The Epistle of First Timothy

Chapter 6

We now come to the end of this instructive and informative letter from the Apostle Paul to his disciple Timothy, and we can tell that Paul wants to see the ministry carried on in a conscientious and organized manner, so that the pagan followers cannot find anything circumspect, or foolish about it. What the outsider will see is; order, peace, gentleness, dedication to learning, and an ‘agape’ love among the brothers and sisters, as they deal with diverse personalities, and personal issues. Friends, we are all different and approach life based on our upbringing, and temperament, and God watches us, as we each bring a different perspective to a problem, or to a project at hand, and how we can meld these different temperaments into a well-oiled machine.

Timothy apparently is still a young man, and has not fully gained the confidence in life that comes with experience, yet Paul has sent him on a most important mission, to a Church plant in Ephesus, that is in desperate need of organization and a calming influence. But even age not-with-standing, we today, might be asked to take on a project, we have not been experienced in doing, and that can leave us with great trepidation at the prospect. So, this letter is a reinforcement of what Paul has been teaching and leading him up to all along, and Paul must have had confidence in Timothy or else he would not have sent him on such a great and important task as this. But there comes that time in all of us during our training that we grab the steering wheel and drive the race course laid out for us.

Paul has touched on the fact of the Church having the right doctrine and all the people being taught the same thing. Then we come to organizing the leadership, understanding the qualifications and qualities of leadership, and then the responsibilities of leadership. We must remember that leaders are held up to a different and more stringent set of rules and standards than are the people they lead. We see that leadership is servanthood, isn’t it? Does a person who desires to be a leader have it within himself or herself, to be a servant first?

And then Paul touches an issue that still befuddles many Churches today, and that is the separation of the elderly to the young and difference in the needs of both. This is such an important factor in many churches today, as the needs of each are quite different and how does leadership minister to both equally?

Also, Paul touches on the fact, that the Church is not the be-all to end-all. Each person must first be responsible for their own self and families, or those who need them. The Church should be charitable, but charity begins at home, the Church cannot and should not be the physical support for just anyone person who needs, when said person has family who can see to their needs, or said person has the ability to support himself. Something that is sadly lacking today in some circles.

A] 1 Timothy 6: 1 & 2; (read)

1] “*Let as many bond servants 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.”*

This is an interesting departure for the Ephesian Church. Now, slavery in all of its forms was the way of life back then. Right, wrong or indifferent, that was the way it was, and as this Christianity began to arise, many of these new Christians were outright slaves, indentured servants or paid help. Nothing could be done about their status, (as we saw with the situation between Onesimus and Philemon) but Paul does have to bring it up. If the master of these folks was a pagan, they must give him the obedience and honor due his position. Don’t give the boss any reason to take actions against you, as in, being obstinate or disobedient, and the master sneers at your God because of your unchristian like attitude, but respect them and maybe by your comportment they might see Christ in you and come to a real relationship with the Living God at some point in the future.

2] “*And those who have believing masters, let them not despise them because they are brethren, but rather serve them, because those who are benefitted are believers, and beloved. Teach and exhort these things.”*

Now the conundrum; if a slave holder is a professing believer??? Can one BE a Christian and have slaves? If we are to accept Philemon and his story, then yes, they can. Again, friends, look to the era this occurs in and the type of society they live in. We today seem to always judge history by today’s standards and not standards of that era. Or any other era for that manner. Also, most of the slaves were bond servants working off debts, they have incurred their own situation. So, if the master is a believer, respect the fact that as a believer the master is giving the bond-servant a way to pay off his debts, and friends debts must be paid, that is personal responsibility. Let everybody know what we are teaching here, this IS important!

B] 1 Timothy 6: 3 through 10; (read)

1] “*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 to godliness, --”*

This is more or less a continuation of the last statements regarding the relationship between slave and master, because there were some teachers who were advocating, that once a man (or woman) became that ‘bond servant’ to Jesus, that person could no longer be a servant to any master on earth. Some scholars like Bishop Ellicott claimed there might have been, in Ephesus, a school of purported Christian teachers who were teaching just that. However, as we previously looked at, that was the mores of society back then, and it was not wise to rock boats, but to remain passengers in the boat so as not to sink the boat and drown all aboard.

However pay attention to the words Paul speaks; If anyone teaches otherwise; there is that false doctrine about slave and master relationship. Paul is being emphatic in his statement. Paul is teaching and Timothy is learning. How many of us are being taught and somehow the words fly over our heads or in one ear and out the other? Mainly I find that when I have developed preconceived my truths, and someone far smarter and more learned try to teach me, I mentally might shut them off.

Remember when Jesus said, in response to someone asking Him regarding paying taxes to Rome, “Render unto Caesar that which is Caesars and unto God that which is God’s.” God put kings and rulers in their place, and the slavery issue was accepted by kings and rulers in lieu of killing the conquered. I mean of what good is it to kill all the adversaries when they can be put to use in their new environment? And as for bond servants, if they owed money, how are they to pay as they might incur greater debt. This way the debt was paid and the servant then can go his own way. So, many of these teachers were negating the words of Christ in order to curry favor with the folks they teach.

2]--”*he is proud, knowing nothing , but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, 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.”*

Another part of this picture is emerging, and that of men who have a knowledge of Christ’s redeeming love but because they are men who seek their own glory, apparently just have to argue over words which was done for centuries with the whole of the Tanakh, and thereby doing what the Jewish teachers had done and that was to revise the scriptures into the books of the Traditions. Today we still have the actions of semantics still going on in our Churches and Seminaries, and they fuss and bother over deeper meanings of words throughout scripture instead of simply teaching the mere truth Scripture contains. But this meant twisting of words, the people favor what they write and more money comes into the coffers and more glory to their names.

If we just pay attention to how Paul words this, he just might be referring to the men sent from the Pharisees and Sadducees who are adept at throwing truth into confusion. This is what the Judiazers have been doing or striving to do to Paul all along, interrupting the ministry wherever Paul goes and disrupting the message, so this then might also be referring to their work of interference. These people were relentless in pursuing Paul because he had long ago abandoned the Temple for the sake of Christ and this new message of hope and redemption.

3] “*Now, godliness with contentment is great gain.*

Paul finished the last thought and immediately launches into the idea that being godly, or being an upright person of high moral character, coupled with being content with whatever position we are in, is what we all long to achieve here on earth. If I am a slave and can be content with that life, or an overseer with godly intent on who he oversees, this is what a man (or woman) should be striving for and once achieved it is to their benefit as a Christian. Too many times we long for more but not knowing what it is we long for. So the question for each of us is, are we content with what we have, and who we are?

4] “*For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.”*

Regardless of the circumstances I was born in, I still came into the world naked, and whatever those circumstances were that I came into means nothing, because when I die, I die with nothing. Anything I might have gained, is left to someone else who never worked for it. Did you ever stop to think about what happens to all you possessed in this life, after you pass from it?

5] “*And having food and clothing we shall be content.”*

Remember again, this is a personal letter to Timothy, and in effect here it is saying, “Timothy, if you are fed, have a roof over your head and clothes to wear, this is all anyone can need at any time. Be content with this”. I have to read this in wry amusement, because It seems to be a direct refutation of all these big-time preachers making hundreds of thousands of dollars or more per year, and none seem to be content. Wonder why that is?

6] “*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.”*

Notice the word ‘desire’; He didn’t say it is wrong to be rich or have riches, but the desire to have riches can be all consuming, because one places the wrong emphasis on what one needs in life to get along. As the desire to have riches grows stronger, so does all the temptations that promise those riches.

7] “*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 through with many sorrows.”*

It is the LOVE of money, that seems to be the hang-up here, not the having of it. What IS the goal of the Christian in this life? When I become a Child of God and adopted brother of Jesus the Messiah, what more do I need? My goal is then to follow Him and obey Him, preparing myself for my victorious homegoing, and not overtly pursuing riches which will accomplish nothing for me in the life to come, but do I revere money more than God, in this life? Remember it is not having the money nor in the making of money that is evil, it is the mindset of money over all else. When the desire of money overshadows your desire for that relationship with God, you have the problem. Where are the desires of your heart taking you?

Paul, speaking directly to Timothy, is saying there are those who seek great profit in speaking and teaching about Jesus, but it is the money talking and not the love for God. These folks will perish in their riches and so might many of their followers. Timothy needs to be careful not to fall into that trap. Boy don’t we see so much of that today! Here we recall that the ‘workman IS worthy of his hire’ but to what excess are we talking about?

C] 1 Timothy 6: 11 through 16; (read)

1] “*But you, Oh man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.”*

“Timothy! Don’t get caught up in the world’s idea of ministry, but stay true to your calling, run away from these temptations, seek after those things that exemplify who you are in Christ.” What IS our witness to the world if we constantly seek after the things of the world? What has the witness of these TV preachers with their furs and diamonds and five hundred thousand-dollar cars and palatial mansions, become to the poor and needy of the world today? They can make this kind of money and flaunt it for all the world to see, and the poor starve.

One of the things I have seen was a church pastor plant a church in a very poor neighborhood and as the parishioners came to his church he was able to use guilt to extract much money from those who could ill afford it, so he could have his brand new Cadillac, which he claimed could be used to a greater ministry. He could have done just as much in a used chevy.

2] “*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.”*

“Timothy you will face these temptations as well as the spectre of arrest and torture or even rejection of many people around you, but because of your acceptance of Christ and commitment to His Cause, and because of the countless folks who have laid hands on you and committed you to the work ahead, stand strong in faith and acknowledge to yourself, the hope that lies ahead for you, of where this journey will take you.” What an encouragement, friends! Stay Strong!

3] “*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, that you keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ’s appearing--”*

Always remembering that Timothy is young, beginning a new chapter in his life assuming a role he is not familiar with, living in a wealthy city with all of its many temptations, Paul is justifiably urgent in his charge to Timothy. This is a major undertaking and Paul must hold Timothy as Timothy himself must hold, himself to much higher standards. And after probably scaring young Timothy with the great demands of the job that was coming up, Paul turns to encouragement and bolster Timothy and his courage for what is ahead.

Paul emphasizes the fact that Timothy keeps the charge given to him with the highest diligence and care, that God is the witness and what he is going to do is what God is calling him to do.

4]--”*which He will manifest in His own time, He Who is the Blessed and only Potentate , the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power . Amen.”*

Paul now goes into a sort of ‘Doxology’ as he continues on with the description of hope from the previous verse, with a vivid description of Christ manifesting His Part of the GodHead being, being immortal, and although we know Jesus as man yet because He is God, we cannot see Him. Anyway, Paul is exercising his doxolical wings here. (Made that word up)

D] 1 Timothy 6: 17 through19; (read)

1] “*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.”*

Here we can see, Paul does not cast aspersions on those who are affluent, but what he does say, is don’t flaunt your riches, nor put your dependence on your wealth believing it will buy your way into heaven or out of trouble. It is fine if you are wealthy, but then what will you do with that wealth? Timothy is to tell them, to put their faith in God. No matter the person being rich or poor, when they die, they are equal both having nothing but the promise of God.

2] “*Let them do good that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.”*

So, those who are very well off, Timothy is to tell them, that is ok. They can be Christian and be rich. However, what is that wealth to them? Will they share, will they donate? Will they see to the needs of others and the Church? Their whole attitude regarding their wealth does play a part in their heavenly future. In this part, for the rich it is in their attitude, isn’t it? Do they have to be told what good deeds they could be doing with their wealth, or do they have the heart already?

E] 1 Timothy 6: 20 & 21; (read)

1] “*Oh, Timothy; Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and idle babblings, and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge,- by professing it some have strayed concerning the faith. Grace be with you; Amen.*

I can remember listening to preachers who talked so far above my head, even Seminary Professors would have been baffled, and Paul is saying one final thing to Timothy-----KEEP IT SIMPLE. When one stands up there and blows smoke, he detracts from the message and the people are learning and that makes them walk in ignorance.