

F.B. Hole

**Comments on  
the 1<sup>st</sup> Epistle to Timothy**

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## Introduction

THE EPISTLE BEFORE US is the first of a group of four which were written by the Apostle Paul to individuals. They were all written rather late in the Apostle's life of service, when declension was becoming pronounced in the church, and consequently the heart of that devoted man turned more especially to reliable and trusted disciples who stood firm when others began to slip. This imparts a certain general resemblance to the four, though each has its own clearly marked features.

We might perhaps characterize them as follows :

1 Timothy. The Epistle of godliness.

2 Timothy. The Epistle of courage.

Titus. The Epistle of sobriety and soundness.

Philemon. The Epistle of Christian courtesy.

At any rate godliness — or piety as some translate the word — is stamped very distinctly upon the epistle we are now to consider, as any concordance will show. It becomes a very urgent necessity when spiritual life is on the decline.

## Chapter 1

IN HIS OPENING verse Paul presents his apostleship as proceeding from God our Saviour — not from Jesus our Saviour, as we might have put it. He is going to bring before us the living GOD as both Saviour and Preserver (1 Tim. 2:3; 1 Tim. 4:10) and so he commences on this note, and presents the Lord Jesus to us as our hope. When declension sets in it is well for us to know a living God as our Preserver, and to have our hopes centred not in churches, bishops, deacons, nor in a man of any kind, but in the Lord Himself.

Having saluted Timothy in verse 2, Paul at once reminds him of the responsibility resting upon him as left at Ephesus during his absence. Already some were beginning to teach things which differed from the truth as already laid down. These strange doctrines were of two kinds, "fables" (or "myths") and "genealogies." By the former term Paul indicated ideas imported from the heathen world, even though they were the refined speculations of Grecian schools; by the latter, ideas imported from the Jewish world in which genealogy had played so large a part. Timothy however was to abide in what he had learned of God and exhort others to do likewise, since the end of what

was enjoined was love springing out of a pure heart, a good conscience, and unfeigned faith. This was that which God desired to see in His people.

The certain result of turning aside to fables or genealogies is questionings (verse 4) and vain jangling (verse 6). Christendom has largely turned aside to the teaching of fabulous assertions in the name of science on the one hand, and on the other to genealogies connected with religious succession, apostolic and otherwise, with all the ritualism based thereupon, consequently the religious arena is filled with questioners and resounds with the uproar of vain jangling. What God aims at producing, and does produce where the truth holds sway, is love, and what is ministered is "God's dispensation which is in faith." The A. V. reads "edifying" but evidently the correct reading is "dispensation" or "house-law" — the alteration of one letter in the Greek word makes the difference. Love furthers all those things that God has ordered as the rule of His house.

The "commandment" of verse 5 has nothing to do with the law of Moses. The word is virtually the same as the one translated "charge" in verse 3. Verse 5 states the object Timothy was to

have in view in the charge which he observed himself and enjoined upon others.

There were those at Ephesus who were enamoured of the law and desired to be teachers of it, and this leads the Apostle to indicate the place that the law was designed to fill, of which these would-be law-teachers were entirely ignorant. The law was not enacted for the righteous but for sinners. Hence to strenuously enforce it upon those who were righteous, because justified by God Himself, was not a lawful use of it. Paul does not pause in this passage to state that which the law of Moses was designed to effect. It was given to bring in conviction of sin, as is stated in Romans 3:19; Romans 5:20; and Galatians 3:19.

The law itself is "holy and just and good" (Rom. 7:12) whatever men may do with it. Verse 8 of our passage states that if lawfully used it is good in its practical effects. If wrongly used, as by these law-teachers, it works mischief, though perfectly good in itself.

Let us all be very careful to use the law lawfully. It is a most potent instrument of conviction for sinners. It deals unsparingly

with the terrible list of sins given in verses 9 and 10, but besides all these there were other things which the law did not specifically mention but which were contrary to all sound teaching, and the Apostle alludes to these at the close of verse 10. Only notice that he does not say, "contrary to sound doctrine according to the holy standard established by the law" but, "according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God," for the gospel sets before us a standard of conduct more lofty than the law.

The law did not set forth the maximum, the utmost possible that God could expect from man, but rather the minimum of His demands, if man is to live on the earth; so that to fall below the standard set, in one item on one occasion, was to incur the death penalty. Now however the gospel has been introduced and Paul was entrusted with it. He speaks of it as the "glorious gospel," or more literally, "gospel of the glory" of the blessed God.

There is for the present moment but one gospel, though spoken of in various passages as the gospel "of God," "of Christ," "of the grace of God," "of the glory of Christ," and as in this verse. So also the one and the same Holy Spirit is variously character-

ized in different passages. This is in order to teach us the depth and wonder residing in both, the many-sided characters that they wear. How striking then is the character in which the gospel is presented to us here, and how suitable to the subjects in hand!

What could exceed the moral filth and degradation of those who had come short not only of the law, but of "the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23)? Their portrait appears in verses 9 and 10. Then in verse 11 comes "the gospel of the glory of the blessed God" followed in succeeding verses by the dark picture Paul gives of himself as an unconverted man. Look before and look after and we see nothing but the shame of cursed and unhappy man. Into the midst comes the glad tidings of the glory of the blessed, or happy, God. A contrast indeed!

The Old Testament has told us that, "it is the glory of God to conceal a thing" (Prov. 25:2) so that busy and inquisitive men are baffled in their researches again and again. Our New Testament passage tells us that it is also the glory of God to reveal Himself in the magnificence of His mercy to rebellious sinners, and the latter glory is greater than the former. If any ask, what is glory? We may answer, it is excellence in display. The Di-

vine excellence may be displayed in such a way as to be visible to the eye, but on the other hand it may not; yet the glory of a moral and spiritual sort which reaches the heart by other channels than the eye is no less wonderful. When Saul of Tarsus was converted a glory smote him to the earth, blinding his eyes, but the glory of that exceeding abundant grace of our Lord "with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" (verse 14) opened the eyes of his heart without dazzling the eyes of his head, and that is the glory spoken of here.

The sin of Saul of Tarsus abounded, since full of ignorant unbelief he aimed in his injurious antagonism directly at Christ Himself, by blasphemy and the persecution of His people. Hence he was, and he felt himself to be, the chief of sinners. The abundance of his sin was met however by the super-abundant grace of God. Did ever the glory of divine grace more brightly shine than when the rebel Saul encountered the risen Saviour? We think not. Yet we all owe our salvation to the same glad tidings of the glory of the blessed God. We all have reason to sing,

Oh! the glory of the grace  
Shining in the Saviour's face,  
Telling sinners from above,

God is light, and God is love.

By the time this Epistle was written not a few crisp statements of truth had passed into sayings. "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," was one of these. It is endorsed as faithful and worthy of all acceptance — hall-marked as it were — by the Apostle's own experience as the chief of sinners. No sinner is beyond the grace and power of a Saviour, who could deliver such an insolent, persecuting blasphemer as he.

How all this shows up the folly of such as were desiring to be law-teachers, and landing their votaries in vain jangling. How weak and beggarly is all that beside this!

Now the astonishing mercy extended to Paul was not shown him for his sake alone but that there might be set forth the extent of divine longsuffering. His was a pattern case showing the full extent of the Lord's dealings in mercy, lifting him from the depths of verse 13 to the heights of verse 12.

Think for one moment of his conversion as recorded in Acts. Jesus had just been made Lord and Christ in resurrection. The early apostolic witness was rejected in the martyrdom of Stephen. Saul played a directing part in that outrage and pro-

ceeded forthwith on a career of violent persecution. From His lofty seat in heaven, clothed with irresistible might, the Lord looked down upon this outrageous little worm of the dust and instead of crushing him in judgment converted him in mercy. Thereby He gave a most striking delineation of His gracious ways and of the extent to which His long-suffering would go.

Henceforth Paul becomes a pattern man. Not only a pattern of mercy but a pattern to believers. He exemplifies and shows forth the truth in its practical workings in the hearts and lives of the people of God. It is because of this that again and again in his epistles he calls upon his converts to be followers of himself.

The recalling and recital of these wonders of mercy greatly moved the heart of the Apostle and led him momentarily to break the thread of his subject and to pen the doxology of verse 17. We find the same kind of thing elsewhere, as for instance, Romans 11:33-36, where the Apostle utters his doxology moved by the consideration of the wisdom of God; or Ephesians 3:20-21, where he is moved by the love of Christ. In our passage he is moved thereto by the mercy of God.

The more majestic the Person who shows the mercy the greater the depth of the mercy displayed. Hence the Apostle views God in the height of His majesty and not in the intimacy of relationship. True, God is our Father as revealed to us in Christ. We do stand in this tender relationship as His children: still He is, "the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God" and this enhances the wonder of the mercy which He showed to the Apostle and to us. In response to such mercy Paul ascribes to Him honour and glory to the ages of ages.

Surely we too feel impelled to join in the doxology and add to it our hearty "Amen!"

In verse 18 the Apostle returns to the main theme of the epistle. In verse 3 he had referred to Timothy's position at Ephesus: he had been left there to charge some against turning aside from the truth. In verse five he had shown what is the end or object of all the charges which God commits to His people. Now he comes to the charge which is the burden of the present epistle from the beginning of 1 Tim. 2 to the end of 1 Tim. 6.

Before starting his charge to Timothy he reminds him of three things that might well emphasize in his mind the weight and

importance of what he was going to say. First, that he had been marked out beforehand by prophetic utterance for the important service that he had to fulfil. Timothy was indeed a very distinguished servant of God, and we might at once feel inclined to excuse ourselves on the ground that we are not at all what he was. That is true. But while this fact may possibly preclude us from doing much in the way of enforcing God's charge upon other Christians it in no way exempts us from the obligation to read, understand and obey the charge ourselves.

Second, that only by holding faith and a good conscience could the faith of God be preserved in its integrity, and with the preservation of that faith the charge was concerned. Have we all digested this fact? We all recognize the doctrine of "justification by faith" but do we equally recognize the doctrine of "faith-preservation by faith"? Our little barque is launched upon the ocean of truth by faith, but do we now successfully navigate that ocean by intellect, by reason, by scientific deductions? Not so, but rather by faith and the maintenance of a good conscience. The Scriptures are the chart by which we navigate but the discerning and understanding eye which alone reads the chart aright is not intellect nor reason but FAITH, though when

faith has done its work the chart discloses to us things which satisfy and overpower the highest intellects. Conscience is our compass, but a conscience that has been dulled and tampered with is as useless as a compass which has been demagnetized.

How do we maintain a good conscience? By honestly obeying that which we see to be the will of God as revealed in His Word. Disobedience will immediately give us a bad conscience. If we let go faith which enables to discern the truth, and a good conscience which keeps us in practical conformity to it, we soon make shipwreck of the faith.

In the third place Timothy was reminded of two men whose history was like a warning beacon. They had let go faith and a good conscience and had gone to such lengths in error that Paul brands them as blasphemers and in his capacity as an apostle had delivered them to Satan. This was something beyond excommunication, which is an act of the church, as may be seen in 1 Corinthians 5:3-5. This delivering to Satan was an apostolic act, and carried with it terrible consequences, as may be seen in the case of Job in the Old Testament.

## Chapter 2

IN THE LIGHT of these solemnizing considerations Paul commences his charge to Timothy in verse 1 of chapter 2. His first exhortation is significant. In the end of 1 Tim. 3 he tells us that the church — to which Timothy belonged, and to which we belong — is the "house of God" for God is dwelling today in the midst of His redeemed people. Now it was always God's intention that His house should be called "an house of prayer for all people" (Isa. 56:7). The temple in Jerusalem should have been this, as our Lord's words in Mark 11:17 show, and how much more so the house in which God dwells today? Only at the present time God's house has taken such a form that all nations do not come to it in order to pray, but rather the believers who form the house being also the household, "an holy priesthood" (1 Peter 2:5), they take the place of prayer and intercession with all men in view.

The great mass of mankind is wholly out of touch with God. In Paul's day the majority were worshippers of dumb idols and it is not otherwise today. How important then that we Christians should be busy in this service which is exclusively ours. In it we have immense scope for the only limit set is "all men" and

then again for "kings and for all that are in authority." We are to pray for all such and to give thanks as well. God is "kind to the unthankful and to the evil" so we may well render thanks on their behalf.

Our prayers for those in authority have a good deal of reference to ourselves: it is that we may be permitted to live godly lives in quietness and tranquillity. Those who compose God's house should carry upon them the stamp of godliness, and although times of persecution may be overruled of God for the promotion of courage and endurance amongst His people, yet it is in times of quietness and rest that most[ly] they are edified and established, as Acts 9:31 bears record.

But in praying for all men generally our requests are to be purely evangelic. The God whom we approach is a Saviour God who desires that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. Have we come to the knowledge of the truth ourselves? Then we have found it to be salvation and we are put into touch with a Saviour God and His character is stamped upon us. He desires the salvation of men and so do we. In our case the natural outlet for our evangelic desires is prayer.

The expression of God's loving desire for men is far different, being found in the ransom gift of Christ. God indeed is one — this fact was made manifest in the Old Testament, in contrast to the many gods of the heathen — the Mediator between God and men is equally one, the Man Christ Jesus. The priestcraft of Rome has built up in the minds of its votaries an elaborate system of many mediators, but here is one sentence of Scripture which demolishes its system at one blow.

Long before Christ appeared the hearts of men yearned for a mediator. The book of Job is evidence of this, for that patriarch felt the immense gulf that lay between God and himself. "He is not a man as I am" was his complaint, "neither is there any Daysman betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both" (Job 9:32-33). The One who takes up the part of Daysman or Mediator must Himself be God to fully represent God, and must be Man to rightly represent man. The Man Christ Jesus is He. Being Man we have no need of further men to come in as subsidiary mediators between Him and ourselves.

And then, oh wonder of wonders! the Mediator became the Ransom. Being Man He could rightly offer Himself as the ransom price for men, and being God there was infinite value

in the ransom price that He offered. Hence none are excluded on God's part. His desires for the salvation of men embrace all: the ransom work of Christ had all in view. This is one of those Scriptures that states the scope and bearing of the death of Christ rather than its actual realized effects. All are not saved, as we know sadly enough, but the blame of that lies upon their side and not upon God's. The tidings of Christ's ransom work are the subject of gospel testimony in the appointed season. Now is that appointed season and the Apostle himself was the great herald thereof in the Gentile world.

All this has been brought before us by the Apostle to enforce upon us how necessary it is that prayer for all men, and not only for ourselves and our own small interests, should mark the church of God if it is to rightly set forth the God whose house it is. But who are to actually voice the church's prayers? The answer is, the men. The word used in this eighth verse is not the one which means mankind, the human race in general, but that which means man distinctively, the male, as contrasted with the female.

Verse 8 then brings before us that which is to characterize Christian men, and verses 9 to 15 that which is to characterize

Christian women. The men are to be marked by holiness and the absence of anger and doubting, or "reasoning" as it more literally is. But then the reasoner usually becomes a doubter so that there is not much difference between the two words. Any breakdown in holiness, any allowance of anger or reasoning is an effectual barrier to effectual prayer, and indicates that there is but little sense of the presence of God.

The women too are to be sensible of the presence of God. Those addressed are spoken of as "Women professing godliness" or more literally "Women professing the fear of God." The woman living in the fear of God will not run after the extremes of fashion but rather adorn herself in the modest and quiet way of which verse 9 speaks. Moreover she will practice good works and also be content to take the place which God has assigned to her. That place is governed by two considerations, according to this passage. First, there was God's original act in creation giving priority and headship to the man. This is mentioned in verse 13. Then there is that which happened at the fall when Eve took the leadership and was deceived, and of this verse 14 speaks.

There is not the slightest ambiguity about this passage. There is really no doubt as to what it teaches. Nor is there any uncertainty about the reasons given for woman's place of subjection and quietness in God's house. Those reasons have nothing to do with any peculiar prejudices of the Apostle as a Jew or as a bachelor, as some would have us believe. They are founded in God's original order in creation, and in that order confirmed and perhaps accentuated as the result of the fall. Genesis 3:16 is explicit in naming two results which were to follow for the woman consequent upon her sin. The second of those two results is alluded to in the verses we have been considering, while the first result is alluded to in verse 15 of our chapter, and in connection with that a gracious proviso is attached, no mention of which is found in Genesis 3.

The modern feminist movement must of necessity come into violent collision with the instructions here laid down, and end by rejecting this small portion of the Word of God. This rejection may seem to the unthinking a comparatively harmless thing. But is it so? There is the allied modernist movement which comes into equally violent collision with the truth of the virgin birth of Christ, with His atoning death, with His resur-

rection. There is just as much reason — or just as little — for conceding the point in the one case as in the other. True, we may not have the slightest wish to concede the point to the modernist, and we may have a good deal of feeling as to matters raised by the feminist but to be swayed by such feelings is to stand on dangerous and uncertain ground. Are we then to virtually say that we believe what commends itself to our way of thinking and what does not we reject? Away with such a thought!

May all our readers stand honestly and happily and altogether upon the authority and integrity of the Word of God.

### **Chapter 3**

THE THIRD CHAPTER is a continuation of the same general theme as occupied us in our reading of the second chapter; viz., the behaviour that becomes believers as being in the house of God. That this is the general subject is plainly stated in verse 15 of our chapter.

Now God is a God of order and hence in the Christian assembly where He dwells all things are to be done "decently and

in order" (1 Cor. 14:40). For the furtherance of this the two offices of Bishop and Deacon had been established in the church, and are referred to in this chapter.

From the first verse it would appear that there were some at Ephesus who were aspiring to become bishops. The Apostle acknowledges that what they aimed at was a good work but he insists in this connection upon the all-importance of character. It is not that the bishop may have all the spiritual qualifications that he mentions, but that he must. Moreover, before he is appointed to take care of the church of God he must have proved his fitness for such a work by the way in which he has governed the far smaller and humbler sphere of his own household. He must not be a novice, one who though possibly well on in years is only a beginner in the things of God, else being lifted up with pride in his new-found importance he may fall into the very fault that caused the overthrow of Satan at the beginning. Diotrephes, who is spoken of in 3 John 9 and 10 would seem to be an illustration of what is meant.

In many of the primitive churches bishops or elders were officially appointed, in others they do not appear to have been. But even if duly appointed the one thing that would confer real

weight upon them would be the character of Christian godliness that Paul here describes. Who would be disposed to pay attention to their exhortations otherwise, or submit themselves to their shepherd care and direction in spiritual things? Moreover there was the outside world to be considered, as verse 7 states. The world has sharp eyes and quickly hurls reproach if there is the least ground for it; and to accomplish this the devil lays his snares.

The word translated "bishop" simply means "overseer." The word "deacon" means "servant." There are many services to be rendered in the church that are not primarily of a spiritual nature, such as those mentioned in Acts 6. But if men are to handle such ordinary matters as these in the service of God they need to possess very definite and high spiritual qualifications, and to be tested first ere they begin.

The wives of deacons are specially mentioned in verse 11. This is doubtless because diaconal service was of such a nature that they not infrequently took part in it. Phebe, for instance, was "a servant [deaconess] of the church which is at Cenchrea" (Rom. 16:1), and was highly commended by the Apostle.

We must remember that bishops and deacons were to possess this sterling Christian character inasmuch as they were to set an example to the mass of believers who looked up to them. Hence all of us reading this chapter today must accept these verses as delineating the character which God desires to see in us. Can we read them without feeling rebuked? How about that greed of money, or the slander, or even the being double-tongued — the saying of one thing in one direction and quite another thing in another direction? Pretty searching considerations, these!

The service of a deacon might seem a very small matter, but nothing in God's service is really small. Verse 13 definitely states that such service faithfully rendered is the way to higher and larger things. This is clearly illustrated for us in the subsequent history of two who are mentioned in Acts 6:5. Stephen advanced to become the first Christian martyr: Philip to become a greatly used preacher of the Gospel, the only man designated an evangelist in Scripture (See, Acts 21:8). Every true servant of God has begun with small and humble things, so let none of us despise and shirk them, as naturally we are inclined to do.

Notice that phrase in verse 7, "them which are without." At the beginning things were quite sharply defined. A man was either within the church of God or part of the great world without, for the church and the world were visibly distinct. Now, alas! it is otherwise. The world has invaded the church and the lines of demarcation are blurred. Not blurred, of course, to God's view, but very much so to ours. It is consequently far more difficult for us to understand how wonderful a place is God's house and the conduct that becomes it.

Verse 15 tells us that the house of God is the church of the living God. We are evidently to understand that the fact of our being a part of the church, and therefore in the house, is not a mere idea void of practical significance. The living God dwells there and He has said, "I will dwell in them, and walk in them" (2 Cor. 6:16). He scrutinizes everything and He operates there as is illustrated in Acts 5:1-11. Hence we should be marked by suitable conduct.

Then again, the church is "the pillar and ground [or, base] of the truth." Pillars had a two-fold use. They were largely used as supports, but they were also commonly erected not to support anything but to bear an inscription as a memorial. The refer-

ence here is, we believe, to the latter use. God intends that the truth shall not only be stated in the inspired words of Scripture but also exemplified in the lives of His people. The church is to be like a pillar reared up on its base on which the truth is inscribed for all to see, and that in a living way for the church is "the church of the living God."

The church then is not the authoritative teacher and interpreter of truth as Rome claims but the living witness to the truth which is authoritatively set forth in Scripture. To differentiate between these two things and to keep them in their right relative places in our minds is of extreme importance. AUTHORITY lies in the very word of God which we have in Scripture alone. The living witness to what Scripture sets forth is found in the church, but at the present moment that witness is sadly obscured though it will be perfect and complete in glory. Compare verses 23 and 21 of John 17, and note that what the world has failed to "believe" now it will "know" when the church is perfected in glory.

If verse 15 speaks of the church as the witness to the truth verse 16 gives a wonderful unfolding of that which lies at the heart of truth, the very revelation of God Himself, spoken of as

"the mystery of godliness." There is no thought here of godliness being a mysterious thing. The force of the sentence is rather — that beyond all question great is the hidden spring from whence flows such godliness as is here taught. The godliness displayed by saints in different ages was always in keeping with such knowledge of God as was available to them, and never went beyond it. The New Testament unquestionably indicates a higher type of godliness than the Old Testament. But why? Because we now have not a partial but a full revelation of God.

The godliness then which the Apostle enjoins is only produced as we know God. In the revelation of God lies its great "mystery" or "secret." It is a secret because made in a way not appreciated by the world but only by believers. "God was manifest in the flesh" in Christ, but in seeing Him unbelievers found "no beauty that they should desire Him," only believers in seeing Him saw the Father. Verse 16, then, is a condensed summary of the way God has revealed Himself in Christ.

The verse is one that baffles the profoundest meditation — as we might expect. It consists of seven terse statements, six of them summarizing the great revelation. The first of the six

shows us God manifested in Manhood, and the last shows us the Man Christ Jesus, in whom God was manifested, received up into glory. The intervening four give us various ways in which the reality of that manifestation was realized.

God was "justified in the Spirit." Compare with Romans 1:4. The resurrection justified Jesus, declaring Him "Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness" when the world had crucified Him as an impostor. After all, He was God manifested in the flesh.

"Seen of angels." Had angels ever really seen God before? Certainly not as they saw Him when the great outburst of angelic praise took place at Bethlehem.

"Preached to the Gentiles" or "proclaimed among the nations," for He had been so really manifested in historic fashion as to become the subject of gospel witness among the peoples who had been far from the actual scenes of His manifestation.

"Believed on in the world." Not by the world, notice, but in the world. Though the world knew Him not yet His manifestation was not an intangible something existing only in the subjective consciousness of the onlookers or hearers, but something real

and objective, verified by competent witness and hence received by those in whom faith existed.

The one who knows by faith this real, true, historic Christ, the true God manifested in flesh, and who as Man has gone up into glory, possesses the secret of a life of godliness. No unbeliever can possibly be godly though he may be of most kindly and amiable disposition as a natural man.

## **Chapter 4**

VERSE 1 of chapter 4 must be read in connection with the last two verses of chapter 3 God dwells in the church as His house by the Holy Spirit and the church is the pillar on which the truth is inscribed. Now the indwelling Spirit speaks in defence of the truth, warning of the devices of the devil to be expected in the latter times, and He speaks expressly, there is no indefiniteness about His utterances.

When the Apostle wrote the Holy Spirit was still giving inspired messages through prophets, as we see in Acts 13:2. The apostles and prophets who were the vehicles of inspiration belonged to the foundation of the church (See, Eph. 2:20) and in-

piration has ceased, though we have as the result of it the Holy Scriptures. Still though He no longer speaks in that authoritative way He abides with us for ever and His direction may often be perceived by those who have eyes to see.

The Spirit's warning in the first three verses has often been taken as applying to Romanism. We believe that the reference is rather to that deliberate trafficking with demons which we see today in spiritism. It is true that Rome imposes celibacy on her clergy which looks like a fulfilment of the opening words of verse 3. Spiritism advocates both celibacy and vegetarianism as necessary if anyone aspires to be a good "medium," and this fulfils both parts of the verse.

The Holy Spirit then warns us that His speaking will be imitated by unholy and seducing spirits, their object always being to turn away from the faith. They may pose as being very cultured, and as wishing to refine our food on aesthetic grounds, and this may be all that is in the mind of their dupe, who acts as the medium, yet the unclean demon who manipulates the dupe has other thoughts and his ulterior aim is ever the overthrow of the faith. If they can divert from the faith and inculcate their doctrines their end is achieved.

Men may raise prejudice against sound doctrine by calling it dogma, but they only end by substituting some other doctrines, probably the doctrines of demons. So, you see DOCTRINE DOES MATTER after all.

In the early verses of our chapter the Spirit's warning is against the doctrines of demons, which, if received, altogether turn men from the faith. In verse 7 the warning is against a danger of a somewhat different order, "Profane and old wives' fables." Timothy is urged to stand firm against both errors.

The Apostle's instructions in verse 6 seem to have specially in view the first of these dangers. We are to be kept in remembrance of "these things," and here he alluded not only to what he had just written in verses 4 and 5 but also to the great truth unfolded in 1 Tim. 3:16, and indeed to all his instructions given earlier in the Epistle, for verse 6 of chapter 4 cannot be disconnected from 1 Tim. 3:14. Thus we as well as Timothy may be nourished with the words of the faith and of good doctrine and this will effectually render us proof against the seducing doctrines of the devil. But this must be "attained" or "fully followed up" for it is only as we become fully acquainted with the truth that we can detect error and consequently refuse it.

Godliness is set in contrast with the profane and old wives' fables, from which we gather that they were mainly concerned with the superstitious ideas and customs which have always played so large a part in heathendom and which creep so easily into Christendom. The poor heathen mind is in bondage to endless superstitions connected with the bringing of good fortune or the averting of evil, and all these customs appeal to, and bear far more hardly upon, the womenfolk than the men. Hence the Apostle's term — "old wives' fables." Now godliness brings GOD Himself into the details of one's life, since it is based upon that "trust in the living God" of which verse 10 speaks.

It is instructive though sad to note the great increase in recent years of superstition amongst nominal Christians. The war doubtless gave it a great impetus when hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of charms were made for the protection of soldiers. The cult has spread everywhere and now mascots abound, and more and more people observe customs which are designed to bring "good luck" or avert "bad luck." All this argues the decline of godliness. If God is shut out of the life these stupid abominations creep in.

Our God is the LIVING God. Nothing escapes His notice and He is "the Saviour [or, Preserver] of all men, specially of those that believe." The poor heathen enjoying a wonderful deliverance may attribute his escape to the potency of the charm given to him by the medicine man. The British motorist, a nominal Christian, just escaping a fearful crash may declare that he never comes to any harm so long as he has his black cat mascot on board — he has never known it to fail. They are both wrong though the latter is far more guilty. Both are victims of profane and old wives' fables. The truth is their deliverances came, whether directly or indirectly from the hand of God.

God's preserving mercy is specially active towards those that believe, so a simple trust in Him should mark us. It marked Paul and carried him through his labours and reproaches. We are to exercise ourselves to godliness. This is a mental exercise of far greater profit than mere bodily exercise. That is profitable in some small things whereas godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of life, both now and to eternity.

Here let us recapitulate for a moment. Godliness is, we may say, the main theme of the epistle, and it is enjoined upon us because we are of the house of God. The knowledge of God

Himself as He has been revealed in Christ is the secret spring of it, and it very largely consists in that God-consciousness, that bringing of God into all the details of our daily lives, which is the result of trust in the living God. All this has come before us, and the question would now naturally arise in our minds as to whether any practical instructions can be given which will help us in exercising ourselves to godliness according to the instructions given in verse 7?

Verses 12 to 16 supply us with a very ample answer. Timothy was a young man yet he was to be an example to the believers who were to see godliness expressed in him, a godliness which affects us in word, in conversation or conduct, in love, in faith and in purity. To this end he was to give himself with all diligence to reading, to exhortation to teaching. The reading enjoined upon him was, we suppose, that public reading in the presence of believers generally which was so necessary when copies of the Scriptures were few and far between, yet it should impress upon us the importance of reading the Scriptures both privately and publicly. When Paul came Timothy might have the joy of hearing God's Word from the inspired lips of the

Apostle; until then he must pay all heed to God's inspired Word in its written form.

The Christian who neglects the study of the Word of God never makes much progress in the things of God nor in the development of Christian character. "Give attendance to reading" should be a watchword with all of us, for only as we are well furnished ourselves can we be of help to others.

Timothy was to exhort and teach others and for this a gift had been deposited in him in a special way. Hence "neglect not the gift that is in thee" is the second word instruction. By reading we take in; by exhortation and teaching we give out. Not all of us have received a special gift but all of us are responsible to give out in one way or another, and we neglect it at the peril of our own spiritual good.

"Meditate upon these things" is the third word that comes before us. By reading our minds become well furnished with truth. By meditation the truth in its force and bearing is brought home to us. Just as the ox not only feeds in the pastures but also lies down to chew the cud so we need to ruminate, to turn things over in our minds, for it is not what we eat that nour-

ishes us but what we digest. If we meditate upon the things of God, getting right into them so that they control us then our profiting, our spiritual advancement, becomes apparent to all.

A fourth word of great importance if we would grow in the ways of godliness is that in verse 16, "Take heed to thyself and to the doctrine." First of all we must get the truth itself, which is set forth in the doctrine, clearly before us. Secondly, we must take heed to ourselves in the light of the truth, testing ourselves and our ways by it, altering them as the truth demands. This of course is the crucial matter.

Too often the truth of God has been taken up in a purely theoretical way when it becomes just a matter of argument, a kind of intellectual battleground. When however we come face to face with it in practical fashion we at once become aware of discrepancies between it and ourselves and our ways, and serious questions are raised. Now comes the temptation to somewhat alter or pare down the doctrine so that we may leave our ways untouched and the discrepancy largely if not entirely disappears. May God give us all grace to reverse that procedure and rather alter our ways that they may be in conformity with the doctrine. Thus we shall be rightly taking heed to ourselves and

to the doctrine as well, and continuing in the truth we shall be saved. The salvation here is from the dangers of which we are expressly warned by the Spirit in the earlier part of the chapter, whether doctrines of demons or profane fables.

## **Chapter 5**

TIMOTHY HAD BEEN entrusted with special responsibilities both as to teaching and as to order in the church. Consequently if he kept right and in a state of happy deliverance from these dangers he would be a minister of deliverance to many others. But then this might bring him into a measure of conflict with some. An elder even might need admonition as verse 1 of chapter 5 shows us, and Timothy must be careful not to set himself wrong in attempting to set him right. The truth teaches us to render to all our fellow-believers their due, whether men or women, whether old or young.

In verse 3 the question of the treatment of widows comes up and the subject is continued to verse 16. We might be tempted to wonder that so much space is given to the matter did we not remember that it was this very question which first brought the

spirit of contention into the church of God, as recorded in Acts 6:1-7.

The general instruction of the passage is quite plain. Widows 60 years old and upwards without relations to support them were to be "taken into the number," or "put on the list," as receiving their support from the church if they had been marked by godliness and good works. The church is to relieve those who are "widows indeed" but not others. How wise is this ordering!

Other instructions come in by the way. Notice how clearly it is taught that children and descendants (the word is "descendants" rather than "nephews") are responsible for the support of their parents. Thus they shew godliness or piety at home. Let us emphasize this in our minds for it is easily forgotten in these days of "doles" and other forms of public support. The denunciation in verse 8 of the man who avoids or neglects this duty is very severe, showing how serious a sin it is in God's sight. There may be men quite renowned for piety in public who are nevertheless branded as worse than an infidel for lack of this piety at home.

The characteristics of a "widow indeed" as given in verse 5 are worthy of note. The Christian who in the days of her prosperity gave herself to such good works as are enumerated in verse 10, would have recognized that after all it was just God Himself ministering to the afflicted through her hands. He was the Giver and she but the channel. Now the position is reversed but she knows well that she must not look to the channels but to the mighty Source of all. Hence her trust is in God and upon Him she waits in prayer. She too is marked by that trust in the living God which is so large an element in practical godliness.

Contrasted with this is the widow living "in pleasure" or "in habits of self-indulgence." Such an one would be seeing life according to the ideas of the world, but she is here declared to be dead while living — practically dead, that is, to the things of God.

Sometimes worldly-minded believers ask rather plaintively why it is that they do not make spiritual progress or have much spiritual joy? Verse 6 supplies us with an answer. There is nothing more deadening than self-indulgence in pleasure. The pleasure may be life of a worldly sort but it is death spiritually, for the soul is thereby deadened towards God and His things.

The bad effects of idleness come strongly before us in this passage. The younger widows were not to be supported at the expense of the church lest having no very definite occupation they should decline in heart from Christ and come under judgment — not "damnation" which is too strong a word. Their idleness then would assuredly produce a course of tale-bearing and general interference in other people's affairs which is most disastrous to the testimony of God. Idleness in the twenty-first century produces exactly the same crop of evil fruit as it did in the first century.

Further instruction as to elders is given in verses 17 to 19. An elder was not necessarily a recognized teacher of the word, though he was to be "apt to teach" (1 Tim. 3:2). Those who did "labour in the word and doctrine" were to be counted worthy of double honour, and that honour was to be expressed in a practical way as might be needful. If any of them lacked in material things they were to be supplied as the Scripture indicated. The first quotation of verse 18 is from the Old Testament but the second is from the New, Luke 10:7. This is interesting evidence that Luke's gospel was already in circulation and recognized as the inspired Word of God equally with the Old Testament.

Above all, Timothy was to be moved by a care for the glory of God in His house. Those who sinned were to be rebuked publicly so that all the believers might be admonished and sobered thereby, only the greatest possible care was to be taken lest anything like partiality should creep in. Nothing is more common in the world than favouritism, and we all of us so easily form prejudices either for or against our brethren in Christ. Hence this solemn charge laid upon Timothy "before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels."

Connected with the solemn charge of verse 21 against partiality comes the injunction, "Lay hands suddenly on no man."

The laying on of hands is expressive of fellowship and identification, as Acts 13:3 shows us. Barnabas and Saul were already prophets and teachers when the Spirit called them to launch forth in the evangelization of the Gentile world. There was therefore no thought of "consecrating" them when their fellow-workers laid hands upon them, but rather of showing full fellowship and identification with their mission.

Timothy was to avoid haste in giving his sanction to any man lest later he should have to discover that he had accredited one

who was unworthy, and thereby he might find himself in the unhappy position of having a share in his misdeeds. The believer is to be careful not only as to purity of a personal sort but also as to his associations.

Paul evidently knew how careful Timothy was as to personal purity, hence the instruction of verse 23. This verse has been much quoted in arguments as to the "temperance" question. It shows without a doubt that Scripture does not warrant the propaganda of extreme reformers. It shows however with equal clearness that a really godly Christian, such as Timothy was, kept so clear of wine that he had to be exhorted to take some medicinally, and then he was only told to take "a little."

Verse 24 is connected with the earlier part of verse 22. Many things whether evil or good are not at all open and manifest and we may therefore be easily deceived in our judgments. Ultimately however all will be manifested for nothing can be permanently hid. A solemn thought this!

## Chapter 6

IN THE APOSTOLIC age, as now, the gospel won many of its triumphs among the poor, hence not a few servants, or slaves, were found in the church. Chapter 6 opens with instructions which show the way of godliness as it applies to them. Slavery is foreign to Christianity yet inasmuch as the rectifying of earthly wrongs was not the Lord's object in His first coming, (See, Luke 12:14) and is only to be accomplished when He comes again, the will of God for His people now is to accept the conditions which characterize their times, and in them adorn the doctrine and honour His name.

Servants have the lower place, then let them be marked by subjection and the honouring of their masters, and should these themselves be believers far from it being a reason for slighting them or belittling their authority it would only furnish the slave with an additional reason for serving them faithfully. These instructions the Apostle calls "the doctrine which is according to godliness," for they were wholesome words as given by the Lord Himself.

The present age is marked by a very considerable uprising against authority even in Christian circles. The thing itself is

not new for it was in evidence when this epistle was written. There were men teaching things which were in contradiction of "the words of our Lord Jesus Christ," even in the first century; it is not surprising therefore that such abound in these later times. The Apostle writes very plainly about these opponents. He unmasks their true character. They were marked by pride and ignorance. How often these two things go together! The less a man knows of God and of himself the more he imagines he has something to boast in. The true knowledge of God and of himself at once dispels his pride.

Verse 4 also makes plain what is the effect of repudiating the authority of the Lord. Questions and strifes of words come to the fore. This of course is inevitable, since if the Lord's authority is set aside it all becomes a question of opinion; and if so one man's opinion is as good as another, and argumentative and verbal strife may be carried on almost ad infinitum, and all kinds of envy and strife flourish.

Men who thus dispute show themselves to have corrupt minds and to be destitute of the truth, and that which underlies their proud thoughts is the idea that personal gain is the real end of godliness — that a man is only godly for what he can get out of

it. If that is their idea then of course they would not advocate a slave rendering such service as is enjoined in verse 2, since any gain from that would accrue to his master and not to himself. The truth is that not gain but God is the end of godliness, though as the Apostle so strikingly adds, "godliness with contentment is great gain." To walk as in the presence of the living God with a simple trust in His goodness and with contentment of heart is very great gain of a spiritual sort.

We have to recognize that we are but life tenants of all that we possess. We entered the world with nothing; we go out with nothing. God may indeed give us much for our enjoyment but on the other hand we should be contented with just the necessities of life — food and raiment. This sets a high standard before us; one that but few of us come up to, though the Apostle himself did. The exhortation of verse 8 is much needed by us all in these days.

On all hands are people who earnestly desire to become rich; the making of money is to them the chief end of life. The Christian may all too easily become infected with this spirit to his great loss. Verse 9 does not speak of those that are rich, as does verse 17, but of those that "will be rich" or "desire to be

rich," that is, they set it before them as the object to be pursued. Such become ensnared by many lusts, which in the case of the man of the world plunge him into destruction and ruin. This is so whether they succeed in their aim and amass wealth or whether they do not, for the coveting of money it is that turns men aside from the faith and pierces them through with sorrows, and not the acquisition and misuse of it only. The love of money is declared to be the root of every kind of evil. It is not that every bit of evil in the world can be traced to the love of money, but that the love of money is a root from which on various occasions every description of evil springs.

The appeal to Timothy in verses 11 to 14 sets before us the will of God for the believer, which is wholly apart from and opposed to the idea that gain is godliness with its consequent love of money. Timothy is here addressed as a "man of God." The meaning of this term is evident if we observe its use in Scripture. It signifies a man who stands with God and acts for God in days of emergency when the majority of those who are professedly His people are proving faithless to His cause.

The man of God then, or for the matter of that, all true believers are to flee all these evil things that follow in the train of the

love of money and they are to pursue the things which are the fruit of the Spirit. Six lovely features are enumerated which hang together like a cluster of fruit; beginning with righteousness, which ever has to be to the fore in a world of unrighteousness and sin, and ending with meekness, which is the very opposite of what we are by nature, for it concerns our spirit as righteousness concerns our acts.

If we make such things as these our pursuit we shall at once become conscious of opposition. There is plenty of opposition in the pursuit of money for we live in a competitive world. Money-making becomes usually a fight, in some cases a fight of a pretty sordid kind. It is a fight also if we pursue these things that please God, only this time it is a fight of faith, for our opponents now will be the world, the flesh and the devil, and nothing but faith in the living God will prevail against these.

Moreover these excellent things are the working out into expression of that eternal life which is the portion of the believer on the Son of God. The life is ours as is made so abundantly plain in the writings of the Apostle John, yet we are exhorted to lay hold of it, for it is a dependent life, Christ being its Source

and Object, and we lay hold of it in laying hold by faith of Him and of all those things which find their centre in Him. The men of the world lay hold of earthly gain, or of as much of it as they can compress into their fists. We are called to eternal life, and are to lay hold of it by going in for all those things in which from a practical standpoint it consists.

Timothy had made a good profession and now he is solemnly charged in the sight of God, who is the Source of all life, and of the Lord Jesus, who was the great Confessor of truth before the highest circles of the world, to walk according to these instructions in an untarnished way until the moment when the servant's responsibility shall cease.

The time is coming when the Lord Jesus Christ shall shine forth in His glory and then the faithful servant shall see the happy fruit of faithfulness and of the good confession rendered. That time is fixed by the blessed and only Potentate whose purposes nothing can frustrate, who dwells in faceless splendour beyond the reach of mortal eye.

Notice the full and complete way in which Scripture identifies the Lord Jesus and God. In these verses (14-16) it is not easy to

discern which of the two is spoken of. It appears however that in this Scripture it is God who is King of kings and Lord of lords, who is going to show forth the Lord Jesus in His glory when the time is come. In Revelation 19:16 it is without a doubt the Lord Jesus who is King of kings and Lord of lords.

Observe also the force of the words, "who only has immortality," for there are not wanting those who attempt to press them into service, as supporting the denial of immortality to the soul of man and the teaching of annihilation. Their meaning is of course that God alone has immortality in an essential and unqualified way. If creatures possess it they have it as derived from Him. Did it mean that as to actual fact God only is immortal we should have of course to accept the ultimate extinction of all the saints and even of the holy angels. Read in that way the words mean too much even for the annihilationist.

Having ascribed "honour and power everlasting" to the immortal, invisible God, before whom Timothy was to walk far removed from the spirit and ways of those whose main object was the acquisition of riches, the Apostle turns in verse 17 to give instructions as to those believers who are "rich in this world." His words indicate first of all the dangers attached to

the possession of wealth. It has a tendency to generate high-mindedness and to divert the possessor from trust in God to trust in money. The worldly man of wealth naturally fancies himself greatly and feels himself secure against the ordinary troubles and struggles of humanity. The wealthy Christian must not imagine that his money entitles him to dominate the church of God and lord it over his fellow-believers.

Secondly Paul shows us the privileges attaching to wealth. It may be used in the service of God, in the help of His people; and thus he who starts by being rich in money may end in being rich in good works, and this is wealth of a more enduring kind. Earthly riches are uncertain, and he who lays it up in store for himself may find his store sadly depleted just when most needed. He who uses his riches in the service of God is laying up in store a good foundation of reward in eternity and meanwhile his trust is in the living God, who after all does not deny us what is good but gives it to us richly for our enjoyment. It is just those who hold and use their possessions as stewards responsible to God that can be trusted to enjoy God's good gifts without misusing them.

We saw that trust in the living God is the very essence of godliness when we were looking at 1 Tim. 4:10. The expression occurs again in verse 17 here. Rich believers are to be godly and to bend their energies not to the laying hold of larger things in this world but to the laying hold of "eternal life," or "that which is really life." The latter is probably the correct reading. Real life is not found in money and the pleasures it procures (See, v. 6.) but in the knowledge and service of God.

The closing charge to Timothy is very striking. To him had been entrusted as a deposit the knowledge and maintenance of the revealed truth of God, as stated more fully in 2 Timothy 3:14-17. This he was to jealously guard for it would be imperilled, on the one hand by profane and vain babblings — doubtless foolish teachings akin to the "profane and old wives fables" of 1 Tim. 4:7 — and on the other hand by "science falsely so called. These words plainly infer that true science exists which is in complete harmony with revelation. They plainly state that there was even 2000 years ago a mix-named science which opposed revelation. It was largely composed of the speculations of the philosophers. The mix-named science of today also is composed of partial knowledge based on imper-

fect or inaccurate observations with a very large admixture of speculation often of the wildest kind. If that kind of "science" be professed the faith is missed altogether.

As to all this the instructions are very simple. Avoid the babblings and AVOID the mis-named science no less than the babblings. We shall need grace from God to do this. Hence the closing words, "Grace be with thee Amen."

