

God's Message to Us in First Timothy

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Introduction

Today we have come to the first of Paul's three epistles that are called the Pastoral Epistles.

- Two of them are letters to Timothy (First and Second Timothy) and the third one is to Titus, so it is simply called Titus.

Today we will look at First Timothy.

Let me give you a little background.

- Paul wrote to Timothy when he was on his fourth missionary journey, which began in AD 62 when he was released from prison in Rome, and ended in AD 64 when he was imprisoned again and soon executed.
- He wrote to Timothy while Timothy was at Ephesus.
 - Paul had sent him there to minister to the church at Ephesus which was made up of many congregations—
 - Paul had ministered there for the three years from AD 53-56, and many people had come to the faith.
 - About a year later, Paul called a meeting of the presbytery at Ephesus when he was passing near the region, and he passionately warned the elders to guard the flock against false teaching.
 - And now, just five years later, Paul has sent Timothy to Ephesus to deal with those who were adding to the gospel that Paul had taught them.
 - Timothy had the very difficult task of charging them to teach no other doctrine.
 - The whole letter is a passionate plea for Timothy to fight for the truth... a strong encouragement for him to fully give himself to the task.

As we hear this plea, it ought to impress us with the need to pursue godliness today.

I. Let me begin with a brief survey of Paul's passionate admonitions to Timothy to promote godliness.

A. In looking at these, think about how important godliness is!

1. It was not just important for Timothy to promote it at Ephesus 2000 years ago.
 - It is just as important today as it ever has been.
 - We are talking about matters of eternity.
 - We are talking about our service to God in a fallen world.
 - This is not something to be indifferent about.
2. You all have different callings from God.
 - Most of you are not called into the ministry as Timothy was, but you are called to be godly and to promote godliness in the church—to do your part to pursue the peace, purity, and prosperity of this congregation...
 - To promote godliness in your marriage, your family, and among the other members of the congregation.

- Most of all, you are to see that you are godly.
 - It matters.
 - Those who do not pursue holiness will not see God.
 - Not because we are saved by works, but because we are saved by faith in Christ, and when He saves us, He changes us by His Spirit so that we pursue holiness—we pursue godliness.
 - If you are not doing that, you still need to be converted.
- B. Look at how Paul urges Timothy (all the way through this letter) to promote godliness in his ministry.
1. First in 1:3 we have the general charge: **“As I urged you when I went into Macedonia—remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine, nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith.”**
 2. At the end of the chapter, he reminds Timothy that he has been set apart by God Himself to this work and must fight valiantly
 - 1 Tim 1:18-20 says: **“This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, ¹⁹ having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck, ²⁰ of whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.”**
 - What strong language! What a powerful warning!
 - Those who do not consider godliness to be of much importance end up as spiritual shipwrecks...
 3. In chapter 3:14-15, he reminds Timothy that he is writing to tell him how to conduct himself in the church—the church which is given the task of upholding the truth in a world that is ruined and cut off from God.
 - **1 Tim 3:14-15: “These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly; ¹⁵ but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.”**
 4. In chapter 4:12-16, he tells Timothy to give himself fully to the task—to let nothing stop him from the great work of promoting godliness.
 - **1 Tim 4:12-16: “Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity... Verse 15: Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. ¹⁶ Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.”**
 - And if Timothy was supposed to fully devote himself to *promoting* godliness,
 - then of course that implies that the congregation at Ephesus was to *be* godly—and so are all of us who read this epistle today.
 - It was important from him to promote godliness because it is important for the church to be godly.
 - That has not changed. It is just as important now as it was then.

5. And then at the end, in chapter 6:11-16, he again urges Timothy to fight with all his might:
 - **1 Tim 6:11-16: “But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. ¹² Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. ¹³ I urge you in the sight of God who gives life to all things, and *before* Christ Jesus who witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate, ¹⁴ that you keep *this* commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ’s appearing, ¹⁵ which He will manifest in His own time, *He who is* the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, ¹⁶ who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom *be* honor and everlasting power. Amen.”**
 - There no place for slackness and half-heartedness.

TRANS> So you see that this book is a call go to war for the purpose of godliness.

- Someone once asked Calvin if God was not able to defend Himself, and Calvin said, “Of course He can, but what kind of dog would I be if I did not bark when my master is attacked?”
- Besides that, God has called us and appointed us to fight the good fight of faith.
 - The book of Timothy proves that because it is given by His Spirit to instruct us in our faith, and it calls us to fight the good fight of faith.
- So seeing that we are called to fight, let’s now look at three ways we are to fight for godliness.

II. **First, we are to fight against false doctrine that is not in accord with godliness.**

- This is the subject of chapter 1.
- A. As we have already seen in verse 3 & 4, the very reason that Paul sent Timothy to Ephesus was to **“charge some that they teach no other doctrine.”**
 1. Apparently there were those who were using the law of God in the wrong way.
 - Paul talks about **fables and endless genealogies.**
 - It would be the kind of thing where they were not looking at the Bible in a straightforward way, but reading into it...
 - Looking for hidden messages and prophecies about the tribes and what they were going to do, or looking for clues or codes and special directives.
 - By using the law in the wrong way, they were just stirring people up and causing division and confusion instead of godly edification in faith...
 2. You know how people will do that kind of thing today.
 - They will look at the Bible... perhaps where it says that Gideon’s little army is going to conquer Midian... and they will conclude that this means that their football team at their Christian college is going to beat a larger school this season... They will claim that God has spoken to them through His word.
 - Or if they are really spiritual, they will claim that He is going to give them their neighbourhood for Christ as a personal promise from God.
 3. Paul’s goal in charging them to teach no other doctrine was love.
 - God’s law, used rightly, teaches us to love one another through the power of the gospel of Christ.

- B. Paul says that the law is good if we use it lawfully.
1. He points out that it is written to sinners, not to righteous persons.
 - It is written to show us how to love each other and how to love God—because we are sinners and we don't love as we ought.
 - It exposes us and shows us our constant need of Christ.
 - **1 Tim 1:8-11: But we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully, knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for *the* lawless and insubordinate, for *the* ungodly and for sinners, for *the* unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine, ¹¹ according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust.**
 - It doesn't have secret codes and messages, it is the plain sense that we need.
 2. Paul speaks about how he himself was a very wicked man until Christ saved him and put him into the ministry.
 - He gives glory to God for saving him in verses 12-17, expressing how thankful he is to now be in the ministry...
 - and essentially saying that if God did that with someone like him who is the chief of sinners, He can do it for anyone.
 - In verse 15-16 he says: **“This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. ¹⁶ However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life.”**
 - That is what you learn of your sin and of God's grace when you use the word in the right way—and then by His grace you grow in love.
- C. The chapter ends with Paul reiterating that he had committed to Timothy the task of charging the leaders at Ephesus to teach no other doctrine...
- He is to (v. 18) wage the good warfare.
 - Wrongful use of the word has already brought destruction to some of the teachers at Ephesus... men that Paul has delivered over to Satan...
 - This is not fun and games. It is warfare with eternal consequences.
 - We must contend against false doctrine.

TRANS> In chapter two through four, we come to the second way we are to engage in battle for godliness.

III. Second, we are to fight together in the church, each doing what we have been called to do.

- A. In 1 Timothy 2:1-8 it says that the men are to lead in the prayers of the church.
- Verse 1 & 2 say: **Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.**
1. This is the great work of the church in the battle...
 - God has called us to do this first of all.

- We are not just to pray for our own people, but even for kings among all nations and those in authority.
2. Salvation is not limited to certain people—
 - God wants all kinds of people to be saved, and He wants people from all nations to come to Him.
 - There is only one way of salvation, and that is by Christ.
 - Verse 5-6 says: **“For *there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.*”**
 - We are to pray for the spread of God’s kingdom in the whole world.
 3. It is interesting that Paul especially calls on the males in the congregation to do this.
 - In verse 8 he says, **“I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.”**
 - The word *man* here is not the word that means “mankind” but the specific word that refers to males.
 - Men, God has given the task of public prayer especially to you.
 - Notice that he says they are to pray “*everywhere...*” more literally “*in every place...*” a semitechnical term for the place where the church meets.
 - Of course we are all to pray in private and in our homes with our families, but the men are to lead in the prayers of the church.
- Next Paul directs the women in the church.
- B. He tells them that as the men are to lead in prayer, the women are to be dedicated to good works.
 1. He explains that their attention should not be on adorning themselves with beautiful clothes, **but** (vs 10), **which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works.**
 - That is the thing that is to stand out among godly women.
 2. He reminds them that as women, their task is not to give public instruction in the church...
 - In fact, he says that they are not permitted to do so in verse 12: **And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence.**
 - Many in the church oppose this teaching, arguing that women can teach just as well as men... but that is not the point.
 - The point is, teaching in the church and leading is not what God has called women to do.
 - The Lord wants them to concentrate on doing good works.
 3. And Paul encourages them about childbearing as well...
 - Women were given the incredible ability to bring forth children that bear the image of God... but the fall took this ability away—
 - Adam and Eve could only bring forth corrupt children, dead in sin.
 - But God in His grace through Christ has delivered them so that, by His grace, they bring forth children under the promise of redemption.

- Verse 15 says that they **will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness with self-control.**
 - What a blessing! They can fill the earth with godly people!
 - So having addressed the work of males and females in the church,
- C. In chapter 3, Paul tells Timothy that godly elders and deacons are to be appointed to serve in the church.
1. God appointed that every church should have a plurality of elders, or *bishops*, as they are here called.
 - The word bishop means overseer—and that is their task.
 - Every church is to have men who are appointed to watch over the congregation with a view to keeping them true to God.
 - Paul lays out the qualifications for the elders, showing that they are to be mature, experienced, godly men.
 - If they are not godly, how could it be possible for them to lead the church in the pursuit of godliness?
 2. Paul also lays out the stipulations for deacons who are given to assist the elders by helping to manage the church's mercy ministry and matters related to the distribution of the church's finances.
 - They too are to be godly men with godly families.
 3. This is the arrangement that God has appointed for His church, but almost immediately, the church began to deviate from the government that God gave us.
 - It has caused so many problems in the church with the rise of individual prelates who take to themselves the power of a body of elders—to ordain, to exercise church discipline, and such things.

TRANS> Paul tells Timothy in 3:14 that he is writing this letter to tell him how to conduct himself in the house of God which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

- This is serious business.
 - We have no right to revise what God has appointed here—changing the calling of women, changing the office of elder—
 - Our Lord has authority and He has revealed His will for us in the word.

D. In chapter 4, Paul calls for full devotion to the ministry of the word.

1. Although his words are directed specifically to Timothy,
 - remember that Timothy's task was to charge all the men who were teaching at Ephesus to teach no other doctrine.
 - For that reason, what Paul says here applied to all who were appointed to teach and preach at Ephesus,
 - and as this was also instruction about how to conduct yourself in the church, it applies to all who have preached in the church since then—it applies to us today.
2. Paul begins by reminding Timothy that the Spirit has told the church of a great apostasy that would come...
 - We saw that last week in 2 Thessalonians, and here it is again.

- 1 Tim 4:1-5 says that they will bring doctrines of demons into the church: **Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, ² speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, ³ forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.**
 - When people don't have new life in Christ and do not look to Him for free forgiveness and grace, they cling to artificial ways of godliness...
 - ceremonies, abstaining from foods, cutting themselves—all sorts of ways.
 - Paul shows Timothy that a good minister is one who teaches what God has said instead of embellishing his teaching with these extras to look superior.
 - In 4:6-7, he says: **“If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed. ⁷ But reject profane and old wives’ fables, and exercise yourself toward godliness.”**
3. And then he shows us that reading and preaching the word is something ministers are to wholly devote themselves to.
- It is not to be a sideline—it is to be something they labour diligently at.
 - They are to let nothing prevent them from it—not criticism, not laziness, not distraction—Look at 4:12-16: **“Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity. ¹³ Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. ¹⁴ Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership. ¹⁵ Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. ¹⁶ Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.”**
 - Here again, if only the church would listen to this mandate!
 - When reading and preaching is relegated to a secondary status, we are no longer fighting the good fight—we are just playing church.
 - We might remember Joshua when he went to conquer the land—the Lord did not give him military strategy, He told him to be strong and courageous in faith and to meditate in the law of God night and day!
 - And that was in the conquest of land—how much more should we be devoted to the word now that Jesus has come so that we walk by faith and not by sight!
 - Paul says that this is how a minister saves himself and those that hear him.
 - Without sound preaching of the word, people will not be saved—they will not even know the way of salvation.

TRANS> So you see that godliness is promoted.

- First, by opposing other doctrine...
- Second by men praying, women doing good works, solid elders and deacons being appointed, and ministers preaching...
- And now in the third place we see... in chapter 5 & 6... that

IV. Third, we are to promote godliness in our relationships with one another in the church.

- A. Paul begins by reminding Timothy to treat the others in the church as family.
- In 5:1-2, he says: **“Do not rebuke an older man, but exhort *him* as a father, younger men as brothers, ² older women as mothers, younger as sisters, with all purity.”**
 - 1. This is something we should all do.
 - We are all family and we are to love one another as such.
 - A young man like Timothy was treat the older folks as mothers and fathers, and the younger ones as brothers and sisters—with all purity...
 - 2. We are in battle, and it important for young men to keep their hands off of girls—to treat them as sisters—until they find one to marry and marry her.
 - Then they can show affection to their own wife and wives to their own husbands in marriage.
 - I advise some of you young men in the church to consider this well.
 - Until you marry, the young women are all sisters.
 - 3. Also, it is striking that after just telling Timothy to let no one despise his youth, he now tells him to treat the older adults as mothers and fathers.
 - He is to approach them with the special honour and affection that children are to have toward their parents.
- After these general comments, Paul addresses some specific categories of persons in the church and how the church is to treat them and how they are to treat others in the church.

B. He speaks of widows.

1. It may seem surprising, but his main focus is that the church is not to provide for all widows—only for those who are *really* widows.
 - a. If they have children, their children are to take care of them.
 - **1 Tim 5:3-4: Honor widows who are really widows. ⁴ But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show piety at home and to repay their parents; for this is good and acceptable before God.**
 - 1) It should be understood that the word *honour* in Greek often refers to financial support—which seems to be the focus here.
 - 2) Paul is very insistent on their own families looking after them, even saying that a man who doesn't look after his own is worse than an unbeliever.
 - We live in a day when we want others to take care of our relations, and we are taxed for this purpose, but there is so much waste with this method.
 - And it tends to isolate people when their own families do not take responsibility to look after them.
 - b. He also excludes younger widows—those under sixty as well as those who have not lived a godly life.
 - It should be understood that he is not saying that we are not to provide for the poor,
 - but he is talking about the church providing regular support out of regular funds for them versus voluntary giving.

- Individual Christians should always help out those who are in need as they are able, but the church is not to commit regular funds to this.
 - By keeping widows who do not qualify off the list of those who receive regular support, it not only keeps the church from being overly burdened, it has a sanctifying influence on the widows.
 - It keeps them from feeling entitled, and it has a way of pushing them to do what they can to help out in the church so that people will be more inclined to help them.
2. He speaks about the behaviour of the widows quite a bit here...
- Those few who do qualify to be on regular support are to continue in the prayer and service to the needy that made them qualified for regular help in the first place.
 - And the younger widows should seek to marry again and should guard against becoming busy-bodies about the church.
- It is clear that the goal is godliness—Paul is setting forth principles that will promote godliness in families and in widows.
- C. Next, he speaks of the treatment of the elders.
1. Again, the word *honour* is used with the idea of financial support.
- In 5:17-18 he says: **Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine.** ¹⁸ **For the Scripture says, “You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain,” and, “The laborer is worthy of his wages.”**
 - When it says, *especially those who labour in the word*, it is probably right to understand this as *in particular—or specifically*—those who labour in the word.
 - They are to be supported by the regular offerings of the church.
 - This will enable them to give themselves entirely to the work of the ministry as they were enjoined to do at the end of chapter 4.
2. He speaks about holding them to a high standard of godliness as well.
- In verse 19, he says not to receive an accusation against them without proper evidence—two or three witnesses—many will accuse ministers...
 - But at the same time he says those who do sin should be rebuked before all—
 - They have a public office and their sins affect everyone.
 - In verse 22 he advises that they not be ordained without careful consideration whether they meet the qualifications and are fit to serve.
 - Again, godliness is the goal.
- In chapter 6 there is a rather lengthy section that many in our day might find offensive, but this is more due to our ignorance of ancient social structure.
- This is God’s word and we need to honour it as pure wisdom and humble ourselves under its authority as the very word of God.
- D. It is about slaves and masters...
1. The opening charge is aimed at the slaves, especially those who have Christian masters:

- **1 Tim 6:1-2: Let as many bondservants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and *His* doctrine may not be blasphemed. And those who have believing masters, let them not despise *them* because they are brethren, but rather serve *them* because those who are benefited are believers and beloved. Teach and exhort these things.**
 - The word *bondservant* is the word for a full slave.
- a. First, understand that this is NOT advocating human trafficking—
 - This is not sanctioning the slave trade.
 - In fact, in the Bible, man-stealing is a capital offense.
 - But in all of ancient society, when nations went to war, the victors would subdue their enemies by putting them to forced labour.
 - Also, in their economy, if a person became destitute, that person could sell themselves as a slave to pay their debt and provide for their family.
 - If you had a good master, you were often better off in this situation because you and your family would be taken care of—you had excellent job security and often better working conditions than a day labourer would have.
 - Slavery was also a way to deal with criminals.
 - Instead of locking them up and teaching them to be idle, such persons were put to forced labour.
 - It was actually much more humane than our system of putting people in cages.
 - Don't get me wrong—they had their cages too—and sometimes it is necessary, but many offenders could be put to work under a responsible master so they could earn their keep.
- b. The LORD does not answer to our idealism about slavery.
 - Of course in an unfallen society there would be no slavery, nor would there be poor people or even the sick,
 - but the Lord advocates here in His word godliness in the relationship of slave and master when it is part of the economic structure.
 - The believing slave was to be faithful to his master—to serve him in love and anyone who teaches otherwise is just wrong...
 - Paul says (v. 3): **“If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, *even* the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing...”**
 - In verse 6, he calls for godliness with contentment... we should be content with our calling whether slave or free.
 - Lust for riches ruins many—it is the root of all kinds of evil.
- 2. And after speaking of the problem of greed, Paul launches into a passionate warning to Timothy to flee from that temptation!
 - It is a bit of a digression from one who has seen firsthand how a love for riches destroys the lives of many, including many ministers like Timothy.
 - He urges him not only to flee from that temptation, but (v. 11) to **pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness...** and to **fight the good fight of faith.**

- He must remember that he serves and answers to the coming Lord who is the **blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and the Lord of lords.**
- After this digression, Paul returns to speak about the rich...
- 3. These rich persons were the ones who would have had servants...
 - In verses 17-19, he says: **Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. ¹⁸ Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, ¹⁹ storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.**
 - Rich men must remember that they will be judged.
 - They have a greater responsibility because of their wealth and influence.
 - They need to remember, and remember with a view to the fact that many of their godly servants will be ranked above them on the Day of Judgment if they have not made good use of their riches to bless others.

Conclusion: Once again, the goal is godliness...

- All the way through this letter, Paul is promoting the quest for godliness...
- This book opposes any kind of passivity in the Christian life...
 - If we truly trust God, we will fight the good fight—
 - We will contend against false doctrine and against being taken in by it...
 - We will take our place as men and women and elders and ministers in the church as the institution of God that upholds the gospel...
 - And we will live in relation to each other as family in every calling, widows, elders, servants and masters... all of us after godliness.
- We have wonderful salvation and it is for us to live in it and promote it to the fullest.
 - Paul committed this responsibility to Timothy, and it has implications for each one of you.
 - In 6:20-21 he says: **“O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge— ²¹ by professing it some have strayed concerning the faith. Grace be with you. Amen.”**