

## OUTLINE & EXPANDED OVERVIEW OF FIRST TIMOTHY

### I. GREETING (1:1–2)

Paul addresses himself to Timothy whom he describes as his true son in the faith. Apparently Paul regarded Timothy as his own spiritual child and offspring - having earlier proclaimed the gospel to him which resulted in his conversion.

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the commandment of God our Savior and the Lord Jesus Christ, our hope, <sup>2</sup>To Timothy, a true son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.

### II. CONFRONTING THE FALSE TEACHING (1:3–20)

#### a. Paul's charge to deal with false teachers (1:3–7)

Paul charges Timothy to refute false teachers in the church who endeavored to enforce the Jewish law as binding on Christians. These false teachers laid great stress on genealogies and traditions, and were given to debates about various questions concerning the law.

<sup>3</sup>As I urged you when I went into Macedonia—remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine, <sup>4</sup>nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith. <sup>5</sup>Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith, <sup>6</sup>from which some, having strayed, have turned aside to idle talk, <sup>7</sup>desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say nor the things which they affirm.

#### b. Paul's teaching on the proper use of the law (1:8-11)

In contrast to the improper use of the law that the false teachers were trying to enforce, Paul teaches Timothy the proper use of the law.

<sup>8</sup>But we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully, <sup>9</sup>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, <sup>10</sup>for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine, <sup>11</sup>according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust.

### c. Paul's summary of his own experience with the gospel and his call to ministry (1:12–17)

Paul is overwhelmed with the thought of God's mercy towards him when he transformed him from his old life and appointed him to His service. This leads Paul to give a doxology to God's praise.

<sup>12</sup> And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, <sup>13</sup> although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. <sup>14</sup> And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. <sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> 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. <sup>17</sup> Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

### d. Paul's restated charge to Timothy to deal firmly with false teachers (1:18–20)

Timothy had a commission similar to Paul's own, for he had been singled out to carry on the spiritual warfare. A sample of this difficult conflict is cited in the case of Hymenaeus and Alexander, who had made shipwreck of their faith.

<sup>18</sup> 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, <sup>19</sup> having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck, <sup>20</sup> of whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.

## III. REGULATIONS FOR WORSHIP AND ORDER IN THE CHURCH (2:1–3:16)

### a. The importance and scope of public prayer (2:1–8)

Prayer is to be made for all men, even for those in high authority, and this injunction is given a doctrinal basis, namely, that God through the ransom of his Son, desires the salvation of people from all walks of life (even kings and those in positions of great authority). Now salvation was for the whole Gentile world, not just for the Jews. It was for "all men" not just for Israel. Paul testified of this by his own apostleship for whom he was especially appointed to the Gentiles.

Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, <sup>2</sup> for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. <sup>3</sup> For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, <sup>4</sup> who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. <sup>5</sup> For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time, <sup>7</sup> for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle—I am speaking the truth in Christ and not lying—a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth. <sup>8</sup> I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting;

### III. REGULATIONS FOR WORSHIP AND ORDER IN THE CHURCH (2:1–3:16)

*continued*

#### b. The status and demeanor of Christian women in the church (2:9–15)

Paul urges upon women the need for modesty in dress and submissiveness in attitude and he supports his assertions by an appeal, not to cultural trends, but to the creation account of Adam and Eve. Women must continue in faith, love, holiness and modesty.

<sup>9</sup>in like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, <sup>10</sup>but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works. <sup>11</sup>Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. <sup>12</sup>And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. <sup>13</sup>For Adam was formed first, then Eve. <sup>14</sup>And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. <sup>15</sup>Nevertheless she will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control.

#### c. The qualifications of the two church office-bearers (3:1–13)

The apostle deals first with bishops or overseers who are elsewhere referred to as elders (3:1–7). He gives a list of qualities, mostly moral requirements, which are indispensable for the office. The overseer must not be a recent convert and must be above reproach.

This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work. <sup>2</sup>A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach; <sup>3</sup>not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous; <sup>4</sup>one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence <sup>5</sup>(for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?); <sup>6</sup>not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil. <sup>7</sup>Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

Then the requirements for deacons are outlined (3:8–13) which are similar to those for overseers. In both cases, the chosen men must have proved themselves in their own homes to be capable of occupying positions of responsibility in the church

<sup>8</sup>Likewise deacons must be reverent, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy for money, <sup>9</sup>holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience. <sup>10</sup>But let these also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons, being found blameless. <sup>11</sup>Likewise, their wives must be reverent, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things. <sup>12</sup>Let deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. <sup>13</sup>For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.

### III. REGULATIONS FOR WORSHIP AND ORDER IN THE CHURCH (2:1–3:16)

*continued*

#### d. Paul's stated purpose for writing this epistle (3:14–16)

Paul informs Timothy that he hoped to visit him soon. But the purpose of the present epistle is to give guidance for Timothy's immediate action in the church, which is described here as (1) God's house, (2) a pillar, and (3) the ground (or foundation) of truth. At this point Paul introduces a hymn expressing the mystery of Christ's incarnation, the universality of its application and the present glory of Christ.

<sup>14</sup> These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly; <sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness:

God was manifested in the flesh,  
Justified in the Spirit,  
Seen by angels,  
Preached among the Gentiles,  
Believed on in the world,  
Received up in glory.

### IV. THREATS TO THE SAFETY OF THE CHURCH (4:1–16)

Through the Spirit the Apostle Paul sees a time of approaching apostasy, which will be marked by deceitful teaching and ascetic practices of abstinence (4:1–5)

Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, <sup>2</sup> speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, <sup>3</sup> 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. <sup>4</sup> For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; <sup>5</sup> for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.

Paul proceeds to give detailed instructions to Timothy about the best methods of dealing with false teaching (4:6-16).

#### a. Timothy must seek to instruct the brethren concerning these false teachings (4:6)

<sup>6</sup> 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.

#### b. Timothy must avoid irrelevant speculations (4:7-8)

<sup>7</sup> But reject profane and old wives' fables, and exercise yourself toward godliness. <sup>8</sup> For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.

#### IV. THREATS TO THE SAFETY OF THE CHURCH (4:1–16) *continued*

##### c. Timothy must be willing to suffer reproach for proclaiming the gospel (4:9-11)

<sup>9</sup> This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance. <sup>10</sup> For to this end we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe. <sup>11</sup> These things command and teach.

##### d. Timothy must cultivate his own religious life so as to be an example in word, conduct and attitude (4:12)

<sup>12</sup> 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.

##### e. Timothy must diligently and wholeheartedly cultivate his ministry gift for the benefit of the church (4:13-16)

<sup>13</sup> Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. <sup>14</sup> 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. <sup>15</sup> Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. <sup>16</sup> 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.

#### V. CONDUCT WITHIN THE CHURCH (5:1–25)

Various groups of people within the church must be managed in different ways so Paul gives Timothy some detailed guidance concerning these matters:

##### a. Different age-groups need to be handled with care and discrimination (5:1–2)

Do not rebuke an older man, but exhort him as a father, younger men as brothers, <sup>2</sup> older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, with all purity.

##### b. Discernment is necessary to determine widows who are really in need (5:3–8)

<sup>3</sup> Honor widows who are really widows. <sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup> Now she who is really a widow, and left alone, trusts in God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day. <sup>6</sup> But she who lives in pleasure is dead while she lives. <sup>7</sup> And these things command, that they may be blameless. <sup>8</sup> But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

## V. CONDUCT WITHIN THE CHURCH (5:1–25) *continued*

### c. Widows of varied age and character must be treated in different ways (5:9-16)

<sup>9</sup> Do not let a widow under sixty years old be taken into the number, and not unless she has been the wife of one man, <sup>10</sup> well reported for good works: if she has brought up children, if she has lodged strangers, if she has washed the saints' feet, if she has relieved the afflicted, if she has diligently followed every good work. <sup>11</sup> But refuse the younger widows; for when they have begun to grow wanton against Christ, they desire to marry, <sup>12</sup> having condemnation because they have cast off their first faith. <sup>13</sup> And besides they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house, and not only idle but also gossips and busybodies, saying things which they ought not. <sup>14</sup> Therefore I desire that the younger widows marry, bear children, manage the house, give no opportunity to the adversary to speak reproachfully. <sup>15</sup> For some have already turned aside after Satan. <sup>16</sup> If any believing man or woman has widows, let them relieve them, and do not let the church be burdened, that it may relieve those who are really widows.

### d. Elders must be honored for their pastoral labor and no indiscriminate charge must be admitted against them without adequate proof from two or more witnesses (5:17–20)

<sup>17</sup> Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. <sup>18</sup> For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer is worthy of his wages." <sup>19</sup> Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses. <sup>20</sup> Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear.

### e. In dealing with these situations Timothy is to watch his own behavior, avoiding partiality and hastiness of action, but cultivating purity and a due concern for his health. In the selection of church officers, hasty choices must be avoided since appearances are often deceptive and some men's sins take time to surface and become apparent (5:21–25)

<sup>21</sup> I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels that you observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing with partiality. <sup>22</sup> Do not lay hands on anyone hastily, nor share in other people's sins; keep yourself pure. <sup>23</sup> No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach's sake and your frequent infirmities. <sup>24</sup> Some men's sins are clearly evident, preceding them to judgment, but those of some men follow later. <sup>25</sup> Likewise, the good works of some are clearly evident, and those that are otherwise cannot be hidden.

## VI. MISCELLANEOUS INSTRUCTIONS (6:1–19)

### a. Concerning slaves (servants) and masters (6:1–2)

The apostle does not condone the yoke of slavery, but urges that Christian slaves should honor unbelieving masters so as not to bring disrespect to the gospel. Furthermore they should serve believing masters even better because of the bond of Christian love that they share together.

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. <sup>2</sup> 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.

### b. Concerning false teachers (6:3–5)

Here is a vivid description of the moral depravity of those who do not agree with the teaching of Christ. Such people not only crave for wordy religious controversies but even seize the opportunity to make gain and profit out of them.

<sup>3</sup> 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, <sup>4</sup> he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, <sup>5</sup> useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself.

### c. Concerning the perils of wealth (6:6–10)

This arises immediately from the case of religious covetousness. The gain of contented godliness is contrasted with the snares of the pursuit and love of riches, which some have painfully found to be the root of all evil.

<sup>6</sup> Now godliness with contentment is great gain. <sup>7</sup> For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. <sup>8</sup> And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. <sup>9</sup> But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. <sup>10</sup> For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

## VI. MISCELLANEOUS INSTRUCTIONS (6:1–19) *continued*

### d. Concerning the goals of a man of God (6:11–16)

Addressed directly to Timothy, these injunctions instill the noblest Christian virtues, urge upon him tenacity in Christian warfare and charge him to keep himself unstained and free from reproach. Everything must be viewed in the light of the approaching advent of Christ, the thought of which draws out a magnificent doxology in verses 15-16.

<sup>11</sup> But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. <sup>12</sup> 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. <sup>13</sup> 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, <sup>14</sup> that you keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing, <sup>15</sup> which He will manifest in His own time, He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, <sup>16</sup> who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen.

### e. Concerning wealthy men (6:17–19)

Paul returns to the theme of wealth because of the need to give advice to rich Christians. They must not trust in their wealth, but through liberality aim to become rich in good works.

<sup>17</sup> 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. <sup>18</sup> Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, <sup>19</sup> storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

## VII. CONCLUDING ADMONITION TO TIMOTHY (6:20–21)

<sup>20</sup> O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge— <sup>21</sup> by professing it some have strayed concerning the faith. Grace be with you. Amen.

Once again Timothy is urged by Paul to guard the deposit of truth in this Epistle and to avoid the irrelevances and pretentious knowledge of false teachers because their knowledge leads men astray, but the Word of God is truth!

Source: Outline substantially adapted from New Testament Introduction, by Donald Guthrie, published by Intervarsity Press, 1990. Fourth edition (revised).