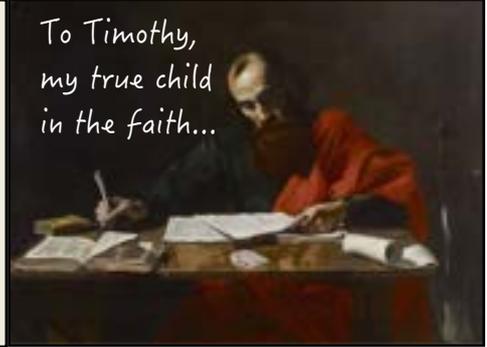


1 Timothy

A Call to Faithful Service

Lesson 7

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



Paul begins this letter warning against false teachers and then moves to how men and women are to live and serve within the church. Now he again writes again to describe the behaviour and purpose of the Lord's Church.

A Pillar and Buttress of the Truth (3:14-16)

Paul's desire was to be able to visit Timothy and the church in Ephesus in the near future, but in the meantime we writes to encourage proper behaviour within the church. We can be impressed first with the fact that there are expected ways of living and acting as Christians.

The church is described by many terms and here it is called "the household of God." This phrase tells us that the church is a family and within families there are structures of leadership and behaviour so that family life will be pleasant and beneficial to all.

1. What lessons can we learn about the church by understanding it as the family or household of God?

We are further impressed with the description Paul gives of the household of God. It is "the church of the living God." The local congregation at Ephesus or anywhere else can be called the church and every faithful congregation combined is the church. The church belongs to God since it was purchased through the blood of his son. The term "Living God" is used thirteen times in the New Testament. In contrast to the many lifeless idols in the world the God of the Bible is alive!

2. Define the word "church."



3. What are the purposes of pillars in a building?

4. What is the purpose of a buttress?¹



¹ The word translated as "buttress" in the ESV is rendered "ground" in the KJV and NKJV; "foundation" in the NIV; "support" in the NASB; and "bulwark" in the RSV.



The church is to be a pillar and buttress of the “truth.” The Bible and all that it teaches is delivered to us by God and is completely true and trustworthy. Within Scripture is contained the Christian’s code of conduct and the answers to every important question and moral dilemma that man may face.

The church cannot be a pillar and buttress of the church unless Christians behave in a godly manner and unless we speak and teach that which is true.

Attacks are made consistently in today’s world against all that is true and godly. As much as ever the church must stand unwavering in the face of falsehood to hold up and support what God says and expects. We note that Paul speaks of “the” truth, not “a” truth. While we hear it said that this may be “your truth” we are taught in Scripture that there is but one truth.

5. What kinds of attacks are being made against the truth in today’s world?

6. Can God’s truth change over time? Defend your answer.

Verse 16 begins what many to believe to have been an ancient Christian hymn. It describes the gospel in a few phrases. These words contain the “mystery of godliness” a phrase that is used only here in the New Testament, but which tells us that the way to live a life that will please God is to believe the truths contained in the hymn.

7. Describe when and how following were accomplished by Christ Jesus:

- a. Manifested in the Flesh -**
- b. Vindicated by the Spirit -**
- c. Seen by Angels -**
- d. Proclaimed Among the Nations -**
- e. Believed on in the World -**
- f. Taken up in Glory -**

Some Will Depart From the Faith (4:1-5)

It is critically important that the church support the truth, defend the truth, and hold out the truth to the world. It is equally important that each follower of Christ obeys and loves the truth found in Scripture. Some who have named Christ as Lord will not remain faithful. The Holy Spirit expressly says “that in later times some will depart from the faith...”

Paul does not provide a date when these later times would come; but it could mean the last period of time (i.e. the Christian age) or simply at some time later than his date of writing. Certainly we are able to witness this departure from the faith in the religious world today.

This great apostasy of which Paul warns is described as: 1) A desertion of the faith; 2) A devotion to deceitful spirits; and 3) Following the teaching of demons.

It is clear to see that those described in verses 1-3 were Christians. They depart from “the faith” which is that body of teaching found in Scripture. The devotion to deceitful spirits shows that these falsehoods are actively promoted by demons. These Christians have allowed themselves to be seduced and led astray by lies. They follow the teaching of demons again describing that the false teaching is promoted by the forces of Satan.

Paul describes the false human teachers as carrying out the untruthful and unconscionable wishes of the demonic as they allow their own consciences to be seared so that they feel no guilt. The false teachers are intentionally insincere and no longer guided by a moral or godly compass in their thinking.

8. What is the meaning of the word “seared” as used by Paul in 4:2?

9. What are the two of the teachings mentioned in 4:3?

It appears that the false teaching of “gnosticism” has begun to invade (or will invade) the Ephesian church. “Gnosticism” comes from the Greek word for “knowledge” and aptly describes a group who thought they had a superior knowledge. This special knowledge led them to believe that anything fleshly is sinful. If Jesus was really divine they assumed that he could not have come in the flesh. This is likely why Paul quoted the hymn in 3:16 which speaks of Jesus being manifested in the flesh.

Those who rebel against the truth often think they have a knowledge superior to others; and especially of Christians. This rebellion against truth finds its origin in Satan and his demons.

Gnostics believed that sexual activity was sinful as a fleshly desire and activity; therefore marriage would be forbidden. Throughout Christian history various groups have prohibited marriage among some or all of their members. Even today some churches do not allow their priests to marry. There is no Scriptural reason to deny marriage and every reason to allow it.



In addition to forbidding marriage the false teachers required their followers to stay away from certain foods. These are foods which may have been those not allowed under the Mosaic Law. The dietary laws of the Old Testament have been removed under the New Testament. Still, there are groups today which forbid certain foods amongst their members.

Disallowing foods which God permits is to ungrateful to God who created these foods. They should be received with thanksgiving by Christians.

In considering the severity of false teaching we are reminded that these originate from deceitful spirits and the teachings of demons.

10. What two words or phrases are used to describe Christians in 4:3?

In Genesis 1 when God created, he said that his creation was good. These who forbid that which God has pronounced as good are rebelling against him and showing a great lack of gratitude.

Food is made holy because God has declared it so and as we respond to God in thanksgiving through our prayers. “Prayer in this context refers to table grace before meals. Thanking God for our food and asking him to consecrate it to the use of our bodies is an important spiritual activity. It is not to be neglected, even when we may be in a public place.”²



Practical Application

1. The church should always be aware of false teaching and actively serve as pillars and buttresses to the truth. This means learning and knowing the truth and being bold enough to stand up for the truth even in the face of hostility.
2. We should not be surprised by false teachers since Christians have been told to expect them.
3. Christians should enjoy and be express thankfulness for those good things that God created for man's benefit and enjoyment.

² Smith, James E. *Exhortation Epistles*. Lulu, 2011, p. 91.