry in Ephesus. Second, the Apostle says that the very scripture he has been learning "are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ." St. Paul is addressing the contemporary Timothy, the Timothy who is presently reading the epistle. Not only is this encouragement in the present tense, the thrust of the verse is that scripture will continue to instruct Timothy. As Mounce acknowledges, "Holy Scripture is to play an going role in Timothy's life…and ministry."[139]

The Source, Authority, and Purpose of Scripture

2 Timothy 3.16-17.

St. Paul turns his attention to the "sacred writings" that Timothy has spent a lifetime learning:

[139] Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 565.

> *All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.*

Given how important this verse has been in discussing the doctrine of scripture and the amount of discussion it has generated, it may be surprising to hear that these two verses are actually a transitional sentence.

In 2 Timothy 3.10-15, St. Paul has been encouraging Timothy in light of their historical placement in the last days and the growing-yet-restrained sphere of evil that rises up in opposition to the gospel by his own testimony, by the the character of those who taught him the Holy Scripture and apostolic teaching, and by the very Holy Scripture he has been taught and believed. In 2 Timothy 4.1-5, the Apostle will give Timothy his final charge to continue in the ministry by preaching and teaching the Holy Scripture.

The role of 2 Timothy 3.16-17 is to be the foundation for the charge given in 4.1-5, based on the encouragement just given. This transitional nature by no means devalues the attention given to these verses by commentators, scholars, and pastors! As we'll see, this one sentence both teaches us about the source and authority of Holy Scripture, while also applying Scripture's purpose particularly to Timothy's ministry.

The Source and Authority of Holy Scripture

2 Timothy 3.16a.

First, St. Paul gives us the source of Holy Scripture, which implies it's authority:

> *All scripture is inspired by God… (2 Timothy 3.16a)*

What is Considered "Scripture?"

Literally every word in this short phrase has been debated. Here's some suggestions for how else it might be translated:

> *All scripture is inspired by God…*
> *Every scripture is inspired by God…*
> *Every scripture that is inspired by God…*
> *All scripture that is inspired by God…*

Now, it should be said that with a proper understanding of this verse, each of those four options is fine. There is no inherent problem with the translations themselves. The translation of "all scripture" looks at the Old Testament (at a minimum, see below) as a composite and whole

work. "Every scripture," on the other hand, would be read as "every part of scripture," emphasizing each individual book or grouping of books within the Old Testament (e.g., The Law, The Prophets, and The Writings). In this debate, theologically conservative scholars are somewhat split, and we need not judge one's interpretation *a priori* based on whether they render the text "all scripture" or "every scripture."

The problem comes when people try to divorce this phrase from the historic Jewish and Christian understanding. Thus, a minority attempt to read this phrase as "every scripture that is inspired by God," giving it a nonexistent nuance by saying this teaches that not every scripture is so inspired. Given the flow of St. Paul's argument throughout chapter 3, it is nonsensical to suggest that here—at the crux of his encouragement—he would introduce a sense of *unreliability* to the argument that undercuts everything that he has been saying.

As stated, the phrase "all scripture" includes, as a minimum, the Old Testament. Is this all it includes, however? Even so, the strength of the verse still stands and as the Church recognized the inspiration of the New Testament it added those books to the Old Testament canon. Thus, while it may be anachronistic to apply this verse to the New Testament letters, it is not incorrect to do so. Certainly, the whole of the New Testament had not been written by the time St. Paul penned these words, a great deal of it had.[140] Given that 2 Timothy is the Apostles last written epistle, the entirety of his work had already been circulating. St. Peter, writing approximately around the same time as 2 Timothy was written, acknowledges that

> *Our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, speaking of this as he does in all his letters. There are some things in [his letters] which are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other scriptures. (2 Peter 3.15b-16)*

St. Peter emphatically joins St. Paul's writings in with the Old Testament scripture (and possibly the gospels and some other writings, too) when he uses the phrase "the other scriptures." The nuance of the original is clear, and the NET Bible renders it accurately "the *rest* of the scriptures."

The Source of Scripture

The wording "inspired by God" is also debated with regards to what "inspired" means in this

[140] J. A. T. Robinson *Redating the New Testament*.

context. Does it mean something like how we might say an artists was inspired by a sunset or a muse? Or does it mean something more?

The phrase translates a greek word *theopneustos*. This is an incredibly rare, compound word, which when broken down etymologically, refers to "God" (*theos*) and "breathe out/blow" (*pneo*). While it can be dangerous to define a word by its etymology, it is sometimes necessary when dealing with words that are rare or completely new and coined by the author.[141] Because the word is rare, the NIV translates this word transparently as "God-breathed."

All Scripture is "breathed out by God." The Apostle's purpose in saying this is not to bring up the mechanics or manner in which God inspired scripture, but rather to emphasize that the ultimate source of Scripture is God himself. When we read Holy Scripture, we are reading the very words that God intended us to have. How he gave us those words through human authors is a secondary matter.[142]

The Authority of Scripture

The authority of Holy Scripture is directly related to its source. Because scripture is God-breathed, it is also authoritative. When we were looking at authority and obedience in week 7, it was argued that God is the only sovereign, and all other authority is delegated authority from God. We said, as we argue here, that Holy Scripture is authoritative because it is God's word written. So, in a technical sense, the authority of Scripture is derivative. At the same time we have to recognize that this is not true of scripture in the way that it is true of governments. Governments have a derived authority from God which bestows a sphere of authoritative power to them without guarantee of how it will wield that power. It is similar to how the ordination priest and a subsequent calling to a parish bestows some authority, within a scope, to that priest. The bestowal does not mean the priest will wield that authority well. The Ephesian opponents are very much an example of that authority being abused.

Scripture, on the other hand, is a derivative authority of a whole other kind. Scripture is not

[141] For more on why this is problematic, see D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*, 28.

[142] In some parts of Scripture, it is quite obvious that, in some way, God dictated his words directly to someone who then wrote those words down. In others, particularly evident in St. Paul's epistles, for example, the manner is much more complex. St. Luke, as another example, relied on historical and eyewitness accounts. In each of these examples, though they differ, it is true that "no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1.20-21).

God, but it is the word of God; it is what God intends it to be without failure. As my friend Rob Plummer has put it, "in all that things that [Scripture] affirm, and in all that things that [Scripture] deny, they are completely truthful because they are God's words."[143] He continues to say that doesn't mean we read the Scripture simplistically, as God has given Scripture to us through the typical ways in which language is used. Thus, when the Psalmists say that the "trees will clap their hands," we recognize this as a metaphor and not a statement regarding the science of dendrology.

The Purpose of Scripture

St. Paul then moves from the source and authority of Scripture, to it's purpose. Now, the ultimate purpose of Scripture is God's self-revelation to sinful human beings. As God's self-revelation, Holy Scripture "instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus." In 2 Timothy 3.16-17, the Apostle applies this overarching purpose of Scripture to Timothy's ministry. Thus, he says that Holy Scripture

> *is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3.16b-17)*

Because Scripture comes from God and carries the authority of God, it is therefore "useful" or "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness." This set of four "uses" of Scripture map directly to St. Paul's charges to Timothy and Titus throughout the Pastoral Epistles. They form two couplets, categorized as sound doctrine and sound behavior (reflecting the themes of the Pastoral Epistles), both of which then contain positive and negative examples.

The first couplet deals with proclamation towards orthodoxy, or sound doctrine. The positive aspect of Scripture's profitability towards sound doctrine is, as the Pastorals have said over and over again, sound teaching. The negative aspect of Scripture's profitability towards sound doctrine, applied to Timothy's ministry is "reproof." Reproof, or rebuke, is that aspect of ministry that exposes someone's unsound doctrine.

The second couplet deals with proclamation towards orthopraxy, or sound behavior and

[143] Robert Plummer, "Is the Bible Inerrant or Infallible," *Honest Answers.* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UT5zYw1qaaM.

practice. The negative aspect of Scripture's profitability for sound behavior is "correction." The various lexicons include the gloss "restoration;" Thayer mentions the nuance of "restoration… correction of life and character." Spicq notes that the term is used often "with respect to the repair of a statue, the restoration of a sanctuary (cf. 2 Maccabees 5.20), the rebuilding of a city." The positive aspect of Scripture's profitability for sound behavior is "training in righteousness."

Regarding this last item, "training in righteousness," we must remember that Scripture doesn't use the term "righteousness" the same way every time the human authors employ the term. For example, our preeminent Greek lexicon for the New Testament gives three definitions for the term: first, righteousness is "the quality, state, or practice of judicial responsibility with focus on fairness; *justice, equitableness, fairness*;" second, the "quality or state of juridicial correctness with focus on redemption; *righteousness*;" third, "the quality or characteristic of upright behavior; *uprightness, righteousness*." Like any word, the definition we use depends on the context in which the word is found.

The context of the Pastoral Epistles constrains the phrase "training in righteousness" to the third definition. This is inline with St. Paul's command to "pursue righteousness" in 1 Timothy 6.11. We cannot, however, confuse this with the righteousness that God declares to be ours by faith in Christ Jesus. To equate the two is likely one of the things St. Peter had in mind when he says that "there are some things in [Paul's letters] that are hard to understand, that the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction."

Finally, there is a direct parallel passage which we have already seen that helps us understand what St. Paul means when he says "training for righteousness." We looked at this passage in week 3 as we studied what the Pastorals say about the relationship between the gospel and good works:

> *For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions, and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly, while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. He it is who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds. (Titus 2.11-14)*

Notice all the parallels between this passage and 2 Timothy 3.16-17: "training us to renounce impiety (or ungodliness)…and [training us] to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly." The word "upright" is from the same root that "righteousness" is in our present text. The

end result in both passages is "good works." In Titus, it is the "grace of God," as we said in week 3, which catechizes us towards godliness and righteousness, and it is Christ himself who "redeems us from all iniquity and purifies us" which results in our "zealousness for good deeds." St. Paul has not abandoned this paradigm. Rather, in 2 Timothy 3.16-17, he shows us the instrument by which the grace of God comes to bear on our lives: through the work of the Holy Spirit as we read Holy Scripture and have it proclaimed to us through the teaching ministry of the church.

The Result of Scripture's Proclamation

The result of everything St. Paul has been teaching about Holy Scripture in verse 16 is

> *…so that the man of God be proficient and fully equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3.17, author's own translation)*

Now, I've provided my own translation here to serve a purpose. Who is "the man of God?" The phrase "man of God" is often the older use of the "generic he," meaning, that "man" is often used generically of men and women, thus "the person of God." Do I think it's being used that way here? Yes. On the other hand, St. Paul specifically calls Timothy "the man of God" in 1 Timothy 6.11: "But as for you, man of God, shun all [the false teaching and its rotten fruit]; pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentlest." Do I think that St. Paul is speaking directly to Timothy here? Also yes.

How can it be both? That St. Paul addresses "the man of God" in the context of encouraging Timothy to persevere in his ministry empowered by the Holy Spirit and the foundation of Holy Scripture certainly seems that verse 17 is meant to continue that encouragement. When taken this way, we could paraphrase verse 16-17 like this:

> *All scripture is God-breathed, and because it is God-breathed it is profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, and for training in righteousness, so that you, Timothy, are capable and fully-equipped for the ministry God has given you.*

At the same time, it is the "good work" of the church's ministers to "equip the saints for the work of ministry" (Ephesians 4.11) Therefore, Holy Scripture, being God-breathed, is useful *for Timothy* to teach, reprove, correct, and train in righteousness. But who is Timothy teaching? Who is he reproving? Correcting? Training? The answer is the family of God, the church, in accordance with Ephesians 4. So, then, we could paraphrase the text this way:

> *All scripture is God-breathed, and because it is God-breathed, it is profitable for your ministry, Timothy, as you teach, reprove, correct, and train in righteousness,*

so that the family of God be capable and fully-equipped for every good work.

Indeed, should we take this latter option it necessarily includes Timothy within it. The point is that 1 Timothy 3.16-17 doesn't arise out of a vacuum, but within the context of St. Paul's encouragement to Timothy. How does this encourage Timothy, overwhelmed by the weight of such a difficult ministry? The Holy Spirit, working through Holy Scripture is able to make Timothy capable, fully-equipping him to do the ministry God has set before him. How does it encourage Timothy in light of the apparent successes of the opponents? The Holy Spirit, working through Holy Scripture is able to protect the family of God, and in so doing make them capable and fully-equipped for the ministry of the church (Ephesians 4.11) and every good work which God has ordained for them to do (Ephesians 2.10).

Questions for Reflection

1. As you reflect on St. Paul's life and his insistence that God rescued him out of his sufferings and persecutions, how would you articulate God's fidelity in the midst of trials and tribulations?
2. God promises that he "works all things together for the good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose;" the "good" he works out is "being conformed to the image of his Son" (Romans 8.28-29a). This accords with other scriptural teaching that suffering and trials produce character and hope. While God does not promise that we will understand or see the "good" that he is working out for us, he does often give us glimpses of varying degrees into this work in his graciousness. Reflecting as you are able on past suffering, trials, and tribulations, how have you seen God's fidelity towards you? How does recognizing God's past fidelity help reframe your current and future suffering?
3. What does St. Paul mean when he says that Holy Scripture is "God-breathed?" What is the relationship (place, role, etc.) between Holy Scripture and the three creeds (Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasius' creeds) and the Anglican Formularies (1662 Book of Common Prayer, The Ordinal, and the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion)?
4. What role does Holy Scripture play in our public church services? What is the relationship between Word and Sacrament?
5. How does God make use of Holy Scripture to teach, reprove, correct, train, and equip

us?

Week 13: Fidelity to the End

Collect For the Discouraged and Downcast

O God, almighty and merciful, you heal the broken-hearted, and turn the sadness of the sorrowful to joy, let your fatherly goodness be upon all whom you have made. Remember in pity all those who are this day destitute, homeless, elderly, infirm, or forgotten. Bless the multitude of your poor. Lift up those who are cast down. Mightily befriend innocent sufferers, and sanctify to them the endurance of their wrongs. Cheer with hope all who are discouraged and downcast, and by your heavenly grace preserve from falling those whose property tempts them to sin. Though they be troubled on every side, suffer them not to be distressed; though they are perplexed, save them from despair. Grant this, O Lord, for the love of him who for our sakes became poor, your Son our Savior Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Scripture

2 Timothy 4.1-22.

Today we finish our study of 2 Timothy, and with it, our study of the Pastoral Epistles. What we look at today, however, is really a continuation of what we looked at in the previous class. Second Timothy 3.10–4.8 is essentially a single, unified section of text that goes from St. Paul's encouragement into his final charge to Timothy.

In our last class, we looked at 2 Timothy 3.10–17, where the Apostle built his encouragement towards the major theme which was that Holy Scripture is God's very word to us, and therefore, authoritative in all that it teaches. For this reason, St. Paul reminds Timothy that it is Holy Scripture which is central to Timothy's ministry because it, along with the Holy Spirit working through Scripture, is sufficient and useful for teaching, reproof, correction, and training with

righteousness.

Today's class, which will takes us all the way through 2 Timothy 4, begins with St. Paul's final charge to Timothy which can be summarized as "Preach the word!" (2 Timothy 4.2a). There is an urgency to St. Paul's charge as the apostle knows that, likely within months, he will be finally convicted by the Romans courts and put to death for his ministry. This final charge, along with the request and information that follows in verses 9-22, then serves as St. Paul's final words which were to be recognized as Scripture. What follows in 9-22, then, is a deeply personal and intimate reflection from St. Paul regarding both his current circumstances and his last few decades of service to God.

On Last or Final Words

The idea of "final" or "last" words may not be intriguing to you, personally, but certainly has caught the imagination of a culture that, ironically, often looks to evade even the concept of death at every turn. Indeed, not only is there a wikipedia article dedicated to last words, but there are in fact articles and whole websites dedicated to the final words that people have spoken before death.[144]

In his article, "Last Words," Robert Kastenbaum seeks to survey why so many people in both Eastern and Western traditions, afford special status to what is said on one's deathbed. The article itself is tangential to our purposes, but there are two points that Kastenbaum makes which touch upon not just the larger infatuation with final words, but upon St. Paul's situation. First,

> It has long been known by experimental psychologists that the first and last items in a series are more salient to the observer than the intermediary items…By implication, a concluding statement is more likely to strike us as memorable because it accords with our standard operating procedure and provides a sense of closure.[145]

This likely makes sense if you think about it; nothing we say is as celebrated as our first words and our last. Certainly, this frames our understanding of why we're drawn to "last words," but

[144] "List of Last Words," *Wikipedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_last_words. Accessed August 8th, 2021. The articles and websites are easily found via searching the internet, frankly, and there is no need to privilege one or more over the others by citing them.

[145] Robert Kasenbaum, "Last Words," *The Monist: Philosophical Aspects of Death and Dying*, Vol. 76, No. 2 (April 1993): 274.

largely more relevant is the second point:

> In a sense, our lives include many last words: the last words we share before going to sleep, or on a voyage, the last words we speak in this class session, this semester, or this career, the last words we say to this person or that person, and so forth. Each parting statement has at least a faint resonance with the final parting.… Separation points are also points of emotional vulnerability and cognitive instability. They are occasions when one often wants to say—and hear—reassuring words.[146]

One reason that I believe we are drawn to final words is that—regardless of whether those words might impart some sort of truth or falsehood, engage in repentance or forgiveness, impart blessings or curses—death strips us from all pretense. This is, I think, related to Kastenbaum's note regarding vulnerability. In light of a known and impending death, whatever that person sees as superfluous drains away and, should they have the wherewithal, what is imparted in that moment reveals.

If you recall during my guest lecture during Jacob Davis' *Christianity and the Arts* class in the Spring, my lead in to talking about a Theology of Beauty made use of the idea that facing death strips away all pretense. I quoted Psalm 27.4:

> *One thing I ask from the Lord,*
> *this only do I seek:*
> *that I may dwell in the house of the Lord*
> *all the days of my life,*
> *to gaze on the beauty of the Lord*
> *and to seek him in his temple.*

The point in bringing up this text is that David was being pursued when he penned these words. While he did not end up dying during this period, he had no confidence that he would survive. Here, then, is David with all pretense stripped away acknowledging his greatest desire: to be in the Tabernacle gazing upon the beauty of the Lord. God's beauty is at the forefront of his mind after all that is superfluous is stripped away.

We find the last words of the saints throughout Scripture, most of which are the words delivered by a father to his sons. Genesis contains the final blessings that Abraham, Isaac, and

[146] Ibid., 284.

Jacob would give to their sons. Deuteronomy contains the final sermon that Moses would preach. 1 Kings 2 records David's final words to his son Solomon.

Turning back to our present passage, 2 Timothy 4, we have the final inscripturated words of a spiritual father to his spiritual son.

St. Paul's Last Charge

1 Timothy 4.1-8.

Now, encouraged by his lifelong learning of the them from first his mother and grandmother and then from St. Paul himself, and, finally, having his own experience with its truth, knowing that Holy Scripture comes from God and therefore it is utterly trustworthy, St. Paul gives this charge to Timothy:

> *In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I solemnly urge you: proclaim the message; be persistent whether the time is favorable or unfavorable; convince, rebuke, and encourage, with the utmost patience in teaching. For the time is coming when people will not put up with sound doctrine, but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own desires, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander away to myths. As for you, always be sober, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, carry out your ministry fully.*
> *As for me, I am already being poured out as a libation, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. From now on there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have longed for his appearing (2 Timothy 4.1-8)*

In these eight verses we see St. Paul's final charge to Timothy, the reason for that charge, and St. Paul's reflection on his impending death.

St. Paul's Final Charge to Timothy: Preach the Word

2 Timothy 4.1-2.

First, St. Paul's final charge:

> *In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I solemnly urge you: proclaim the message; be persistent whether the time is favorable or unfavorable; convince, rebuke, and encourage, with the utmost patience in teaching. (2 Timothy 4.1-2)*

We hear St. Paul's urgency from the very first verse. In the original, the first word is the phrase we translate here as "I solemnly charge you." The word is strong and weighty, and it carries the full weight of St. Paul's apostolic authority. It's placement at the beginning of the sentence serves to further emphasize the the word, and therefore strengthening what is already a very strong word.

We don't get to St. Paul's charge until verse 2. Between "I solemnly charge you" and the charge itself is a string of phrases that only serve to add more and more weight. With each phrase, St. Paul increases the urgency of the charge, taking Timothy "further up, and further in" (as we read that phrase in the Chronicles of Narnia.

The first phrase is that both St. Paul's charge and Timothy's discharging of his duties are "before (or in the presence of) God and of Christ Jesus." For St. Paul, he is giving this charge to Timothy in the presence of God and Christ Jesus, the highest possible authority by which the Apostle might give someone a command. It also serves as a reminder to Timothy that he will also be living out this charge before God and Christ Jesus Christ.

Second, St. Paul goes on to say that it is this same Jesus "who is to judge the living and the dead." Third, when he does so, it will be at his return which will consummate God's kingdom and thus both the charge and the duties discharged are "in view of his appearing and his kingdom." None of this is given to strike fear in Timothy for what he is called to do. Remember, this charges comes on the heals of St. Paul's encouragement. Timothy is not afraid of the final judgment and the consummation of the kingdom—he looks forward to it. Timothy is counted among those who "look forward to his coming" (v8). Thus, while this adds weight to Timothy's calling, Timothy has already been encouraged by Paul that he is fully equipped for the task (2 Timothy 2.26), and that God is faithful to his children (2 Timothy 2.11-14, *et al.*).

Furthermore, the Apostle strikes this eschatological tone likely to look back to 2 Timothy 3.1-9, where he speaks of the ever-increasing, yet still restrained evils of these "last days," and forward to verses 3-4 which we will see next. It is these opponents of the gospel that should, had they the right mind to do so, quake in fear in view of the Judgment.

Finally, after building the sense of weight, we come to the charge proper in verse 2:

> *Preach the word! Be ready, regardless of if it is a favorable time or unfavorable time; Convince, rebuke, and encourage. Do all this with the utmost patience and*

teaching. (2 Timothy 4.2, author's own translation)

Preach the Word

The first command of the charge is the overarching charge: "Preach the word!" Everything else that follows fills out this charge. If you remember from the last class, there were six instances in 3.10-4.8 where St. Paul makes reference to a combination of the Old Testament along with, at a minimum, the gospel and apostolic teaching. As was argued in that class, it is probable that St. Paul also has in mind those New Testament writings which existed at the time of the writing of 2 Timothy. This charge is the fourth of these six references.

We know, from the strictest reading of 2 Timothy 3.16-17, that the Old Testament is part of the word to be preached. The main idea of 2 Timothy 3.10-17 was that the "sacred writings" and "all scripture" was to take a central place in Timothy's ministry. It would be unfathomable, however, to suggest that St. Paul wants Timothy to preach and teach the Old Testament apart from what has been revealed in the gospel and the sound doctrine stewarded and handed down by the apostles. This has been one of the main points of the entirety of the Pastoral Epistles: Timothy is to preach and teach the gospel and doctrine which conforms the to the gospel.

Be Ready

To the charge of "preach the word!" St. Paul adds, "Be ready regardless of if the time is favorable or the time is unfavorable." Another way of translating this charge is "whether it's convenient or inconvenient." Transparently, St. Paul says "Be ready good-times bad-times." The use of the word "time" with prefixes will be picked back up in verse 3.

The idea here is a sense of consistency in ministry. Timothy is to preach the word, regardless of whether his ministry is in a time of flourishing or in a time of opposition; regardless of whether the Ephesians are willing to hear him or not.

Convince, Rebuke, Encourage

The third aspect of the charge is that Timothy is, through preaching the word at all times, to convince, rebuke, and encourage.These three loosely map to the list of Holy Scripture's "uses" in 2 Timothy 3.16: reproof, correction, and training in righteousness. "Convince" means "to bring a person to the point of recognizing wrongdoing; *convict, convince*" and is similar to the word "reprove" (which is often the translation offered here). "Rebuke" is the same word (or concept)

that has been used throughout the Pastoral Epistles as the minister's posture towards the false teachers. "Encourage" or "exhort" is the same word (or concept) that has been used throughout the Pastorals as the minister's posture towards God's family. For example, we saw both of these words contrasted in week 6 as we looked at 1 Timothy 5.1-2:

> *Do not rebuke an older man, but encourage him as you would a father, [do not rebuke, but encourage] younger men as brothers, [do not rebuke, but encourage] older women as mothers, [do not rebuke, but encourage] younger women as sisters, in all purity.*

With Patience and Instruction

St. Paul ends the charge with the phrase "with utmost patience in teaching." Because of it's placement, it may seem like this phrase goes with "encourage," or perhaps the whole series of "convince, rebuke, encourage." Keep in mind, though, that everything in verse 2 modifies the charge "preach the word!" Thus, Timothy is to preach the word, persevering through good and bad times, convincing, rebuking, and encourage—all with the utmost patience in instructing.

This calls back to 2 Timothy 2.24-25a, where St. Paul teaches,

> *The Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kindly to everyone, and apt teacher, patient, correcting opponents with gentleness.*

And 2 Timothy 3.10,

> *You have observed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness.*

And 1 Timothy 1.16,

> *But for that very reason [being the foremost sinner] I received mercy, so that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display the utmost patience, making me an example to those who would come to believe in him for eternal life.*

Taking all this into consideration, we can see that St. Paul's final charge to Timothy is a summary of all that he has been teaching in the Pastoral Epistles.

The Reason for the Charge

2 Timothy 4.3-5.

In verses 3 through 5, St. Paul gives the reason for why he is giving Timothy the charge; like verses 1 to 2 what we find is nothing new, but rather a summary of what St. Paul has been teaching throughout these epistles.

> *For the time is coming when people will not put up with sound doctrine, but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own desires, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander away to myths. As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, carry out your ministry fully. (2 Timothy 4.3-5)*

The reason St. Paul gives for his final charge is that the time (cf. 4.2) will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Sound doctrine is the fifth of the six references to Old Testament scripture as read and interpreted through the gospel and apostolic teaching. When the text says they "will not put up with" sound doctrine, it uses a synonym for the word "patience" in verse 2 above (and also 2.25, 3.10, and 1 Timothy 1.6). In essence, the Ephesians will "lose their patience" with sound doctrine, leading them to respond in two ways. First, they will surround themselves with teachers (and, therefore, presbyters) who will teach what they want to hear. The imagery is that the Ephesians will seek out teacher after teacher, eventually having a great heap or pile of teachers who all "suit [the Ephesians] own desires."

Second, the Ephesians will "turn away from listening to the truth and wander away to myths." That the false teachers were teaching myths that led some of the Ephesians astray was a major issue addressed in both 1 Timothy and Titus. It was already occurring, so why, then does the Apostle use the future tense all throughout verses 3-4?

The concern for St. Paul, besides the fact that the apostasy he is warning about is already occurring, is the degree to which the apostasy will increase. In 1 Timothy 4.1-5 and 2 Timothy 3.1-9, St. Paul places their current situation within the "last days." His reason for bringing this up, as we have said multiple times, is to highlight the fact that Timothy should not be surprised that people are turning away from the faith. The find themselves in the "times of distress" (2 Timothy 3.1) now; yet one of the truths about these "last days" is that "evil people and imposters will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived" (2 Timothy 3.12). If left unchecked, if more and more false teachers are brought into the church, the problems that the church of Ephesus are now facing will only be multiplied.

This increase in apostasy, then, is the reason for St. Paul's seriousness and urgency in verses 1 and 2. St. Paul knows that the only way that the course can be corrected is in the very charge he gives Timothy: preach the word, consistently preach the word through good and bad times. By doing so, the Holy Spirit will work through the proclamation of Holy Scripture just as he has

promised to do. There will be people who fall away, but the Holy Spirit will work through the proclamation to save and persevere the elect (2 Timothy 2.10-13) because, even in the persecution and suffering of St. Paul and Timothy, the word of God is not bound in chains (2 Timothy 2.9). Indeed, the word of God will not return to him void, "but it shall accomplish his purpose, and succeed in the thing for which he sent it" (Isaiah 55.11).

Therefore, says St. Paul to Timothy, in light of this charge, always be sober-mind, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, carry out your ministry fully."

St. Paul Considers his Death

2 Timothy 4.6-8.

St. Paul's charge to Timothy is to press on in ministry, proclaiming the word of God so that the Holy Spirit might work in those who hear it. But what is the Apostle to do?

> *As for me, I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have longed for his appearing. (2 Timothy 4.6-8, ESV).*

Here, in verses 6 to 8, St. Paul finally addresses the ghost that has been haunting the entire epistle: He knows that his death will be coming soon and that he is not going to be leaving his present cell again. In this moment we see, with clear hindsight, that there has been no pretense in St. Paul's affection towards Timothy, his concern for his son, and his urgency towards the church of Ephesus. All is stripped away and laid bare before the gaping maw of death. His death is immanent. So much so that he can say "I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come."

The Metaphors of St. Paul's Death

When reading text, you miss the cues that you would normally have when speaking with someone that you you understand. One big clue to understanding is the person's tone. Yet, reading with a 'tone' (which we implicitly do in all texts) can help us—if correct—or hurt us—if incorrect—in interpreting that text. In chapter 4, verses 1 to 5, the tone of urgency comes out easily through the text. Here, in verses 6 through 8, I think that there's a tonal shift: more sober, and moderated. Surely, the Apostle knows that if a brief parting led Timothy to tears (2 Timothy

1.4), how much more would his death be upsetting to the young leader? St. Paul, always the Pastor, talks about the end of his life using three metaphors that don't try to "fix" the sadness that Timothy would be feeling, and yet would be encouraging in the midst of sadness.

The Metaphor of the Drink Offering

The first is the metaphor of the drink offering. St. Paul writes, "I am already being poured out as a drink offering." A drink offering is imagery taken from the Old Testament. One of the many sacrifices prescribed to Israel was that of bringing a drink and pouring it out before the altar (thus, the sacrifice being the loss of wine dedicated to the Lord). For whatever this was meant to show to the Israelites, it prefigured Christ's death, as shown in the institution of the Eucharist (Luke 22.20), and the piercing of his side at the crucifixion (John 19.34). Certainly, the use of wine would have appeared to look like blood splattered onto the altar.

This is how St. Paul uses the metaphor as well—not in the sense that his death is in any way sacrificial in the way that Jesus' was, but simply that his blood was about to be spilled as a martyr. Of the three metaphors, this is the only one which is in the present tense, which says that this is the beginning of the end of his life and St. Paul knows that he is not escaping the prison alive.

Not only is it in the present tense, but it is the only metaphor with a passive verb. It is not St. Paul which is pouring himself out, but someone else is doing the pouring. The New Testament often uses "passive" verbs without defining the actor who performs the action. These are known as "divine passives" because the actor is God himself. By using the divine passive here, St. Paul is encouraging Timothy that, while yes, the Apostle will be dying soon, and yes, the events that lead up to that death have already begun, it is God who is in control. God, not Rome, is the sovereign at work here. And, just as God is faithful to his children when he rescues us from the mouths of lions (2 Timothy 3.1-9), St. Paul is telling Timothy that he is still faithful even when we are being devoured by them.

The Metaphor of The Good Fight

The next two metaphors are not present tense, but past tense which speaks to St. Paul's journey to his current situation. They both also have a Yoda-esque syntax in the original writings to which we'll mention the significance of shortly. The first of these two is that St. Paul "has fought the good fight."

While some take this to be more of a military metaphor, the word is also often used within

the sphere of an athletic contest. In either, the word "fight" can also mean "to struggle."[147] To read these metaphors as a sort of boasting by St. Paul is to miss his tone. He is merely stating a fact; he has struggled and fought and now, for him the contest is over. If, instead, we take the military metaphor we might say the Apostle's days of fighting are over, but the war still goes on.

St. Paul uses the word "good" to describe the struggle itself, not the way in which he fought. He is assuring Timothy that while the struggle is difficult and hard, bringing some even to their breaking point, it is still a good and worthwhile fight. Therefore, empowered the Holy Spirit, Timothy is called to persevere through the contest.

This brings us to the syntax which I mentioned earlier, and which applies to the next metaphor as well. Again, in Greek, there is not a specific word order that must be followed. Typically, however, the word order can follow closely to the order we use in English today. When words seem disordered that typically means the author is emphasizing one thing over another. I called the syntax of these metaphors "Yoda-esque" because the sentences are constructed as direct object, followed by the verb (with their implied subject, which is Paul himself). Hence this particular metaphor is, "the good fight, I have fought." Note how good explicitly modifies "fight" rather than "I have fought."

This order has a purpose other than making sure we correctly understand how the adjectives or working, though. It emphasizes the "good fight" itself over St. Paul's struggle. The same will be true in the next metaphor as well. First, it emphasizes the struggle because even though St. Paul's struggling will cease Timothy's struggle is going to continue (cf. 1 Timothy 4.10, 11-16; 6.2; 2 Tim 2.1, 3 if we take the metaphor militarily). He is drawing attention to the struggle, and then encouraging Timothy that, as the Apostle has finished his struggling, Timothy can also persevere until his struggling also comes to an end.

Second, when paired with the divine passive in verse 6, it shows that the struggle itself belongs to God, not St. Paul. God is sovereign even over suffering, persecution, trials, and tribulations in such a way that he is not the author of those things, but he is faithful in rescuing us in the middle of them. Even if that rescue comes through death, which, for the Christian is not to be desired more than the resurrection,[148] yet is still transformed into the safe passage to beholding

[147] BDAG, s.v. ἀγωνίζομαι.
[148] Cf. 2 Corinthians 5.1-8, and footnote 104 on page 178.

Christ.

The Metaphor of the Race

The third and final metaphor is that St. Paul "has finished the race." Or, in the original Yoda syntax, "the race, I have finished." Again, St. Paul emphasizes the race itself which God is also sovereign over and which Timothy is still running. Again, the race isn't won, otherwise Timothy's ministry would be unnecessary.[149] Rather, St. Paul has finished his part and Timothy is to continue running. Given that the Summer Olympics occurred this year, an appropriate illustration would be the relay races which originated in the Grecian Olympics. St. Paul has finished his leg and passed the baton to Timothy, who will continue on after the Apostle is gone.

St. Paul has Kept the Faith

Next, St. Paul drops the metaphors and gives their interpretation explicitly: "the faith, I have kept." Yes, it follows the same Yoda syntax as the rest. St. Paul has persevered both in his faith (cf 2 Timothy 2.12a) and in his ministry all by the strengthening grace found in Christ Jesus and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. Following the patter of the last two metaphors, "the faith" is emphasized and God is sovereign over the gift (Ephesians 2.1-10) and our perseverance.

What Awaits Those Who Persevere

After working through the metaphors, St. Paul moves towards the future and speaks to what lies in store for him and other faithful believers:

> *Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have longed for his appearing. (2 Timothy 4.8)*

There is "laid up" for St. Paul a "crown of righteousness." The crown isn't a reward in the sense that St. Paul has earned it. Rather, the crown is part of the package deal of God's gift to us in Christ. It is a symbol of victory—and that victory was won by Christ and given to us by faith, evidenced by one's perseverance that is, itself, empowered and sealed by the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, says St. Paul, this crown is "not only for me but also to all who have longed for his appearing." Thus, all of 2 Timothy 4.1–8 is bookended by the second coming of Christ. The Apostle began by giving his solemn charge to Timothy

> *in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead,*

[149] Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 579.

> *and by his appearing and his kingdom. (4.1)*

He ends by encouraging Timothy that on the day of Christ's appearing,

> *There is laid up…the crown of righteousness…for all who have longed for his appearing.*

Summarizing St. Paul's Charge in View of His Death

St. Paul knows that his earthly life is soon ending. In these, his final inscripturated words to his son-in-the-faith Timothy, he seeks to encourage Timothy, knowing that in the midst of Timothy's suffering and persecution, news of the death of his mentor and spiritual father will be devastating. In light of this, the Apostle pastorally guides his friend and ministry partner through what the good fight and the race will look like in these last days after he has died.

Timothy is to continue the ministry of preaching and teaching sound doctrine, using the gospel and Holy Scripture as the foundation of all he does. St. Paul has finished his struggle, but the struggling doesn't end with the Apostle. He has finished his leg of the race, but the race itself continues—and has continued now for 2,000 years and going. This calls for endurance, because the proclamation of the gospel will always have opponents who creep into God's household to stir division and plunder the people of God. While this attack from the inside continues throughout history, the opposition outside of the church rages against the very One who came to rescue them. In the midst of this, St. Paul calls Timothy and all Christians to persevere, to maintain fidelity in such difficulties. Despite the growing presence of evil in these last days, St. Paul holds out the empowering work of the Holy Spirit and the daily available, infinitely deep well of God's strengthening grace found only in Christ Jesus.

The sufferings, persecutions, trials, and tribulations of this age work together the good of those who love Christ Jesus, whom he calls and rescues, as God uses them to form character, endurance, and patience in us—the family of God—conforming us ever so slowly but surely into the image of the Son. What hope does such things form in us? The certain hope that when Jesus returns, he will consummate his kingdom bringing restoration to all of creation seen chiefly in the restoration of the faithful family, the Church.

Be encouraged, church. God is faithful to his family and will bring us through whatever the world throws at us. All that God asks, his grace will provide.

St. Paul's Last Wishes

2 Timothy 4.9-18.

Having given Timothy his final encouragement and final charge, the Apostle moves on to his final wishes.

> *Do your best to come to me soon, for Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica; Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful in my ministry. I have sent Tychicus to Ephesus. When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, also the books, and above all the parchments. Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm; the Lord will pay him back for his deeds. You also must beware of him, for he strongly opposed our message.*
> *At my first defense no one came to my support, but all deserted me. May it not be counted against them! But the Lord stood by me and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and save me for his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen. (2 Timothy 4.9-18)*

In this passage, in light of his looming death, St. Paul requests that Timothy would come and see him soon so that he can see his friend one last time. (Cf 2 Timothy 1.5) He then recounts his current situation, and gives Timothy one last warning before giving one final testimony to God's faithfulness even in the face of martyrdom.

St. Paul Desire to See Timothy One Last Time

Just as St. Paul mentioned when he began this epistle, he desires to see Timothy one last time before he dies. He knows that this is a difficult request to make given all that the Apostle has said about Timothy remaining steadfast and faithful in his ministry at Ephesus. In the midst of calling for such fidelity by Timothy, the Apostle does not see the trip as an abandonment of Timothy's calling. His request is strong, asking Timothy to do anything he can ("do your best", NRSV) to get to St. Paul quickly ("soon," NRSV). The urgency isn't because St. Paul thinks he will die very soon; indeed, the imprisonment and subsequent trials could stretch on for months. Rather, his sense of urgency is do to his current situation (4.10-13) and the fact that winter was coming, which would make travel far more difficult (4.21). If Timothy did not come until winter, the then conditions might keep him from getting there in time.

St. Paul's Current Situation

The Apostle informs Timothy of his current situation in verse 10 to 13, heightening his sense of urgency in seeing his friend one last time.

Only Luke Remains…

At the time that St. Paul was writing his epistle, the only person left of his inner circle of missionary partners was St. Luke (11a). Everyone else who was with him had left, though the circumstances differed. The Apostle mentions a man named Demas first, of whom St. Paul says, "in love with this present world, [he] has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica." The description of Demas as being "in love with this present world" suggests that he has not only physically deserted St. Paul, but deserted the faith. Perhaps the "love for this present world" is a reference to Demas' desire security and safety, overcome by and unable to endure the sufferings and persecutions. "This present world" is synonymous with the increasingly evil of the last days.

This would have been a difficult loss for St. Paul. Demas was, along with all the others here mentioned, part of St. Paul's group of ministry partners who would go with him during his missionary journeys. Demas is mentioned as being with St. Paul in Colossians 4.14 and in Philemon 24 where he is also called a "fellow worker." Luke is also mentioned as being present in both Colossians and Philemon, and Timothy is with St. Paul as he writes the epistle to the Colossians. Demas' apostasy would not only be difficult for St. Paul, but also even more difficult news for Timothy.

The next three people, Crescens, Titus, and Tychicus, did not desert St. Paul but left him for ministry reasons. Not much else is known about Crescens (v10), but tradition says that he likely went to Northern Gaul (modern day France), which was also called Galatia (as opposed to Galatia in Asia Minor, to whom St. Paul wrote the epistle to the Galatians). Titus (v10) is, of course, the same Titus who had previously been ministering in Crete and to whom the Apostle wrote the epistle we studied earlier. Similar to his ministry in Crete, it is likely that Titus went on to do follow-up ministry in other cities that St. Paul and the others had visited previously.

Finally, St. Paul himself sent Tychicus to Ephesus (v13). Sending him to Ephesus probably accomplished two things: first, he would have been the likely letter-carrier to take this epistle to Timothy; second, Tychicus was also likely sent as a replacement for Timothy during his absence, continuing to provide oversight of the Ephesian church. Tychicus has previously visited the

Ephesian church (Ephesians 6.21), and is familiar with the situation, served a similar function in Crete for Titus (Titus 3.12), and was with Paul, Luke, Timothy, Mark, and Demas at Colossae (Colossians 4.7).

Of all St. Paul's closest friends and partners, only St. Luke remains with him (v12).

St. Paul's Request of Timothy

St. Paul makes several requests of Timothy for when he comes. First, he asks Timothy to bring St. Mark along with him. St. Mark and St. Paul's relationship is interesting. They, along with Barnabas, were part of the group that travelled for the first missionary journey as related by St. Luke in Acts 13-15, and which St. Paul draws from in 2 Timothy 3.11. However, something happened which caused St. Mark to leave them at Pamphylia and return to Jerusalem (Acts 13.3), before any of the events recorded in 2 Timothy 3.11 occurred. Whatever that event was, it caused a sharp disagreement between St. Paul and Barnabas, because Barnabas wanted to bring St. Mark along for their second missionary journey. This disagreement was strong enough that St. Paul and Barnabas went their own ways on differing journeys (Acts 15.37–39). Whatever trust St. Paul had lost in Mark, we know that they were able to reconcile from his inclusion in Colossians 4.10-11 and Philemon 24, and his designation as a "fellow worker."

St. Paul further requests that Timothy also bring with him a cloak that he left behind in Troas, a set of books, and some parchments. The cloak was likely in preparation for the upcoming winter (v21). Though there is much conjecture, it is impossible to know what St. Paul is referring to when he mentions the books and parchments. One common suggestion is that, at least in part, this may refer to scrolls containing the Old Testament scripture. While certainly possible, it would be the only time that the Old Testmane scripture would be referred to in this way rather than the technical term for scripture.

Regardless to what these books and parchments were, St. Paul's situation is clear. He is lonely. One of his closest friends has deserted both St. Paul and the faith. Others have left him, called by the Holy Spirit to various ministries throughout the known world at the time. He is bereft of all his personal possessions, so much so that he doesn't have a cloak, which is going to become increasingly necessary soon. The language he uses to describe his imprisonment in 2 Timothy 2.9 suggests very harsh conditions. His desire for comfort manifests in these things: seeing Timothy

(and St. Mark) one last time, a cloak for use in winter, and his books and parchments.

In view of his upcoming death, all pretense has been stripped away and St. Paul's final words have been to encouraged Timothy again and again, reassuring him of God's fidelity even while calling to persevere in a very difficult ministry.

St. Paul's Final Word

2 Timothy 4.14-18, 22.

We bring our study of 2 Timothy and the Pastoral Epistles, by looking at St. Paul's final words to Timothy.

> *Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm; the Lord will pay him back for his deeds. You also must beware of him, for he strongly opposed our message.*
> *At my first defense no one came to my support, but all deserted me. May it not be counted against them! But the Lord stood by me and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and save me for his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.*
> *…The Lord be with youra spirit. Grace be with you. (2 Timothy 2.14-18, 22).*

Having given his final encouragement, his final charge, and made a final request of Timothy, the Apostle ends his letter with a warning, a reminder, and a blessing.

A Warning: Avoid Alexander the Coppersmith

2 Timothy 4.14-15.

First, St. Paul gives Timothy a warning:

> *Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm; the Lord will pay him back for his deeds. You also must beware of him, for he strongly opposed our message. You also must beware of him, for he strongly opposed our message.(2 Timothy 2.14-15)*

There's no real way to identify who Alexander is beyond being a coppersmith. He could very well be the Alexander mentioned along with Hymenaeus in 1 Timothy 1.20, two leaders of the opposition that St. Paul had excommunicated from the church. At the same time the name Alexander was very common in the Greco-Roman world. Whoever Alexander is, whatever he did as he "strongly opposed the message," it caused St. Paul "great harm." He is still out and about in the world—likely in Rome?—and therefore St. Paul warns Timothy that he must avoid him in

his travels. Even after mentioning his own dire situation, St. Paul returns to his affection and concern towards Timothy well-being.

Again, whatever grevious harm Alexander did, it was enough that St. Paul articulates his presumption of God's justice against him: "The Lord will pay him back for his deeds" (v14). This is inline with the teaching of Holy Scripture that the people of God are to forgo vengeance, leaving judgment in God's more-than-capable hands (cf. Deuteronomy 32.26, cited in Psalm 50.4, 135.14; Romans 12.19; Hebrews 10.30. Also see Ezekiel 25.17, Matthew 16.27, Revelation 2.22-23).

A Reminder: God is Faithful

2 Timothy 4.16-18.

After giving this warning, St. Paul returns to familiar ground by reminding St. Timothy once again of God's fidelity:

> *At my first defense no one came to my support, but all deserted me. May it not be counted against them! 17 But the Lord stood by me and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth. 18 The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and save me for his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen. (1 Timothy 4.16-18)*

When St. Paul was first arrested in Rome he was given a preliminary trial in which he was required to respond to the accusations against him. Everyone deserted him then, just as he finds himself now. But notice the contrast between St. Paul's response to the believers who abandoned him in the moment of trial and that of Alexander. The Apostle feels confident in leaving Alexander to face the judgment of God, but with respect to those who left him in his need of a defense he says "May it not be counted against them!" This seems to be a practical outworking of 2 Timothy 2.13b-14; Recognizing that Alexander has either left the faith or always has been opposed to the gospel ("denying Christ," 2.13b), St. Paul leaves his fait in God's hands. Those who deserted the Apostle at the time of his trial, however, are likely among those who, in a moment of weakness, were found faithless but to whom God remains faithful (2.14).

Whether or not 2 Timothy 2.13b-14 was explicitly on the Apostles mind, he says that, contrary to Alexander and to those with him during that first trial, when all others fled, God remained faithful: "But the Lord stood by me and gave me strength." Just as the Apostle called on

Timothy to daily draw strength from God's grace (2.1), he says that in his loneliness he was not alone. God strengthened him just as he has faithfully done throughout the entirety of St. Paul's ministry (1 Timothy 1.12; v17).

God rescued St. Paul "from the lion's mouth" (v17), meaning, St. Paul was kept from facing death immediately after his preliminary hearing, though only he was there to offer a defense. Just as he was rescued by God at Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra (2 Timothy 3.11), and at his preliminary trial, so too, St. Paul trusts that God will be faithful in rescuing him "from every evil attack and bring [him] safely into his heavenly kingdom" (v18, ESV). St. Paul doesn't think God will stave off his execution. He's made that much clear already! What he means is that through his martyrdom God's faithfulness is the ground by which he knows that the moment his life here on earth is snuffed out he will be taken into the presence of Christ himself.

Hear St. Paul's final reminder and encouragement to Timothy: Persevere in the gospel struggle, for God is faithful whether he shuts the mouths of lions or we are devoured by them.

A Blessing: God's Grace be with You

2 Timothy 4.22.

Thus we come at last to St. Paul's final words of scripture. Are we surprised that they would be a blessing?

> *The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you. (2 Timothy 4.22)*

Is there any more appropriate way for St. Paul to end his ministry, but with the assurance of the Lord's loving presence and the grace of God? From the moment that God's grace overflowed the Apostles' life (1 Timothy 1.14) until the moment grace brought him safely home (2 Timothy 4.18), St. Paul's life was nothing less than the embodiment of John Newton's *Amazing Grace*, writ large:

> Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound
> that saved a wretch like me.
> I once was lost, but now I am found,
> was blind, but now I see.
> 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
> and grace my fears relieved.
> How precious did that grace appear
> the hour I first believed.

Through many dangers, toils, and snares
I have already come,
'Tis grace has brought me safe thus far
and grace will lead me home.
The Lord has promised good to me;
his word my hope secures;
He will my shield and portion be,
as long as life endures.
Yea, when this flesh and heart shall fail,
and mortal life shall cease,
I shall possess within the veil
a life of joy and peace.
When we've been there ten thousand years
bright shining as the sun,
we've no less days to sing God's praise
than when we've first begun.

St. Paul died with the word "grace" on his lips. Note well, however, that his word of grace was not directed to himself; even at his last he is thinking of Timothy and through him the church as he proclaims this blessing: "the Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you all."

Dear church—the faithful family of God, St. Paul, having all pretense stripped away in light of his martyrdom, gives us a blessing of the assurance of God's grace and loving presence. When confronted with his possible death, David's sole desire was that he might behold the beauty of the Lord. When confronted with his, St. Paul's desire was that we might do the same.

The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you all. Amen.

Tables

Table 1: Structure of 1 Timothy 3.16

1 Stanza (NASB)	**Reference**
He who was revealed in the flesh,	Incarnation
was vindicated in the Spirit,	Baptism or Resurrection
seen by angels,	During earthly ministry
proclaimed among the gentiles,	Proclamation
believed on in the world,	Proclamation Results
taken up in glory.	Ascension, emphasis on current reign

Each line is a loose association with the lines before and after. Loosely chronological.

2 Stanzas (NRSV)	**Reference**
He who was revealed in the flesh,	Incarnation
was vindicated in the Spirit,	Baptism or Resurrection
seen by angels,	During earthly ministry
proclaimed among the gentiles,	Proclamation
believed on in the world,	Proclamation Results
taken up in glory.	Ascension, emphasis on current reign

Stanza 1 refers to Jesus's earthly ministry, while
Stanza 2 refers to after Jesus's earthly ministry

3 Stanzas (NIV)	**Reference**
He who was revealed in the flesh,	Incarnation (earthly realm)
was vindicated in the Spirit,	The Holy Spirit (heavenly realm)
seen by angels,	Heavenly witness
proclaimed among the gentiles,	Earthly witness
believed on in the world,	Earthly kingdom
taken up in glory.	Heavenly kingdom

Each stanza (couplet) offers a contrast between the "earthly" realm
and the "heavenly realm"

Table 2: Structure of Titus 3.5[150]

Arrangement I.A.		
Through the washing	of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit	

Regeneration and renewal are parallel, both governed by the word "washing;"
And can be "copulative," where regeneration and renewal are different acts; or
And can be "resumptive," where renewal defines the nature of regeneration.

Arrangement I.B.		
Through the washing	of regeneration and renewal	of the Holy Spirit

Same as I.A., but "Holy Spirit" governs both regeneration and renewal.

Arrangement II	
Through	the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit

Washing and renewal are parallel.
Regeneration is distinct from renewal, even if contemporaneous events.

[150] Arrangements and notes taken from Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 441–443.

Table 3: Qualifications for Holy Orders

Bishop/Priest *1 Timothy 3.1–7*	**Bishop/Priest** *Titus 1.5–9*	**Deacon** *1 Timothy 3.8–9*
Desires the office (3.1)		
Above reproach (3.2)	Blameless (1.6a, 7a)	Tested & proved blameless (3.10)
Faithful to spouse (3.2)[151]	Faithful to spouse(1.xx)	Faithful to spouse (3.12)
Sober-minded (3.2)		Serious (3.8)
Not a drunkard (3.3)	Not a drunkard (1.7)	Not too much wine (3.8)
Self-controlled (3.2)	Self-controlled & disciplined (1.8)	Temperate (3.11)
Respectable (3.2)		
Hospitable (3.2)	Hospitable (1.8)	
Able to teach (3.2)	Able to give instruction (1.9)	
Not violent/gentle (3.3)	Not violent (1.9)	
Not quarrelsome (3.3)	Not arrogant or quick tempered (1.7)	Not double-tongued (3.8); not slanderous (3.11)
Not lover of money (3.3)	Not greedy for gain (1.7)	Not greedy for money (3.8)
Manages household well(3.4); obedient children (3.5)	obedient children (1.6–7)	Manages household & children well (3.12)
Not a recent convert (3.6)		
Good reputation outside of the church (3.7)		
	A lover of good (1.8)	
	Upright & Holy (1.8)	Faithful in all things (3.11)
		Holds to mystery of faith (3.9)

[151] See exegesis in Week 5 for this rendering.

Table 4: Structure of 1 Timothy

Passage	**Content**
1 Timothy 1.1-2	Greetings
1 Timothy 1.3a	**Introductory Inclusio Opening**
1 Timothy 1.3b-11	Cycle I – Discussing the Heresy
1 Timothy 1.12-17	Cycle I –Encouraging Timothy
1 Timothy 1.18a	**Introductory Inclusio Closing**
1 Timothy 1.18b-20	**Body Inclusio Opening**
1 Timothy 2–3.16	Congregational Issues
1 Timothy 4.1–5	Cycle II – Discussing the Heresy
1 Timothy 4.6-16	Cycle II – Encouraging Timothy
1 Timothy 5–6.2	Congregational Issues
1 Timothy 6.3–10	Cycle III – Discussing the Heresy
1 Timothy 6.11–16	Cycle III – Encouraging Timothy
1 Timothy 6.17-19	Congregational Issues
1 Timothy6.20-21	**Body Inclusio Closing**

Table 2: The Bedeviled Opponents

The following shows the chiastic structure of 2 Timothy 3.2-5, which is a description of the false teachers in Ephesus. This structure is found in F. Alan Tomlinson's chapter, "The Purpose and Stewardship Theme within the Pastoral Epistles," *Entrusted with the Gospel: Paul's Theology in the Pastoral Epistles*

A	Lovers of self, lovers of money
B	Boastful, arrogant
C	Disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable[152]
D/D′	*διάβολοι*/Slanderous
C′	Uncontrollable, untamed, not loving good, treacherous, reckless[153]
B′	Conceited
A′	Lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God

[152] These descriptions are all grouped together due to both the alliteration of their alpha privative. This prefix is used to negate the noun it appears with. They are further grouped by the fact that they may all emphasize a rejection of family. See Week 11 for details.

[153] The first three of these characteristics also have the alpha privative, while the last two have the prefix *pro–*. Along with their alliteration, these words around grouped together thematically under the heading of "uncontrollable."

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