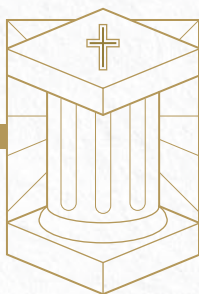


(((PREACHING *the* WORD)))

1–2 TIMOTHY AND TITUS

To GUARD
the DEPOSIT



R. KENT HUGHES &
BRYAN CHAPELL

1–2 Timothy and Titus

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A Word to Those Who Preach the Word

There are times when I am preaching that I have especially sensed the pleasure of God. I usually become aware of it through the unnatural silence. The ever-present coughing ceases and the pews stop creaking, bringing an almost physical quiet to the sanctuary—through which my words sail like arrows. I experience a heightened eloquence, so that the cadence and volume of my voice intensify the truth I am preaching.

There is nothing quite like it—the Holy Spirit filling one’s sails, the sense of his pleasure, and the awareness that something is happening among one’s hearers. This experience is, of course, not unique, for thousands of preachers have similar experiences, even greater ones.

What has happened when this takes place? How do we account for this sense of his smile? The answer for me has come from the ancient rhetorical categories of *logos*, *ethos*, and *pathos*.

The first reason for his smile is the *logos*—in terms of preaching, God’s Word. This means that as we stand before God’s people to proclaim his Word, we have done our homework. We have exegeted the passage, mined the significance of its words in their context, and applied sound hermeneutical principles in interpreting the text so that we understand what its words meant to its hearers. And it means that we have labored long until we can express in a sentence what the theme of the text is—so that our outline springs from the text. Then our preparation will be such that as we preach, we will not be preaching our own thoughts about God’s Word, but God’s actual Word, his *logos*. This is fundamental to pleasing him in preaching.

The second element in knowing God’s smile in preaching is *ethos*—what you are as a person. There is a danger endemic to preaching, which is having your hands and heart cauterized by holy things. Phillips Brooks illustrated it by the analogy of a train conductor who comes to believe that he has been to the places he announces because of his long and loud heralding of them. And that is why Brooks insisted that preaching must be “the bringing of truth through personality.” Though we can never *perfectly* embody the truth we preach, we must be subject to it, long for it, and make it as much a part of our ethos as possible. As the Puritan William Ames said, “Next to the Scriptures, nothing makes a sermon more to pierce, than when it comes out of the inward

affection of the heart without any affectation.” When a preacher’s ethos backs up his *logos*, there will be the pleasure of God.

Last, there is *pathos*—personal passion and conviction. David Hume, the Scottish philosopher and skeptic, was once challenged as he was seen going to hear George Whitefield preach: “I thought you do not believe in the gospel.” Hume replied, “I don’t, but *he does*.” Just so! When a preacher believes what he preaches, there will be passion. And this belief and requisite passion will know the smile of God.

The pleasure of God is a matter of *logos* (the Word), *ethos* (what you are), and *pathos* (your passion). As you *preach the Word* may you experience his smile—the Holy Spirit in your sails!

R. Kent Hughes
Wheaton, Illinois

1 TIMOTHY

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope, To Timothy, my true child in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

1 TIMOTHY 1:1, 2

1

Greetings to All



THERE ARE SUBSTANTIAL reasons to be energized by the prospect of studying the Pastoral Letters of St. Paul.

I am filled with pleasant anticipation by the purpose of 1 Timothy as it is variously stated by the apostle. The overarching purpose of the book is to teach the proper ordering and conduct of the church, as Paul so clearly states it to Timothy: “I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth” (3:14, 15).

Paul had communicated the essentials of church conduct during his earlier long ministry in Ephesus, but recent events had apparently necessitated his spelling it out again in a letter to Timothy, to whom Paul had charged the care of the churches there. And in respect to Timothy, Paul’s instructions about church operations were meant to help him to “hang in there”—“This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience” (1:18, 19). So the letter of 1 Timothy provides the exhilarating essentials to both leader and congregation as to how they must conduct themselves to the glory of God. This is cause for marked enthusiasm in our day, when there is so much confusion about what the church ought to be like.

I am also enthusiastic because the teaching of 1 Timothy (and all the Pastorals) about church order and conduct came through *special revelation from Christ to St. Paul*, as is implicit in the stated purpose of this letter, as we will see.

To begin with, when Paul earlier wrote to the Galatians he made it very

clear that the gospel had come to him by special personal revelation from Christ himself—“For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man’s gospel. For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ” (1:11, 12). Thus we understand that the knowledge of the gospel was not mediated to Paul through any other human being. It came straight from the lips of Christ. The gospel theology that he inscripturated in his writings first came from Christ. Most believe this happened during Paul’s three-year sojourn in Arabia (cf. Galatians 1:13–18).

Along with “the gospel,” Paul received knowledge of what he called “the mystery,” which he referred to as “the mystery . . . made known to me by revelation” (Ephesians 3:3). Evidently Paul was given knowledge of “the mystery” in the same direct manner that “the gospel” had been given to him—straight from Christ.

In the book of Ephesians, which deals so much with “the mystery,” Paul indicates that it is revealed in the coming together and ordering of three pairs of relationships: 1) *heaven and earth*, 1:9, 10; 2) *Jew and Gentile*, 2:11–3:6; and 3) *husband and wife*, 5:31, 32. All three relationships are joined and ordered under the headship of Christ. And all three (heaven/earth, Jew/Gentile, husband/wife) are joined into one by and through Christ. Each pair reveals a different aspect of the wondrous mystery of Christ’s work.¹

Understanding from Ephesians something of the dynamic union and ordering that comes from the mystery of Christ, the purpose of 1 Timothy (which has to do with church order and conduct) takes on additional importance—because the practical ordering of the church has everything to do with the revelation of the mystery of Christ to the world. We know this because the word *mystery* was in Paul’s thinking when he declared the purpose of 1 Timothy. Listen closely to the purpose of 1 Timothy again: “I am writing these things to you so that, if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth. Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness” (3:14–16a).

Paul then quotes an excerpt from a creedal hymn about Christ’s incarnation. Because the mystery of Christ’s incarnation made possible the gospel and the mystery of Christ and the church, the hymn sings of the wondrous reality of the incarnation: “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”

(v. 16). And now, with Christ ascended, the church (his Body) proclaims the mystery by the way it lives on earth.²

The details of proper church life are therefore part of “the plan of the mystery” revealed to Paul directly from Christ, as that apostle explained in Ephesians where he talks about the union of Jew and Gentile:

To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things, so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord. (3:8–11)

First Timothy is a letter on order in the church and how it ought to live so as to reveal that “mystery.” God tells us in 1 Timothy how the church must look and act if it is to glorify him. It has everything to do with the gospel and the declaration of the revealed mystery. Thus we have in 1 Timothy one of the grand treasures of the church—given directly from Christ to Paul for us. It is of immense value. The final paragraph of 1 Timothy begins with this charge: “O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you” (6:20)—(that is, “guard the deposit, the revelation, I have given to you”). And Paul goes on to include in the opening paragraphs of 2 Timothy a further charge: “By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you” (1:14). This is our happy charge today, and it is grounds for expectant enthusiasm.

First Timothy is incredibly relevant. Philip H. Towner addresses the question of the relevance of the Pastorals, saying:

What do these three letters have to do with our present situation? Consider the agendas for Christian action and evangelical response being set in many quarters of the church today. At the forefront are a number of very pressing items: the church’s role in a changing society, the church’s responsibility to the poor and the disfranchised, the Christian message among competing messages, the secularization of Christianity, church and state. Consider some of the perennial issues: a Christian attitude to wealth and materialism, the church’s response to the cults, spiritual lifestyle, leadership and authority, the role of women, discipline in the church. Finally, consider some of the items on our personal agendas: the true meaning of godliness, faithfulness to the gospel, suffering and life in the Spirit, responsibility to those in authority, the importance of Christian witness. For the church that seeks to understand its role in a complex world and for the individual Christian “who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim 3:12) today, the Pastoral epistles make very relevant reading.³

Indeed they do.

Paul provides a Biblical worldview for today’s culture-bound church. The Pastorals are shocking and disjunctive. There is nothing bourgeois about the Pastorals, as some critics have argued. They are not a tract about middle-class ethics.⁴ Certainly they do call the church to a respectable lifestyle, but it is radically respectable, and radically ordered by the most radical of all persons—Christ himself! The Pastorals are also bracing. The church that will ride the high seas of the third millennium will be the one that is Biblically defined—by the Pastorals.

The Pastorals are also saving. We will see that Paul tells Timothy in the middle of the first letter, “Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers” (4:16). That is what I hope for myself and you—to be saved as we study this book. Not saved and re-saved (as in reborn again and again), but saved certainly and securely, and therefore saved from our selfishness and from our carelessness, and then saved and saved and saved and saved from our sins as we give closer attention to our doctrine and way of life.

Greetings (vv. 1, 2)

With the purpose of 1 Timothy in mind (the proper order and conduct of the church), let us turn to Paul’s carefully phrased greetings to Timothy, which are meant to hearten him in his daunting leadership role.

Paul. Paul’s opening self-designation—“Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope” (v. 1)—is boldly significant because this is the only greeting where he claims that his apostolic position was due to divine command. Here the word is freighted with the nuance of a royal order.⁵ Paul regards himself as sovereignly dispatched by the Holy Trinity, as seen by his naming the first two members. His intention here is to convey to embattled Timothy (and perhaps even more to the elders of the church) that his teaching was authoritative.

Paul’s indication that his “command,” his commission, came from “God our Savior and . . . Christ Jesus our hope” was both emotive and heartening. The phrase “God our Savior” is deeply rooted in the Old Testament and was common in Jewish devotional language, which repeatedly recalled his acts of salvation.⁶ Thus the Virgin Mary naturally used it in the *Magnificat*: “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior” (Luke 1:46, 47). Paul was implicitly saying, “Timothy—and whoever else reads this—what I am going to tell you comes from our Savior God, who backs up what he commands. Take heart!” The additional phrase “and of Christ Jesus our hope”

makes it even more encouraging, because *hope* in the New Testament means certain hope, fully confident expectation of an as yet unrealized fulfillment.⁷

So from the onset Paul's letter to Timothy was pure offense—confident, authoritative, and encouraging. “Chin up, Timothy! Chin up, all who love the church and desire to see her sail as she should despite rough waters.”

Timothy. Paul's heartening introduction was matched by his tender address to Timothy: “To Timothy, my true child in the faith” (v. 2a). Timothy came from a mixed (Jew/Gentile) marriage. His godly mother Eunice was Jewish and his pagan father a Greek. They lived in the pagan town of Lystra (cf. Acts 16:1; 2 Timothy 1:5). Most think that Timothy was converted while a boy during Paul's first missionary journey, when the apostle was almost stoned to death in Lystra (Acts 14:8–23; cf. 2 Timothy 3:11).

Paul was delighted with young Timothy and added him to his entourage, possibly as a replacement for John Mark. It was a good choice, apparently confirmed through prophetic utterances by Paul's associates. Timothy was gifted for ministry through the laying on of hands (1 Timothy 1:18; 4:14) and was circumcised, so as not to hinder ministry among Jews, thus becoming a lifelong member of the missionary task force.

When this first letter was written to him, he was still young because Paul advised him, “Let no one despise you for your youth” (4:12), and in 2 Timothy he warned him, “Flee youthful passions” (2:22). John Stott calculates that he was in his mid-thirties.⁸ Not only was Timothy young, he was also timid. So Paul says to him, “For God gave us a spirit not of fear” (2 Timothy 1:7). Earlier he had encouraged the Corinthians, “When Timothy comes, see that you put him at ease among you, for he is doing the work of the Lord, as I am” (1 Corinthians 16:10). “Timid Timothy” needed encouragement.

Timothy also appears to have had a fragile constitution and nagging stomach problems, for which Paul advised, “No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments” (1 Timothy 5:23). So we conclude that Timothy, by nature, was not a missionary commando—a C. T. Studd or a “Dr. Livingston, I presume.” And this is probably why we find him so endearing. He is one of us. He does not intimidate anyone. He is so un-Paul!

Yet Paul loved him affectionately. The appellation “Timothy, my true child in the faith” appears to contain a double balm, gently assuaging the fact that Timothy was regarded as illegitimate by Jewish law, while also affirming the spiritual legitimacy of Timothy's own faith—“my true *child* in the *faith*.” The church was meant to recognize in Paul's affection the stamp of approval, particularly in light of the difficulties Timothy was facing. Paul's other letters

also reflect the beautiful depth of his affection for his shy, sometimes frail disciple. To the Corinthians he wrote, “I sent you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 4:17). And to the Philippians he said of Timothy, “As a son with his father he has served with me in the gospel” (Philippians 2:22). And to Timothy himself he would poignantly write at the beginning of his next letter, “As I remember your tears, I long to see you, that I may be filled with joy” (1:4). How heartening Paul’s words were to his reluctant successor.

And Timothy did well. We do not know exactly how it all worked out in Ephesus, but we can be sure he faithfully carried out his duties. We know he was Paul’s faithful cohort to the end, through thick and thin. We also know that Timothy himself became a prisoner for a time (cf. Hebrews 13:23). And we know he was mightily used by God. Oswald Chambers could well have had Timothy in mind when he wrote:

God can achieve his purpose either through the absence of human power and resources, or the abandonment of reliance on them. All through history God has chosen and used nobodies, because their unusual dependence on him made possible the unique display of his power and grace. He chose and used somebodies only when they renounced dependence on their natural abilities and resources.⁹

Triple blessing. Paul now rains a triple blessing in the form of a prayer-wish upon his dear disciple: “Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord” (v. 2b). The standard pagan Greek greeting was simply “Greetings!” (*charein*), which Paul had early changed into “Grace” (*charis*), creating a Christianized greeting that he combined with the standard Hebrew greeting, “Peace” (*shalom*). Thus the typical Pauline greeting was the beautifully nuanced “Grace and peace.” But in 1 and 2 Timothy Paul inserts “mercy” between them, creating a triple blessing that is particularly fitting to Timothy’s situation.

In invoking God’s grace upon Timothy, Paul referenced not only God’s *saving* grace (cf. Ephesians 2:8), but even more, God’s *continued* grace for living. God is lovingly disposed toward his children, and Paul wishes all the gifts and blessings upon Timothy that naturally fall from a smiling God. It is the “grace upon grace” that John speaks of (John 1:16)—the “he gives more grace” of the Apostle James (cf. James 4:6).

The added word *mercy* here carries the idea of God’s special care for a person in need.¹⁰ The Old Testament equivalent of this word (*hesed*) is used multiple times in the Psalms, with the idea of help in time of need. Paul may

well have used this word because of Timothy's Jewish background,¹¹ which would bring to mind the rich associations of this word—"help to those who cannot help themselves"—"help to the wretched"—"help to the helpless." Timothy was in a situation that would sometimes bring him to the end of himself in certain relational miseries. But there God's special care would be his.

"Peace" is, of course, first of all peace with God (cf. Romans 5:1) and then inner peace for living (cf. John 14:27). His wish for Timothy was for personal tranquility and well-being, and also for interpersonal peace as he challenged the church to climb to higher ground.

How beautiful this triple blessing was! The source of grace, mercy, and peace was and is the infinite resources of God. No matter how much God would give the young servant of the Lord, there would always be more. This was Paul's wish for Timothy! Grace upon grace to equip him for ministry. Mercy upon mercy to attend to his distresses. Peace upon peace—tranquility and well-being—throughout his life.

God would give Timothy the grace, mercy, and peace he needed to teach the Ephesians "how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God" (1 Timothy 3:15). And Timothy would follow Paul's instruction and "wage the good warfare" (1 Timothy 1:18). May we do so as well, and in so doing declare the mystery of Christ in the gospel to the world.

As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith. The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. Certain persons, by swerving from these, have wandered away into vain discussion, desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions.

1 TIMOTHY 1:3-7

2

The Wrong Use of the Law



THE PRECISE BEGINNING of the church in Ephesus is not known. We do know, however, that Priscilla and Aquila were involved very early in its shaping, if not founding, when Paul dropped them off at a brief stopover in Ephesus on his hurried way to Antioch (circa A.D. 52) during his second missionary journey (cf. Acts 18:18–22).¹ Ultimately, when Paul returned, he engaged in a mighty two- to three-year ministry, preaching first in the synagogue and then in the hall of Tyrannus (cf. Acts 19:8–10). His ministry was filled with extraordinary power, so much so that the idol-making industry suffered substantial economic losses that eventuated in the famous Ephesian riot led by the idol-makers' guild (cf. Acts 19).

Those tumultuous years marked the firm establishment of a powerful beachhead in the most important city of the Roman province of Asia. Ephesus became the command center for the evangelization of Asia Minor. The church in Ephesus was supremely crucial to Paul's ministry, and in his poignant farewell address to the Ephesian elders he gave this clear warning:

And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again. Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears. (Acts 20:25–31)

Now, as he writes this first letter to Timothy, in A.D. 64, some five years have elapsed since his ministry in Ephesus. Trouble has come to the church from within—savage wolves are in the very sheepfold. And Paul has already dispatched Timothy to Ephesus to deal with the problems. It was imperative that Timothy succeed. So Paul penned specific directions about church conduct and order in a document that is now known as 1 Timothy.

As mentioned in our study of the apostle’s uniquely crafted salutation to Timothy in verses 1, 2, the greetings were meant to steel and hearten this timid disciple for his difficult task. At the same time the greetings were ominous because they did not include Paul’s thanksgiving for the church, as did nearly all his letters. That which was taking place in Ephesus was no cause for thanksgiving.²

The Prohibition (vv. 3, 4a)

Paul, *sans* thanksgiving, went right to the point with a ringing prohibition: “As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies” (vv. 3, 4a).

The “certain persons” who were teaching false doctrines are unnamed, but the people knew who they were.³ They were even elders, as Paul had so clearly predicted in his farewell to the Ephesian church leaders: “from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things” (Acts 20:30). Gordon Fee convincingly argues that this is evident from 1 Timothy because of: 1) the fact that they presume to be “teachers of the law” (v. 7) and that teaching in 1 Timothy is a specific responsibility of elders (cf. 5:17; 3:2); 2) the fact that two are subsequently named, “Hymenaeus and Alexander,” and are excommunicated by Paul rather than by the elders of the church (1:19, 20); and 3) the fact of the repeated concerns expressed about elders in this letter regarding their qualifications (3:1–7), their discipline, and apparently their replacement (5:19–25).⁴

The elder problem dominated the entire church landscape. These false teachers were not from the outside, nor were they individual church members (which would be bad enough). Rather, they were from among the various leaders in the house churches. No wonder Paul had to urge Timothy to stay on in Ephesus!

Paul describes the style and motivations of these false teachers within the elders in verses 6, 7: “Certain persons, by swerving from these, have wandered away into vain discussion, desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they

make confident assertions.” Rabbis were called “teachers of the law” (cf. Luke 5:17; Acts 5:34). These elders in Ephesus aspired to be Christian versions of the rabbis—authoritative interpreters of the deep things of the Old Testament. In imitation of their rabbinic counterparts they spoke with assured confidence and dogmatism, though they did not know what they were talking about. The modern preacher’s version of the bluster described here is the marginal note on his preaching manuscript, “Weak point here. Look confident and pound the pulpit!” In grim reality, they had apostatized and wandered away from love into controversy, away from pure hearts and good consciences to duplicity and religious insincerity.

Their method of teaching false doctrine was “to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies” (v. 4a). The Old Testament is full of genealogies that made perfect fodder for “Jewish myths” (Titus 1:14)—the fanciful allegorical creation of stories about the people in the genealogies. The Jewish tradition included books such as *The Book of Jubilees* (circa 135–105 B.C.), a fanciful rewrite of Old Testament history from creation to Sinai. The later *Biblical Antiquities of Philo* (circa A.D. 70) retells more of the Old Testament story—from creation to the death of King Saul.⁵ Thus there were ample allegorical models for the Ephesian elders turned Christian rabbis to imitate.

These errant elders weren’t Judaizers like those in Galatia, who taught salvation by obedience to the law. There is not a hint of this in the Pastorals. As John Stott explains, “They were certainly speculators. They treated the law (that is, the Old Testament) as a happy hunting ground for their speculations.”⁶ It was not so much that they set out to be heretical. They simply wanted to “go deeper” into the Scriptures. They wanted to go beyond the “simple” exegesis of Paul, and by giving people and events allegorical meaning, simple stories would reveal fantastic truths. They did not set out to abandon the gospel doctrine that salvation is by faith alone, but in fact their progressive accretions smothered the gospel.

It was all so appealing, and it fed on the incipient Gnosticism in Ephesus that would flower in the second century. Their style and approach is timeless. It is spoken softly with a distant heavenly look in the moist eye: “What you believe is good—it’s a good beginning point. But there is more that those of us who have paid the price of meditation and study can reveal to you. Adam stands for the spirit, Eve represents the flesh. One is good, the other is bad.”

And their disciples live on today. Consider the incredible distortions that the number 666 has undergone to spell out the name of every international villain from Caesar to Napoleon to Hitler to Stalin. A few years ago the best-selling book *The Bible Code*, a tendentious interpretation of the Old Testament,

claimed that an Israeli mathematician, Dr. Elijah Rips, has decoded the Bible with a computer formula, unlocking 3,000-year-old prophecies of events such as the Kennedy assassination and the election of Bill Clinton—“everything from the holocaust to Hiroshima, from the moon landing to the collision of a comet with Jupiter.”⁷ Religious novelties abound everywhere—fantastic claims of new truth about everything from raising perfect children to restraining the aging process. The problem is that these teachings and their systems, while not denying the gospel outright, replace it.

So we see that Paul exhibits a huge concern in the Pastorals for sound doctrine. Paul mentions doctrine (*didaskalia*) seven times in 1 Timothy, not to mention its verbal forms. These seven occurrences are variously translated here as “doctrine” or “teaching.” These references are:

- 1:10—where Paul exalts “sound *doctrine*.”
- 4:6—“If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good *doctrine* that you have followed.”
- 4:13—“Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to *teaching*.”
- 4:16—“Keep a close watch on yourself and on the *teaching*. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.”
- 5:17—“Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and *teaching*.”
- 6:1—“Let all who are under a yoke as bondservants regard their own masters as worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and the *teaching* may not be reviled.”
- 6:3, 4a—“If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the *teaching* that accords with godliness, he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing.”

Having observed Paul’s repeated emphasis on sound doctrine, we must make this connection: 1 Timothy, with its great emphasis on doctrine, has a basic practical purpose—to teach the people in Ephesus how to live—to “know how . . . to behave in the household of God, which is the church” (3:15). There is a dynamic connection between our doctrine and the way we live. This truth is directly opposite to much contemporary Christian thinking. Often today we hear people say, “We don’t need more doctrine. What we need is practical preaching.” Now, we must certainly agree that preaching must be applied. But we must not agree that there is no connection between the doctrinal and the practical. What we know and believe has everything to do with how we live. Doctrine is at the heart of practical living.

Do you love God now? Will you love him less if you learn more about

him? Absolutely not! You will love him more. The more you learn of his excellencies, his holiness, his grace, his mercy, his love, the greater will be your grasp of his character, and the closer to him you will draw.

The greatest need of the church today is not less doctrine but *more* doctrine—about God, about salvation, about ourselves, about character, about church, about family. Our greatest need is to know God better—and we can learn more only from his Word.

The Prohibition's Rationale (v. 4b)

Having enjoined Timothy to command these “certain persons not to teach any different doctrine,” Paul briefly stated his rationale behind the command: these “promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith” (v. 4b). Arcane, novel interpretations serve only to promote questionings and speculations. They naturally spawn elitism and snobbery. Those who “buy in” think all others are simple or unspiritual or even downright sinful.

The ultimate tragedy of false doctrine is that “the stewardship from God that is by faith” is not promoted. The depth of the tragedy is clear when we see that the phrase “the stewardship from God” uses the same word as in Ephesians 3:2 (“the *stewardship* of God’s grace”) and 3:9 (“the *plan [stewardship]* of the mystery”), in both places meaning the responsibility of administering or managing. Here in 1 Timothy 1:4 it refers to *the stewardship of God that is by faith*. The church and especially its leaders have been given the responsibility (the stewardship) of administering or managing the truth that salvation and Christian living are by faith.⁸

The tragedy in Ephesus was that the false teachers had blocked the faithful discharge of God’s administration of this truth. The “by faith” gospel wasn’t going out. The very conduct of the people, their confusion, and their wrangling prevented the conduct and church order that would promote the “by faith” gospel. This again goes to the explicitly stated purpose of the book—to teach the proper conduct of God’s household, which is the church (cf. 3:15). For Paul, everything rides on the conduct and administration (*oikonomia*) of God’s household (*oikas*), the church—because if the church is living as it should, the gospel will spread!

The Prohibition's Purpose (v. 5)

This understanding leads to the positive reason why Paul had Timothy command the false teachers to desist. Paul asserts, “The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith” (v. 5).

If the Ephesian elders would put a stop to the teaching of false doctrine by their deluded eldest colleagues and go back to sound doctrine, that would restore love to God’s people—“The aim of our charge is love.”

What is this “love”? It is love for God first, and then love for those around us—the classic dimensions of love in the Ten Commandments, as Jesus so eloquently proclaimed: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 22:37–40). Love for others is made possible and is fueled by love for God. As John Piper has said, “Love is the overflow of joy in God which gladly meets the needs of others.”⁹ And when this happens, the administration of God by faith given to his people goes into full gear. “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35).

The love described here comes from a dynamic triple inner work.

First, in the *heart*—“that issues from a pure heart.” Jesus’ beatitude is certainly in view here: “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Matthew 5:8). Blessed is the heart that is pure and is thus focused on him. Rich Old Testament associations are also in the background, such as Psalm 86:11, where David prays, “Unite my heart to fear your name.” Or Jeremiah 32:38, 39, which prophesies the effects of the new covenant: “And they shall be my people, and I will be their God. I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me forever, for their own good and the good of their children after them.” This radical purity and focus in the depth of one’s being elicits love from one’s heart.

Second, in the *conscience*—“and a good conscience.” The essential meaning of *conscience* is one’s inner awareness of the quality of one’s own actions (cf. Romans 2:15; 9:1; 2 Corinthians 1:12).¹⁰ But in Biblical culture it also meant the sense of one’s moral actions as part of a group. The “good conscience” sensed inner moral approval from God and God’s people.¹¹ Such “a good conscience” was innately joyous. Love for others was its boon.

And third, in *faith*—“and a sincere faith”—literally, “a faith without hypocrisy.” The way some people live has no relationship to the faith they declare with their lips. Here “sincere faith” means a faith that is really there—an “undissembling faith.”¹² Such faith joins naturally with love. In fact, the Pastorals link faith and love eight times (1 Timothy 1:14; 2:15; 4:12; 6:11; 2 Timothy 1:13; 2:22; 3:10; Titus 2:2)!

Never sell doctrine short. False doctrine promotes controversies and strife. Its wranglings, its confusions, its snobbishness, its empty talk bring

hatred and distrust. But sound doctrine produces a dynamic love “that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith” (v. 5). Joyful worship flows up to God. And the overflow gladly meets the needs of others.

Publisher and author Frank Sheed eloquently capsulized the primacy of Biblical, doctrinal knowledge:

A virtuous man may be ignorant, but ignorance is not a virtue. It would be a strange God Who could be loved better by being known less. Love of God is not the same thing as knowledge of God; love of God is immeasurably more important than knowledge of God; but if a man loves God knowing a little about Him, he should love God more from knowing more about Him: for every new thing known about God is a new reason for loving Him.¹³

What we understand and believe about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit) is everything!

What we believe about ourselves,
What we believe about the cross,
What we believe about the world,
What we believe about our purpose,
What we believe about the church,
What we believe about our relationships,
What we believe about God’s Word
is everything!

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