

1 Timothy

A Call to Faithful Service

Lesson 11

To Timothy,
my true child
in the faith...



In the latter part of chapter 5, Paul returned to a discussion of the elders or pastors and their relationship with the congregation and evangelist. In this last chapter he will provide a series of miscellaneous instructions to Timothy.

Masters and Slaves (6:1-2)

Slaves in the first century were considered almost like livestock that could be bought and sold and abused any way deemed necessary. A considerable proportion of the early church was made up of slaves which can be seen in the number of times slavery is mentioned in the New Testament.



Reading this section on the relationship of slaves to masters can seem strange to 21st century western ears. We may wonder why Paul didn't take this opportunity to denounce the sinfulness of slavery. There is no doubt that slavery is a heinous and detestable practice which is totally contrary to the will of God who has created each person with equal status in his eyes. Still, Paul follows in the footsteps of Jesus and all the apostles who never urge revolt against the corrupt and oppressive Roman government or the institution of slavery.

Slavery was so entrenched in the first century that to preach and teach against slavery would be to urge rebellion and revolution in the empire. As detestable as the institution of slavery was, the disrepute, persecution, and violence that would come to Christians if they tried to overturn the social order was not something that could be contemplated. Open opposition to slavery would have stopped the growth of the church in its tracks and more Christians would have been thrown to the lions while the Roman government would have marshaled its resources to eradicate Christianity.



As hard as it might be for us to grasp in our minds, living in our society, a Christian's physical freedom is not as important as the spiritual liberty that comes in Christ. The gospel never calls Christians to political resistance, but to live in their circumstances and to evangelise in their culture. The world will be changed as hearts are changed.

Paul's purpose in this letter to Timothy is to promote the most effective ways to see the church grow and Christians mature whether they be master or slave. The truth is that true freedom is found only in Christ no matter what one's circumstances.

Slaves who have found freedom in Christ and understand their value as men and women created in the image of God might tend to lose respect for their earthly masters. Paul knew that the best hope of eradicating slavery and to further the gospel would be to change the hearts of men through their conversion to Christ. The Christian message is one of love and every believer will want what is best for his brothers and sisters in Christ as well as for every other person. Slavery would collapse under the weight of Christian love.

Paul provides two reasons why slaves should give honour to their masters: 1) So that the name of God and the teaching may not be reviled and 2) Those who have believing masters are their brothers in Christ.

- 1. Why is the slave's personal condition less important than the gospel?**
- 2. How could verses 1 and 2 be applied to our work life and those who are our employers or who are in authority over us?**

Westerners today are taught that the pursuit of individual gratification is life's greatest aim. Christianity speaks of denying oneself, giving up one's rights, and living a life of submission to Christ. Our greatest desire must not be for the benefit of self, but to honour Christ and spread his gospel even when that means personal discomfort and sacrifice.

- 3. What if anything does this section of Scripture teach us about a Christian's response to government laws are unjust and ungodly.**

Teaching Sound Doctrine (6:3-10)

Paul again approaches a common theme in this book; the necessity of sound doctrine. Even a casual reading of this letter impresses us how often Paul stresses to Timothy the importance of teaching the truth and doing so with the proper motivation.

- 4. What does Paul's stress on sound doctrine tell us about the importance of Bible study?**



Timothy should be prepared for those who teach a false or “different” doctrine. Sound teaching will agree with the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. This phrase probably means that by this time the church at Ephesus had access to at least one of the Gospels and most likely it was Luke.¹ In addition to the words of Jesus are the words of all Scripture which accords with a godly lifestyle.

¹ Smith, James E. Exhortation Epistles. Lulu, 2011, p. 121.

Paul provides a progressive analysis of these false teachers by:

1. Showing their actions -- They are teaching a different doctrine; and thus a wrong doctrine.
2. Describing their attitudes -- They are “puffed up with conceit.” This tells us that there was an arrogance about them as they thought themselves wiser than others and their teaching superior, but in reality they knew nothing. These arrogant teachers loved controversy and loved to parse words. They reveled in argument.
3. Chronicling their fruit -- They produced controversy, quarreling, envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, and constant friction.
4. Noting their motivation -- They looked for personal gain from their teaching.



5. Why are false teachers puffed up with conceit?

6. Describe the fruit of the false teachers from verse 4-5 and why these outcomes came from their teaching.

7. Why are people drawn to false teachers who bear the type of fruit described in verses 4-5?

There are those who love controversy and seem to thrive amidst it. They argue about things that do not matter (quarrels about words). Their argumentative attitudes produce fruit in the lives of others that could be described as nothing but destructive. These attitudes develop envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, and friction amongst people. These are bitter and evil attitudes filled with animosity. The truth that one reaps what he sows is proven true. These false teachers sow conceit and argument and reap bitterness. They are “depraved in mind and deprived of the truth.”

8. What gain did the false teachers hope to gain from their insincere godliness?

True godliness comes from a growing spiritual maturity grounded in knowing, believing, and obeying the truth found in Scripture. This type of mature attitude is content with whatever circumstances life may bring. “Contentment translates a technical Greek term used by philosophers to refer to a man who could not be shaken by circumstances.”²

² ibid. p. 123-124.

It is an undeniable fact that each person entered this life with nothing and it equally true that we will depart this life carrying nothing with us. If this is the case, during our brief time on earth we should be content with food and clothing; i.e. the basic necessities of life. This is a full and rewarding life and when a man lives a life that is godly and sees contentment in whatever comes, he has found great gain.



9. Give some examples of how “those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and how this brings “senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction.” (vs 9)

There is nothing wrong with being wealthy or acquiring wealth, but a love of money and putting one’s hope in earthly riches is sure to disappoint and can lead into all types of evils. Those who are consumed with what they can earn, what they can own, and what status they can achieve through their wealth get caught up in schemes, relationships, and lifestyles that bring pain, misery, and destruction. Ultimately a love of money can lead Christians away from Christ costing them their very souls.

10. How can Christians keep a proper perspective in their attitudes about money including the earning, accumulating, and use of riches?

Practical Application

1. Christians are not called to right every social injustice in this world, but we are called to set an example of godliness and to teach men and women how they can find salvation. The world will be changed and wrongs will be righted if enough people know Jesus as Lord.
2. Our personal lives and wants are not as important as furthering the Kingdom of God.
3. Since the necessity of sound doctrine is taught over and over again we can be sure it is important. As Christians we should devote ourselves to knowing and obeying God’s Word.
4. We must beware of false teachers and mark them by their ungodly lifestyle, their departure from truth as revealed in God’s word, and their argumentative demeanor.
5. We need to view money and possessions as tools to be used as faithful servants of Christ and not the greatest desire of our hearts. The love of money is a dangerous and deceptive lure which can bring grief to those are consumed with it. As Christians we should find contentment in a godly lifestyle and the basic necessities of life.