

PAUL'S CHARGE TO TIMOTHY

TEXT: I TIMOTHY 5:21-25

INTRODUCTION:

1. Tonight we will look at Paul's charge to Timothy (5:21; cf. II Tim. 4:1).
2. The word "charge" is a military term.
3. Tonight we will focus on three aspects of this charge.
4. "These things" (5:21) refers to all the precepts laid out in this epistle. This is a very important and serious charge, for Paul charged Timothy to observe them as in the presence of God and the Lord Jesus Christ, and called the "elect" angels to be witnesses (5:21).
5. Furthermore, this was to be done without partiality (5:21).

I. LAY HANDS SUDDENLY ON NO MAN (5:22).

1. Laying hands signifies placing men in positions of leadership (cf. 4:14). Church leaders should be godly and mature men (cf. 3:6).
2. It is wise to test men before putting them in positions of leadership. It is not unusual to see problems in churches that are caused by men who had no business being in positions of authority.
3. By approving of an unworthy man to the ministry, Timothy would be a "partaker of other men's sins" (5:22). God holds us responsible for assisting and sustaining those who are not right with God.
4. Matthew Poole said, "He who puts into the ministry any erroneous or ignorant persons, or any persons of a lewd conversation, makes himself guilty of all the harm they do, if he hath not first taken a due and reasonable proof of them, but hath laid hands upon them suddenly. Amongst other ways by which we interest ourselves in others' guilt, one is, by not hindering it, having power so to do. He, or they, whom it lies upon to admit, or not admit, men into the ministry, have a power to refuse them in case upon proof of them they do not find them apt to teach, or fit for the ministration they are to undertake, or such for holiness of life as God requireth."
5. Timothy needed to be pure so that he would remain fit for the ministry, and fit to rebuke the sins of others (5:22).
6. Purity means more than just moral purity. It includes doctrinal purity, purity of intention, separation from the world, and singleness of life.

II. THE USE OF WINE FOR MEDICINAL PURPOSES (5:23)

1. Like most good Christians, Timothy was probably a teetotaler. "It is clear from I Timothy 5:23 that the Apostles and their helpers practiced total abstinence, or there had been no need for that special injunction to Timothy" (F.B. Meyer).
2. Therefore, Paul advised him to "use a little wine" for his stomach's sake and his "often infirmities" (5:23). This is a popular verse with drunkards. H.A. Ironside said, "I would not attempt to say how many times this passage has been quoted to me by inebriates seeking to justify their indulgences in alcoholic liquor."
3. Ironside went on to say, "It is certainly a great mistake to take advice such as this and apply it as though spoken to everyone under all circumstances. Evidently Timothy was suffering from digestive disturbances brought about, no doubt, by the intensely alkaline water found in some parts of the lands through which he traveled. The native wines of that time, which were quite different from the wines we have today, were calculated to correct this condition, at least to some extent. So Paul prescribed a little wine, which is a far different thing to convivial drinking of intoxicating liquor. This is a prescription authorizing the use of the wine as a medicine not as a beverage. If the circumstances be the same, it is perfectly right and proper to follow the prescription, but one should be careful not to use a passage like this as license for carelessness in the use of strong drink of any kind" (*I Timothy*).
4. It is wise to compare Scripture with Scripture (cf. Pro. 20:1; 23:29-35).
5. Some Pentecostals and charismatics teach that it is never God's will for a Christian to get sick, but Paul refers to Timothy's "often infirmities." To suggest that Timothy was "often" out of the will of God, or "often" not right with God is absurd.
6. A.T. Robertson said, "Timothy was clearly a semi-invalid" (*Robertson's Word Pictures of the New Testament*).

III. THE JUDGMENT OF GOD (5:24, 25)

1. Sometimes God judges men's sins beforehand, and sometimes it is after they die. But either way the sinner is judged.
2. Some men's sins are very obvious. But some men, like Judas Iscariot, manage to deceive everyone. When they are eventually exposed people are surprised.
3. A pastor friend of mine used to preach in an old-age home. There was an elderly man who used to attend all of the services and always

- shouted out, "Hallelujah," "Amen," and so on. The man gave everyone the impression he was a fervent Christian.
4. He died in his sleep and the workers who cleaned his room saw some disturbing things. When my friend came back to preach, the manager of the old-age home said, "I think you ought to know about this," and proceeded to tell him the old man had a large pornography collection.
 5. Some sinners are skillful in covering up their transgressions. H.A. Ironside said, "They often go through life hiding their wickedness under a pretense of piety, but the day will come when all their sins will be manifest. When they leave this world they will find that those sins have followed them to the judgment bar of God, and every transgression and disobedience will receive a just recompense of reward. 'Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting' (Galatians 6:7, 8)."
 6. This same principle applies to the good works that people do (5:25). Eventually people take notice of a man's good works.
 7. Cf. verse 22 -- "Lay hands suddenly on no man." If a man is qualified for church leadership, it will eventually be obvious to others. On the other hand, if a man is not qualified, this too will become clear sooner or later.
 8. It has been said, "Neither vice nor virtue can remain a secret forever."

CONCLUSION:

1. In 1873, Charles Haddon Spurgeon preached a message on I Timothy 5:22 -- "Neither be partaker of other men's sins."
2. He asked this question, "Why Should We Seek To Avoid Being Partakers Of Other Men's Sins?"
3. "This will be a sufficient answer, — Because we have more than enough sins of our own, and cannot also carry other people's; and also because, if we are partakers in their sins, we shall also partake in their plagues; and also because we do other men an injury by being accomplices with them; we steel and harden them in their sins. The weightiest reason, of all is this, — we should not be 'partakers of other men's sins' because, by so doing, we should grieve our holy and gracious God, and no true lover of Christ ought ever to do that. Remember what Paul wrote to the saints at Ephesus, 'Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.'"

